

Subject	Geography
Unit/Topic	Year 9 - Plate Tectonics

Key Vocabulary	Definition
Plate Tectonics	A theory that the earth's crust is divided up into a number of large plates that move on top of the mantle.
Continental crust	Layer of rock (35km thick).
Oceanic Crust	Thin layer of rock (7km) under the World's oceans.
Mantle	The thickest layer of the earth (2890km thick), temperatures up to 4000C.
Lithosphere	The crust and very top of the mantle.
Core	Centre of the earth, inner core is solid rock, outer core is liquid.
Plate boundaries	The places where two or more plates meet.
Constructive boundary	Plates are moving apart and creating new land.
Destructive boundary	Plates are moving towards each other with one being forced under the other.
Collision boundary	Plates are moving towards each other and creating fold mountains.
Conservative boundary	Plates are moving alongside each other with no land lost or gained.
Earthquakes	A shaking of the earth's crust caused by plate movement.
Volcanoes	A vent in the earth's crust where magma can be released.
Lava	Molten rock on the surface of the earth.
Subduction	Denser oceanic crust is forced under the continental plate.
Fold mountains	As two plates push against each other the continental plate(s) buckles creating fold mountains.

Fault	A crack in the Earth's crust.
Mid-ocean ridges	When plates pull apart under the oceans partially melted mantle rises and cools forming a ridge.
Rift valleys	Similar to mid ocean ridge but occurs on land, not under the sea.
Focus	The point under the earth's surface from where the earthquake originates.
Seismic (shock) waves	Fast waves of energy released by an earthquake that can travel through rock.
Epicentre	The point directly above the focus on the earth's surface.
Aftershocks	A series of smaller tremors after the main quake event.
Magnitude	The amount of energy released in an earthquake.
Richter scale	A numerical, logarithmic scale from 1 – 9 measuring the magnitude of an earthquake.
Shield Volcano	A gentle sloping volcano found at constructive boundaries with gentle eruptions.
Hotspots	Volcanoes occurring where the oceanic crust is thin, not on plate boundaries.
Composite volcano	Steep sided volcanoes occurring on destructive boundaries giving explosive eruptions.
Pyroclastic flow	A flow of hot ash, rocks, gases and steam travelling at high speed.
Lahar	A mudflow of melted ice and volcanic ash.