

Specimen Care & Handling Guide

Natural History specimens are amazing tools for scientists, researchers, artists, historians, etc. and we're excited to share some of our specimens with your classroom! That being said, specimens can be hard to come by and take time to make, so we ask that you and your classroom handle them with care to help us ensure that many other classrooms have the chance to interact with them in the future. Below is an overview of how best to handle and care for different types of specimens. Please review these guidelines with your classroom and ensure that specimens are handled properly throughout your lesson.

Bird Study Skins

Study skins are bird specimens that have been prepared to lay flat and fit more comfortably in drawers. These specimens can be delicate and should be handled one at a time and treated respectfully.

- We encourage you to touch the birds, but please do not ruffle the feathers. Pet them in the direction of the feathers like you would pet a cat or dog.
- Do not pick up by the beak/bill, tail, leg, or wings as these can break off and cause damage to the specimen. Take extra care not to pull on the heads of the birds as these can also become detached over time.
- Some study skins may have a wooden dowel sticking out of them. These can be picked up by the dowel.
- Never handle a study skin by its tag or label.
- Never stack study skins on top of each other.
- Place your bird on its back on the desk in front of you when you can and try to avoid dropping it.

Skulls

These specimens tend to be on the more robust side, but always handle with care and do your best to handle from the thickest part of bone when possible.

- Do not pull on the teeth as they may come loose from the jaw.
- Do not smash the jaws together as if you're pretending to "bite" with the skull.

Other Specimens - Handle all other specimens with care as well!

If you notice damage on a specimen or parts of a specimen fall off, break, etc. during your lesson, carefully pack away the specimen, make note of the damages, and contact us to let us know. If you're unsure how to handle a specimen or have further questions, please email slatermuseum@pugetsound.edu.

Packing

Each kit comes with photos of packing instructions. Please do your best to put away the specimens as close to the packing instructions as possible and be sure not to stack specimens unless otherwise instructed to do so.