



ICHTHYOSAUR – TEACHER

What You Will Need:

- 1 print of fossil bones per student
- Scissors

What You Will Do:

- Have students cut out their bones
- Allow students to arrange the bones to come up with any fossil they can build.
- Encourage them to work with others.

*Getting the right arrangement is not as important as allowing the students to hypothesize and think through their ideas. You can have everyone display their best guess before you show them the answer.

Here are some fun questions to share about this ancient extinct animal.

-Question: Do you think a kid or an adult discovered the first Ichtheosaur fossil?

Answer: The first ichthyosaur fossil was found by 12 year old Mary Anning (1799–1847) and her brother Joseph!

-Question: Why do you think the eyes are so big?

Answer: Scientists hypothesize that the large eyes indicate this animal hunted by sight even in the dimly lit waters of night. The Ichthyosaur eye is the largest eye ever recorded for any vertebrate!

-Question: What else do you notice about this fossil?

Answer: Compliment the variety of answers that students give. Then you can point out that the tail is pointed down. This is how all of the various fossils looked. A remarkable find in Germany showed a very well preserved fossil in fine mudstone and even the soft fleshy outline of the animal had been preserved showing the tail of ichthyosaurus was shaped like the tail of a fish/shark. And on its back, like a dolphin and a shark, there was a dorsal fin!

-Question: Do you think Ichtheosaur gave live birth or had egg cases like sharks? How could we know if they were extinct?

Answer: Fossils tell amazing stories and some fossils uncovered in Germany and recently in Chile show that the Ichtheosaur gave live birth. Embryos have been found in some fossils and a well developed baby ichtheosuar fossil was found inside the mother.