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**The Happy Scientist**

## Paleo-Cookies

You might imagine that scientists find fossil bones as part of a complete skeleton. Most times, fossilized bones are found broken into fragments. Putting bone pieces back together can be quite a challenge. You can get an idea of what **paleontologists** (scientists who study past life) do by using cookies in place of bones.

### What You Need

- at least seven cookies

### What to Do

- 1.** Take one cookie and break it into four pieces. Mix the pieces and try to put the cookie back together.
- 2.** Take another cookie and try breaking it into eight pieces. Mix the pieces and try to put it back together. Next, if you are really feeling brave, take a new cookie and break it into 12 pieces. Mix the pieces up. Can you put them back together?
- 3.** To make things even more realistic, break a cookie into 12 pieces. Mix the pieces and then eat three of them. Try to put the pieces you have left back into place.
- 4.** For a real challenge, take three cookies and break each into four pieces. Mix all the pieces and then eat three of them. Now try to reassemble the pieces.

### What Happens

The broken cookies are models of fossilized bones. People usually find fossils after erosion uncovers a buried bone. But before that happens, water and shifting rocks often break the bone into pieces. As the surrounding rock is eroded away, bone pieces become scattered. Many times, fossil bones are located by following a trail of bone fragments that has been washed downhill.

If this activity appeals to you, think about becoming a paleontologist or an **archaeologist** (a scientist who studies human history). Just remember that if you dig up a dinosaur bone, you should not eat the pieces when you are done.