

Create a Fossil

This activity was created by Sophia

Fossils are formed when parts of plants or animals get preserved in the earth. Fossils are very important for helping us identify animals or plants from the past, and for understanding our planet's history. In this activity, you have the choice to make a trace or mold fossil. A **trace fossil** is something left behind by a living thing, like footprints, nests or tooth marks. A **mold fossil** is an imprint of the animal or plant that was left in the ground.

- 1 Find an object you would like to use for your fossil. This could be a small toy you have, or a cool leaf or rock you find on the ground. (If you are using a leaf, make sure not to pick it off of a tree!)
- 2 In one bowl, mix the salt, flour, water and oil with a spoon. Once the dough starts to form, use your hands to mix it more. It should feel like cookie dough or play dough.
- 3 Roll the dough into a ball.
- 4 Flatten out the ball with the palm of your hand, to about the thickness of a finger.
- 5 **If you are using a toy:** Make a trace fossil or a mold fossil! Use its feet to make footprints in the dough, or press the body halfway into the dough and then remove it.

If you are using a leaf: Make a mold fossil! Press the leaf into the dough using your palm for the best result, then pull the leaf out of the dough.

For any other thin object, use your palm. For harder objects, press it in using your fingers.

- 6 Leave the dough to dry for a few days, until it is hard. Congrats! You just made a fossil!

MATERIALS

- 1 tbsp salt
- 2 tbsp flour
- 3/4 tbsp water
- 1/4 tsp oil
- An item to “fossilize”

Coding challenge: Follow the instructions again, but this time pretend you are a robot following an **algorithm**. Try to rewrite the steps in a way that a robot would understand! Think of being more specific and straight to the point. Ask someone to listen to your coding instructions and to be as literal as possible. If you have a lot of trouble getting them to follow the instructions, write them out again!

