Water cycle

The water cycle is a model that describes the never-ending movement of Earth's water. Water is generally not created or destroyed. Rather, it constantly moves between the land, the air, and bodies of water. In the water cycle, water goes from the ocean to the air. Then it falls to the land as rain or snow. Water from the land flows back to the ocean. From there, it may return to the air again. This process can repeat itself over and over. Such a process is called a *cycle.* Another name for the water cycle is the hydrologic*HY druh LOJ ihk* cycle.

Heat from the sun helps turn ocean water into *water vapor.* Water vapor is water that has changed into a gas. This change is called *evaporation.* Some water also evaporates from lakes, other bodies of water, and wet places on the land. Still other water passes into the air through the leaves of plants. This special kind of evaporation is called *transpiration.*

The water vapor rises into the sky, where it cools off. The cooled water vapor changes into dropletstiny drops of water. This change is called *condensation.* Clouds are made up of billions of droplets of water. The water in clouds eventually falls as rain or snow. Most rain and snow falls into the ocean, but some falls on land. This water in time flows back to the ocean or some other body of water.

Water does not always take the same path through the cycle. For example, some water may evaporate right back into the air after it rains. Water may also be trapped for many years in Earth's icecaps or deep in the oceans.

The water cycle is important for weather and life on Earth. It creates the clouds that bring the rain and snow. Many living things need the water from rain or snow to survive.

CloudEvaporationOceanRainSnowWaterWeatherPlants and the water cycle

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