

# Identifying Rocks and Minerals

**FQ: How do geologists identify rocks and minerals?**

**Color** - one of the least reliable ways to identify

- Trace elements can change its color

**Luster** - the way a mineral reflects light

- Metallic, nonmetallic, shiny, glassy, dull

**Texture** - the way a mineral feels

- Smooth, rough, ragged, greasy, waxy

**Streak** - the color of the powder of a rock or mineral after scratching it on a streak plate

- Sometimes the streak does not match the outside color

**Hardness** - How easily the rock or mineral can be scratched

- This is one of the most useful and reliable tests for identification