

# KITCHEN TABLE FOSSILS

## MATERIALS:

- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 1 cup water
- mixing bowl and spoon
- plastic wrap
- leaves, shells, cones, rocks



Fossils hold a special fascination for young naturalists. There is something particularly fantastic about the idea of something from far in the past reemerging in the world today, having been preserved for years upon years by accidents of nature. From dinosaur bones to the leaves of prehistoric plants, much of the information that we have about the world of long ago is because of the discovery of fossils. This easy activity won't bring dinosaur skeletons into your kitchen, but it is a good way to harness the enthusiasm of your budding paleontologists while also learning a bit about the way that the plants and animals of yesteryear find themselves hanging in the halls of museums today.

As an added benefit, the medium used for fossil making here is something that you can mix up in your own kitchen. Plaster of paris is great stuff, but isn't always handy. Most families have some kind of flour available however, making this "cheater's plaster" and excellent option for fossil making fun.

## MAKING KITCHEN TABLE FOSSILS



Begin measuring the two cups of flour and the salt into a mixing bowl. Add the cup of water, and mix with a sturdy spoon.

Continue to mix until a thick, goopy paste is formed. It should be thick enough that it will hold together in one blob if you take some out and put it on a flat surface or in your hand. If you need to, add a bit more flour to achieve this consistency.



Scoop out about a 1/4 cup of the fossil dough and lay it on a piece of plastic wrap. Either flatten it a bit with your hands, or allow it to sit for a few minutes so that it will even out across the top and sit flat on the plastic wrap. Press your nature items into the top of the fossil clay.



Things like pine cones, leaves, and shells work well because they have enough detail to leave an interesting impression, but feel free to experiment!



After pressing your items into the clay for a bit, gently remove them, leaving behind an impression in the place where they were sitting. Set the fossil aside and allow it to dry. For a faster, firmer dry, you can also bake the fossil in a 225 degree oven until hard.

Once the fossil is dry, you can display it any way that you like—just be careful because it will be somewhat delicate.

For information on where to go hunting for the real deal, visit <http://www.fossilsites.com/> to find fossil searching sites near you.



# GOOD BOOKS, TERRIBLE LIZARDS

If there is one subject that graces the shelves of children everywhere with astonishing regularity, it is likely to be dinosaurs. From the fictional and friendly to the fierce teeth-gnashers on the pages of the dino-encyclopedia, dinosaurs are popular creatures indeed. And with good reason. They give a fascinating glimpse into the past, to a time when animals and plants existed that could only live in our wildest imaginations today. Plus, they are great proof of the fact that science is awesome, exciting, and can discover some really huge stuff. Pun intended.

## PICTURE BOOKS AND NON-FICTION

*Prehistoric Actual Size*

by Steve Jenkins (R.L. 4.3, I.L. 3-6)

*T is for Terrible*

by Peter McCarty (R.L. 2.8, I.L. preK-2)

*Dinosaur Bones*

by Aliko (R.L. 2.5 I.L. preK-2)

*Encyclopedia Prehistorica Dinosaurs*

by Robert Sabuda (R.L. 5.7, I.L. 3-6)

*The Dinosaurs Of Waterhouse Hawkins*

by Barbara Kerley (R.L. 3.3, I.L. K-3)

*The Field Mouse And The Dinosaur Named Sue*

by Jan Wahl (R.L. 2.1, I.L. preK-2)

*The Magic School Bus in the Time of the Dinosaurs*

by Joanna Cole (R.L. 3.3, I.L. K-3)

*The Ultimate Dinopedia:*

*The Most Complete Dinosaur Reference Ever*

by “Dino” Don Lessem (R.L. ?, I.L. K-5)

*Brontorina*

by James Howe (R.L. 2.9, I.L. K-3)

*National Geographic Little Kids*

*First Big Book of Dinosaurs*

by Catherine D. Hughes (R.L. ?, I.L. K-3)

*Dinosaurs*

by Gail Gibbons (R.L. 3.7, I.L. preK-3)

*Patrick’s Dinosaurs*

by Carol Carrick (R.L. 3.3, I.L. preK-2)

*Time Flies*

by Eric Rohmann (R.L. wordless, I.L.K-2)

*Dinosaur Dream*

by Dennis Nolan (R.L. 3.5, I.L. K-3)

*Dinosaur Discoveries*

by Gail Gibbons, (R.L. 3.3, I.L.K-3)

*Dinosaurs & Prehistoric Life*

by Campbell and Parker (R.L. ?, I.L. K-3)

## CHAPTER BOOKS

*Dinosaur Named Sue: The World’s Most Complete T. Rex*

by Pat Reif (R.L. 7.3, I.L. 6-8)

*Cam Jansen and the Mystery of the Dinosaur Bones*

by David A. Adler, (R.L. 3.2, I.L. 2-5)

*The Dinosaur Mystery*

by Gertrude Chandler Warner  
(R.L. 3.8, I.L. 2-5)

*Ivy & Bean Break the Fossil Record*

by George Selden (R.L. 5.9, I.L. 2-5)