

The Water Cycle

Did you know that we're using the same water over and over again? The water on the earth today has been here for millions of years. It moves from the earth to the air and back to the earth again through a process called the Water Cycle. Here's how it works:



EVAPORATION - When water gets hot, it changes into a gas called water vapor. This is called evaporation. When you lay a wet towel outside in the hot sun, the towel dries because of evaporation.

CONDENSATION - Rivers, lakes and oceans lose water everyday because of evaporation. That water travels into the air as water vapor. It becomes part of a cloud. When the water vapor in the clouds gets cold, it changes back into a liquid. This is called condensation.



PRECIPITATION - The water falls back to earth as rain, snow, sleet or hail. We call this precipitation. Once the water comes back to the earth, the process begins all over again.

PERCOLATION - Rain doesn't fall only on bodies of water. Some rain falls on the ground and seeps through the soil. This is called percolation. After a long time, the water reaches underground streams. Then it becomes part of the groundwater system.

The Water Cycle keeps water moving - from the earth to the air and back to the earth.

The Water Cycle keeps water changing - from liquid (rain, river water, groundwater) to gas (water vapor) and even to solid (snow and sleet).

