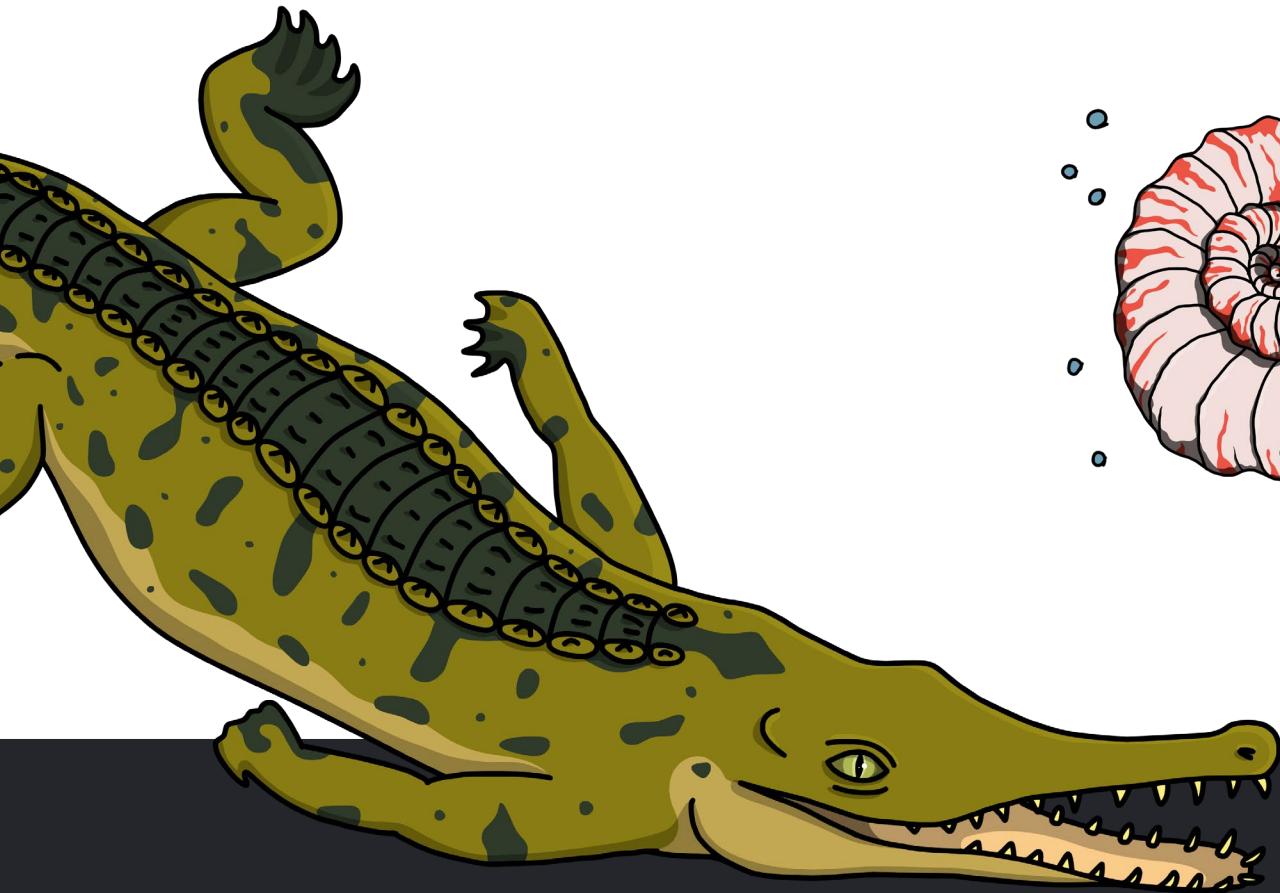


# Making Fossils

## Salt dough craft activity



### You will need:

- Plain flour
- Table salt
- Water
- Baking paper
- A wooden spoon
- Baking trays
- Oven gloves

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# What is a fossil?

A fossil, is the physical evidence left behind by ancient life. Fossils can be made of the physical body, usually the hard parts like a skeleton or a shell, or in rarer cases the traces left behind, like a footprint, the shape of a leaf or even poop (coprolites).

## Belemnite Fossils

Belemnites were soft bodied molluscs, that lived during the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods, they looked like modern squids. But unlike squids, belemnites had hard internal skeletons. These skeletons in the right conditions, can become fossils! The densest part of this skeleton called the 'Rostrum', is commonly found today as cone shaped fossils. Have you ever found a fossil like this?



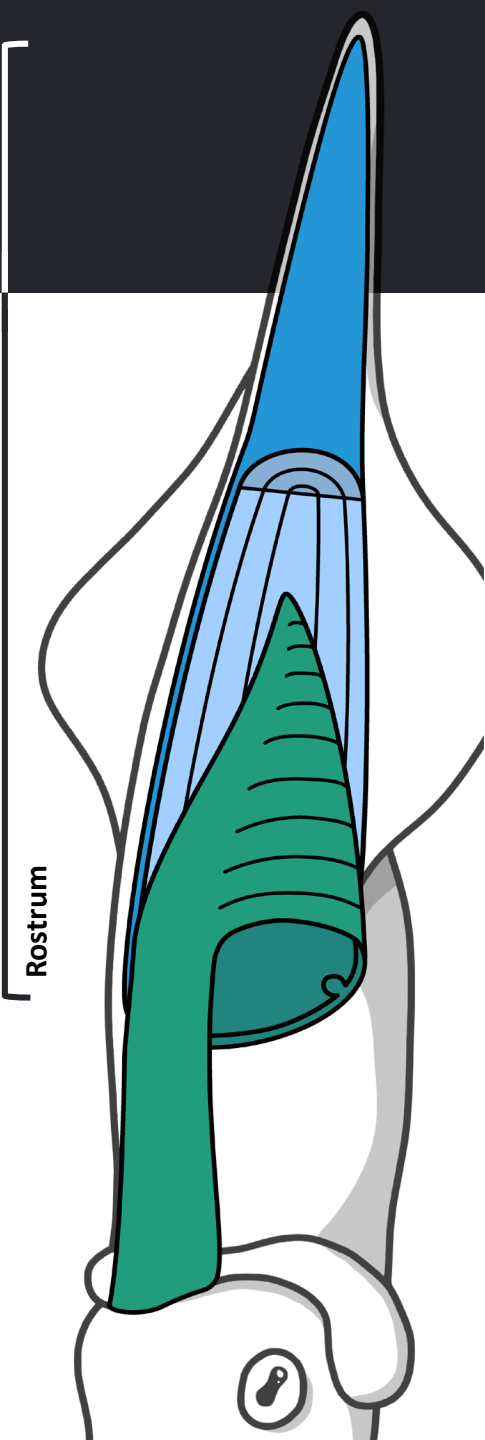
Rostrum



Phragmocone

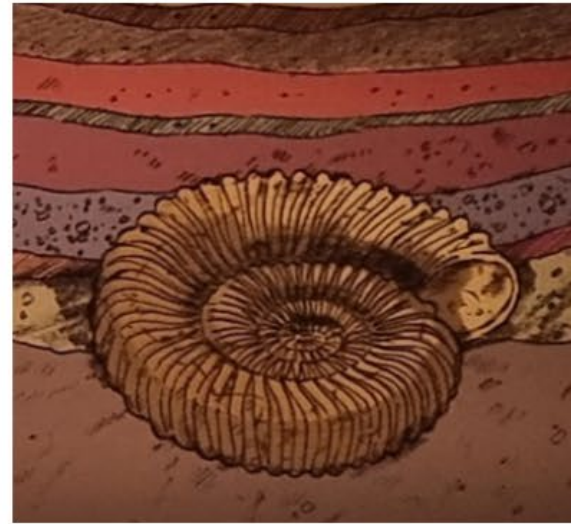
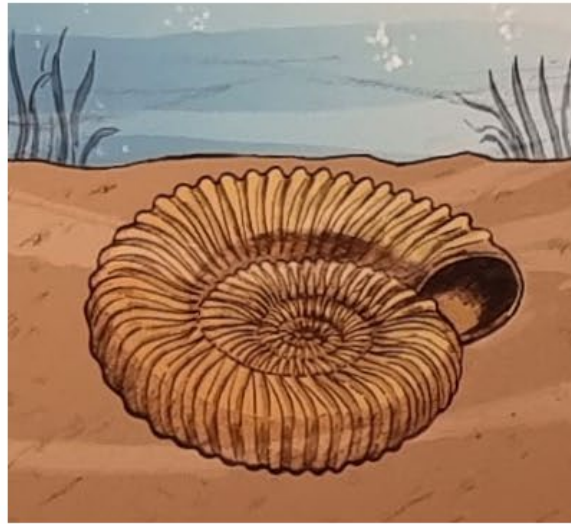
Phragmocone

Rostrum



# It's a matter of time

Fossils are formed over many thousands of years in a process called fossilisation. It takes a very long time for a fossil to form, over 10,000 years!. Some of the oldest known fossils are over 3.5 **BILLION** years old! But how does a fossil form?



A fossil is the physical evidence left behind by something that was once living. This could be a plant, animal, fungi or even microscopic life. Here we have an ammonite, a shelled mollusc that lived millions of years ago.

After the ammonite died, the soft parts of its body were eaten away or decayed. The hard shell remained and slowly over time, became buried by layers of mud and sand (sediments).

Heat and pressure turns these sedimentary layers into rocks, with our shell trapped inside. Mineral rich water passing through the rocks dissolve the shell, which is replaced by the minerals in the water.

These minerals over time harden into rocks, creating a fossilised replica of the shell. Over time natural wind and water erosion can wear away the surrounding rock, revealing the fossil trapped inside.

# Making Your Salt Dough Creatures

## Ingredients

250g of plain flour or one level cup

125g of table salt or ½ a cup

110ml of tap water or ½ a cup

## Notes

Prep time 10 minutes

Baking time 3 hours

This recipe creates enough dough for 10 small creatures or body parts.

## Method

1. Preheat your oven to 120C.

2. Mix the flour and salt in a large bowl, gradually add the water and stir or knead with your hands until the mixture can be

formed into a ball.

3. On a floured surface knead and shape your dough into your chosen fossil shapes.

4. Lay your fossils out on a lined baking tray and bake for 90 - 120minutes, if they are still soft bake for a little longer until hard. Smaller fossils will bake faster than larger ones so make sure to check each fossil.

5. **HOT!** With oven gloves on take your creatures out of the oven and leave them on the side to cool.

6. We are now ready to bury our creations to turn them into fossils. Remember a fossil takes tens of thousands of years to make, we recommend .





Add the flour to your mixing bowl.



Next add the salt.



Mix and make a well in the middle.



Pour your water into the well.



Stir to combine.



Mix by hand, squishing any lumps.



7

Lightly flour a surface and then form the dough into a ball.



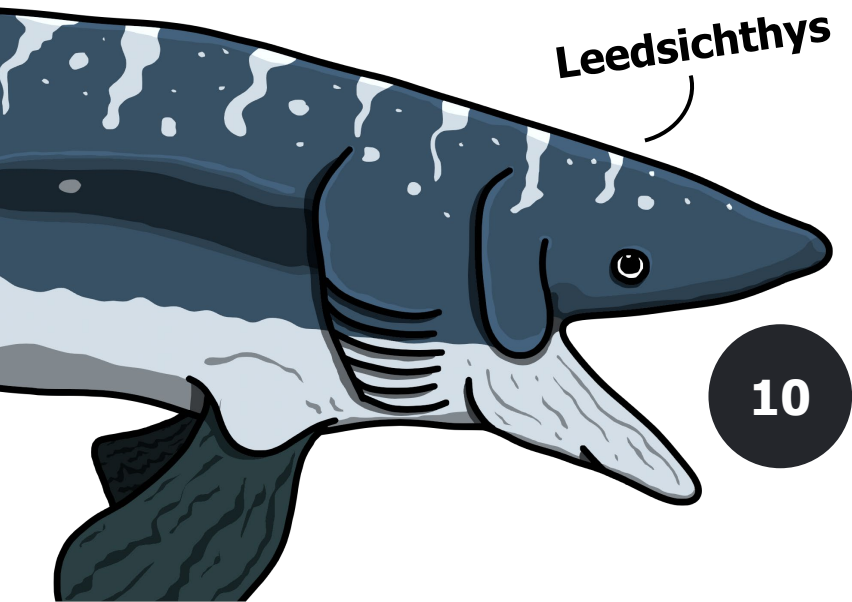
8

On the floured surface knead and roll the dough until it is soft and slightly elastic. It's now ready to model with! Check out the next slides for modeling ideas.



9

You can store any left over dough in a sealable bag, in the fridge. The dough will keep for a few days. Let the dough warm for a few hours before modeling it.

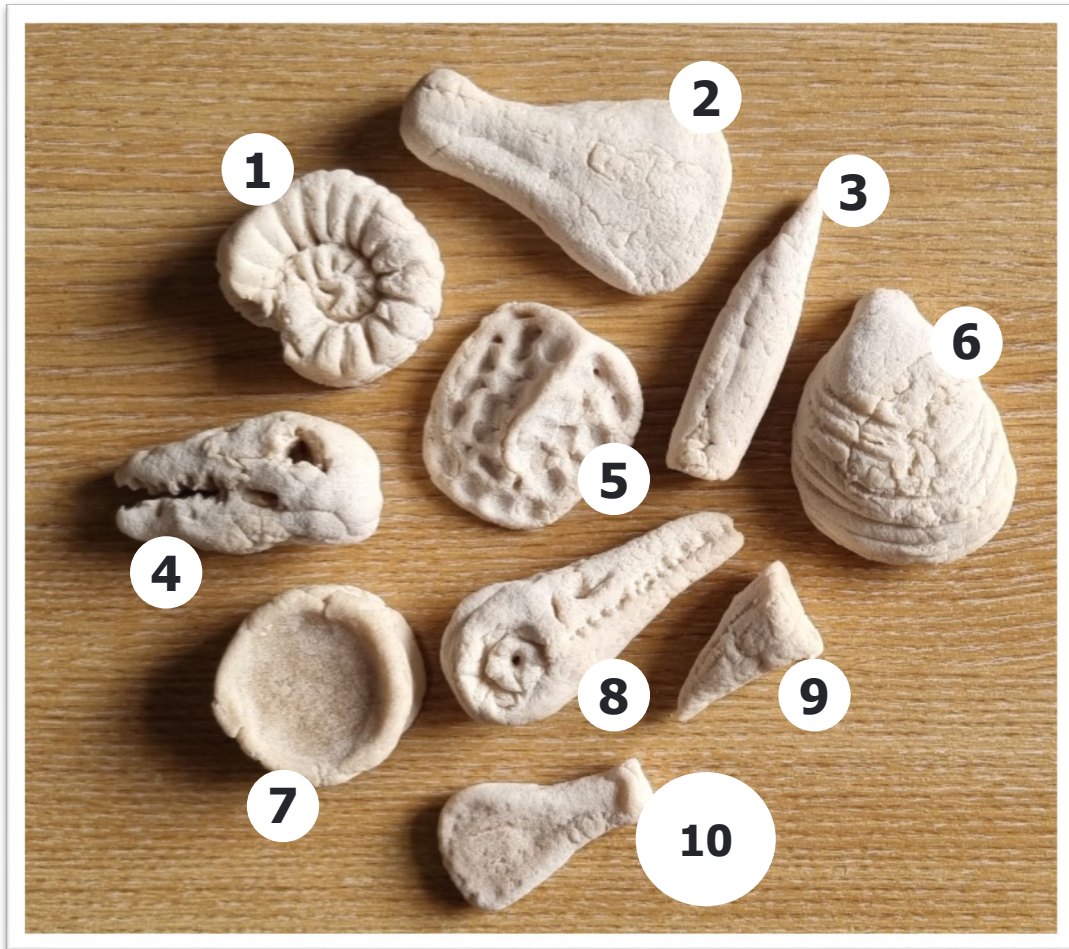


Leedsichthys

10

Lay your fossils out on a lined baking tray and bake for 90 – 120minutes, or until all of the models are hard. Leave the models to cool after baking.

# A few we made earlier



We took inspiration from our collection to make our fossils. You can learn all about ancient sea life and see some of their fossils in our Jurassic Gallery. What creatures will you use to inspire your fossil creations?

(1) Ammonite shell. (2) Pliosaur paddle bone. (3) Belemnite rostrum. (4) Simolestes skull. (5) Steneosaurus scute. (6) Bivalve shell. (7) Ichthyosaur backbone. (8) Ichthyosaur skull. (9) Liopleurodon tooth. (10) Cryptoclidus paddle bone.

