What is a mountain?



A mountain is a geological landform that rises above the surrounding land. Typically a mountain will rise at least 1,000 feet above sea level. Some mountains exceed 10,000 feet above sea level with the highest mountain in the world, Mount Everest, rising 29,036 feet. Small mountains (below 1,000 feet) are usually called hills.

How are mountains formed?

Mountains are most often formed by movement of the **tectonic plates** in the Earth's crust. Great mountain ranges like the Himalayas often form along the boundaries of these plates.
Tectonic plates move very slowly. It can take millions and millions of years for mountains to form.

Types of Mountains

There are three main types of mountains: Fold Mountains, fault-block Mountains, and volcanic mountains. They get their names from how they were formed.

- **Fold Mountains** - Fold Mountains are formed when two plates run into each other or collide. The force of the two plates running into each other causes the Earth's crust to crumple and fold. Many of the world's great mountain ranges are Fold Mountains including the Andes, Himalayas, and the Rockies.
- **Fault-block Mountains** - Fault-block Mountains are formed along faults (when tectonic plates move away from each other and create long gaps in the ground). The Sierra Nevada Mountains in the western United States are fault-block Mountains.
- **Volcanic Mountains** - Mountains that are caused by volcanic activity are called volcanic mountains or volcanos. Volcanoes are formed when magma erupts all the way to the surface of the Earth. The magma will harden on the Earth's surface, forming a mountain. Examples of volcanic mountains include Mount Fuji in Japan and Mount Mauna Loa in Hawaii.