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Don't know dinos? Blame Barney!

Here's a test of your dinosaur knowledge: Did Tyrannosaurus rex stand upright, with its tail on the ground?

The answer: No. But a lot of young people seem to think so, and the authors of a study are blaming toys like Barney and other pop influences for that misconception.

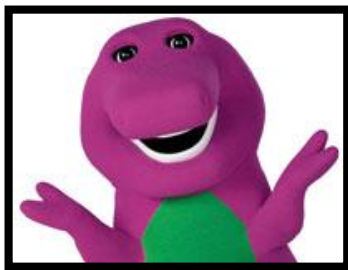


Scientists used to think T. rex stood tall, but they abandoned that idea decades ago. Now, the ferocious dinosaur is depicted in a bird-like posture, tail in the air and head pitched forward of its two massive legs.

The change led major museums to update their T. rex displays, study authors said, and popular books have largely gotten the posture right since around 1990. So did the "Jurassic Park" movies.

But when the researchers asked college students and children to draw a T. rex, most gave it an upright posture instead. Why? They'd soaked up the wrong idea from toys like Barney, games and other pop culture items, the researchers conclude.

"It doesn't matter what they see in science books or even in 'Jurassic Park,'" says Warren Allmon, a paleontology professor.



It struck him when he saw a box of dinosaur chicken nuggets at a grocery store.

"What they grew up with on their pajamas and their macaroni and wallpaper and everything else is wrong," he said.

If the explanation is correct, Allmon said, it's a sobering reminder of how people can get wrong ideas about science.

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