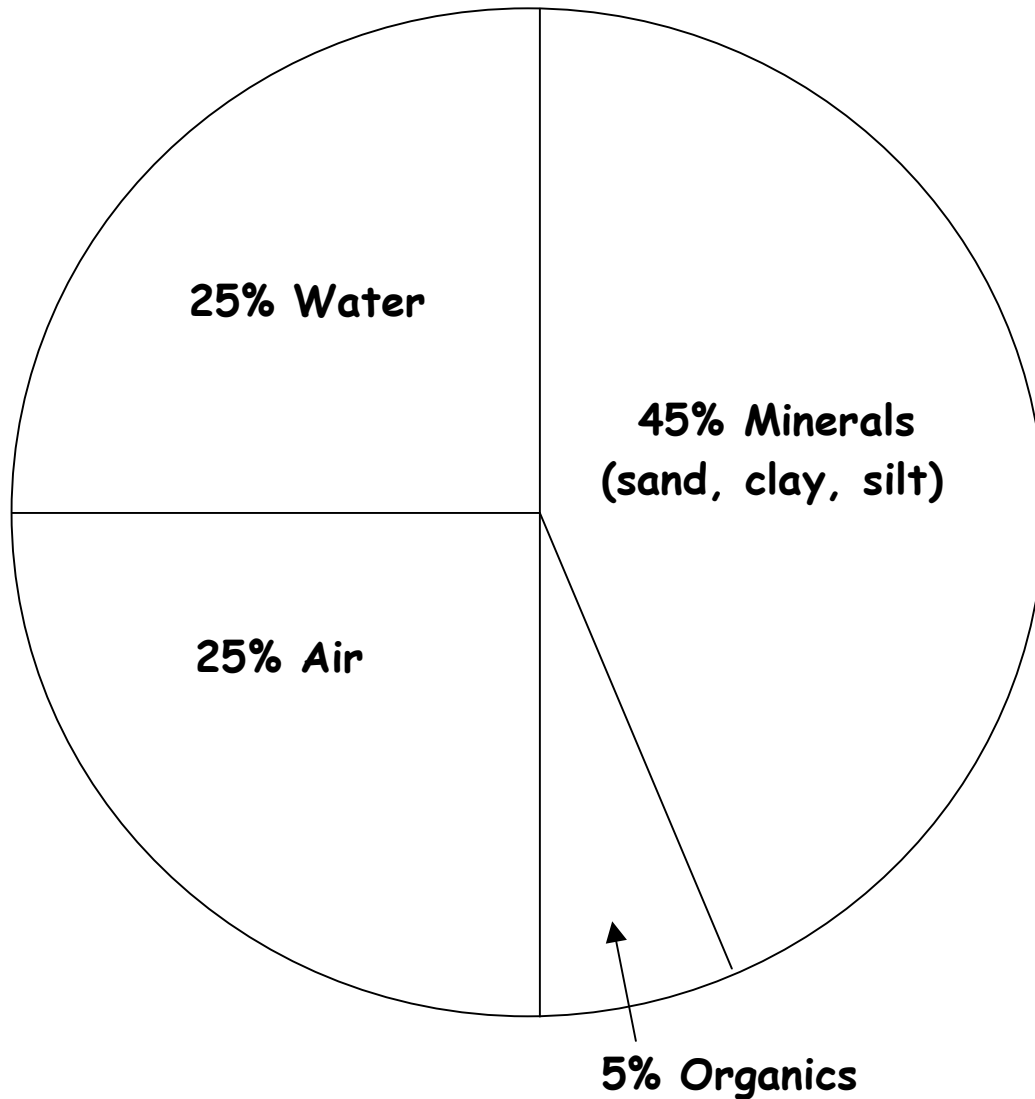


## What is soil made of?



1. Soil is varying amounts of organic matter (living and dead organisms), minerals, and nutrients.
2. Natural processes can take more than 500 years to form 1 inch of topsoil.
3. Soil is formed from rocks and decaying plants and animals.
4. An average soil sample is 45% minerals, 25% water, 25% air, and 5% organic matter.
5. Different size mineral particles, such as sand, silt, and clay give soil its texture.
6. Fungi and bacteria help break down organic matter in soil.
7. Plant roots and lichens break up rocks, which becomes part of new soil.
8. Roots loosen the soil, allowing oxygen to penetrate. This benefits animals living in the soil.
9. Roots hold soil together and help prevent erosion.
10. Earthworms digest organic matter, recycle nutrients, and make soil richer.
11. Mice take seeds and other plant materials into underground burrows, where this material eventually decays and becomes part of the soil.
12. Mice, moles and shrews dig burrows, which help aerate soil.