

Photo Description



Ocean waves crash against dark rocks on a beach, creating white foam and spray. The water hits the rocks with great force, sending water droplets high into the air. You can see the sandy beach in front of the rocks and the ocean stretching far away.

Scientific Phenomena

This image captures the Anchoring Phenomenon of wave energy transfer and erosion. Ocean waves carry energy from wind across great distances. When this moving water hits solid objects like rocks, the energy is transferred on impact, creating the dramatic splash and spray visible in the photo. Over long periods of time, this constant force of water hitting rocks breaks them down into smaller pieces, which eventually become the sand on beaches. This is a perfect example of how energy can be transferred from one object to another and how forces can change the shape of Earth's surface.

Core Science Concepts

1. Energy Transfer: Moving water carries energy that gets transferred when it hits objects like rocks
2. Forces and Motion: The force of moving water can change the motion of objects and break apart materials
3. Weathering and Erosion: Water constantly hitting rocks breaks them down over time, creating smaller rock pieces and sand
4. States of Matter: Water exists as a liquid in the ocean but creates tiny droplets in the air when it splashes

Pedagogical Tip:

Use this image to help students make the connection between everyday experiences (like splashing in a bathtub) and larger Earth processes. Ask them to think about what happens when they jump in a pool - the same energy transfer is happening here, just on a much bigger scale!

UDL Suggestions:

Provide multiple ways for students to explore this concept by having them create wave motions with their arms, use a spray bottle to demonstrate water droplets, or shake a container with water and small rocks to simulate the erosion process. This gives kinesthetic learners a hands-on way to understand the phenomena.

Zoom In / Zoom Out

1. Zoom In: At the molecular level, water molecules are constantly moving and bumping into each other. When waves crash, these tiny particles hit the rock surface with tremendous force, gradually wearing away microscopic pieces of the rock's surface.

2. Zoom Out: This wave action is part of the global water cycle and ocean current systems. Winds across entire ocean basins create these waves, and the erosion happening here contributes to the formation of beaches, coastal changes, and sediment that travels hundreds of miles through ocean currents.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think would happen if these waves hit the rocks every day for 100 years? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 3)
2. Where do you think the energy in these waves came from originally? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
3. How is this wave crashing similar to what happens when you throw a ball against a wall? (Bloom's: Apply | DOK: 2)
4. What evidence can you see in the photo that shows energy is being transferred? (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 2)

Potential Student Misconceptions

1. Misconception: "Rocks are too hard for water to break them."

Reality: Water may seem soft, but when it moves with force over long periods of time, it can break down even the hardest rocks.

2. Misconception: "The splashing water just bounces off and doesn't change anything."

Reality: Each wave carries away tiny pieces of rock, and over many years, this creates significant changes to coastlines and beaches.

3. Misconception: "Waves only move up and down."

Reality: Waves carry energy forward across the ocean, even though the water itself mostly moves in circular motions.

NGSS Connections

- Performance Expectation: 3-PS2-1 - Plan and conduct an investigation to provide evidence of the effects of balanced and unbalanced forces on the motion of an object
- Disciplinary Core Ideas: 3-PS2.A Forces and Interactions, 2-ESS1.C The History of Planet Earth
- Crosscutting Concepts: Cause and Effect, Energy and Matter

Science Vocabulary

- * Energy: The ability to cause motion or create change in matter
- * Force: A push or pull that can change how objects move
- * Erosion: The process of breaking down rocks and moving the pieces to new places
- * Transfer: To move something from one place or object to another
- * Impact: When one object hits another object with force

External Resources

Children's Books:

- Waves by Patricia Whitehouse
- The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks by Joanna Cole
- National Geographic Readers: Storms by Miriam Goin

YouTube Videos:



Force — 3rd Grade Lesson Guide

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- "How Do Ocean Waves Work?" by SciShow Kids - Simple explanation of wave formation and energy (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjWYDTs>)
 - "Erosion and Weathering for Kids" by Generation Genius - Shows how water changes Earth's surface over time (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zu1xbvEuEaU>)