

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

STAAR Earth and Space Vocabulary

1. Abrasion-the grinding and wearing away of rock surfaces by contact with other rock pieces.
2. Acid rain-rain with a pH below 5.6.
3. Air mass-a large body of air that has the same properties throughout.
4. Air pressure-the weight of the air pressing at a given location.
5. Aquifer-an area that has a large amount of groundwater (water underneath the ground).
6. Asteroid-a small, rocky body that revolves around the Sun.
7. Asthenosphere-the soft layer within the mantle that flows like a very thick liquid.
8. Astronaut-a person who travels into space from the United States of America.
9. Axis-an imaginary line that runs through the center of a planet from one pole to the other.
10. Big Bang Theory-a scientific theory of the origin of the universe that holds that all matter and energy were once packed into a tiny particle smaller than a piece of dust, which suddenly started to expand.
11. Chemical weathering-a process that breaks rock down into smaller pieces as a result of chemical reaction.
12. Chromosphere-a layer of the sun's atmosphere, above the photosphere.
13. Comet-a body of ice, dust, and small, gritty particles that orbits the Sun.
14. Conduction-the transfer of heat by direct contact of particles.
15. Continental crust-the lighter, older, and thicker part of the crust, which makes up the continents.
16. Continental drift-the slow movement of the continents across Earth's surface.
17. Contour interval-the differences in elevation between any two contour lines.
18. Contour line-a line on a topographic map that connects areas with the same elevation.
19. Convection-the transfer of heat in fluids by the movement of currents (low temps sinking, hot rising) that form in fluids.
20. Core-Earth's innermost layer.
21. Coriolis Effect-the curving of the paths of winds and ocean currents because of Earth's rotation.
22. Corona-the outermost layer of the Sun's atmosphere.
23. Crust-the outermost layer of Earth.
24. Deep current-a convection current in the ocean that results from difference in temperature and density.
25. Density-the ratio of mass to volume of a substance.
26. Earthquake-the shaking of the Earth's surface due to plate movement.
27. Elliptical galaxy-a galaxy that has an oval or near spherical shape.
28. Elliptical orbit-an orbit shaped like a flattened circle or elongated oval.
29. Equator-an imaginary line that divides Earth horizontally.
30. Equinox-a point in Earth's orbit when the planet is tilted neither toward nor away from the Sun.
31. Erosion-a process by which weathered rock is picked up and moved to new places.
32. Fault-a break, or crack, in Earth's surface along which rock has moved.
33. Field study-a scientific investigation carried out in a natural setting.
34. Fold-a ripple in Earth's crust formed when rock layers are squeezed together and pushed upward.
35. Fossil fuel-an energy resource that formed over millions of years from the decayed remains of ancient plants and animals.
36. Front-the boundary between two air masses.
37. Full moon-the phase when all of the whole sunlit side of the moon faces Earth.
38. Galaxy-a very large group of stars, solar systems, space dust, and gases held together by gravity.
39. Geothermal energy-heat energy from inside Earth that can be used to heat buildings and produce electricity.

40. Glacier-a large mass of ice that moves slowly over land.
41. Global wind-a wind that blows steadily in a path for thousands of kilometers.
42. Groundwater-water that is below Earth's surface.
43. Heat-the flow of thermal energy.
44. Hertzsprung-Russell diagram-a graph that plots the relationship between a star's average surface temperature and its brightness; also called H-R diagram.
45. High tide-a tide when the water is at its highest level.
46. High pressure area-an area where the air is slowly sinking.
47. Hot spot-an area of volcanic activity near the middle of a tectonic plate.
48. Humidity-the amount of water vapor in the air.
49. Hydroelectric energy-energy obtained from the kinetic energy of flowing water.
50. Igneous rock-rock that forms when melted rock (magma or lava) cools and hardens.
51. Inner planets-the four planets closest to the sun (Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars).
52. International Space Station (ISS)-a research laboratory that orbits Earth.
53. Irregular galaxy-a galaxy that does not have a particular shape.
54. Island arc-a long, curved chain of islands that form from volcanic activity.
55. Lava-melted rock that reaches Earth's surface.
56. Light-year-the distance that light travels in one year-about 9.5 trillion kilometers.
57. Lithosphere-Earth's crust and the rigid upper part of the mantle.
58. Low tide-a tide when the water is at its lowest level.
59. Low pressure area-an area where the air is slowly rising.
60. Luster-the way a mineral reflects light.
61. Magma-melted rock below Earth's surface.
62. Mantle-the middle layer of Earth, located between the crust and the core.
63. Mechanical weathering-a process that breaks rock into smaller pieces by physical means without changing its chemical composition.
64. Metamorphic rock-rock formed from other rock changed chemically by high heat and pressure inside Earth.
65. Meteor-a streak of light produced by a meteoroid passing through Earth's atmosphere.
66. Meteorite-a meteoroid that lands on Earth.
67. Meteoroid-a small piece of rock that breaks free from an asteroid or comet and travels through the solar system.
68. Mid ocean ridge-a large chain of volcanic mountains on the ocean floor, formed where lava erupted between oceanic plates.
69. Milky Way-the spiral galaxy to which the sun belongs.
70. Mineral-a solid, nonliving material that is made up of crystals and is usually found in the ground.
71. Model-a representation of an object, system, or process.
72. Mohs scale-a way to rank the hardness of minerals from 1 to 10, with 1 being the softest and 10 being the hardest.
73. Moon-a natural body that revolves around a planet.
74. Neap tide- a tide with the least difference between high tide and low tide.
75. Nebula-a huge cloud of gas and dust particles in space.
76. New moon-the phase when the whole sunlit side of the moon faces away from Earth.
77. Nonrenewable energy resource-a natural energy supply that cannot be replaced as quickly as it is used.
78. Northern hemisphere-the half of Earth north of the equator.
79. Ocean basin-a part of Earth's surface covered by ocean water.

80. Oceanic crust-the rock that makes up the ocean floor.
81. Orbit-the path that a revolving body follows.
82. Outer planets-the four planets farthest from the sun (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune).
83. Pangaea-a large landmass of the distant past that included all of today's continents.
84. Parallax-the apparent shift in the position of an object when viewed from two different places.
85. Phase-a shape of the sunlit portion of the moon visible from Earth.
86. Photosphere-the surface of the sun, which gives off most of the light that Earth receives.
87. Planet-a round body in space that moves in a curved path around a star, such as our sun.
88. Plate boundary-the region where two tectonic plates meet.
89. Renewable energy resource-a natural energy supply that is replaced as quickly as it is used or that cannot be used up.
90. Revolution-the movement of a body in space around another body.
91. Rift valley-a valley that forms as two continental plates pull apart and new crust forms in the space between them.
92. Rock cycle-the process through which rock slowly but continuously changes from one type of rock to another.
93. Rotation-the spinning of a planet (or other body) on its axis.
94. Runoff-water that flows over land.
95. Satellite-an object that revolves around another object, such as a planet.
96. Satellite image-a photograph taken from a satellite.
97. Seafloor spreading-the process in which new ocean floor forms from magma released at boundaries between two oceanic plates.
98. Sediment-small pieces of broken down rock that is deposited in a new place usually by wind, water, gravity, or ice (glaciers).
99. Sedimentary rock-rock formed when layers of sediment are compacted and cemented together.
100. Seismic wave-a wave of energy that travels away from the center of an earthquake in all directions.
101. Solar energy-energy from the sun.
102. Solar flare-a sudden explosion on the sun's surface.
103. Solar prominence-a huge, reddish loop of gas above the surface of the sun.
104. Solar system-a star and all the planets, moons, and other objects that revolve around it.
105. Solstice-a point in Earth's orbit when a hemisphere is tilted toward or away from the sun as far as possible.
106. Southern hemisphere-the half of Earth south of the equator.
107. Space probe-an unmanned spacecraft used to explore other parts of the solar system.
108. Spectroscope-a device that can analyze visible light by acting like a prism.
109. Spiral galaxy-a galaxy that has "arms" that wind outward from the center, resembling a pinwheel.
110. Spring tide-a tide with the greatest difference between high tide and low tide.
111. Star-a sphere of hot, glowing gases (H, He) that gives off its own light and is held together by gravity.
112. Star cluster-a group of stars with similar characteristics that are located near each other.
113. Streak-the color of the powder left behind by rubbing a mineral on a plate.
114. Subduction zone-the region where one tectonic plate slides under another tectonic plate.
115. Sunspot-a dark area on the sun's surface.
116. Surface current-a current in the ocean caused by wind moving across the surface of the ocean.
117. Sustainable use-taking no more of a resource than can be replaced.
118. Tectonic plate-one of the large sections into which the lithosphere is broken.

119. Theory of natural selection-a scientific theory stating that organisms that are best suited to a particular environment are most likely to survive and reproduce.
120. Theory of plate tectonics-a scientific theory stating that Earth's crust is made up of several rigid plates that move on the Asthenosphere.
121. Thermal energy-the energy of the moving particles that make up all matter.
122. Tidal energy-energy obtained by harnessing the kinetic (moving) energy of the rise and fall of ocean tides.
123. Tide-the regular rise and fall of the surface of Earth's oceans.
124. Topographic map-a map that shows the elevation of natural and artificial features of a region.
125. Volcano-an opening in Earth's surface through which magma is released.
126. Waning-decreasing; used to describe phases of the moon when less of the lit side is becoming visible from Earth.
127. Watershed-an area of land that drains into a stream, river, lake, or other body of water.
128. Waxing-increasing; used to describe phases of the moon when more of the lit side is becoming visible from Earth.
129. Weather-the condition of the atmosphere at a certain time and place.
130. Weathering-a process by which rock is broken down into small pieces.
131. Wind-moving air.
132. Wind energy-energy obtained from moving air.