

Focus

Location on the fault plane in the lithosphere where the earthquake occurs. (Also known as the hypocenter.)

Epicenter

Location on the surface of the Earth directly above the focus.

Seismic Wave

Any of three types of energy waves generated by an earthquake that carry energy away from the focus.

P Wave

Primary (compressional) waves generated by an earthquake. Fastest. Can move through solids and liquids.

S Wave

Secondary (shearing) waves generated by an earthquake. Slower than P waves. Can only move through solids.

Surface Wave

Seismic wave that only follows the Earth's surface. Much slower than S waves.

Seismograph

Instrument for recording ground movement. Produces seismograms.

Magnitude (Moment Magnitude Scale)

The size of an earthquake. Magnitude is a measure of how much energy is released by the quake. It is measured on an open-ended scale. The largest earthquake to date was 9.5. The magnitude does not change with your location.

Mercalli Scale (Modified Mercalli Scale)

The intensity of an earthquake any specific location. A measure of the destructiveness of the earthquake.

Triangulation

Method used to find the location of an earthquake's epicenter. Requires at least three recording stations.