

A Scientist just like me



Dr Emma Nicholls
Palaeontologist

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Hi there! I am Dr Emma Nicholls— a palaeontologist



Where do I work?

I am a Senior Curator of Natural Sciences at the Horniman Museum in Southeast London.

We have amazing collections and galleries and a huge outdoor space to explore and enjoy.

What did I like doing when I was at school?

I have wanted to work with fossils since I was five, so was thrilled to study science at school. I particularly enjoyed biology and physics.

What do I like doing in my spare time?

When your job is your passion it's difficult to know where work ends and hobbies begin! I spend lots of time in museums and reading about palaeontology, and I also read science fiction.

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What do I do as a palaeontologist?



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I use my knowledge of fossils and rocks to do scientific research (sharks and marine reptiles), and to engage schools and families with exhibitions about science and the natural world. I'm also part of a group that is helping to address climate change.

How does what I do make the world a better place?

By studying past animal and plant life and how they lived, evolved and interacted with environments, we can make important predictions about how the world might respond to climate change. I also help museum visitors connect with the natural world, which brings them joy and improves their wellbeing.

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What I like about my job

I love my job because I get to study fossils and learn about prehistoric animals. I really enjoy working on a variety of projects with lots of different people at the museum. I care for nearly 200,000 scientific specimens and help other people learn about them, which is very rewarding.

Challenges I have faced

A challenge most of us face in the world of palaeontology and museums is having too much to do, but not enough time, money or equipment to do it! We all work hard and help each other to deliver as much as we can.



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If you want to be a palaeontologist, you need:

- ✱ **curiosity**... to want to find answers to mysteries science hasn't solved yet
- ✱ **attention to detail**, as a scientist has to be accurate and precise when observing and doing experiments
- ✱ **to be excited by science** – whether it's biology, chemistry or physics – palaeontology is very broad!
- ✱ **self-belief**... if you want something enough, don't let anyone hold you back!



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Discussion time

- ✦ Would you like to be a palaeontologist like Dr Emma Nicholls?

Why? Why not?



- ✦ What skills and interests do you already have that would help you become a paleontologist?
- ✦ What new skills and knowledge would you need to develop?

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Free supporting resources for palaeontology

The Big Jurassic Classroom - resources and information to support teachers with using their local environments to inspire interest in the UK's geological history. The resources include exciting activities for learning about rocks, fossils and evolution.

I bet you didn't know... articles use cutting-edge science research as a context for learning. Teacher Guides describing the research and activities and investigations for children can be used as classroom presentations:

- Some mammals have unusual backbones
- Evolution of life in cities

Created by the Primary Science Teaching Trust

