

Layers of the Earth

Crust

Earth's thin outermost layer is solid rock. It is about five times thicker under the continents than it is under the oceans.

Mantle

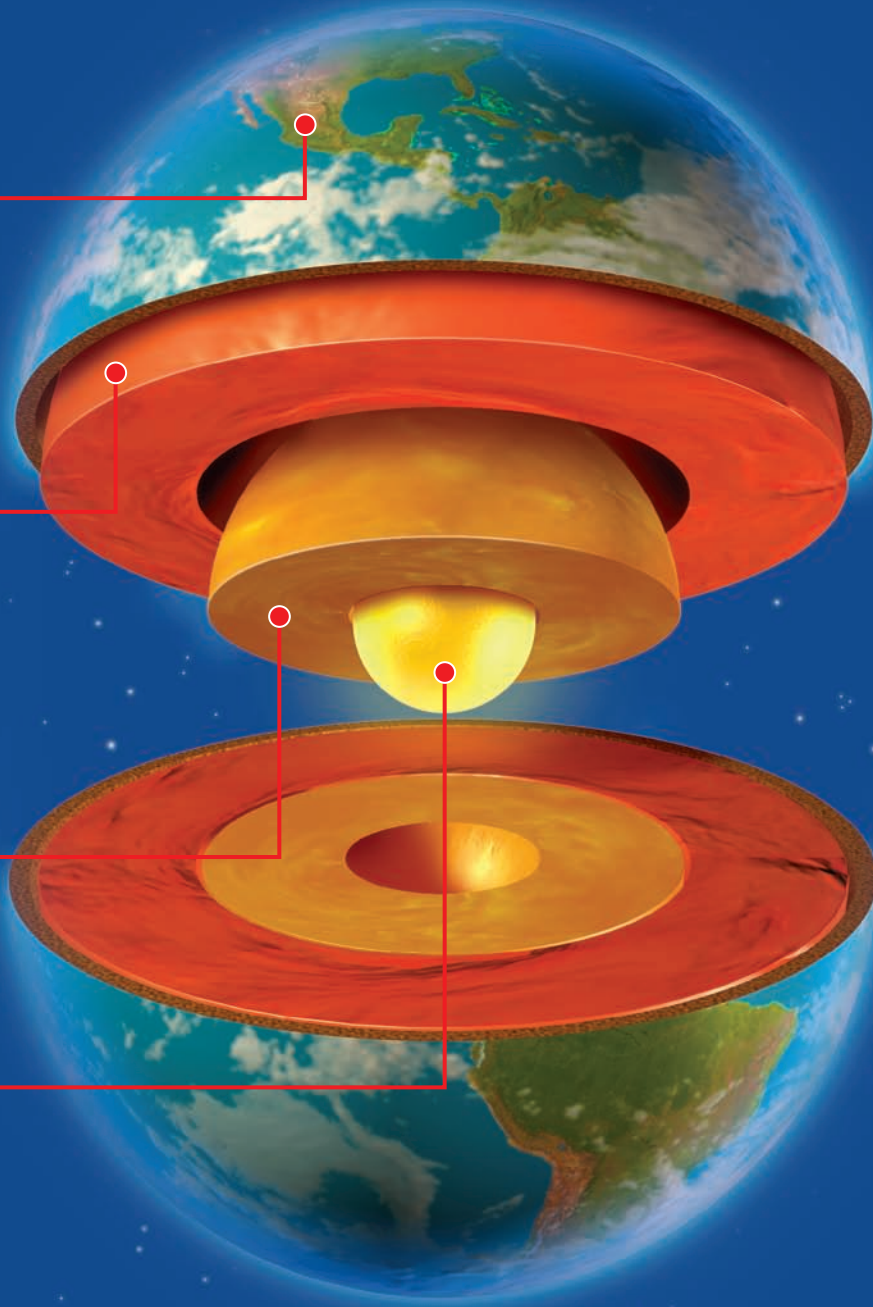
This thick layer is between the crust and the outer core. The solid upper mantle combines with the crust to form the lithosphere.

Outer Core

Formed mostly of molten metal, this is Earth's only liquid layer.

Inner Core

Pressure keeps this super-hot metallic region in a solid state.



Earth's Layers

Earth has a layered structure. Most of these layers are made up of solid or partly melted rock. The innermost layers are mostly a mixture of metals.

Earth's layers vary in thickness. The **crust**, the uppermost layer, is much thinner than the other layers. The crust is nearly all solid rock. Under the continents, the crust is mostly granite and other light rocks.

Below the oceans, the crust is mostly made of basalt—a dark, dense rock.

The crust is by far the thinnest of Earth's layers. Under the continents, the average thickness of the crust is about 40 km (24 mi), but it may be as much as 70 km (42 mi) in mountainous regions. The crust is even thinner under the oceans. The ocean-floor crust has a thickness of about 7 km (4 mi).