

Name:

Date:

Activity 1 – Discovering Dinosaurs!

Fossils are evidence of prehistoric life. These could be remains, like bones, teeth, horns or eggs, or *trace* fossils like footprints or ‘coprolites’ (dinosaur poo). Fossils can tell us about prehistoric animals.

Dinosaur names sound complex but are often very simple and just describe some feature of the fossils in Latin or Greek. The Iguanodon was first discovered when some teeth were found close to Crawley. The teeth looked like an iguana’s teeth (a type of lizard). ‘Iguanodon’ means ‘iguana-tooth’.

Other dinosaurs are similarly simple:

Tri – cera – tops: ‘three’ ‘horned’ ‘face’ (they had three horns for defence from predators)

Deino – nychus: ‘terrible’ ‘claw’ (they had a huge claw on each foot for slashing at prey)

Kentro – saurus: ‘spiky’ ‘lizard’ (huge spines ran down their back)

Euo – plo – cephalus: ‘well’ ‘armoured’ ‘head’ (this dino was covered in protective plates)

Sucho – mimus: ‘crocodile’ ‘mimic’ (its head was like a crocodile’s, likely for catching fish)

Carcharo – don – tosaurus: ‘sharp’ ‘tooth’ ‘lizard’ (it had very sharp teeth for hunting)

You are going to ‘discover’ and name your own dinosaur!

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My Dinosaur Discovery!

You have come across a dinosaur fossil! It is a complete skeleton of an unknown species, which means you get to name it! Use parts of the names from the last page or the selection below to create your own dinosaur species, with a name that describes it. Then, draw your creation and label the features described in the name! If you want to be inventive, feel free to look up the Latin or Greek for any other words you want to include.

pteryx ('feather') compso ('pretty') mega ('huge') micro ('small') veloci ('quick')
smilo ('knife') fortis ('strong') caudi ('tail') 'rhynco' (beak) rhino ('nose') spino ('spine')

My dinosaur is called: _____

My dinosaur looks like:



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So, you have discovered your dinosaur!

Now what can you learn about it from the fossil? Palaeontologists (scientists who study fossils and prehistory) look at fossils to work out how an animal lived. What did it eat? Was it predator or prey? Where did it live? What adaptations did it have to its habitat?

For example: if it has a 'large' 'claw', perhaps it used it for catching prey? Did it use its 'strong' 'tail' to defend itself from predators? Were its 'knife' 'horns' for spearing other animals or for fighting between individuals? Maybe its 'small' 'teeth' were just right for catching insects while its 'pretty' 'feathers' helped it to attract a mate?

Describe your dinosaur!

Make sure to include what features in the fossil support your descriptions.

Make sure to send us your dinosaur! We really want to see it!

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Extension: Thinking time! Are you good with names?

It is not just dinosaurs with Latin names, all living things are given one. Once you know a few it is easy to work out where other animals get their names from and why.

- a) The spelling is slightly different, but based on the dinosaur names what do you think the name 'rhinoceros' actually means? (Hint: it makes sense!) _____
- b) The word 'dinosaur' was coined in Victorian times to describe many large fossil reptiles being discovered. It is also slightly different in spelling to those above, but what do you think it might mean? _____
- c) 'Carcharodon' is not just part of a dinosaur name. It is also part of the Latin name for the great white shark! Do you think this is a good name? Why?

- d) A huge pair of arms and hands were dug up in Mongolia. Experts realised it was a new species and the new proposed dinosaur was named 'Deinocheirus', which means 'terrible hands'. Since then, whole specimens have been found, which show that it has many more notable features than its arms. In your opinion, do you think it should be renamed?

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Answers: Extension: Thinking time!

What do you think the name 'rhinoceros' actually means?

It comes from 'rhino-ceros' which means nose-horn! How appropriate!

What do you think 'dinosaur' might mean?

'Dinosaur' means 'terrible' 'lizard' and comes from 'deinos-sauros'. The name was coined in 1842 and the use of 'terrible' was mainly referring to the impressively large (and therefore scary and intimidating) size of the dinosaurs that had been found by that point. It is now clear that dinosaurs are in fact not lizards, they are a separate group of reptiles, more closely related to crocodiles (and to birds, their descendants).

Do you think Carcharodon is a good name for the great white shark? Why?

Of course, this is up to you! But it certainly makes sense. Like the dinosaur they share their name with, great white sharks have very 'sharp teeth'. In fact, the great white shark was actually named first! When Carcharodontosaurus was discovered, its sharp, jagged teeth reminded those studying it of a great white shark, so they chose to give the dinosaur a similar name!

In your opinion, should Deinocheirus be renamed?

Again, this is entirely up to you! But it would be rather unusual to rename it. Usually, when it comes to names, the original one sticks. For example, Spinosaurus was named after the long spines apparently sticking out of its backbone. Scientists later realised that these 'spines' were actually covered in skin! They would not have looked like spines at all! Its name, however, stayed the same! Do you agree with that?