



DINO DIG DAZE!

A freeform larp designed by Nicolas Hornyak as part of the 2016 Golden Cobra Challenge.

Dino Dig Daze is the ongoing saga about a group of dinosaur ghosts who, by way of an incredibly tragic clerical error, have had their fossilized remains switched out with display quality replicas. Even worse, these actual fossils were bought by a children's museum, which uses them in their seasonal Dino Dig—an outdoor, interactive exhibit where kids of all ages can brush away sand to reveal fossils like the paleontologists!

Since their souls are tied to the bones, there is little chance of escape. But while they're here, they've had no shortage of squabbles, grudges, and jealous moments! Maybe some children are gentler with them during a session. Or perhaps one dinosaur got eaten by the other! Either way, the afterlife is sillier and more absurd than any of them could imagine.

CREATE YOUR DINOSAUR!

To play, you will need a table around which you can sit down and move about when needed. You may also need some paper and pencils (although not a lot—a notepad will do if you can't remember these answers). To start, answer these three questions for yourself:

1. What species of dinosaur are you? (Pterosaurs are fair game!)
2. What is one positive personality trait of your dinosaur?
3. What is one negative personality trait of your dinosaur?

From there, you simply need a name! You can take a whole bunch of inspiration for this part by coming up with characters that could be straight out of *The Land before Time* or *Jurassic World*. Alternatively, you can go the scientific route and do some quick research on certain dinosaurs with your smartphone. Either way, nothing has to be set in stone or consistent—every fossil comes from a long, long time ago, and dinosaurs can still remember how that music used to make them smile. They're a little fuzzy on the details, though.

THE AGE OF DINOS?

Oh come on! You should know by now that dinosaurs *invented* the English language!

Furthermore, many of them hailed from advanced societies. Honestly, if they had developed their space program a little more, humans wouldn't be here right now!

Have fun with it, make it up as you go along, and above all, be excellent to each other. 😊

(*Pterosaurs are winged lizards, btw.)

PLAY THE GAME!

Play takes place in a 30-minute phase followed by a 15-minute phase. During the first phase, you will roleplay in two different ways. Both are distinguishable by the positioning of their hands.

Whenever your hands are flat on the table, palms down and unmoving, you are playing as the spirit of your Dinosaur. This represents the anchor for your ghost—the fossil which keeps them on the mortal plane.

When your hands are *not* flat on the table, you are playing as a guest at the Dino Dig! You can be an adult or a little kid—whichever you think might be more amusing to the situation. In this state, you may stand up and move around the table to signify that your temporary character is moving through the Dino Dig exhibit. Additionally, you may interact with the Dinosaurs by tapping, tugging, or lightly scratching their fingers, in order to indicate that their fossils are being messed around with in the exhibit. Dinosaurs are free to whine and complain about this indecency, although there is virtually nothing they can do about it.



**here come
dat boil!**

With this rough treatment and exposure to the outdoor elements, not to mention the haphazard personalities of ghosts, sometimes the fossils suffer damage. When this happens, bend a finger underneath itself to indicate what has happened. It is entirely up to the player how and if this happens, be it from a kid banging on the fossil too hard or simply as an adverse reaction to an insult. Concurrently, Dinosaurs blow it out of proportion, and around the Dino Dig, it is not uncommon for these fossils to be angry about it all the time.

At the end of 30 minutes, all players must return to being Dinosaurs, as the exhibit is closing for the day. For the final 15 minute phase, start letting bygones be bygones and forgive the other Dinosaurs for their transgressions. Or don't—no grudge is too small at Dino Dig, after all! But ease out of play; the game is done.

CREDITS

Thank you to the judges and curators of this year's Golden Cobra Challenge for their service and hard work. I hope this was as fun to read as it was designing it!

Additional thanks go out to Liberty Science Center, who hired me and ended up giving me the idea.

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Triceratops Fossil Image
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MOOD

Like *Mean Girls*, but with dinosaurs. This game is wildly absurd, utterly implausible, and altogether ridiculous. Players should approach the game with a sense of humor and every bit of fantastic antics they can summon between them.

At the same time, there may be moments of introspection or times when silence seems the most reasonable answer. Let such instances pass with reasonable respect if these are heavy subjects which matter to a player out-of-game.

Otherwise, tear each other apart in the way only bitter dinosaurs can, ala "*Well your horns still look stupid, JEREMY!*"