



Crystals

What is a crystal?

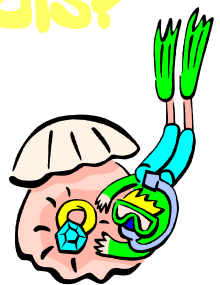
A crystal is rock that has lots of little atoms which have been pushed together in patterns. The patterns are usually little electrons followed by bigger protons in different combinations. The order of the pattern decides how the crystal is shaped. For example salt crystals are always square but quartz is always six-sided.

How crystals are formed.

Crystals form in different ways. The first way is when molten lava cools slowly and the atoms inside the molten lava have enough time to get into place before it turns into rock. A second way, which you can do at home, is by using evaporation. For example, if you mix hot water with salt and then leave it in a small dish, in about three days you will begin to see salt crystals forming.

Where can you find crystals?

About 200 years ago, you were able to find diamonds lying on the ground of the Namibia Desert in Africa. How did this happen? A long time ago the Namibia desert was covered in water. The gems formed under the water but that evaporated and left the gems on the ground. You can still find gems there if you dig for them. Nowadays you can find gems in jewellery stores but you can find crystals all around your house. For example in your sugar bowl or in your salt shaker. You might find some quartz on the ground in the country or if you are lucky some more valuable crystals.



by Debbie