

MAJOR LANDFORMS OF THE EARTH

The surface of the earth is not the same everywhere. The earth has an infinite variety of landforms. Some parts of the lithosphere may be rugged and some flat.

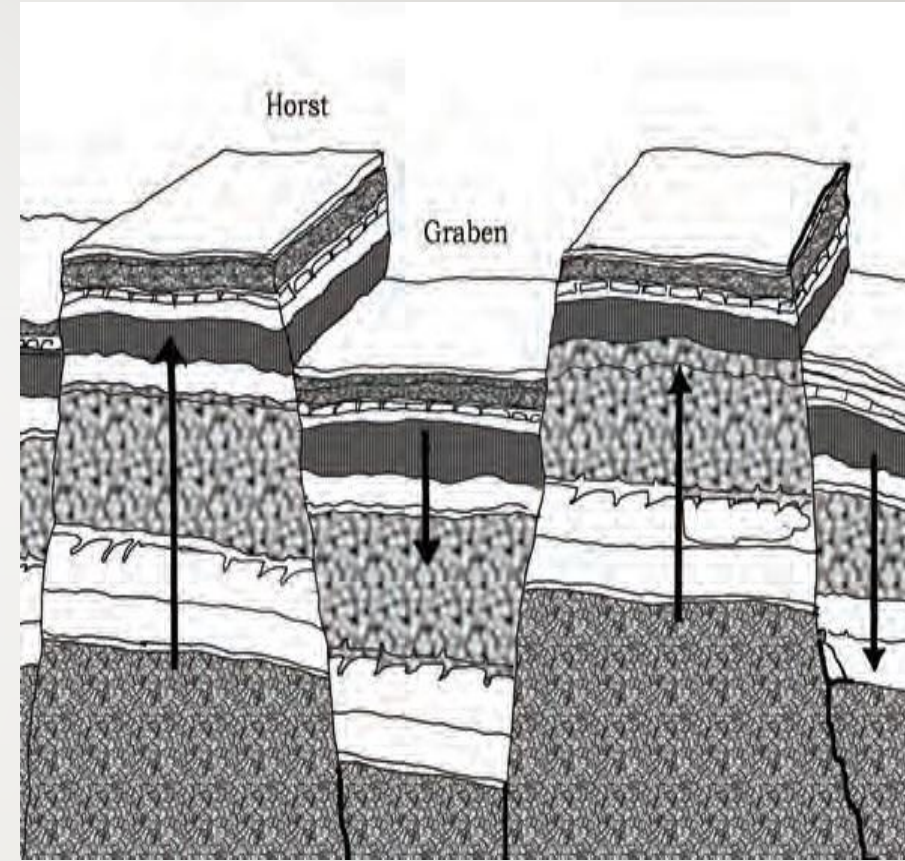
These landforms are a result of two processes. You will be amazed to know that the ground you are standing on is slowly moving. Within the earth, a continuous movement is taking place. The first, or the **internal process** leads to the upliftment and sinking of the earth's surface at several places. The second, or the **external process** is the continuous wearing down and rebuilding of the land surface. The wearing away of the earth's surface is called **erosion**. The surface is being lowered by the process of erosion and rebuilt by the process of **deposition**. These two processes are carried out by running water, ice and wind. We can group different landforms depending on elevation and slope as **mountains, plateaus and plains**.

MOUNTAINS

A **mountain** is any natural elevation of the earth surface. The mountains may have a small summit and a broad base. In some mountains, there are permanently frozen rivers of ice. They are called **glaciers**. Mountains may be arranged in a line known as **range**. The Himalayas, the Alps and the Andes are mountain ranges of Asia, Europe and South America, respectively. Mountains vary in their heights and shape.

There are three types of mountains- **Fold Mountains, Block Mountains and the Volcanic Mountains**. The Himalayan Mountains and the Alps are young fold mountains with rugged relief and high conical peaks.

The Aravalli range in India is one of the oldest fold mountain systems in the world. The range has considerably worn down due to the processes of erosion. The Appalachians in North America and the Ural mountains in Russia have rounded features and low elevation. They are very old fold mountains. **Block Mountains** are created when large areas are broken and displaced vertically. The uplifted blocks are termed as **horsts** and the lowered blocks are called **graben**.



PLATEAUS

A plateau is an elevated flat land. It is a flat-topped **table land** standing above the surrounding area. Deccan plateau in India is one of the oldest plateaus. The East African Plateau in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and the Western plateau of Australia are other **examples**. **The Tibet plateau is the**

A plateau is an elevated flat land. It is a flat-topped **table land** standing above the surrounding area. highest plateau in the world with a height of 4,000 to 6,000 meters above the mean sea level.

Plateaus are very useful because they are rich in mineral deposits. The African plateau is famous for gold and diamond mining. In India huge reserves of iron, coal and manganese are found in the Chhotanagpur plateau.



PLAINS

Plains are large stretches of flat land. They are, generally, not more than 200 meters above mean sea level. Most of the plains are formed by rivers and their tributaries. The rivers flow down the slopes of mountains and erode them. They carry forward the eroded material. Then they deposit their load consisting of stones, sand and silt along their courses and in their valleys. It is from these deposits that plains are formed.

Construction of transport network is easy.

- These plains are very thickly-populated regions of the world.
- Plains are the most useful areas for human habitation.
- There is great concentration of people as more flat land is available for building houses, as well as for cultivation.
- Because of fertile soils, the land is highly productive for cultivation.
- Example- the Indo-Gangetic plains.



LANDFORMS AND THE PEOPLE

Natural calamities such as earthquakes, volcanic eruption, storms and floods cause widespread destruction. Huge loss of life and property takes place. By creative awareness about such incidences we may lower the risks. Humans have been living on different kinds of landforms in different ways. Life is difficult in mountainous areas. Plains provide much better conditions. It is easy to grow crops, build a house or a road in a plain than a mountain. Quite often we use the land in a wasteful manner, for example constructing houses on a fertile land. Similarly we throw garbage on land or in water making them dirty. We should avoid using such important gifts of nature in a careless manner. The available land is not only for our use. It is our duty to leave the earth a better place for future generations as well.

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