

Introduction to Palaeontology

Looking at a variety of fossils

A I 20 min

Twenty or so fossils or plaster casts are laid out, each numbered but not named. Examples should include things like coprolites, bones, teeth, insects as well as sea urchins and bivalves etc. Students must guess what they are.

It adds interest if the age in millions of years is added.

Body and trace fossils

A P 15 min

Students examine a display of a variety of whole and broken body fossils and of trace fossils, these should include things like plants, shells, borings, tracks, cruziana trails, dinosaur egg, teeth, coprolites, impressions etc. They have to identify which is a trace fossil and which a body fossil.

Is it a fossil?

A P 10 min

Students examine a display of a variety of fossils and of things which might be confused with fossils e.g. recent shells, borings, bone, growths of manganese dioxide, staining in rock, odd shaped flints and nodules etc. They must identify the real fossils.

Fossil and modern shells

A I 5 min

Eight fossils are laid out with ages but not names, Modern equivalents of each of the fossils are provided. Students must match the fossils with their modern equivalents.

Identification of fossils

A I 15 min

Put out a display of one or more fossils from each group. Students select from a list of very simple terms e.g. spiral, mirror image valves, etc to describe each fossil and then use a key to identify it.

Fossils in gravel

A I 10 min

A tray of gravel contains some small fossils, bivalves, brachiopods, crinoid stems, echinoids, ammonites. Students must find them and identify them from a key and then rebury them in the gravel.

Learning about common fossils

A P 60 min

Each box contains 10 or so fossils or their modern equivalents belonging to the same fossil group. There is one box for each fossil group. Students

examine the fossils in one box and draw one and then read a brief description of the group or look at the appropriate BGS Fossil Focus card.

Fossil rubbing

A I 5 min per fossil

Students are provided with plaster casts of fossils with little relief. They use wax crayons or soft pencils to make rubbings on thin paper.