

The water cycle

The water cycle is the path that water follows as it moves around Earth.

Evaporation

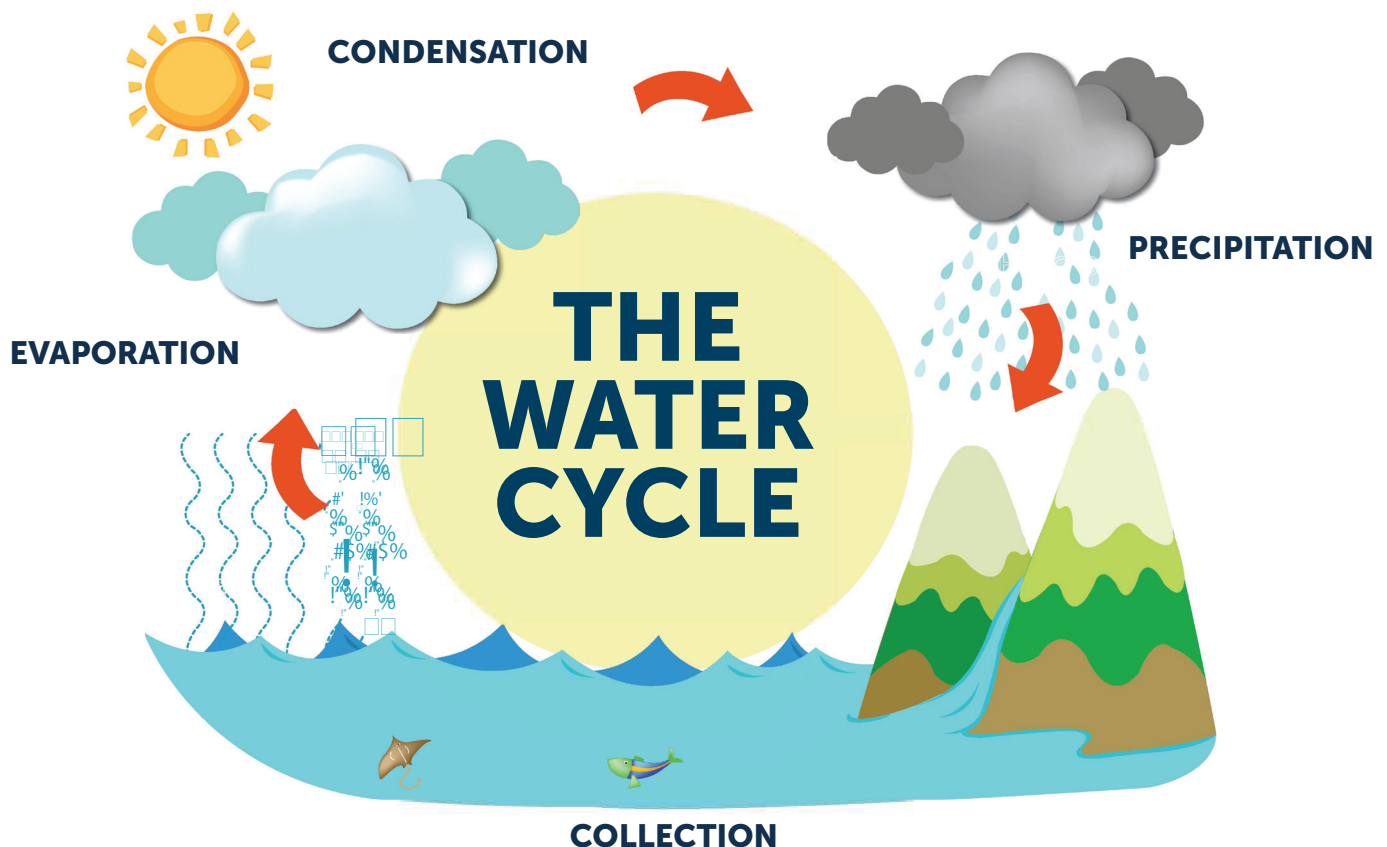
Evaporation occurs in everyday life, like when you boil the kettle. As the water heats up, it reaches a certain point, where it creates steam which rises up into the air.

This is just like the sun heating up the water in our rivers, lakes and oceans, turning the water to steam beginning to rise into the air.

Condensation

As water vapour rises into the air, it cools down. When it floats up higher into the atmosphere it becomes so cold that it changes back into a liquid.

Once a large amount of water vapour gathers, liquid clouds are formed. Water vapour continues to cool down until the clouds become heavy with condensation, turning a dark colour.



Precipitation

Rain! Precipitation is another word for rain, hail, sleet or snow. It occurs when there is too much condensed water in the air and clouds cannot hold anymore.

The clouds get heavy and dark with rain, hail, sleet or snow falling back to the earth.

Collection

When water falls back to earth as precipitation, it will end up on land, soaking into the soil and become part of the groundwater or it will be collected in dams, rivers, lakes and oceans.

The water that soaks into the earth helps living things like plants grow. When the water is collected in dams, rivers and lakes it supplies water for animals, plants and houses.

The water cycle process begins again with collected water in oceans, lakes or rivers being heated up by evaporation.