

The key to rocks!



Background knowledge

There are many different types of rocks. Rocks are natural matter that are composed of one or more minerals. Some common rocks are granite, limestone, sandstone, chalk, slate, basalt, and flint. They differ in the way they look and their properties. Scientists can use keys to identify rocks.

Science activity

Use the key below to identify these two rocks.



Key to some common rocks

- 1 Does the rock fizz when lemon juice is poured over it? If yes, go to 2; if no, go to 4.
- 2 Is the rock hard? If yes, it is limestone; if no, then go to 3.
- 3 The rock is chalk.
- 4 Does the rock have layers? If yes, go to 7; if no, go to 5.
- 5 Does the rock contain crystals? If yes, it is granite; if no, go to 6.
- 6 The rock is flint.
- 7 Is the rock soft and made of individual grains? If yes, it is sandstone; if no, go to 8.
- 8 The rock is slate.

Science investigation

In addition to rocks, many other things can be identified using a key. Develop a key to identify different types of snails. Consider specific identifying features of the snails. Try the key out on some of your friends to test how useful it is. Write up your results, including a sample of the key that you developed. How useful was your key in identifying a type of snail?

