The Rock Cycle

Rock is the hard, solid material, consisting of one or more minerals, that makes up the Earth. Rocks continuously change from one type to another through the rock cycle process. There are three types of rocks: igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary.

Key vocabulary

rock
The very hard mineral matter that forms an important part of the Earth's crust.

lava
The hot, thick liquid that pours out of a volcano when it erupts.

volcano
A mountain with vents through which molten lava, ash, cinders, and gas erupt, sometimes violently.

igneous rock
Rock produced by great heat or a volcano.

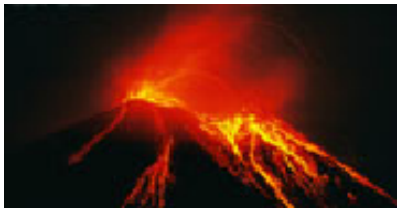
metamorphic rock
Rock that is changed by heat and pressure is metamorphic.

sedimentary rock
Rock created when weathering and erosion deposits sediment into layers. The layers become cemented, forming a new sedimentary rock. Three-fourths of the Earth's rocks are sedimentary.

Related articles

Volcanoes

What are the Earth's most fantastic, and sometimes most violent, geologic changes? Here is a hint: molten rock and ash shoot out of them!



Igneous Rocks

Can you imagine melting a rock? It takes a lot of heat, but the earth has plenty!

Sedimentary Rocks

The Earth has layers, and so do some of its rocks! Sedimentary rocks are the product of a lot of pressure, and they even tell a lot about the Earth's history.

Metamorphic Rocks

Take a rock, add a whole bunch of heat and pressure, and presto! You have a new kind of rock: a metamorphic rock.

Weathering & Erosion

Some of the world's most famous landmarks were created by weathering and erosion. Ever heard of the Grand Canyon? That is one of them.

Earthquakes

When the ground shakes, there is a hidden cause. There are plates in the Earth's crust moving around, and when they collide, it is called an earthquake!