

Stream Characteristics - Observations and Data

Streambed Deposits²

The kind of materials you find on the streambed can give you clues about the flow of water in your stream. Streambed deposits also affect the habitat available for aquatic creatures. Check with your leader to make sure it is safe to proceed; then follow the steps below to identify streambed deposits and estimate the percentage of each.

1. If possible, enter the stream from the 0 transect site.
2. Use the descriptions on the data sheet to help you identify the types of bed material in your stream.
3. Estimate the percentage of streambed materials that you find at the 0 transect site. Choose from 0, 25, 50, 75, or 100 percent. The total percentages of all the types should add up to 100 %.

Streambed Deposits Data Sheet	
Types of Bed Materials	Percent (circle)
silt, clay These substances have a sticky feeling. The particles are fine. The spaces between the particles hold a lot of water, making the sediments feel like ooze.	0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
sand (<0.2 cm in diameter) A sandy bottom is made up of tiny, gritty particles of rock that are smaller than gravel but coarser than silt (gritty, smaller than a grain of rice).	0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
gravel (0.2-7.5 cm in diameter) A gravel bottom is made up of stones ranging from tiny 2-mm pebbles to rocks of about 7.5 cm (fine gravel – rice size to marble size; coarse gravel – marble to ping pong ball size).	0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
cobbles (7.5-25 cm in diameter)	0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
stones (25-60 cm in diameter)	0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
boulders (>60 cm in diameter)	0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
bedrock (solid)	0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
TOTAL (should add up to 100%)	

² Adapted from “Habitat Assessments: The Parts Equal the Whole,” *Water Action Volunteers—Volunteer Monitoring Factsheet Series* (Univ. of Wisconsin-Extension and Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, 1999)