



SEDIMENTARY ROCK

Nature has a way of making sediments each and every day. Dust blowing through the air and landing on your doorstep is sediment. A rock that you throw and a piece chips off as it lands is sediment. Most sedimentary rock is formed under water.

Rocks also get bumped as they roll along at the bottom of a river. The rough edges get chipped off and settle to the bottom. Dirt from the riverbank or runoff from fields also carries soil particles into streams and rivers. Some of this sediment travels great distances before it eventually settles to the bottom of the river or is carried out to the ocean. How can all these particles turn into rock?

The process may take millions of years as more sediment piling on top slowly buries sediment. As the pile gets heavier, the particles near the bottom are squeezed closer and closer together and warmed by the heat of the earth. Under ground water brings new minerals that act like glue to hold the tiny particles together into sedimentary rock.

Another kind of sedimentary rock is formed when skeletons of tiny sea animals called plankton fall to the bottom of the ocean. Shells and other sea life also add to this collection on the ocean floor. All these things piling up on the ocean floor along with the heaviness of the water creates a squeezing pressure that changes the sediment into hard rock. Minerals that are dissolved in the water help to cement the sediment together. Sedimentary rocks are often formed in layers as more and more sediment falls on top of older layers.