

PLATE TECTONICS VOCABULARY

Convection Current – Circular movement of mantle material (caused by differences in temperature) resulting in tectonic plate movement.

Convergent Plate Boundary – A tectonic plate boundary in which two plates come together.

Divergent Plate Boundary – A tectonic plate boundary in which two plates move apart.

Fault – Fracture in rock caused by stress.

Folding – The deformation of rock layers due to compressive forces and heat.

Fossils - Preserved remains or traces of ancient organisms; *help support the Theory of Continental Drift. (i.e. Glossopteris found in South America, India, Australia, Antarctica).*

Island Arcs - Landform created when two oceanic plates collide and the denser of the two plates is subducted. *Example: Japan*

Lithosphere – The Earth's surface layer consisting of the topmost rigid portion of the mantle plus oceanic and continental crusts.

Magma - Molten rock beneath the Earth's surface.

Mid-Ocean Ridge - An large undersea mountain chain where new ocean floor is produced.

Mountain Ranges – Landform created when continental plates collide and continental crust is pushed together and upward.

Pangaea – The last (most recent time) Earth was once a large single landmass called Pangaea, meaning "all lands" in Greek.

Oceanic & Continental – Types of Earth's crust. Oceanic is more dense, so it will subduct in a collision with continental crust.

Ocean-Floor Spreading - The process in which old ocean floor is pushed away from a mid-ocean ridge by the formation of a new ocean floor.

Rift - Zone between two diverging tectonic plates.

Subduction - The process in which crust plunges back into the interior of the Earth. Subduction occurs at convergent plate boundaries. *The denser plate will subduct.*

Theory of Plate Tectonics- The theory that the Earth is made up of plates that through continental drift and ocean floor spreading has moved and continue to move. *This theory explains the formation, movement and destruction of the Earth's crust. It incorporates the earlier concept of continental drift developed by Alfred Wegener in the early 20th century.*

Transform Fault – A boundary in which two plates slip past one another. *Earthquakes are often located along these fault lines.*

Trench-V shaped valley on the ocean floor where old (and denser/heavier) ocean floor is subducted.