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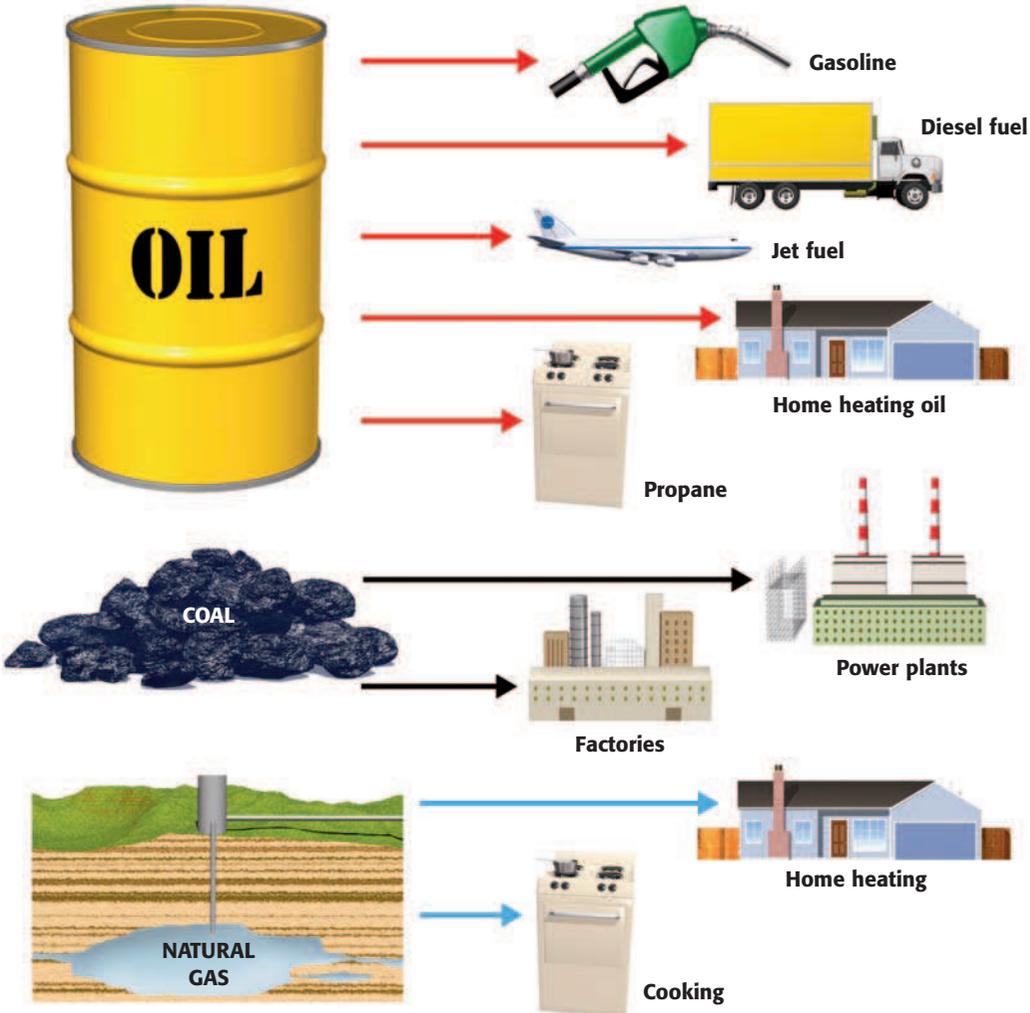
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## Fossil Fuels

**Fuels** are materials that are burned to produce heat energy. The heat energy is used to run cars and trains, to warm buildings, and to produce electricity in power plants.

Most of the fuels we use today were formed from the decayed remains of ancient plants and animals. The remains of ancient plants and animals are called **fossils** (FAHS ulz), so these fuels are called **fossil fuels**. Oil, coal, and natural gas are the three major fossil fuels. Jet fuel, gasoline, and many other fuels are made from oil.



**How Fossil Fuels Are Formed** When the ancient plants were alive, they used the energy in sunlight to make their own food. Some of that food was stored in the plants' bodies as chemical energy. Animals that ate the plants took in the chemical energy. Some of the chemical energy was stored in the animals' bodies.

When the ancient plants and animals died, their remains settled to the bottom of the swamp, lake, or ocean where they lived.

Particles of sand, soil, and mud settled on top of the remains. More decayed remains and more particles built up into layers.

Over millions of years, the particles were pressed and cemented together to form solid rock. The remains of the dead plants and animals were trapped between rock layers.

Heat and pressure gradually changed the remains into oil, coal, and natural gas.

Fossil fuels are still forming today. But because they take millions of years to form, we have to think of them as nonrenewable resources. People use fossil fuels much faster than nature can make them.

