

Vocabulary

Study the vocabulary words and definitions below.

- absolute dates** dates that tell how many years have passed since an event took place
- brachiopods** small, clam-like marine invertebrates
- carbon-14** radioactive form of carbon found in living things which is used to determine the age of materials
- cast** a mold that has the same shape as the original fossil and has been filled with hardened sediment
- Cenozoic** the most recent geologic era of Earth; the Age of Mammals
- epoch** subdivision of a period of time in the geologic time scale
- era** the largest division of geologic time
- extinct** no longer living on Earth
- fossils** remains and imprints of life forms that once lived on Earth

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- geologic time scale** the division of Earth into periods of time; the sequence of eras, periods, and epochs
- geologists** scientists who study the origin, history, and structure of Earth and the processes which form and change its surface
- half-life** the time it takes one-half of the atoms of a radioactive sample to decay
- index fossils** fossils that identify the age of the rock in which they occur; also called guide fossils
Example: The trilobite is an index fossil for the middle Cambrian Period.
- law of superposition** principle stating that sedimentary rocks are formed with the oldest layers on the bottom and the youngest on top
- Mesozoic** the geologic era of Earth from 225 million years ago to 65 million year ago; the Age of Reptiles
- mold** the empty cavity of a fossil left in a rock after the original organism has decayed
- paleontologist** scientist who studies fossils
- Paleozoic** the geologic era of Earth from 600 million years ago to 225 million years ago, known for presence of invertebrates, amphibians, and fish; the Age of Invertebrates

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- period** subdivision of an era in the geologic time scale
- petrification** process by which the remains of plants or animals are replaced by stone
- Proterozoic** the first geologic era of Earth, beginning about 3,000 million years ago and lasting until 600 million years ago; the Age of Rocks
- radioactive decay** process used to determine the age of rocks based on the rate at which the radioactive materials in them decay
- rate of erosion** time it takes for land to weather away
- rate of sedimentation** amount of sediment deposited over time
- relative dates** dates that place events in order of when they took place
- revolutions** major changes in Earth's crust due to volcanic activity and crustal movement that marked the end of eras
- trace fossils** imprints from the activities of animals
Example: footprints
- trilobites** small marine invertebrates believed to be the early ancestors of the horseshoe crab