

Dinosaur Fact File

Dinosaurs come in all shapes and sizes and lived on the earth some 65 - 230 million years ago.

Around 300 different kinds of dinosaur have been discovered. Interestingly, the first whole dinosaur skeleton ever found was an Ichthyosaurus – a huge dolphin-like dinosaur with very sharp eyes for spotting fish to eat. What's more, it was unearthed in our own back yard (at the foot of coastal cliffs in Dorset, southern England) by 12-year-old Mary Anning and her 16-year-old brother Joseph in 1810.

Archaeologists know so much about dinosaurs because of fossils – the stony remains of plants and animals that died a long time ago. Fossils are usually found in sandstone, clay, limestone or shale rocks, and studying them can tell us many things.

Studying fossilised bones tells us how each dinosaur might have looked - how tall it was, what its claws were like and how big its skull was. By studying dinosaur footprints, archaeologists can work out how heavy different dinosaurs

were and how fast they travelled. Even fossilised dinosaur poo is helpful! The pieces of food left inside tell us what different dinosaurs ate.

However, we do not know what colour dinosaurs were because fossilised skin only shows us that they were scaly, a bit like lizards, snakes and crocodiles. In fact, the word 'dinosaur' actually means "terrible lizard" ('deinos' = terrible + 'sauros' = lizard).

Here are some facts about well-known dinosaurs you have probably heard of:

Name	Meaning	Diet	Length (metres)	Fascinating Fact
Tyrannosaurus Rex (T - Rex)	"Tyrant lizard"	Meat	14m	T-Rex was huge! Its teeth were 18cm long and its lungs were the size of a car.
Stegosaurus	"Roof lizard"	Plant	7m	The plates on his back helped soak up the sun's heat to keep his body warm.
Diplodocus	"Double beam"	Plant	27m	Although long, its head was as small as a horse's head.
Velociraptor	"Quick thief"	Meat	2m	Recent research suggests that this dinosaur may have had feathers.
Triceratops	"Three-horned face"	Plant	9m	As well as its horns, it had a frill to protect its neck and shoulders.

