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Geology

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Quartz

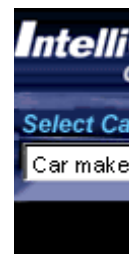


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Quartz is the most common single mineral on Earth. It can be found in almost any geologic setting, but it most typically forms sedimentary rocks like sandstone and is the defining mineral of igneous rocks like [granite](#).

It comes in many colors and shapes, but quartz always has a glassy luster and it always is hardness 7 on the Mohs scale. On the left is a spear of colorless quartz; on the right is a polished slab of a massive milky pink variety (rose quartz). The [Herkimer diamond](#) is a form of quartz crystal. It also can be brown or purple or black, rarely green and other colors depending on the impurities in it. Pure, clear quartz is called rock crystal.

Crystals always show a six-sided outer form, but inside, when you break them, they have almost no cleavage direction. Instead they display a conchoidal fracture, in which the broken surfaces show scooped-out, shell shaped forms. This fracture and the glassy luster are very typical signs



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of quartz.

Quartz also occurs in massive, microcrystalline forms called [chert](#), agate, flint, chalcedony, or jasper depending on various characteristics. The chipped stone tools made by our prehistoric ancestors commonly use these materials.

Sand is generally composed of quartz, and when a clean sandstone is subjected to high pressure and temperature, it metamorphoses into the rock quartzite.

When bodies of igneous rock crystallize deep underground, quartz is generally the last mineral to form, and in these settings it can sometimes form very large crystals, as long as a meter.

Quartz is an old German word that originally meant something like hard or tough.

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