

About Ammonites



Ammonites are extinct cephalopods related to squid and octopuses, but had a hard shell. They first appeared in the fossil record about 240 million years ago before going extinct along with the dinosaurs 65 million years ago.

- Ammonites could grow quite large. Many species grew to over a foot across and there are a few reported specimens reaching gigantic sizes of over 2 meters (6 ½ feet) wide.
- Ammonites had spiral shells, and lived in the outer chambers. They had tentacles that they could use to grab their food and a beak like modern day squid.
- Ammonites used a biological pump and siphon system to control their buoyancy.
- In medieval Europe, fossilized ammonites were thought to be petrified snakes and were called “snakestones”
- “Ammonite” refers to the Egyptian God, Amun, and the ram’s horns on his head.
- The fossilized shells of ammonites are common fossils found on every continent.
- Because they are widespread and common fossils, ammonites are often used as “index fossils” to help determine the relative age of rock formations.
- Fossilized ammonites shells often are iridescent, showing luminous colors when viewed from different angles. This iridescence would not have been seen on the shell of a living ammonite.
- Ammonites are thought to have fed on tiny invertebrates and were preyed on by the large sea going reptiles of their time, such as Mosasaurs and Plesiosaurs.

