

Classification and Soils Definitions

The vocabulary from Activity 1 on the scientific method is important for all your science lessons. Review the Activity 1 vocabulary, with emphasis on the words *analysis*, *classify*, *compare*, *hypothesis*, *measure*, *observation*, *prediction*, and *variable*.

Aquifer – An underground layer of rock, sand, or gravel that contains slow moving water.

Air – The Earth’s atmosphere (a mixture of gases).

Asteroid – One of thousands of small rocky bodies orbiting the sun; an asteroid “belt” occurs between Mars and Jupiter.

Astrobiologist– A scientist who searches for evidence of life on planets other than Earth.

Atmosphere – The layer of gases that surrounds a planet.

Clay lens – A layer of clay, often found in the soil profile beneath wetlands.

Compost – A mixture of dead and decaying organic leaves and plant material mixed with soil (bacteria in the soil break down the organic matter into soil and nutrients).

Dirt – Soil that is out of place in the human world, like dust on the floor and mud on your shoes.

Erosion – The “wearing away” of the land surface by water, wind, ice, or other processes.

Fossil – Evidence of life in past geologic ages, often preserved in a petrified or mineralized form.

Geologist – A scientist who studies the history and physical nature of the earth.

Groundwater – Underground water within a zone of rock or soil that is “saturated.”

Humus – Very decomposed organic matter (the remains of plants and animals), such as compost, that contains mainly the elements carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulfur.

Kaolinite – A type of clay, usually whitish in color, that is abundant in the Aiken area.

Martian – Something from the planet Mars (example: a *martian* meteorite).

Meteorite – A small piece of rocky matter from space that reaches the surface of the earth; part of a larger meteor.

Microorganisms – Living organisms that are so small that they can only be seen individually through a microscope.

Organic matter –The remains of plants and animals.

Percolation (soil water) – The movement of water down through the soil.

Porosity – The volume of space in a block of soil that it not filled by solid particles.

Satellite – A human-made object or vehicle intended to orbit a planet or other celestial body; a celestial body orbiting another of a larger size.

Soil – The top layer of the Earth's surface; a mixture of minerals and organic matter in which most plants grow and some animals live.

Soil particles – The solid parts of soils, such as sand, silt, and clay that come in different sizes.

Soil profile – All the different layers of soil you would see if you dug a hole in the ground.

Soil texture – Characteristics of soil that can be felt when soil is rubbed between the fingers or seen by observing its appearance.

Texture – A characteristic of a substance that can be felt by using the sense of touch (gritty, silky, etc.) or seen by observing its appearance (smooth, rough, etc.).

Topsoil – The upper layer of soil; contains the greatest amount of decomposed organic matter and plant nutrients.

Weathering – The physical and chemical breakdown of rocks into smaller particles, minerals, and nutrients dissolved in water.