

What Are Earthquakes?

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Earthquakes are natural disasters that humans can't control. They are the shaking of the earth's surface. The earth makes these natural earthquakes in order to release pressure. More than a million earthquakes happen in the world each year. Earthquakes usually last less than a minute but you can feel them, especially over large areas. The scary thing about earthquakes is that they begin with no warning. But, scientists are still working on the problem.

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There are about 20 plates* along the surface of the earth that move slowly all the time next to each other. When the plates touch each other, huge rocks are created and explode with great power, causing an earthquake. As the plates move, they put pressure on themselves and each other. When the pressure is large enough, the crust** is forced to break.

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Shaking and ground breaking are the main effects created by earthquakes. After an earthquake is over, buildings are usually damaged and people get hurt or even killed. The amount of damage depends on the level of the earthquake which is measured by Richter Scale***.

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So what should you do when earthquake begins? If you are inside a building you should take cover under a table. If you are outside, you should stay out in an open space. Because you don't get a warning before an earthquake always be prepared with a radio, a first aid kit and a bottle of water.

**plates- layers of rocks at the crust*

***crust -outer portion of the earth*

****Richter Scale - rating system used to grade the intensity of earthquakes*