



## Fabulous Fossils

Discuss with children that the earth is very old and that some of the plants and animals that were on the planet long ago left behind evidence of their life that we call fossils. Review how scientists who study rocks and fossils are called geologists and paleontologists. Using photos from a book or the Internet, discuss how fossils can be either the remains of a plant or animal or an impression that it left behind. Tell children that they are going to make their own fossil impressions.

**Materials:** plaster of paris; paper plates; tin foil; modeling clay; leaves, twigs, shells, flowers, plastic insects, and/or other objects with interesting shapes; plastic knife or toothpicks

Mix the plaster according to package instructions. Distribute the paper plates and small handfuls of clay. Have each child form the clay into a mound on a paper plate. Then have them make an imprint in their clay, pressing firmly but not so hard that the object goes through the clay. With the help of a plastic knife or toothpick, carefully pry the object out of the clay. Remind children that over time—many millions of years—animal bones or plant and animal prints left in mud (represented by the clay) are covered by layers of sediment and compressed, and eventually they harden into sedimentary rocks. Help children remove the clay from the paper plate and form a tin foil “bowl” around it. Pour enough plaster into each tin foil bowl to cover the imprint. Once the plaster is completely dry, remove the tin foil and peel away the clay from the plaster. Have children observe their fabulous fossils and then summarize how fossils are made in nature.

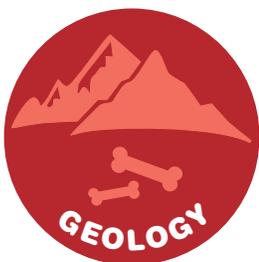


Illustration by Jennifer Kalis.