***Tectonic Plates***

Tectonic Plates - Huge pieces of lithosphere that slowly move on the asthenosphere and consist of the crust and the rigid, uppermost part of the mantle.

North American Plate - A tectonic plate division of the lithosphere that includes the continental crust of Greenland, North America, Siberia, and the surrounding oceanic crust.

Eurasian Plate - A tectonic plate division of the lithosphere, including most of the landmasses of Europe and Asia.

African Plate - A tectonic plate division of the lithosphere that includes the continental crust of Africa and the surrounding oceanic crust.

South American Plate - A tectonic plate division of the lithosphere that includes the continental crust of South America and the oceanic crust extending to the Mid-Atlantic ridge.

Indo-Australian Plate - A tectonic plate division of the lithosphere that includes the continental crust of India and Australia and the surrounding oceanic crust.

Pacific Plate - A tectonic plate division of the lithosphere that is composed entirely of oceanic crust and lies beneath the Pacific Ocean.

Antarctic Plate - A tectonic plate division of the lithosphere that includes the continental crust of Antarctica and the surrounding oceanic crust.

Density of Plates - The amount of matter in a given space or volume; oceanic crust is thinner, but denser than continental crust.

Crustal Rock Material - Crust can be either oceanic, which is thin and dense, or continental, which is thick and less dense.

Plate Boundary - The place where two different plates have contact.

Convergent Boundary - Occurs when two tectonic plates move toward each other and collide.

Subduction - The process in which a denser plate is pushed downward beneath a less dense plate when plates converge; occurs at continental to oceanic boundaries and oceanic to oceanic boundaries.

Volcanic Eruptions - Events in which molten rock spews out from the mantle to the surface of Earth as ash, lava, and gases; major geological events that occur when a dense plate subducts below a less dense plate.

Mountain Building - Major geological event that occurs when continental plates of equal density converge, resulting in mountain chains.

Divergent Boundary - Occurs when two tectonic plates move away from each other.

Spreading Ridges - Ridges formed from new crustal material at diverging oceanic plate boundaries.

Ocean Basin - An area of oceanic crust covered by sea water and surrounded by areas of continental crust.

Transform Boundary - Occurs when two tectonic plates slide past each other.

Earthquakes - Major geological events that occur when plates shift suddenly and release stored energy; frequent occurrences along all types of plate boundaries.