

Activity: What is soil made of?

<http://www.soil-net.com>

Why is each of these important in soil?



silt

sand

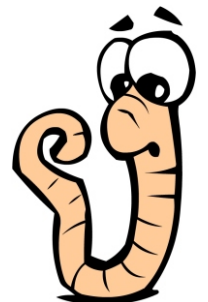
clay

organic matter

water

air

animals



Which one of these is there most of in soil?





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This activity helps students to understand the components that make up soil and their importance.

Sand particles: form lightweight, free-draining soils; cannot hold onto nutrients

Clay particles: hold water well; can become heavy and waterlogged when wet; can hold onto nutrients.

Silt particles: hold water; can be hard to drain; can hold only limited nutrients.

All soil contains sand, silt and clay particles, but in differing proportions. Sand particles are the biggest, then silt and finally clay.

Water: clings to soil particles; is taken up by plant roots.

Air: fills gaps in soil; allows the plant roots and animals to 'breathe'.

Just under half, about 35 to 40%, of a good soil is made up of water and air! So 'Which one is there most of' - could be air!

Organic matter: includes manure, leaf mould and compost; releases nutrients slowly as it rots; improves water holding. You can say it helps stick the soil together!

Animals: includes insects, bacteria and earthworms; help to break down dead materials.

Soil is all around us; in the school playground, at the park and in our gardens. We need to look after our soil.

Suggested key words for class discussion:

Sand, Nutrients, Water holding, Silt, Drainage, Organic matter, Clay, Particles, Air, Animals, Rot, Dead material

