

Rock Cycle

Rocks are made up of minerals, and different kinds of rocks are formed in different ways. Rocks also constantly change from one form of rock to another, through the rock cycle.

The rock cycle is a slow cycle of changes that change the Earth's surface. Rocks change from one form to another, but are never destroyed in the rock cycle.

In the rock cycle, rocks break down from rain, snow, pressure and temperature. For example, mountains are broken down into rocks, and then the rocks are broken down into smaller rocks, pebbles and sand, through weathering.

Erosion causes those smaller pieces to be washed away by wind or rain. The washed away bits of rock (or sediment) settle into layers, and over many years they can compact into rock. These types of rocks are called sedimentary rocks.

Sedimentary rock is forced deeper under the surface of the Earth, where there are even hotter temperatures and more pressure. That high heat and pressure can change sedimentary rock into metamorphic rock. Once it cools, this melted metamorphic rock forms igneous rock.

The rock cycle can change a rock from one type to another, but rocks are never destroyed in the rock cycle.