

Eight quick tips for requesting materials from natural history collections

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Eight practical tips help researchers borrow museum specimens, protect them, and earn the trust of the curators who lend them.

BEFORE THE LOAN

1

Know the databases

Search GBIF, iDigBio, VertNet, and each collection's own catalog.

2

Build an accurate specimen list

Verify identifications. List catalog numbers, localities, and preparation types.

3

Write a complete loan request

State the question, the methods, the timeline, and who is responsible for the loan.

DURING THE LOAN

4

Handle specimens with care

Follow the collection's rules and justify any destructive sampling.

5

Expect delays and adapt

Plan for split shipments, outdated names, and a denied request.

6

Keep the curator informed

Share progress and publications. Deposit data with voucher catalog numbers.

AFTER THE LOAN

7

Return specimens on time

Reuse the original packing and photograph the return shipment.

8

Build lasting relationships

Credit the collection, join societies, and offer to collaborate.



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