

Continental Margin Types

Name: _____

Date: _____

Introduction

The majority of the human population lives on or near a coast, and most large cities are found on coasts. The coastal zone where continents and oceans meet is called a **continental margin**. In this activity you will learn about three different types of continental margins, the features that characterize them, and how different continental margin types affect humans. You will then make a map showing the distribution of continental margins.

Procedure

1. Choose three colors to use on this activity. Make a key on your map and include example colors for **Passive Margins**, **Active Margins**, and **Translation Margins**.
2. Read the description of each type of margin; find areas that match the description on your Raised Relief Map of the Ocean Floor, and color code the coastlines of the continents on your blank map according to which type of continental margin exists there.
3. The first type of continental margin to look for on the Raised Relief Map of the Ocean Floor is a passive margin. Look for coastal areas that have wide continental shelves (flat, shallow waters just off the coast) and face mid ocean ridges. Color-code the coastlines along passive margins. A good example of a passive margin is the East Coast of North America.
4. The second type of continental margin to look for is called an active margin. Active margins are found on coastlines next to deep-sea trenches and have coastal volcanic mountain ranges.
5. Continental shelves are very narrow or non-existent at active margins. Color-code the coastlines along active margins. A good example of an active margin is the West Coast of South America.
6. Finally, you should be aware of a third type of continental margin known as a translation margin. These are uncommon but very important to people living along them. Translation margins occur where faults allow the crust to slide past itself, causing many earthquakes. These are hard to find without additional information, but a region from southern through Baja California is a translation margin. Color-code this area on your map.
7. Based on the information on your map and your teacher's presentation, complete the analysis questions on the next page.