



Create-A-Fossil Investigation

YOU WILL NEED: fine sand, 2 containers (one for the molds/casts, one to mix plaster), quick-set Plaster of Paris and various items to create molds/casts.

1. Fill 2/3 of your container with moistened sand.
2. Press found objects into the moist sand—Leaves, plastic dinosaurs or bugs, shells and twigs; other items with interesting textures work well.
3. With the help of an adult, mix Plaster of Paris and carefully pour into the impressions in the sand.
4. Wait patiently for the plaster to dry to the touch, about 30-40 minutes. Then turn container out onto a flat work surface, remove the excess sand, and let the remaining plaster dry. Finally, whisk away dried sand using a small brush and uncover your creation!

What is a fossil?



Fossils are remains of life from the past preserved in rock. The most common types of fossils are molds and casts. A **mold** forms when something is pressed into soft mud and removed by decomposition or pulled out, leaving an impression of the object. A **cast** is a three-dimensional (3-D) example of an object of the past created when a mold fills up with sediment like mud, sand or volcanic ash.



Digging for Fossils Classroom Activity

YOU WILL NEED (Per Group): 15 wooden craft sticks, dinosaur pictures, sand, small shovel, bush or hammer, adhesive tape, markers, show box, paper, pencil, ruler.

1. Lay 12 craft sticks side by side on a table. Tape them together at the top and bottom. Draw a picture of a dinosaur so that each stick contains a piece of the drawing.
2. Remove tape and jumble up the sticks. Practice putting your fossil puzzle back together.
3. Remove three random sticks from your fossil puzzle, and replace them with blank sticks. Put sand in the shoebox, spread out the fossil pieces, and bury them. Wet the sand slightly.
4. Switch boxes with another group. Carefully dig one inch of sand at a time. Take notes as you dig. Sketch the arrangement of sticks as you find them.
5. Carefully, remove the sticks from the sand and lay them on a table. Try to piece the drawing together. What is missing? What kind of dinosaur is it?

