



*This view of the earth from outer space shows the San Andreas fault, where two plates are alongside one another*

## Tectonic Plates

Picture the Earth as a big puzzle made up of huge pieces. These pieces are called tectonic plates. They're like giant slabs that fit together but can also move around. When these plates move, it's called tectonic activity.

These plates are always moving, very slowly, like slow-motion bumper cars. Sometimes, they move apart from each other, and new land forms in-between. Other times, they crash into each other, and that's when we get things like mountains. And sometimes, one plate slides under another, causing big earthquakes.