Explorify at home: Fossils and evolution

This collection of activities about the fossils and evolution is ideal to do at home with your little explorers.

Ammonite fossils in rock

Explorify from home is a special series of science activities for parents and carers of primary school children who are now learning at home. We define activities by age and curriculum topics in Explorify, but these collections are also suitable to do all together as a family of mixed aged children. Or if your little scientist just wants to explore further, pick something from the other age sections for inspiration!

This collection is all about fossils and evolution. Our living world gives us clues about the past, but it is dynamic, adapting to change.

For children aged 5-7

First, take a close-up look: Children are fascinated by living things but sometimes struggle to distinguish between what is living and what is not. Look at the first picture in this Zoom In Zoom Out activity on the Explorify website called, "Rugged ridges". Look for clues and wonder what it might be; any idea is fine if children can say why as there isn't always just one right answer in science. Use the magnifying glass icon to zoom out and reveal more clues; talk about what you see in the final picture.

Hands-on activity: Sea shells are the remains of shellfish - the soft body of the animal has decayed (or been eaten by a predator) but gives us clues as to what is

living in the sea and on the sea shore. You might also spot different snail shells out and about. If you're able to go shell spotting that would be lovely but if not, why not make some prints of leaves or other material to explore the patterns on them.

Age 7-9

First, take a close-up look: Rocks and soils tell us a lot about the life that lived on earth millions of years ago. Here's another Zoom In Zoom Out, called Mysterious material, for you to explore on the Explorify website. As before, remember to click on the hand lens icon to zoom out and reveal more of the image, encouraging lots of wonder about what it could be and valuing any ideas.

Hands-on activity: Fossils are often found in lots of different rocks around the UK and give us clues to living creatures from the past. Make some of your own fossil replicas using home-made play dough, using this recipe on the BBC good food website.

Age 9-11

Evolution takes place over millennia. We can see how living things are adapted to their environments which shows how evolution has taken place over a very long time. For example, our hands allow us to do some intricate things, but our evolutionary ancestors would not have had such good fine motor skills.

Hands-on activity: To investigate this, try some challenges but do not allow the use of your thumbs:

- Tie your shoelaces
- Cut with scissors • Brush your hair
- Draw or write.

If you are able to, look at the beaks of different garden birds. Their beaks are shaped to enable them to get their preferred food. What shape beaks do seed eaters have compared to those that eat worms?

Please note that adults should supervise practical activities, make sure that children use appropriate materials and tools, and wash hands after handling any food items. That's all for this week!

We hope your little scientists have enjoyed exploring fossils and evolution. Look out for more activities or click to browse the Explorify collections here.

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