Authors:	Tucker, Maurice E.
Keywords:	Rocks Sedimentary Geology
Issue Date:	1996
Publisher:	Open University Press
URI:	http://10.6.20.12:80/handle/123456789/20391
ISBN:	0-470-27239-2
Appears in Collections:	Earth Sciences

Files in This Item:

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Maurice E. Tucker_1996.pdf		30.47 MB	Adobe PDF	View/Open

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Sedimentary rocks are one of the three great rock classes (along with igneous and metamorphic rocks). Learn about how they form and their characteristics. The main thing about sedimentary rocks is that they were once sediment — mud and sand and gravel and clay — and were not greatly changed as they turned into rock. The following traits are all related to that. They're generally arranged in layers of sandy or clayey material (strata) like those you'll see in excavations or a hole dug in a sand dune. Sedimentary rocks fall into two broad categories, and they do not share a specific set of features. You really should pick up a textbook because pictures (and actual hand specimens and a hand lens) do help hugely. Detrital (clastic) sedimentary rocks are made of particles that are arranged in patterns expected from settling in water or through the atmosphere. However, the particles can be very diverse in shape, size (from microscopic shells in chalk, to huge blocks in conglomerates) and origin (fossilized remains of organisms are reliable indicators of a sedimentary origin, while grains or chu Thorpe and Brown: The Field Description of Igneous Rocks McClay: The Mapping of Geological Structures. Hancock: The Field Description ofBrittle Structures. (in preparation). .. , , 'r. Table 2.1 Broad scheme for the study of sedimentary rocks in the field, together with reference to appropriate chapters in this book. A Identify lithology by establishing mineralogy/composition of rock; see. Chapter 3. B Examine texture of rock: grain shape and roundness, sorting, fabric and colour; see Chapter 4. C Look for sedimentary structures on bedding surfaces and undersurfaces, anf\l within beds; see Chapter 5. D Deduce the geometry of the sedimentary rock beds, units and bodies; see Section 5.7.