

Make Your Own Imprint Fossil

When an organism dies, sometimes evidence of it is preserved, and it's called a fossil! It's very rare for living things to become fossils. Usually, after a living thing dies, its body returns to the ecosystem. However, under special conditions, a fossil can form. For fossilization to occur, certain steps must happen.

First, after an organism dies, it must be in a location where the environment will bury it under layers of small particles. Over time and under pressure, these particles will become something called sediment. Next, as more layers of sediment build up on top, the sediment around the skeleton begins to compact and turn to rock. Finally, the bones, shell, or other hard parts of the organism then start to be dissolved by water seeping through the rock. Minerals in the water replace the shell or bone, leaving a rock replica of the original: a brand-new fossil!

Another type of fossil is an impression or imprint fossil. When an animal, like a dinosaur, steps in clay the animal leaves behind a footprint. If the conditions are just right the clay ground dries out over many years and can harden permanently: creating a fossil.

Make your own imprint fossils out of gummy animals and bread with this activity!

Materials:

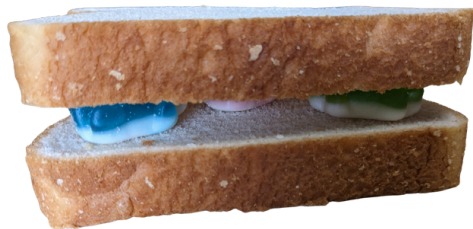
2 slices of bread

2-5 animal shaped gummy candies (bears, worms, sharks, or frogs work well here)



Directions:

1. Place one slice of bread on a table or countertop, then arrange your gummy animals on the bread slice.



2. Place the second slice of bread on top.



3. Press down on the sandwich you have made for 20-30 seconds. More pressure makes better results!



4. Remove the top slice of bread and place the side that made contact with the gummy candies facing up. Remove the candies from the other slice of bread and set aside.



5. Examine the imprints your gummy animals made on the slices of bread.

Questions:

1. What can you tell about the animal from the imprint left in the bread?
2. What can't you tell about the animal from its imprint?
3. Why did you need to press down so hard on the bread to make the fossil? Would a fossil be made if you hadn't pressed on the bread?

Did you know?

Sharks are older than trees! That's right, there were sharks in the oceans before any plants had learned how to become trees. Sharks are also older than Saturn's rings. They're like living fossils!

Further Reading:

Britannica Kids: Fossil <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/fossil/353144>

How are fossils made? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z2ym2p3>

Living Fossil: Frilled Shark <https://sharkangels.org/species-in-focus-frilled-shark/>