

What is a mineral?

a naturally occurring, inorganic solid that has a crystal structure and a fixed chemical composition

S - must be a solid - not a liquid or a gas

N - must be found or made in nature - naturally occurring

I - cannot be made from living things - inorganic

F - made from two or more elements - fixed chemical composition

C - must have a crystal formation - crystal

How are minerals identified?

Color - the observed color of the outside of the specimen

Streak - the color of the specimen's powder (streak plate or sand paper)

Luster - how light reflects from the specimen (shiny or dull)

Hardness - how soft or hard the specimen is (Moh's Hardness Scale)

Breakage - how the specimen splits

Cleavage - specimen splits easily along flat surfaces

Fracture - specimen splits in an irregular way - jagged edges

Special Properties - magnetic; fluorescent; radioactive
(use a magnet; use a black light; use a Geiger Counter)