

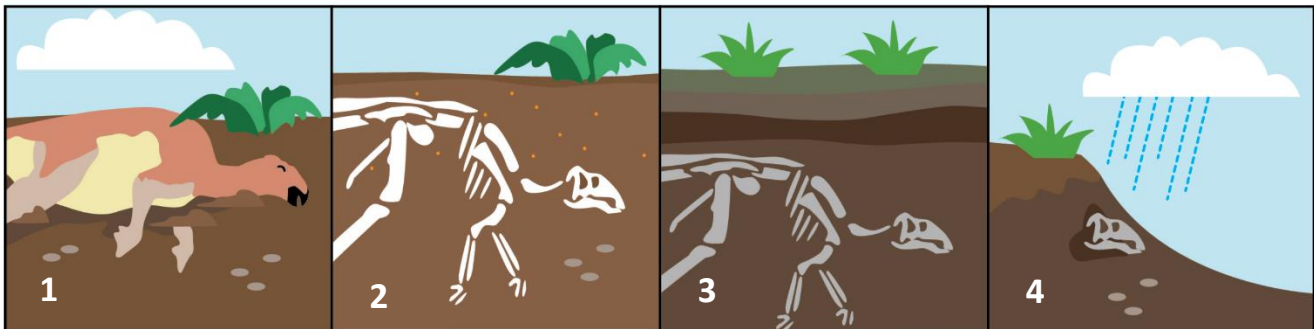


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Turning to Stone

How do fossils form? Most dinosaur bones are preserved by **permineralization**. This is when minerals are deposited in the pores, or open spaces, within the remains of living things and harden into stone.



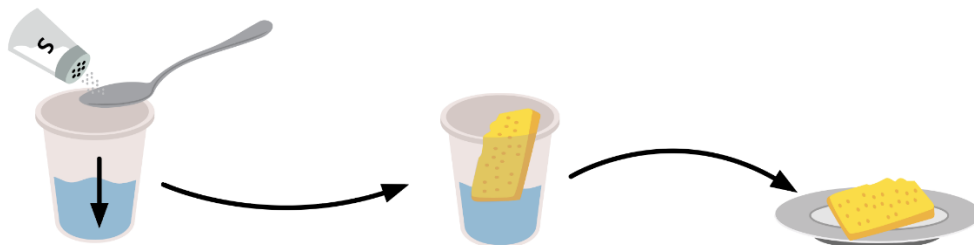
- 1: After an animal dies, it is buried by silt, sand, or ash (sediment).
- 2: The soft parts of the animal decay, leaving the hard bones. Minerals seep into the bones.
- 3: Over millions of years, the sediment becomes rock. The skeleton becomes a fossil.
- 4: The rock erodes and exposes the fossil.

You'll need:

- Salt
- A sponge
- Water
- Plate
- Cup

What to do:

1. Add 1 tablespoon of salt to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of very warm water. Mix until almost all the salt disappears.
2. Soak the sponge in the salt water. Squeeze and resoak it a few times so that it gets really salty.
3. Place the fully soaked sponge on a plate and add a few drops of salt water on top. Let it dry for 5-6 days.



What does the dried-out sponge feel like? Is it soft or hard? Hold it in a bright light. Can you see the sparkly mineral crystals? The sponge has become permineralized—like a dinosaur bone fossil!