Gathering Supplies:
Soft Modeling Clay or Homemade Salt Dough
Rolling Pen
Toothpick
Leaves, Sticks, Bark and/or Shells
Paint Brushes (Optional)

Types of Fossils!

There are two main types of fossils that paleontologists study: body fossils and trace fossils. So what is the difference between the two?

Body fossils are probably what you think of most when you hear the word fossil. Like the large bones of a dinosaur. Body fossils are fossils that retain or keep the actual remains of an animal, even though it goes through the fossilization process. Think about fossils of a tooth, a claw, or skull of an ancient animal. These are all parts of the actual animal that have become a fossil. So if the original remains of a plant, insect or animal become fossilized, this would be a body fossil.

Trace fossils show the activity of a plant or animal, without any of the actual remains being present. Examples of trace fossils are tracks of animals, or signs of their scratching and burrowing. Even fossilized poop is a type of trace fossil. The imprint of a leaf or bark from a tree or the texture of a shell are all examples of trace fossils. Remember a trace fossil will show the presence of an living organism without an actual part of their remains being fossilized. They can give clues to what animals did and how they acted along with what their environment was like.
Try This! Making your own trace fossil.

Go out on a nature walk with your family, in your neighborhood or in your backyard. See what plants and animals are living around you. Collect some leaves, along with a piece of bark or a twig. See if you have any shells at home.

Use a soft piece of modeling clay (air dry or oven bake). Don’t have any? No problem just make some salt dough. There are many different recipes on-line. Take a ball of clay and roll it flat with a rolling pin. Then press your shell, bark or twig into the clay. You don’t have to press hard! Gently lift your object off of the clay and see what impression was left behind. For the leaves, place the leaves flat on the clay and roll the rolling pin over them. You can use a toothpick to help take the leaf off of the clay.

Once you have an impression that you like, bake the clay or let it air dry. After the clay is hard you can paint your own trace fossil!