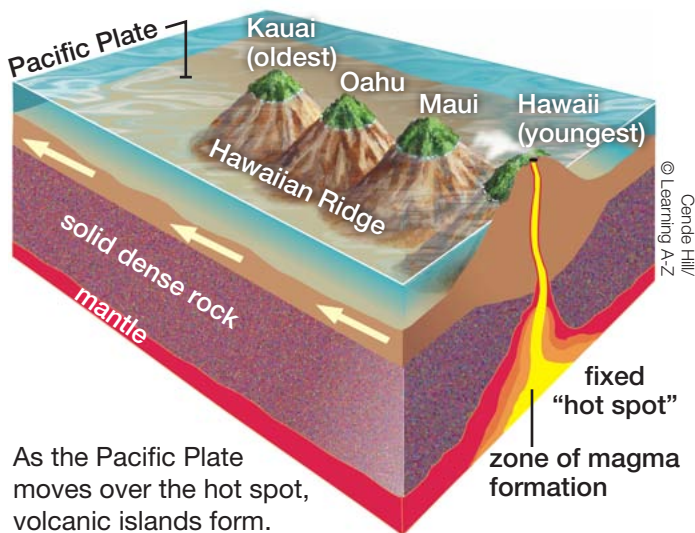


If you want proof that Earth's features are changing, visit the Big Island of Hawaii! Volcanic activity formed all the Hawaiian Islands. It's still forming the Big Island.

The Hawaiian Islands are located above a "hot spot." A hot spot is an area in Earth's **crust** where superhot, melted rock rises very close to the surface. Sometimes the melted rock comes out through cracks in the crust, forming **volcanoes**. Each time a volcano erupts, it forms new land as lava cools and hardens.



As the Pacific Plate moves over the hot spot, volcanic islands form.

Earth's crust is made up of huge sheets of rock. The Hawaiian Islands are in the middle of one of the sheets. The sheet is slowly moving to the north and west, over the hot spot. Over millions of years, volcanoes have formed over the hot spot, making a chain of islands.

Do You Know?

Kilauea has erupted thirty-four times since 1952. It has been erupting nonstop since January 1983.



Some volcanoes release steam and gases.

Courtesy of U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey

Kauai, the western island, is the oldest. The middle islands formed a shorter time ago. Now the hot spot is under the Big Island (also called Hawaii).

Kilauea, a volcano on the Big Island, is one of the most active volcanoes on Earth. The island grows every day. It's one of the few places on Earth where you can watch new land being formed.

Brain Check

- What is a hot spot?
- Why did the hot spot form a chain of islands instead of just one?