

Y3 How Fossils Form

KS2 Science · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Describe how a fish skeleton could become a fossil.

Step 1 · Step 1

The fish dies and sinks to the bottom of the sea

Step 2 · Step 2

It is quickly covered by mud and sand

Step 3 · Step 3

The soft parts rot; the bones are left. More layers build up

Step 4 · Step 4

Over millions of years the layers become rock and minerals replace the bones

Answer: Dies → buried by sediment → soft parts rot → layers turn to rock and minerals replace the bones → fossil.

Check: Fossils form over millions of years, not days.

2. Now try one with the steps

Why are fossils usually of hard parts like shells, bones and teeth?

Step 1 · What happens to soft parts like skin and muscles?

Step 2 · What lasts longer?

Answer:

3. Practice

Have a go at each one. There is space underneath to work it out.

1. What is a fossil?

2. Name ONE thing that can become a fossil.

3. Do fossils form in days, years or millions of years?

4. Why must an animal be buried quickly to become a fossil?

5. What happens to the soft parts of a dead animal before it becomes a fossil?

6. What slowly replaces a shell or bone to turn it into stone?

7. Who was the famous fossil hunter from Lyme Regis?

8. Is a dinosaur footprint in rock a fossil?

9. Put in order: the layers turn to rock; the animal dies; the fossil is uncovered; it is buried by mud.

10. In a cliff, which rock layer is usually the oldest: the top or the bottom?

11. Why are fossils of jellyfish very rare?

12. Why do we often find fossils of sea creatures on the tops of cliffs?

13. Mary Anning was born in 1799. In 1823 she found a plesiosaur. How old was she?

14. How do fossils help scientists?

4. Before you hand it in

Fossils are the actual bones of the animal.

A fossil is usually rock in the shape of the living thing.

Every animal that dies becomes a fossil.

Fossils are rare: the living thing must be buried quickly, usually under water.

Fossils form quickly, in a few years.

Fossils take millions of years to form.

Humans lived at the same time

Dinosaurs died out about 66 million years ago — long before the first humans.