

Property Descriptions and Testing Procedures:

Color: This is probably the most easily observed property of minerals. However, color often varies widely and is the least reliable property for identification.

Streak: The color of the mineral when powdered. To test for streak, draw the mineral against an unglazed porcelain tile (streak plate). Streak is more useful for identification than color is.

Hardness: A mineral's hardness is its resistance to scratching.

Mohs Scale of Hardness, this scale uses common everyday objects to test hardness of each mineral sample. Below is the resulting table.

Moh's scale of Hardness	
Rating	Object used to test Hardness
1	
2	Fingernail-2.5
3	Penny-3.5
4	Nail-4.5
5	Glass-5.5
6	Steel file-6.5
7	Streak plate-7
8-10	Diamond -10

Cleavage or fracture: These two properties refer to the way in which a mineral breaks. Cleavage is an orderly breakage in well-defined planes, meaning the mineral has flat sides. Fracture is a random breakage. If a mineral breaks with rough, random surfaces, it is said to have fracture.

Heft: Compare the relative "heft" of a mineral by holding it in your hand and comparing it to other minerals of about the same size. In general, metallic minerals are heavier than non-metallic minerals. For ease, minerals are classified as 1.) light, 2.) heavy, 3.) very heavy.

Luster: Refers to the way that a mineral reflects light. The simplest distinction is between metallic luster (shiny and gold or silver color) and nonmetallic luster (does not look like a metal in color, although it may be shiny). Particular types of nonmetallic luster include pearly, vitreous (glassy), silky, and earthy (dull).

Other Tests:

MAGNET TEST: if one of your rocks is attracted to a magnet, it may be magnetite. But check all the other properties too because other iron ores are also easily magnetized.
