

Jurassic Playdough

Dinosaurs lived on earth over 65 million years ago, yet scientists know a lot about them. Fossils help teach us what dinosaurs were like. When I explore fossils with young children, I like to use the language of *stories*. Fossils tell us *stories* about what life was like long long ago. The story can have different meanings to different people, but the more we study and explore the fossil story, the more we understand. In this activity, you can use playdough to create **trace fossils** and tell your own dinosaur stories.



Materials Needed for Playdough:

- 1 cup flour
- ½ cup salt
- 2 tbsp. cream of tartar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tbsp. oil
- 2 tbsp. ground coffee (optional)

Steps to Make Playdough:

1. Combine flour, salt, and cream of tartar in a microwave safe bowl.
2. Mix water and ground coffee together and allow to sit for a minute or two. The coffee gives the playdough a soil-like color and texture, but it also makes the playdough smell like coffee. If you or your child doesn't like the smell of coffee, you can leave it out (but, seriously, yummmmm)
3. Slowly stir water, coffee, and oil into the dry ingredients
4. Mix for several minutes to get rid of as many clumps as possible
5. Microwave the dough for 1 minute.
6. Mix the dough and microwave for another minute.
7. If the dough is still runny, microwave in 30 second increments until you have reached a playdough consistency. In my microwave, I usually cook it for a total of 2 minutes and 30 seconds.
8. Carefully take the dough out of the bowl (it will be hot!) and knead until it has cooled. Store in an airtight container when it is not being used.

Once your playdough is made, you can use toy dinosaurs (or any other toys for that matter) to make impressions - or **trace fossils** - in the playdough. What story does your fossil tell? What other stories can you create?

