

# Dig It! Faux Fossil Fun (art + science)

Experience an archeological dig, right in your own classroom! Students create fossils the way that nature does - by making impressions and filling them. Students will learn a simple plaster-casting method used by both artists and scientists. Then, the fun really begins as the fossils are "unearthed"! The detail is surprisingly accurate and finished pieces look a lot like the real thing.

## Grade Levels K-8

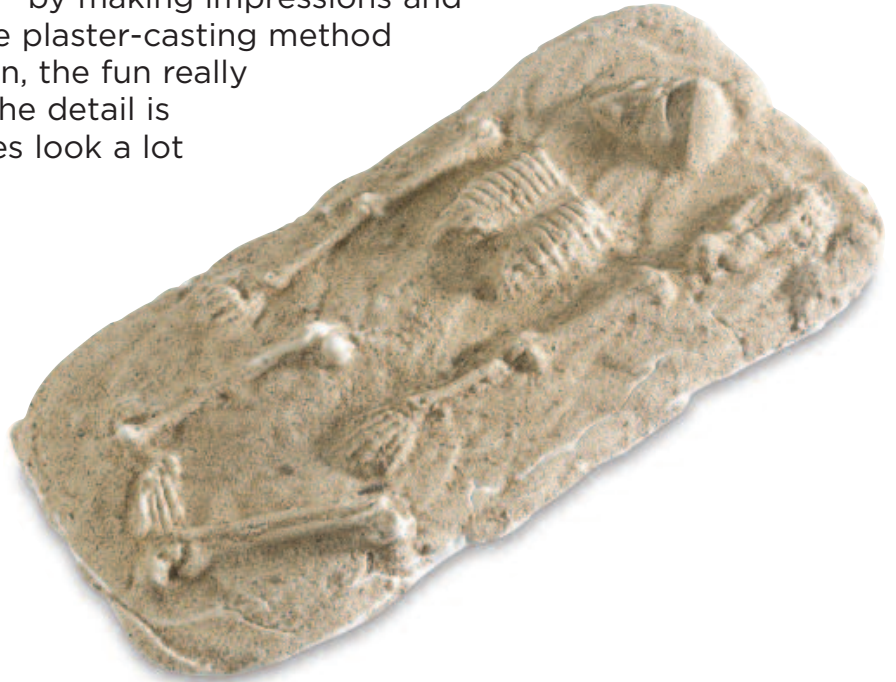
*Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*

## Preparation

1. Save chicken or fish bones, coarse leaves, etc. Prepare by removing as much of the meat as possible and drying well in an oven or window. Bones can also be boiled, but still need to dry in an oven or outdoor sunlight.

## Process

1. Fill a shoe box with damp sand, about 3" deep
2. Push the bones into the packed sand and carefully remove, leaving a negative impression. Very young children can leave objects in the sand, as it will be difficult for them to remove and fill without disturbing the impression.
3. Mix the plaster. It helps to have students work in pairs. Using a bowl or plastic container, measure 3 cups of dry plaster and add 1 to 1-1/2 cups of water. Stir until mixture is pancake batter (pourable) consistency.
4. Pour into shoebox immediately (one shoebox at a time). Pour from one end of the box to the other. Do not dump in middle and try to spread, this disturbs the impressions.
5. If desired, place an opened paper clip in the wet plaster for use as a hanger once the cast is dry.
6. Allow to set for about 2 hours. Check frequently to see how plaster changes from wet and cold, to warm, then back to cold. Do not remove until totally dry - 24 hours. It is difficult to wait but damage can occur if removed too soon.
7. Tear sides from the shoe box. Use fingers to dig away sand from the sides.
8. Turn plaster right side up and use brush to remove sand from the cast. As it is exposed to the air, it will be easier to remove sand.



## Materials

Blick Pottery Plaster, 25-lb box (33536-1025), need two per class

Brown sand from lumberyard or home center

Cardboard shoebox, one per student

Bucket or plastic container

Scoop or plastic cup

Plastic bowls or containers

Plastic quart pitcher for water

Plastic spoons or spatulas for mixing

Blick Economy Black Bristle Brush, 1" wide (05172-1001), one per student

Leaves, chicken bones, fish bones, shells, Halloween decorations, etc. for casting

## National Standards

**Content Standard #1** — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

- **K-4** Students use different media, techniques and processes to communicate ideas, experiences and stories
- **5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

**Content Standard #4** — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture

- **K-4** Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationship to various cultures
- **5-8** Students analyze, describe and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art

**Content Standard #6** — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

- **K-4** Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum
- **5-8** Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts