Earth Science Glossary

Name:

Class

Chapter 6A – Tectonic Forces and Earthquakes

Accelerometer
A sensor that detects movement or shaking. Many computers and smartphones have accelerometers that can help detect earthquake vibrations.

Brittle
A material that breaks easily when stress is applied instead of bending. Brittle rocks often cause earthquakes when they suddenly break.

Compression
A type of stress that pushes rocks together.

Convergent Boundary
A place where two tectonic plates move toward each other. One plate may slide under the other or both plates may form mountains.

Ductile
A material that can bend, stretch, or change shape without breaking.

Earthquake
A sudden shaking of the ground caused by the release of energy when rocks break deep underground.

Elasticity
The ability of a material to return to its original shape after being bent or stretched.

Fault
A crack or break in Earth's crust where movement has occurred.

Plate Tectonics
The theory that Earth's surface is divided into large pieces called tectonic plates that move slowly over time.

Seismometer
A scientific instrument that measures and records earthquake waves.

Shear Stress
A type of stress that pushes rocks in opposite directions, causing them to slide past each other.

Strain
The change in shape of a rock or material caused by stress.

Stress
A force applied to rocks that can cause them to bend, stretch, or break.

Subduction
When one tectonic plate slides under another plate and moves into the mantle.

Transform Boundary
A place where two tectonic plates slide past each other horizontally.