

Vocabulary: Unit 6: Earth's Physical Resources

mineral	A naturally occurring, inorganic solid substance having a definite chemical composition and characteristic crystalline structure.
crystal	A solid in which the atoms are arranged in a regular, repeating pattern.
streak	The color of a mineral's powder, usually when rubbed on an unglazed tile.
luster	The measure of shininess of a mineral.
density	Mass per unit of volume.
cleavage	A mineral's tendency to break along planes of weakness.
fracture	The pattern in which a mineral breaks.
vein	A mineral deposit that forms when a mineral fills cracks in rocks.
gemstone	A mineral mined and cut for use in jewelry.
ore	A rock containing a useful mineral.
ore deposit	A deposit of minerals that has been deemed profitable to mine.
placer	Deposits of minerals found settled to the bottom of stream beds.
reclamation	Returning mined land back to its natural state.
rock	A naturally formed, non-living Earth material made of collections of mineral grains that are held together in a firm, solid mass.
rock cycle	A depiction of how the three major rock types convert from one to another.
crystallization	The solidification of mineral crystals as molten magma cools.
weathering	Any of the chemical or mechanical processes by which rocks exposed to the weather undergo changes in character and break down.
erosion	The movement of weathered sediments from one place to another by biological activity, running water, wind, ice, or gravity.
sedimentation	The process by which sediments are laid down or deposited.
compaction	The increasing of the density of material, generally from confining stress.
cementation	The binding and hardening of mineral matter.
metamorphism	The alteration of the composition or structure of a rock by heat, pressure, or other natural process.
intrusive igneous rock	Rock that has cooled and crystallized from magma beneath Earth's surface, generally characterized by large, well-formed mineral crystals.
pluton	A body of intrusive igneous rock.
extrusive igneous rock	Rock that has cooled and crystallized quickly from magma above Earth's surface, generally characterized by a smooth or glassy texture.
porphyry	Rock containing relatively large conspicuous crystals in a fine-grained extrusive igneous matrix.
vesicular	Extrusive igneous rock that has cooled quickly and retained visible gas bubbles.
clastic sedimentary rock	Rock made of inorganic sediments.
bioclastic sedimentary rock	Rock made of organic sediments.
foliation	Layers found in some metamorphic rocks.
regional metamorphism	Changes in large rock bodies due to the extreme pressure from overlying rock.
contact metamorphism	Changes in rocks due to contact with magma.
ice wedging	The breaking apart of rock in areas that have regular freeze and thaw cycles; water infiltrates into the cracks in rock during the warm period, the water expands as it freezes into ice, and the rock breaks after repeated thaw/freeze cycles.

abrasion	The breakdown of rock by the physical grinding of one rock against another.
mechanical weathering	The breakdown of rocks by physical forces.
chemical weathering	The change in composition and breakdown of rocks through chemical reactions.
hydrolysis	The name for the various reactions of water with minerals in rock.
oxidation	A chemical reaction where oxygen reacts with another element in minerals.
soil	The top layer of the earth's surface, consisting of rock and mineral particles mixed with organic matter.
permeability	The ability for water to flow easily through a soil because the spaces between inorganic particles are large and well-connected.
porosity	The ability of a soil to hold a large amount of water because of its large spaces between particles.
loam	A soil made up of a mixture of inorganic particle sizes.
humus	An important part of soil made of plant and animal remains.
soil horizon	A layer of soil that has a consistent composition.
soil profile	A vertical section of soil from the ground surface to the parent rock that shows each different layer.
pedalfer	Soil rich in alumina and iron and deficient in carbonates, found in and characteristic of humid regions.
pedocal	A soil of semiarid and arid regions that is rich in calcium carbonate and lime.
laterite	A reddish clay-rich soil, hard when dry, forming a topsoil in some tropical or subtropical regions and sometimes used for building.
saltation	The movement of hard particles such as sand over an uneven surface in a turbulent flow of air or water.
deflation	As small particles are removed, the ground surface gets lower and rockier.
desert pavement	Ground surface covered only by large, gravel-sized particles.
abrasion	The process of scraping or wearing away.
ventifacts	Stones that have become polished and faceted due to abrasion by sand particles.
dune	A mound or ridge of sand or other loose sediment formed by the wind, esp. on the sea coast or in a desert.
loess	Windblown silt and clay deposited layer on layer over a large area.
plucking	Glacial ice surrounds, then transports large rocks.
glacial striations	Long, parallel grooves in the bedrock created by glacial abrasion.
erratics	Random rocks (sometimes huge) that are dropped by a melting glacier.
glacial till	Unsorted glacial deposits of both large and small sediments.
moraines	Linear glacial deposits.
mass wasting	Erosion caused by gravity.
talus	The rocks that collect at the base of a slope.
landslide	The sliding down of a mass of earth or rock from a mountain or cliff.
mudflow	A washing out of sediments on a slope due to elevated precipitation.
slump	The erosion of material as a large block along a curved surface
creep	A gradual movement of soil downhill.