



HOME DEMO NO. 29

Move Mountains

Earth's crust is made up of tectonic plates. And we're not talking fine china, we're talking gigantic pieces of earth. And these things are moving all of the time! They're floating around on the Earth's mantle, a layer of hot molten rock that is under the plates and surrounds the very hot center of the Earth.

The continents are part of the tectonic plates. And the ocean sloshes over the top of them. As the plates flow over the molten mantle, islands, oceans, and whole continents move too! Sometimes you can feel the plates move as they collide. That's an earthquake! Most of the time we can't really see the plates moving -- they only go about 2 centimeters (less than one inch) every year. It is possible to see a result caused by colliding tectonic plates. If two cars crash, the hard outsides crumple up. The same thing happens with tectonic plates, but instead of trips to repair shops, you get big rocky mountains.

Use some muscle to make mountains!

What you need:

1. A big flat table or hard floor
2. A sheet of newspaper

What you do:

1. Lay the newspaper flat on the table or floor.
2. Put the palms of your hands on the paper about a foot apart.
3. Now slowly push your hands together and let the papers touch at a little bit of an angle.

What's happening?

The middle of the papers lifts up off the floor, crumpling as you push. You get mountains just like the Himalayas or the Rockies only, well... smaller.

Science rocks in a big way!