Figure 2-8
Schematic diagram of fossil fuel electric power plant. Coal, oil, or natural gas is burned to produce steam in the boiler. The steam rotates the blades of a turbine, rotating the coil in the generator and producing electricity.

At present fossil fuels, coal, oil, or natural gas, are the usual sources of heat that produce steam in the boiler. However, a very similar system is used in nuclear power plants where heat is produced by a controlled nuclear fission reaction instead of the chemical burning of coal, oil, or gas.