

How do fossils form?

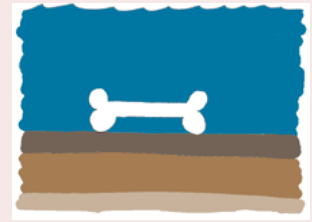
Not many plants and animals are lucky enough to be turned into fossils.

When an animal or plant dies its remains usually rot away to nothing. Sometimes though, when the conditions are just right and its remains can be buried quickly, it may be fossilised. There are several different ways fossils are formed.

Five steps of fossilisation to make a typical 'mould and cast' fossil.

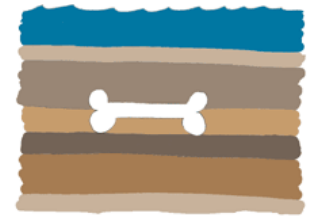
1

An animal dies, its skeleton settles on the sea floor and is buried by sediment.



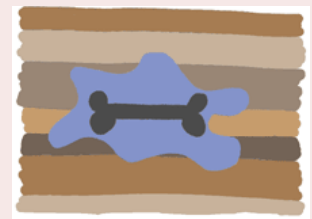
2

The sediment surrounding the skeleton thickens and begins to turn to stone.



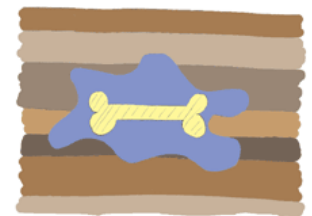
3

The skeleton dissolves and a mould is formed.



4

Minerals crystallise inside the mould and a cast is formed.



5

The fossil is exposed on the Earth's surface.

