

Rock Activities



Pick up a small container of rocks or gravel from a driveway or roadside or get some from a local gravel company. Gather a collection of small rocks and minerals picked up in the driveway or on the land. These represent outwash from a glacier. What to do with the collection: Find out from Melvins and Petersons, local gravel companies, where their rocks come from.

Use a paper plate or box lid divided into sections. Give each person some of the specimens. Sort them by how they are alike and different. Talk about the kinds of characteristics each person used when they sorted. Can they think of names for their choices? (Color, smooth or rough, visible crystals or fine grained, layers, can be scratched, leaves a mark or streak, cleavage, etc.)

Read to find out how geologists or other scientists sort and classify rocks and minerals and the names they give to their categories.

What to do with the collection:

Sort in several ways.

- Igneous
- Metamorphic
- Sedimentary

Similar in color

Similar in luster

Similar in cleavage

Similar in hardness using a scratch test

Similar in streak

They could make sheets or boxes for these categories so that they can lay their rocks on them.

Do the samples move to different categories as the category labels change?

Match the samples to picture.

Match the samples to rock in the stone walls of the stone house.

Find a Rock or Mineral

Geographic Sources

- Find out where the rocks you were sorting came from. Use maps to locate the geological areas and history of that land.
- Look at rock piles along line fences in the Kuse Nature Preserve or in other places where rocks have been cleared from farms. How did they get to the land and how were they moved to rock piles? What kinds of rocks are they?

Rock Collections and Collectors

- Find out what kinds of rocks are in the yard where you live.
- Find out what rocks are owned by members of your family. Do not damage or lose precious jewelry.
- Examine jewelry and determine which have pieces have real rocks and which are imitation.
- Make rock collections from rocks that are found in the local area or in other areas. Be sure to label the source of your rocks.

Uses of Rocks and Minerals

Use a phone book to find firms that use rocks and minerals in their business or profession. Landscapers, builders, building supply firms, highway departments, monument dealers, metal recycling, lime and fertilizer firms, well drillers, jewelers, crafts persons and gem collectors, museums, etc.

Rocks in Monuments, Buildings and Bridges

Use a camera or smart phone and take pictures of buildings, monuments, bridges, and other items in the community that are made of rocks or minerals. Where did the material come from? How was it processed?

Look at the monuments at a cemetery, the dates on the stones, the kind of rock they are made of, and the weathering or erosion that has taken place. Talk to monument dealers and learn where the stones come from.

- Find all the places in which iron is used.
- Find all the places in which copper is used in the school, home or community.
- Learn about the minerals found in the Bend Deposit in Taylor County, Wisconsin.
- Make a map of the State or the County and determine which rocks or minerals are found there. Mark their sources on the maps. Look at a web site created by the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey to learn about minerals of Wisconsin.
<http://wisconsingeologicalsurvey.org/MinIndexIntro.htm>

Tools for Working With Rocks

What tools are used to help people work with rocks and minerals?

Rocks that Glow in the Dark under Ultraviolet Light

With the help of an adult, use a special black or ultraviolet light with a collection of rocks. Find out which ones glow. Learn about the minerals in the rocks that make them glow.

Find lists of fluorescent rocks on the Internet. Read about them.

Learning More

Use a self-checking device with information and questions about rocks.

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