

# ACADEMY VIRTUAL FESTIVAL PALEOPALOOZA

A Nine-Day Festival of Fossils

October 17–25

## How to identify if you have a fossil

Fossils are everywhere. They are found across the globe — at the tops of mountains, at the bottoms of seas and everywhere in between. Sometimes they are even found in our own backyards! However, not everything we find is a fossil. If you want to identify if what you have found is a fossil, use the flow chart below.

### Know before you begin

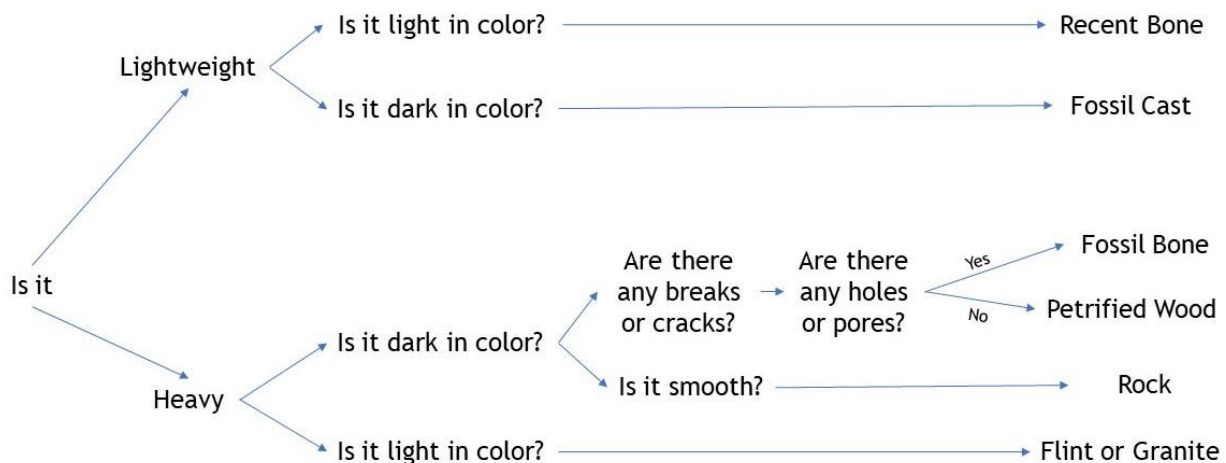
- This activity can be done inside or outside
- All supplies are easy to find
- Adult supervision is recommended
- Please choose a safe space to play

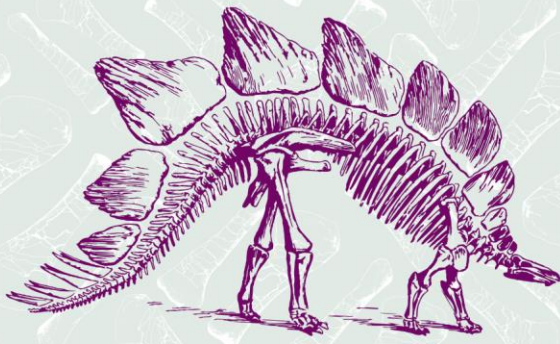
### Materials

- Your hypothesized fossil
- The flow chart and instructions below.

### Instructions

- Start by looking at the flow chart below. This will help guide our answers:





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- *When checking if something is a fossil, the first thing paleontologists check is the weight. When something becomes a fossil, it mineralized, or becomes made of minerals. This usually means an increase in weight. A fossil bone is heavier than a normal bone, noticeably so. So, if your object is heavy, it might be a fossil.*
- *The next thing paleontologists check is the color. If an object is heavy and has a light color, it is usually not a fossil unless it has an obvious fossil imprint in it. Fossil shells in limestone are an example. Mostly, however, heavy and lightly colored objects are rocks, like flint.*
- *Paleontologists also examine the surfaces of potential fossils. If they are smooth and do not have any real texture, they are probably rocks. Even if it is shaped like a bone, if it does not have the right texture then it is probably a rock.*
- *Lastly, paleontologists do a final inspection of their possible fossil by checking for pores. Pores are small holes that are found in bone as part of its structure. Some bone parts have more pores (porous), while other parts are denser. The pores in porous bone are obvious and can be seen without using any kind of magnifier. In denser bone, it is harder to see or feel. If you cannot find any pores, then you probably have petrified wood. Petrified wood is the plant equivalent of fossil bone, the mineralized remains of the toughest part of a tree.*
- *There is one other way of checking if something is a fossil. However, we do not recommend it. As mentioned before, bone is porous. The purpose of those holes is for strength, and to allow air or liquid to pass through. That means that one way paleontologists check if something is a bone is to put the possible fossil on their tongue. If it sticks to the tongue, it is a fossil. If it does not, it is not. While this is effective, the downsides are obvious. That is why the flow chart is a much better way.*