

# Fossil Discovery

In this open-ended activity, children are invited to make impressions of objects, such as shells, sticks, and leaves into clay. This exploration allows children the opportunity to explore how impressions are made, a key concept in understanding that fossils are a record of early life. It also allows the opportunity for children to express their creativity as they model, scrape, roll, pound and pinch the clay.

## ***In The Wonder Cabinet:***

Today's activity is meant to provide children with the opportunity to gain an initial understanding of how trace fossils are made as they make impressions of objects into clay. Trace fossils are signs of plant or animal activity that has been preserved in rock, like animal tracks for example.

Today's activity is also an opportunity for children to explore clay. Clay is stiffer than Playdough, giving children more of a fine muscle challenge when they work with it. Since the material is new to most children, they are encouraged to use their senses to investigate its texture. Allow your child to explore how it feels as it slips between their fingers when they squeeze, shape, poke and pound the clay.

## **At Home:**

At home, you may want to experiment making impressions of other objects into clay or dough. Try this recipe for coffee ground dough...

1. Mix 1 cup of used coffee grounds,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cold coffee, 1 cup of flour, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup salt.
2. Knead dough, then flatten it out onto the waxed paper.
3. Cut the dough into sections large enough to fit your "fossil" object.
4. Press your object into the dough to leave an impression
5. Dry overnight to harden

## **Suggested "fossil" materials:**

- Feathers
- Leaves
- Sticks or twigs
- Flower petals
- Small pinecones
- Pebbles
- Shells