

Water Life Cycle

The recycling trend has been around for millions of years when it comes to water. Nature does not create any new water, but simply recycles the water that has been on the earth for billions of years. As water moves through the earth and its atmosphere, it goes through three phases: solid, liquid, gas.

The water cycle is just that – a cycle, no beginning or ending. Let's pick one area to start with – the ocean where 97% of the water exists as seawater.

The sun heats up the ocean and water is evaporated as vapor into the air.

Water is also transpired from plants and the soil - these vapors also rise into the air.

Both of these, evaporation and transpiration, condense into clouds.

Air currents move clouds around the globe. These clouds grow and collide and eventually rain or snow occurs causing precipitation to fall back to the earth.

- Some precipitation falls as snow and can accumulate as ice caps and glaciers and can be frozen for thousands of years.
- Most precipitation falls back into the oceans or onto land.

Snowpacks eventually melt and flow into streams moving toward the ocean.

Not all runoff flows into rivers, much of it soaks into the ground and replenishes aquifers. The aquifers store huge amounts of water for long periods of time.

At any given time 0.005 percent of the world's total water supply is moving through this water life cycle.

A drop of water will usually spend 9 days in the cycle, then can spend up to 40,000 years in the ocean before going through the cycle again.

You can download a flash video of the water cycle from the EPA at:
http://www.epa.gov/safewater/kids/flash/flash_watercycle.html

Why does all this matter?

Water is more precious than gold!

If 97% of our water is seawater (undrinkable),
And 2% of our water is locked in ice caps and glaciers (unreachable),
And 1% lies too far underground to retrieve (irretrievable),
Then less than one percent (0.37% to be exact) of that water is drinkable.

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