Rock Cycle Study Guide

Rock Cycle: A group of changes that rock can undergo. Igneous rock (see below) can change into sedimentary or into metamorphic rock. Sedimentary rock (see below) can change into metamorphic or into igneous rock. Metamorphic rock (see below) can change into igneous or sedimentary rock. Rocks are constantly changing. The rock cycle never ends!

Example: Metamorphic rocks can be broken and washed away from streams. These new sediments can then create sedimentary rock.

Igneous Rock: Igneous rock forms when magma cools and creates crystals. Igneous rock can form slowly underground or quickly above ground. There are two types of igneous rock: extrusive and intrusive igneous rock. Extrusive rock forms on the Earth's surface following a volcanic eruption. Extrusive rock has small crystals. Intrusive rock is formed in the Earth's mantle. Intrusive rock has large, well-formed crystals. Buried, intrusive rocks are often uplifted and brought to the Earth's surface.

Sedimentary Rock: Pieces of rock (sediments) are buried and cemented together to create sedimentary rock. Any rock exposed to physical weathering (i.e. wind, rain, snow or ice) or chemical weathering can be broken down, transported and created into sedimentary rock. Pieces of old sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic rock can become new sedimentary rock. It is common for sedimentary rocks to contain fossils.

Metamorphic Rock: All rock can be heated due to heat inside of the Earth or due to heat caused by friction on the Earth's surface (caused by plate tectonic movement). Heated rock does not melt; however, it does undergo change. Rocks that change form crystals. Igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rock can all be changed.