

Testing rocks



You will need:

- ◆ a collection of rocks (not valuable specimens)
- ◆ a large sheet of paper
- ◆ a coin
- ◆ a steel nail or blunt knife
- ◆ a magnifying glass
- ◆ a dropper
- ◆ water
- ◆ soapy water
- ◆ a nailbrush
- ◆ a bowl of clear vinegar

Hardness

- 1 Which of your rocks can you scratch with your fingernail? These are very soft rocks.
- 2 Which can be scratched with the coin? These are soft rocks.
- 3 Which can be scratched only with the nail or knife? These are hard rocks.



Do your rocks fizz in vinegar?

- 1 Clean your rocks in soapy water with the nailbrush.
- 2 Carefully place them in the bowl of vinegar. Do any of them fizz?

Do your rocks soak up water?

- 1 Use the dropper to put a big drop of water on each rock sample.
- 2 Look at each drop half an hour later. Which has soaked in? Which is still on the surface?



Limestone is made of the mineral calcium carbonate. This is dissolved by acids such as vinegar. Chalk is a form of limestone.

Some rocks absorb water. These rocks are a natural underground store of water.