



REPLICA FOSSIL CRAFT ACTIVITY

Fossils are the preserved remains of organisms, like plants and animals, from the past. By studying fossils, Palaeontologists can learn how these organisms lived and the kinds of environments they thrived in.

There are four main types of fossil:

- Mould fossil – when an organism leaves an imprint of their body, but the body is no longer there
- Cast fossil – when a mould fossil (or imprint) gets filled in with minerals and hardens to rock
- Trace fossil – the fossilised traces that an organism has left behind like footprints, eggs, or faeces
- True form fossils – when an organism's body has been petrified in rock and the body itself is replaced by minerals

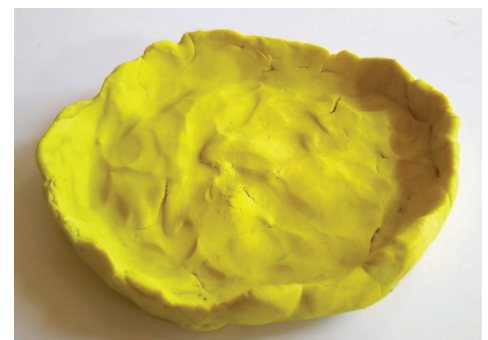
In this craft we are going to replicate how a mould is made and then how a cast fossil is formed.

RESOURCES:

- Plaster of Paris
- Plastic dinosaur toys
- Playdough
- Ice-cream container
- Wooden spoon
- Water

INSTRUCTIONS:

- ▶ 1. Take a ball of playdough, about a size that comfortably fits in your hand, and press the playdough into a disc about half a centimetre thick.
- ▶ 2. Once you have your playdough disc, pinch a border around the outside of the disc.



INSTRUCTIONS CONTIUNED:

- ▶ 3. Choose your dinosaur or other prehistoric creature. You can also use toy plants if you like. If you are using a large toy, then you can make a fossil of its head or footprints. If it is small you may be able to fit the whole animal inside the disk.

Simply press your toy into the playdough, until it is about half-way through. Try to get a nice indentation of the whole body, but make sure you don't press all the way through.

Imagine the dinosaur has died, its body has left an indentation in the sediment and then its body has decomposed. If that dinosaur indentation gets covered by more sediment, it will be preserved from the elements and may eventually harden and become a mould fossil as it gets buried.



- ▶ 4. When you are happy with your dinosaur mould get an adult to help you mix up some plaster of Paris. Place about 1 cup of dry plaster into an ice cream container and slowly add a little water at a time while stirring the plaster constantly. This is a bit like making icing for a cake, so if you add too much water then you need to add quite a bit of plaster to thicken the mixture back up. Stop adding water when the plaster is the consistency of thick icing or mud. Fill your mould with the plaster and leave it for at least 20 minutes to harden. If your plaster is runnier, it will need longer to dry.



- ▶ 5. When the plaster is dry, peel off the playdough and you have your dinosaur cast fossil!

A cast fossil is formed when a mould gets filled in by minerals, hardening and preserving the indentation.

