

The Water Cycle

Week 21 — Wednesday | How Water Moves Around Earth

Reading Time

The **water cycle** is the continuous movement of water on, above, and below the surface of the Earth. It has four main stages: **evaporation**, **condensation**, **precipitation**, and **collection**. These stages happen over and over again in a never-ending loop.

Evaporation happens when the sun heats up water in oceans, lakes, and rivers. The water turns into an invisible gas called **water vapor** and rises into the air. Plants also release water vapor through their leaves in a process called **transpiration**. As the water vapor rises higher, the air gets cooler. When the water vapor cools down, it turns back into tiny liquid water droplets. This is called **condensation**. These tiny droplets come together to form clouds.

When the water droplets in clouds become too heavy, they fall back to Earth as **precipitation**. Precipitation can be rain, snow, sleet, or hail, depending on how cold the air is. Once precipitation reaches the ground, it begins the **collection** stage. Water collects in oceans, lakes, rivers, and underground. Some water soaks into the soil to become groundwater. Then the sun heats the collected water, and the whole cycle starts all over again.

Reading Questions

1. What are the four main stages of the water cycle?

2. What is evaporation and what causes it?

3. How does condensation form clouds?

4. Describe what happens during the collection stage and how the cycle continues.

Vocabulary Grid

Write a definition or draw a picture for each word.

 Evaporation 	 Condensation
 Precipitation 	 Collection
 Water Vapor 	 Transpiration

 Water Cycle in a Bag Experiment

Ask an adult to help. You will need a clear plastic zip-top bag, blue food coloring, water, a marker, and tape. Draw the sun on one side of the bag. Fill the bag one-quarter full with water and a few drops of blue food coloring. Squeeze the air out, seal it tightly, and tape it to a sunny window. Observe the bag each day for three days and record what you see.

Day	What Do You See on the Bag?	Water Cycle Stage Happening
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		

 Draw the Water Cycle

Draw a complete water cycle diagram. Include the sun, ocean, clouds, rain, a mountain, a river, and a plant. Label all four stages: evaporation, condensation, precipitation, and collection. Use arrows to show the direction of water movement.

 Match the Stage

Match each description to the correct water cycle stage.

Description	Water Cycle Stage
The sun heats water and it turns into invisible gas.	
Water vapor cools and forms tiny droplets in clouds.	
Rain, snow, sleet, or hail falls from clouds.	
Water gathers in oceans, lakes, and underground.	
Plants release water vapor through their leaves.	

Act Out the Water Cycle

Work with family members to act out the water cycle. Each person can be a drop of water. Show what happens at each stage. Then draw your performance below, showing at least four positions from your acting.

Water Cycle Stage Order

Number the stages below in the order they happen in the water cycle, starting with 1 for evaporation.

Stage Description	Order (1-4)
Water collects in oceans, lakes, and underground.	
The sun heats water and it evaporates into water vapor.	
Rain falls from clouds back to Earth.	
Water vapor cools and condenses into clouds.	

True or False — Circle Your Answer

- ☐ 1. The water cycle has four main stages.
- ☐ 2. Evaporation happens when water freezes into ice.
- ☐ 3. Water vapor is an invisible gas.
- ☐ 4. Condensation is when water vapor turns into liquid droplets.
- ☐ 5. Precipitation only includes rain.
- ☐ 6. Transpiration is when plants release water vapor.
- ☐ 7. The water cycle stops at night when the sun goes down.
- ☐ 8. Collection is when water gathers in bodies of water and underground.

Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: evaporation condensation precipitation collection water vapor transpiration sun clouds

- 1. When the _____ heats water, it turns into gas called _____.
- 2. Water vapor rising into the air is called _____.
- 3. When water vapor cools and forms _____, that is _____.
- 4. Rain, snow, sleet, and hail are all types of _____.
- 5. When water gathers in oceans and lakes, it is called _____.
- 6. _____ is when plants release water through their leaves.

Think About It

If the water cycle stopped working, what would happen to plants, animals, and people on Earth? Explain your answer.
