


1. **DESCRIPTION:** Teams will demonstrate their knowledge of ancient life by completing selected tasks at a series of stations. Emphasis will be on fossil identification and ability to answer questions about classification, habitat, ecologic relationships, behaviors and the use of fossils to date and correlate rock units.

**A TEAM OF UP TO:** 2

**APPROXIMATE TIME:** 50 minutes

2. **EVENT PARAMETERS:** Each team may bring only one magnifying glass; one published field guide that they may tab, write in or attach Post-It or other notes; and one 3-ring binder (any size) containing information in any form from any source. The materials must be 3-hole punched and inserted into the rings (sheet protectors are allowed).
3. **THE COMPETITION:** Emphasis will be placed upon task-oriented activities. Participants will move from station to station, with the length of time at each station predetermined and announced by the event supervisor. Participants are not permitted to return to stations, but may change or add information to their original responses while at other stations.

**Topics may include, but are not limited to:**

- a. Conditions required for a plant or an animal to become fossilized.
  - b. Common modes of preservation: permineralization, petrification/petrifaction, mineral replacement, cast/mold, imprint, actual remains. Uncommon modes of preservation include encased in amber, mummification, freezing, trapped in tar/asphalt.
  - c. Relative dating: law of superposition, original horizontality, cross cutting relationships, unconformities (buried erosion surfaces).
  - d. Absolute dating: radiometric dating, half-life, **carbon dating**, volcanic ash layers.
  - e. Geologic Time Scale
  - f. Index Fossils
  - g. Fossil bearing sedimentary rocks: limestone, shale, sandstone, mudstone, coquina, etc.
  - h. Identification of all fossil specimens on the official Fossil List posted at <http://www.soinc.org>
  - i. Modes of life: filter feeder, predator, scavenger, deposit feeder, benthic, pelagic, etc.
  - j. Environments: marine, terrestrial, fresh water, etc.
  - k. Mineral and organic components of skeletons, shells, etc: calcite, aragonite, silica, chiton
  - l. Taxonomic hierarchy: kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species
  - m. Adaptations and morphologic features of major fossils groups (i.e., Trilobites—compound eye on Phacops; lack of eyes on Cryptolithus; body parts—cephalon, thorax, pygidium)
  - n. Important paleontological events and discoveries and their significance, Ediacaran fossils, Burgess Shale, Permian extinction, Dinosaurs with feathers from China, Cretaceous extinction, Pleistocene Ice Age.
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4. **REPRESENTATIVE STATION TASKS:** Possible questions, tasks, stations and/or examples:
    - a. Identify each fossil and record its mode of preservation.
    - b. Identify each dinosaur (model/image) by name. Record each specimen's order (Saurischia or Ornithischia) and the period in which it thrived (Triassic, Jurassic, or Cretaceous).
    - c. Identify each index fossil by its informal name and record the geologic period(s) during which it thrived.
    - d. Order each specimen according to age, oldest to most recent. Geologic Time Chart provided.
    - e. Based on the fossil and rock associations, determine the environment in which the organism lived.
    - f. Construct a range chart and determine the age of the fossil assemblage.
  5. **SCORING:** Points will be awarded for the quality and accuracy of responses. Ties will be broken by the accuracy and/or quality of responses to several pre-identified questions.

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCE:** Smithsonian Fossil Handbook contains most specimens and may be ordered at: <http://www.soinc.org>

**NATIONAL SCIENCE EDUCATION STANDARDS: Grades 5-8. Earth & Space Science, Content Standard D:** Fossils provide important evidence of how life and environmental conditions have changed. Life Science, Content Standard C: Structure and function in living systems; diversity and adaptation of organisms.

**Grades 9-12. Earth & Space Science, Content D:** Geologic time can be estimated by observing rock sequences and using fossils to correlate the sequences at various locations. Life Science, Content Standard C: Natural selection and its evolutionary consequences provide a scientific explanation for the fossil record of ancient life forms. The great diversity of organisms is the result of more than 3.5 billion years of evolution that has filled every available niche with life forms.