

## How Soil is Formed

There is a thin layer of soil on the Earth, which is only a few metres deep. It is very important, though, as plants need it in order to grow and, without plants, there would be no animals or humans.

Two things happen in order to make soil. One works from above, the other from below.

Beneath the soil is a layer of solid rock. Over millions of years, tiny particles wear off the surface of this rock. They mix with water to form a thick paste.

If the grains are large, they make a sandy soil, whereas if they are small, they make clay. Water drains through sand easily, because of the gaps between the grains. It does not drain through clay, though.

The second thing that happens is that when plants and animals die, they fall onto the ground. They then rot and the ground absorbs their nutrients.

Rain washes the rotting plants and animals down and they mix with the thick paste from the rocks to form soil. Underground creatures such as worms help blend everything together as they tunnel through the soil.

1. What is soil and why is it so important?

2. What is the underground process that helps form soil?

3. What is the over-ground process that helps form soil?

4. How do the the two parts of the soil get mixed together?