

Minerals

Minerals are the building blocks of rocks.

A mineral is a naturally occurring, inorganic (non-living) solid with a unique combination of chemical elements. When atoms and molecules bond together to make a mineral, they usually form some type of crystal. There are over 2500 different types of minerals.

Rocks

A rock is made up of one or more minerals.

A rock is a naturally occurring solid substance that is usually made of minerals. Rocks may also include organic remains. It is usually not easy to spot the different minerals. However, many common rocks such as granite and sandstone have visible pieces of minerals in a "glue-like" background.

Gems

Gems are minerals that are attractive to the eye when cut and polished.

Gems are a special group of mineral crystals with unusual properties that make them sought after for jewelry or other adornments. Rarity is another characteristic that lends value to a gemstone.

Fossils

Fossils are the remains of animals and plants that have been preserved in rocks or minerals.

But a buried bone isn't the same thing as a fossil -- to become a fossil, the bone has to become rock. When the organism decays it can leave an impression in the rock which can then fill in with rock or minerals. This process takes millions of years.