



Minerals

Gypsum



Crystallography:

Monoclinic; $2/m$. Crystals commonly simple in habit; tabular on {010}; diamond-shaped, with edges beveled by {120} and $\{\bar{1}11\}$. Twinning common on {100}. Also granular, massive.

Physical Properties:

Cleavage: {010} perfect, yielding thin folia. {100} with conchoidal surface; {011} with fibrous fracture. Sectile.

Hardness: 2.0.

Specific Gravity: 2.32.

Luster: Vitreous, often pearly on {010} cleavage. Massive varieties glistening to dull, earthy.

Color: Colorless, white, gray, shades of yellow, red, and brown for impurities. Transparent to opaque.

Streak: White.

Composition/Features:

A hydrated calcium sulfate, gypsum is characterized by its softness and its three unequal cleavages. Fusible at 3. Distinguished from anhydrite by its solubility in acid and the presence of much water.

Occurrence/Use:

Gypsum is the most common sulfate mineral; widely distributed in sedimentary rocks. Varieties include: *alabaster*, *satin spar*, and *selenite*. Gypsum is mined extensively in many parts of the world for the use in plasters, fillers, and other commercial products.