

Fossil Fuels



Study*ladder*

What Are Fossil Fuels?

Fossil fuels are hydrocarbons formed from the remains of dead plants and marine microorganisms. These can be burned as fuel.

Fossil fuels include:

- coal
- oil
- natural gas

Coal

Coal is the remains of ancient vegetation that has been compacted under layers of sediment for millions of years.

The combination of pressure and heat from tectonic activity cause chemical changes in the structure of the organic material.

Over time, peat is formed, then the peat turns into lignite (brown coal). Eventually, lignite will turn into sub-bituminous coal (black lignite), then bituminous coal (black coal) and finally anthracite (hard coal).



dried peat



brown coal



black coal

Oil and Natural Gas

Petroleum oil and natural gas are the remains of marine microorganisms that have been compacted under layers of sediment for millions of years.

Heat and pressure turn the organic material into a waxy substance called kerogen. After more time and heat this turns into liquid oil and gas.

Oil and natural gas can be found in pockets trapped between layers of rock. They can be reached by drilling down through the rock layers.

