

Introduction

Dinosaurs lived for approximately 180 million years before being largely wiped out by the after effects of the impact of an enormous comet or asteroid. They have been a source of fascination for centuries and continue to spark our curiosity.

This engaging collection of resources offers children the opportunity to combine their imagination and investigative skills as they explore prehistoric animals and their worlds, comparing them with their own and noting the similarities and differences. They will be able to bring the animals and their habitats to life by creating scenes, investigating footprint trails, and comparing the wooden figures.

The resources can be used separately or together to offer a range of language-rich learning opportunities. They can be used to support transition and to assist those children in Year 1 who need some extra support.

Resources in the collection

YD1216 Let's Roll – Dinosaurs

This set of six rollers offers an engaging way to explore the exciting world of dinosaurs. The rollers will provoke curiosity, extend knowledge and develop fine motor skills. Simply roll one into play clay and use the stamp to complete the scene. The set includes:

- Roaring head and Tyrannosaurus rex
- Coelacanth fish and Spinosaurus
- Prehistoric scene and Diplodocus
- Volcanic landscape and Triceratops
- Spinal plates and Stegosaurus
- Hatchling and dinosaur eggs.



YD1086 Let's Investigate – Dinosaur Footprints

This set of eight double-sided stones encourages children to examine, compare, match and sort the different prehistoric footprints. Each stone shows a footprint on one side and its owner on the reverse. The animals included are Apatosaurus, Deinonychus, Hysilophodon, Iguanodon, Quetzalcoatlus, Stegosaurus, Triceratops and Tyrannosaurus rex.



YD0201 Dinosaur Wooden Characters

This beautifully detailed set of eight double-sided dinosaurs depicts the external skin tones of the dinosaur on one side, while the reverse shows the animal's skeleton in simplified form. Children will be absorbed by the intriguing details and inspired in their storytelling, imaginary play and fact finding. The set includes Ankylosaurus, Diplodocus, Iguanodon, Spinosaurus, Stegosaurus, Triceratops, Tyrannosaurus rex and Velociraptor.

Developing learning through conversation

Young children need strong spoken language skills to underpin their development in all areas of learning. If they can communicate well, they will be able to make friendships more easily and access the curriculum. This is especially true for older children who may need extra support to improve skills. High-quality interactions between practitioners and children are, therefore, crucially important. The conversations we have with children have the potential to open up or close down language development and understanding, so thinking about comments and choosing questions carefully will have a large impact on language development and engagement. Those questions that begin with 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why', 'who' and 'how' provide opportunities for extended interactions. Try using 'Tell me about ...' or 'I wonder ...' to promote deeper exchanges. Listening to what a child is focused on, responding accordingly and then expanding the conversation will offer greater opportunities to extend their learning.

Activity ideas using the resources

Invitation to play

You will need: Let's Roll Dinosaurs, Dinosaur Wooden Characters, Let's Investigate Dinosaur Footprints

Display the resources above in an accessible place with room for play to evolve. Provide extra items suitable for open-ended play. Try to use natural materials such as sand, stones, wood, water, and so on. These tend to offer a greater range of tactile and sensory feedback, which often enhances play and language development. Display themed story and non-fiction books nearby, especially those that the children have enjoyed on the subject. Provide equipment for the children to record their play should they wish to.

Such set-ups encourage children to follow their own interests, engage in deep play with others, and develop their storytelling skills by learning how narratives are structured.

Conversation prompts

The children may be absorbed in their own play, giving you the opportunity to observe and then engage with them, focusing on their interests to extend their conversations and learning. You could try the following:

- Tell me about what you're doing.
- What's happening here?
- I would love to hear your story.
- This scene looks amazing. What can you tell me about it?

Look for opportunities to ask children to elaborate on what they said:

- Tell me more.
- What else can you tell me?

Provide a supportive environment for them to share ideas.

For older children, help them to speculate, hypothesise and justify their thinking. Such collaborative conversations encourage engagement.

Vocabulary

- Beginning, middle, end
- Next
- Then
- Scene
- Story
- Character
- Plot



Paleontologist play



You will need: Dinosaur Wooden Characters, Let's Investigate Dinosaur Footprints

Making provision for role play gives younger children the chance to enter into imaginary play in which ideas and interests can be explored. It offers a play-based opportunity to extend language skills and develop vocabulary. Using the dinosaur footprint stones, children will be able to role play digging up artefacts from the past, taking rubbings, making imprints and cleaning their finds. Having the wooden dinosaurs available will allow them to refer to some of the animals whose footprints they have discovered. It will also provide opportunities for children to apply their newly-learned vocabulary in a different context.

Other useful resources:

- Other dinosaur resources to bury in sand, bark or soil
- Useful tools: brushes, magnifying glasses, warm water, wash cloths, trowels, collecting bowls
- Suitable clothing for a dinosaur dig: boots, hats, tough-wearing clothing
- A tent for base camp
- Finds table
- Water bottles for drinks
- Clipboards, paper and pencils
- Digital camera
- Wax crayons for rubbings
- Play clay for imprints
- Non-fiction books.

The children will be able to take visitors on a tour of the site, explaining what they have learned about the past from what they have discovered, responding to questions and considering the views of others. Older children could try recording a tour with the children operating the camera and providing commentary.

By asking questions of the tour guides, the visitors will help the children to process what they have learned and explain it to someone else in a different context.

Older children will enjoy researching finds using non-fiction sources and presenting these facts to the visitors, giving them opportunities to tailor their descriptions to specific purposes.

Conversation prompts

- Tell me about your dinosaur/footprint.
- I wonder what we could push this stone into to make a footprint.
- How did you create this picture in the dough?
- Can you take me on a guided tour, please.

Vocabulary

- Dig/digging/dug
- Clean/cleaning/cleaned
- Wash/washing/washed
- Fossil
- Skeleton
- Press
- Imprint
- Rubbing



Walking with dinosaurs activities

- Use the stones to make footprints trails in wet sand. The children could hide the stone used at the end of the trail, with the trackers explaining which dinosaur they think they will find, and why they think this, marshalling their knowledge for this context.
- Use the stones as inspiration for making your own footprints. Draw a pair of dinosaur feet on cardboard and cut each foot out. Attach cardboard handles to them. Hold the feet by the handles and dip the cut outs in a tray of paint. Make footprints on a long piece of paper. Place the related stone next to the prints. A similar effect can be achieved by cutting dinosaur footprints out of washing-up sponges. Whether you do the cutting or allow the children to do so will depend on their developmental level, fine motor skills and familiarity with the safe use of scissors.



Compare and sort dinosaurs

You will need: Dinosaur Wooden Characters, Let's Investigate Dinosaur Footprints

The dinosaur wooden characters offer a range of ways to compare and sort the figures. Invite the children to suggest their own criteria for sorting the dinosaurs. How many ways can they sort them by? Ideas might include by:

- Length/height (long/short, tall/small)
- Diet
- Armour / no armour
- Claws / no claws
- Sharp / blunt teeth
- Carnivore, herbivore, omnivore, piscivore.



The complexity of the sorting theme can be varied to suit the children. There is scope for older children to engage in collaborative conversations, sharing ideas and justifying thinking.

These activities will sharpen children's language use and introduce a greater range of descriptive language to their conversations. Echo children's comments back to them, adding new vocabulary as you do so.

The same principles can be applied to the dinosaur footprint stones. These are ideal for making imprints in play clay, soil, mud and sand, so the children can compare and sort the imprints they create by:

- Number of toes
- Short toes / long toes
- Narrow / wide feet

The children will also be able to make imprints of the dinosaurs that are on the other side of the stones. With careful examination, they can be another source of sorting. Encourage children to use full sentences when they explain their thinking.

Older children will be able to consider and build on the thinking of others in the group to hone their chosen criteria.

Conversation prompts

- Tell me how you've sorted these dinosaurs.
- I wonder how we can sort these dinosaurs into groups.
- What have you learned from looking at these dinosaurs/footprints?
- I wonder what this dinosaur ate... . What makes you think that?
- Why do you think this dinosaur has [give attribute]?
- How are dinosaurs similar to / different from animals that live today?

Vocabulary

- Length/height
- Diet
- Armour
- Sharp/blunt
- Tooth/teeth
- Narrow/wide
- Claws
- Sort/compare
- Similarities/differences
- Different from / similar to

Guess who?

You will need: Dinosaur Wooden Characters

Ask a child to choose a wooden dinosaur character and keep it hidden behind a barrier or under a cloth. Invite the other children to work out which dinosaur has been chosen by asking questions. You will find several downloadable free resources of helpful information by following the link below. This includes a poster of all the dinosaurs, which the children can use as a visual memory prompt for the dinosaur they are guessing:

[Dinosaur downloads](#)

These resources provide a wealth of information on each dinosaur that will deepen the children's understanding and extend their vocabulary.

Younger children might find it easier to work as a group, while older children could work in pairs.

Conversation prompts

- What would be a good question to ask?
- How might that help us work out the dinosaur?
- Why did you choose that dinosaur to describe?
- How else might we describe this dinosaur?

Vocabulary

- Long/short
- Length/height
- Wider than / longer than / shorter than
- Point(ed) / ridge(d) / curve(d)
- Diet
- Armour
- Sharp/blunt
- Tooth/teeth
- Narrow/wide
- Claws
- Sort/compare
- Similarities/differences
- Different from / similar to
- Rough/smooth
- Carnivore, herbivore, omnivore, piscivore



Making music with dinosaurs

- Body percussion: We do not know for certain what noises dinosaurs made. However, recent research suggests that they made cooing noises much like doves rather than the ear-splitting roars we thought. Invite the children to choose one of the wooden dinosaurs. Discuss the appearance of the dinosaur and how it might influence their composition. Then ask them to create some body percussion to describe the way it might sound. Ask them to explain why they chose this pattern. Using the sounds of their walking to make simple patterns will help develop children's listening skills and sense of rhythm. Encourage older children to ask questions of the performers so that they have to think about how to explain what they composed.
- Dinosaur chants: In a similar way, discuss the wooden dinosaurs and identify attributes that may be used to inspire simple chants that will help develop children's understanding of rhyme and rhythm. For example, 'I'm a massive Diplodocus, hear me plod' or 'I'm a spiked Stegosaurus, hear my plates rattle.' Continue in this way, changing the description of the dinosaur and what it does. This is ideal for collaborative learning. These types of rhymes work with actions too.
- Counting rhymes will help develop language skills and simple maths concepts. For example:

*Five friendly dinosaurs pretending to roar.
One got a cough and then there were four.
Four friendly dinosaurs, wild and free.
One dozed off and then there were three.
Three friendly dinosaurs playing peek-a-boo.
One got a shock and then there were two.
Two friendly dinosaurs still having fun.
One gave a wave and then there was one.
One friendly dinosaur smiling in the sun.
Went home for tea and then there were none.*

Using rhymes with repeating structures like this will help older children create their own versions. They will enjoy playing with words and their sounds as they create their own compositions, building on their discussions as they work together.

Dinosaur Tales

You will need: Let's Roll Dinosaurs

Let's Roll Dinosaurs is a great resource to use to develop gross and fine motor skills and to enhance storytelling skills. When a child rolls one of the cylinders in play clay, whether away from / towards themselves or across their body from side to side (crossing the midline), they will produce a scene. This scene can be added to by using the stamp at the end of the roller.

Conversation prompts

- Tell me about your scene.
- In what ways is it similar to /different from where we live?
- How do these rollers work?
- I wonder how I use this picture on the end of the roller.
- Why have you joined these two scenes?
- When did your story take place?
- How does it feel?



Use the creative process to encourage older children to explain their intentions.



Vocabulary

- Roll
- Press
- Stamp
- Push/pull
- Towards / away from
- Backwards/forwards

Learning more with dinosaurs

- Children can work individually or together (using a larger area of play clay or sand) to make a canvas on which they can create their dinosaur tales. They can use the same roller to form a single repeating scene, or several rollers to create something more varied. The same can be applied to the stampers. Encourage younger children to retell or record their stories. Older children may enjoy beginning to create labels for their scenes or to write their stories down.
- As far as we know, all dinosaurs laid eggs. Some, like turtles, buried them while they incubated. Others built nests. Use the idea of rolling a dinosaur's lost eggs back into the safety of its nest as an enjoyable way to practise gross motor movements. Use a round object to start with, then try a small rugby ball to increase the level of difficulty. Return to using the rollers.
- Design a dinosaur by adding marks and details to a painted hand print, with the thumb being the head and the fingers being the legs. Add details to make the print a specific dinosaur. If you add some armour plating and a tail with a bony ball at the end, you have an Ankylosaurus, for example.
- Invite children to paint images of their favourite dinosaurs, but only body, head and tail. Give each child two wooden pegs to paint as their dinosaur's legs. The children will need to judge whereabouts on the dinosaur's belly to attach the pegs. They will need to think about spacing and making sure the pegs are level to create an even base.



Children's books to enjoy together featuring dinosaurs

Reading books together and actively commenting on the text and what is shown in the illustrations will allow children to experience language structures and a rich range of vocabulary.

Ten Little Dinosaurs by Mike Brownlow

First Dinosaur Encyclopaedia published by Dorling Kindersley

Axel Scheffler's Flip Flop Dinosaurs by Axel Scheffler

Mary Anning by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara and Popy Matigot

Dinosaur Roar! by Henrietta Strickland and Paul Strickland