

Traveling Programs

Reconstructing a Dinosaur

In this activity, learn how paleontologists can take a jumble of bones from a long dead animal and figure out what the animal would have looked like when it was alive, what it would have eaten, and even where it may have lived!

Materials

- Dinosaur skeleton cut-out sheet (provided on next page)
- Blank paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Colored pencils/crayons/markers

Directions

Use scissors to cut along the dotted lines on the dinosaur skeleton cut-out sheet. Cut all of the body parts out of the page, and then piece them together like a puzzle. Use tape to tape the whole skeleton together. After the skeleton is complete, take a piece of blank paper and some colored pencils/crayons/markers to draw what the dinosaur may have looked like while alive. The skeleton can provide vital clues! Check the skeleton to see how many legs the dinosaur had, if it ate meat or plants, how long its tail was, etc. What the skeleton usually cannot tell paleontologists is if the dinosaur had scales, if it had feathers, and what color it might have been, so all of those ideas are up to the students. Older students may also want to draw in what sort of environment they believe the dinosaur lived around. Did it live in a field? In a forest? In a swamp? In the water?

Finally, students should be prepared to explain to one another why they choose to draw the dinosaur a certain way (and if they put it in an environment scene, why they chose the environment they did). By sharing their ideas with their classmates, they can begin to understand how real paleontologists come up with, share, and defend their ideas with other scientists.



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