

## Earthquakes

What would you think if the earth started to shake? It actually happens all the time. When the earth shakes and shifts, it is called an “earthquake.” Earthquakes happen all over the world and in all seasons of the year. If you could look below the earth's surface, you would see four different layers. The layer below the surface is called the crust. The crust looks like pieces of a puzzle, and these puzzle pieces are called “tectonic plates.” These plates can move together, move apart, or rub past each other. A “fault line” is where the edges of the plates meet and move. When the edges of the plates along a fault line move, an earthquake happens on the surface of the earth. Most earthquakes in the world occur along these fault lines.

Some earthquakes can be strong and felt for miles while others are mild and go unnoticed. The size of an earthquake is called its “magnitude,” and it is measured with a “Richter scale.” A mild earthquake would measure between two and four on the Richter scale and would cause very little damage. An earthquake that measures six or greater would be widely felt and cause a great deal of damage. Most earthquakes that occur around the world measure less than 2.5 on the Richter scale. Occasionally, large earthquakes occur that cause severe damage. Unfortunately, scientists are not able to predict when an earthquake will occur, so people that live around fault lines must always be prepared.