

Mineral Guide for Chaperones



How to use this sheet: Here are some minerals your students may have studied in class, or are just interested in. This sheet will help you find the minerals in the museum gallery and lists some things to point out or discuss with your students as you look. Be careful! Some samples show one mineral growing on top of another mineral.

Note about case numbers: Numbers with a "W" in front of them indicate that the case is located along one of the gallery walls.

Calcite (Cases W11, W12, W29, 37, 38)

- Calcite comes in many colors, but is often clear or white.
- Calcite often grows in the shape of a rhombus.
- Calcite often forms when calcium separates from a water mixture (a process called precipitation). This is how stalactites form.

Copper (Cases W2, 4)

- Copper is an element.
- Copper found in large chunks, such as the samples here, is called Native Copper.
- Copper is soft and malleable.
- Copper may turn green like an old penny or the Statue of Liberty.

Feldspar (Cases W23, W24, 76)

- Feldspar is the name for a group of minerals including albite, orthoclase, and microcline.
- There are many kinds, and many colors of feldspar.
- Look at the labradorite. Notice the way the surface changes color if you move where you stand.

Fluorite (Cases W9, W10, 32, 33)

- Fluorite comes in many colors.
- Fluorite often grows in a cube shape.
- Very clear fluorite can act as a prism.

Galena (Cases W3, W35, 9)

- Galena often grows in the shape of a cube. If you break a chunk of galena into pieces, the pieces will also be shaped like cubes.
- Galena is usually dark gray & very shiny.
- Galena is very heavy. This is because it contains lead, which is very dense.

Gold (Cases W1, 3)

- Gold has a bright, yellow color.
- Gold is very soft. If you hit gold with a hammer, you will flatten it.
- Gold is very rare, but is most often found as flakes or nuggets.

Gypsum (Cases W14, 50, also see large sample in center of gallery)

- Gypsum forms when water evaporates and leaves behind calcium and sulfur.
- Gypsum can grow in the shape of a flower. This kind of gypsum is often red and is called a desert rose.
- Gypsum can sometimes grow in the shape of an "X."

Halite (Cases W10, 34)

- Halite is often colorless, but not always! What other colors do you see?
- Halite often grows in the shape of a cube.
- Halite is the mineral name for rock salt (this is the kind of salt we often use on food).

Hematite (Cases W8, W29)

- Hematite can be black or red.
- Sparkly hematite is called specular hematite.
- A cluster of hematite crystals can grow in the shape of petals on a rose.

Hornblende (Cases W18, 71)

- Hornblende is one mineral in the group of amphibole minerals.
- Hornblende is usually dark green or black.
- Hornblende is a common mineral in metamorphic rocks.

Magnetite (Cases W7, 25)

- Magnetite often grows in a cube or diamond shape.
- All magnetite is attracted to magnets.
- Some magnetite will act like a magnet and attract metal. This type of magnetite is called lodestone.

Mica (Cases W17, 67, 68, 69)

- Mica is the name for a group of minerals including biotite, muscovite, and phlogopite.
- Mica grows in very thin sheets.
- Mica is often found in New England. You may see mica in rocks if you go for a hike in Massachusetts.

Pyrite (Cases W3, W4, W6, 11)

- Pyrite is called fool's gold for its yellow color and metallic luster.
- Pyrite, unlike gold, often grows in a cube shape.
- Look for the pyrite that is shaped like a circle. Pyrite like this is found in only one place in the world! It is called a "sun."

Quartz (Cases W21, W22, W28 77, 78, also see large amethyst in center of gallery)

- Quartz comes in many colors. Purple quartz is called amethyst; yellow quartz is called citrine.
- Quartz often grows in a six-sided shape.
- Opal is quartz that formed with extra water mixed in with its crystals. This makes opal look milky.

Ruby and Sapphire (Case 1, 19)

- Ruby & sapphire are kinds of corundum.
- Red corundum is called ruby, but many colors of corundum are called sapphire, not just blue!
- Look at the rubies and sapphires in the case and see where they were found. Different colors of corundum come from different places.