

Describing Physical Properties of Matter

By Cindy Grigg

Look around you. You see many different things. You may see rock. You may see metal. You may see paper. You may see plastics. We call these things matter. Matter is everything around us.

You know that these things are different. Rock is not like paper. Metal is not like plastic. Different things have different physical properties -- the things we can see, touch, or sometimes even taste or smell. Color, size, and texture are just three physical properties. There are many more.

Physical properties can be used to describe an object. Texture is the way something feels when you touch it. Paper feels smooth. Sandpaper feels rough. Rough and smooth describe texture. Other words are used to describe other physical properties. Rocks are hard. Some things can float. Some things are stretchy. Some things feel hard. Some things feel soft.

Certain materials are used to make certain objects. Glass is good for windows because it is clear. It lets light come through it. You can see through it. But wind and bugs cannot pass through it. Glass can be described as solid and clear. Cloth is used to make our clothes. It is soft and warm. It bends with our bodies. Metal would not be a good material for clothing! Metal feels cold. It cannot bend where we bend.

Physical properties can be measured. Elastic is used in some clothes so they can stretch. Your sock can stretch with your foot as it moves and grows. The amount of stretch can be measured with a ruler. Other physical properties can be measured, too.

Matter can be solid. It can be liquid. It can be gas. We call these the states of matter. Water can be found in all three states. Ice is water in the solid state. Water in a lake is usually in the liquid state. When water is a gas, we can't see it. It becomes part of the air around us.

The matter around us is not all the same. It has different shapes and colors. It has different textures and properties. Matter can be solid, liquid, or gas. You can use your senses of sight, touch, smell, and taste to describe the physical properties of different types of matter. The way an object is used is suited to its physical



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properties.

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Questions

- ____ 1. One state of matter is:
- A. gasoline
 - B. square
 - C. solid
- ____ 2. Water can be found in _____ states of matter.
- A. two
 - B. three
 - C. one
3. What are two words used in the story to describe texture, how something feels?
- _____
- _____
- ____ 4. Color, size, and texture are three _____.
- A. materials
 - B. physical properties
 - C. states of matter
- ____ 5. Which of these choices is a fact?
- A. Matter can only have three physical properties.
 - B. We use our sense of sight and nothing else to learn physical properties of matter.
 - C. Materials are chosen to make things based on their physical properties.
- ____ 6. Water is always a liquid.
- A. true
 - B. false

