When you collect

Never collect without the permission of the landowner.

Never collect from cliffs or from quarry walls...

...or from any other walls for that matter.

Collect from fallen blocks and waste tips.

Write on the specimen or in a notebook where and when you collect. A pencil or black water-proof felt-tip pen are best.

Wrap your specimens in kitchen roll or toilet tissue (not cotton wool).

Don't be greedy - leave some for others to find.

When in doubt ask at your LOCAL MUSEUM


When you get home

Clean away loose flakes of dirt with a dry brush.

If this doesn't work, try brushing with a little water.

Dry the specimen thoroughly afterwards.

Broken bits can be stuck back on using 'UHU' or Humbrol polystyrene and balsa cements. Never use 'super glue' or 'Araldite' or any other epoxy resin.

Make a catalogue in a hard-backed exercise book. Give each specimen a number and write it on the specimen.

Against this number in the catalogue write what you know about the specimen. Correct identification etc. can be added later.

Store your collection safely by making a tissue paper 'nest' for each specimen, fitting snugly with other 'nests' in wooden drawers or boxes with lids.

When in doubt ask at your LOCAL MUSEUM

Further reading: 'Fossils, minerals and rocks: collection and preservation' by K. Croucher and A.R. Woolley, published 1982 by the British Museum (Natural History) and Cambridge University Press.

Finding out more...

Guides and Maps ~

An important first step in identifying a specimen is to find out about the geology of the area where you found it.

Local guides are published by, amongst others, the Geologists' Association, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1Y 9AG.

Detailed geological maps (each with an explanatory Memoir for more advanced study) are published by the British Geological Survey, and are available from BGS Headquarters, Keyworth, Nottingham NG12 5GG and BGS Information Office, Natural History Museum, Earth Galleries, Exhibition Road, London SW7 2DE. There you can also obtain the more general handbooks in the series 'British Regional Geology'.

Identification Books ~

There are many well-illustrated books available to help you to identify your specimens:


Dorling Kindersley 'Eyewitness' series and handbooks.

British Palaeozoic Fossils, British Mesozoic Fossils and British Cenozoic Fossils, published by HMSO.

Clubs and Societies ~ RockWATCH is a club for young geologists but with something to offer the whole family. For details of exciting expeditions, challenging surveys and special events contact: RockWATCH, The Green, Witham Park, Waterside South, Lincoln LN5 7JR. Details of other clubs and societies can be obtained from the Geologists' Association.

Displays ~ In the Natural History Museum in London there are fossil and mineral displayes designed to help you identify your specimens. Your local museum may also have displays.

Get HELP! from

Do you need help?
★ to find where to go to collect specimens?
★ to get equipment?
★ to find books and maps?
★ to identify your specimens?
★ to find out more about geology?

Then visit your LOCAL MUSEUM.

Remember to look for museums with the "Thumbs-up" sign for geological service, listed overleaf.