

The Process of Paleontology

Kids want to be paleontologists—but what does that mean for a career?



Prospecting: looking for fossils in areas where the rocks are the right age and type



Discovery: finding a fossil

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How does a fossil get from the ground to a museum exhibit?



Excavation: digging a fossil out of the ground



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Transportation: moving the fossil from the dig site to the museum



Preparation: carefully removing the remaining rock from around the fossil.

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Molding and Casting: making exact copies of fossils

Real vs. Replica



Replicas are exact copies of fossils. They allow us to better study real fossils and to display fossils in ways we otherwise could not.



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Cataloging: carefully labeling fossils for reference and organization.



Reconstruction: piecing fossils, or casts of fossils together for study or display.

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Paleontologists use the scanning electron microscope to look at slices of fossilized bone at high magnification.



CAT scan of a young *Hypacrosaurus*



Histology Lab where fossils are cut and prepared for microscopic study and microscopic view of fossil bone (behind).



Research: studying fossil evidence using our senses and technology

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Collections: when fossils are not on display they are safely stored in a controlled collections area

Exhibit: some fossils are prepared for museum display