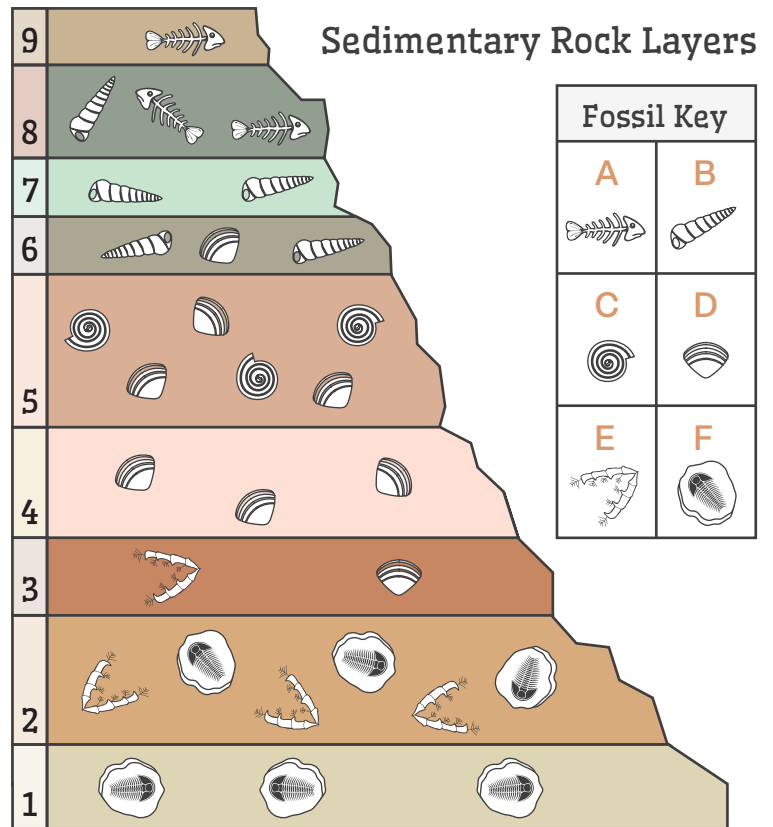


Analyzing the Fossil Record

Fossils are the preserved remains or traces of plants and animals that were once living. The millions of fossils that scientists have collected make up the **fossil record**.

Paleontology is the study of life throughout Earth's history. Paleontologists study the fossil record to learn about how living organisms have changed over time. The fossil record can help scientists piece together information about Earth's past and the history of life on Earth.

Look at the diagram of sedimentary rock layers. Learn more about the fossil record by answering the questions below.



1. Which rock layer is the oldest? How do you know? _____

2. Which rock layer is the youngest? How do you know? _____

3. Which fossil appears to have lived on Earth for the longest amount of time? Why do you think so?

4. Which fossil appears to have lived on Earth for the shortest amount of time? Why do you think so?

5. A **mass extinction** is a widespread and rapid decrease in the number and variety of species on Earth. What evidence could scientists look for in rock layers around the world to identify mass extinction events throughout Earth's history? _____

