



OMSI EARLY LEARNER ACTIVITY: **DINOSAUR FOOTPRINTS & FOSSILS**

Objective: Children simulate fossil prints in play dough or clay.

Age Range: 2 to 6 years

CONTENT TOPICS

Earth Science
Organisms³

PROCESS SKILLS

Finding Patterns and Relationships¹
Raising Questions¹

¹ Science Process Skills ² Head Start Child Outcomes ³ Oregon Early Childhood Foundations

TIME REQUIRED

Advance Preparation
About 15 min

Set Up
About 5min

Activity
About 30min

Clean Up
About 10min

MATERIALS

Required: clay or play dough, rolling pins, harvest items (leaves, corn, twigs, acorns), toy dinosaurs' footprints

ADVANCE PREPARATION

- Make playdough following the simple microwave recipe available at if you decide not to use clay.
- Set out rolling pins and harvest items such as leaves, corn, acorns and twigs.

EXPLANATION

The following is a sample of some scientific explanations behind this subject. For more information see the books in the Discovery Box.

- *A dinosaur bone or footprint that has been preserved in rock is called a **fossil**.*
- *Fossils are all we have left of dinosaurs because they are no longer alive today. When there are no more of a particular animal, that animal is said to be **extinct**.*
- *A scientist who studies dinosaurs and fossils is called a **paleontologist**.*

ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

1. Provide children each with a handful of clay or playdough and ask them to roll it into a thin layer on their trays.
2. Let the children select two or three items with which to make fossils prints. Assist them in gently pressing the whole item down to make a print. Use the prints to study parts of a particular plant or item.
3. You can also use toy dinosaurs' footprints instead of the harvest items to talk about the making of real fossils.

DISCUSSION

To discuss the topic, explore the children's knowledge on the subject through open-ended questions.

Ask:

What materials did you make a print of?

How are the prints we made different from actual fossils?

Did any of the materials make a better print than the others?

Why do think fossils are important to paleontologists?