

Plate Tectonics Lab Answers Sheet Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 1.1: Recognizing Plates and Plate Boundaries**

Use **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** and your lecture notes to complete the following:

- What is the name of the plate on which the United States resides? **The North American Plate**
- Does this plate consist of continental lithosphere, ocean lithosphere, or both? **Both**
- Where does the lithosphere of the Atlantic Ocean form? **It is formed at the mid-atlantic ridge**
- What kind of plate boundary occurs along the west coast of South America? **Convergent boundary**
- Is the west coast of Africa a plate boundary? **Yes it is considered a divergent boundary.**
- What is the rate of plate motion of the Nazca Plate near the East Pacific Rise? **13.9**
- What is the rate of plate motion of the African Plate near the Mid-Atlantic Ridge? **2.5-3.0**
- What is the rate of plate motion of the Pacific Plate near the San Andreas Transform? **5.5**
- Using **Figure 1**, do transform margins and divergent margins have deep, intermediate, or shallow focus earthquakes? **Shallow focus earthquakes**
- Which plate margin has deep focus earthquakes? **Convergent plate margin**
- In lecture, the zone of earthquakes in the subduction zone is called the \_\_\_\_\_ zone.

**Activity 1.2: Evidence from the Fit of Continents**

As far back as 500 years, cartographers noted that the coastlines of South America and west Africa looked as if they might fit together once in a larger continent (**Figure 3**).

- Sketch the shorelines of South America and Africa in **Figure 3** on separate pieces of tracing paper. Cutout your tracings using scissors. Rearrange the continents so that they fit snugly without overlapping or leaving large gaps. **Take a pic of your coastline fit.** You will include this pic in your lab submittal.
- Note where there are problem areas in your coastline fit.

**When connecting the cut outs, the problem areas are the gaps and overlaps of the coastlines of South America and Africa. The continental crust extends well beneath the continental shelf areas to the continental slope.**

- If Africa and South America rifted tens of millions of years ago, would their shorelines be the best indicators of the shapes of the original pieces or the true extent of either continent?

**No, the current shorelines of Africa and South America are not indicators of the continents when they were rifted apart, because of some gaps, overlaps, and mismatches.**

Explain what factors other than rifting and sea-floor spreading could have modified the shape of the current shorelines.

**Erosion is caused by longshore currents and the erosion products are deposited in another place. So the place which is eroded and the place where deposition occurs both changes in their shape. Sometimes erosion and deposition both occur due to wind. So due to repeated erosions and depositions, the shapes of the current shorelines could have been modified.**

- In **Figure 3**, what are the submerged light blue colored areas at the edges of the continents called? **Continental Shelves**

e. Trace the outlines of the continents again, this time using the edges of their continental shelves rather than the shorelines. Rearrange the continents with their continental shelves and **take a pic of your reconstruction** (you will also include this pic in your submittal). Which reconstruction produced the best fit? **South America and Africa Continental shelves produced the best fit.**

f. Based on this evidence, what is the true edge of a continent? **The edge of a continental shelf and not the coastline.**

- When you fit the continents together, you could rotate them however you wished. However, **Figure 3** also

# Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers

**United States. Energy Research and  
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## **Table of Contents Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers**

1. Understanding the eBook Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - The Rise of Digital Reading Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Exploring Different Genres
  - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
  - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
  - Popular eBook Platforms
  - Features to Look for in an Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Personalized Recommendations
  - Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers User Reviews and Ratings
  - Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers Free and Paid eBooks
  - Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers Public Domain eBooks
  - Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers eBook Subscription Services
  - Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers Budget-Friendly Options

6. Navigating Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers eBook Formats
  - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
  - Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers Compatibility with Devices
  - Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
  - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Highlighting and Note-Taking Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Interactive Elements Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
8. Staying Engaged with Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Joining Online Reading Communities
  - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
  - Following Authors and Publishers Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Benefits of a Digital Library
  - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
  - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
  - Minimizing Distractions
  - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Setting Reading Goals Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Environmental Science Investigation Plate Tectonics Lab Answers
  - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
  - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
  - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
  - Integration of Multimedia Elements

- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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