

##The Water Cycle for Grade 3

##Introduction: What is the Water Cycle?

The water cycle is the journey water takes as it moves from the land to the sky and back again. It's like a big circle that never ends. All the water on Earth has been here for millions of years, and it's constantly moving through this cycle. We're going to learn about the four main steps: evaporation, condensation, precipitation, and collection.

##Step 1: Evaporation - Water Goes Up

Evaporation is when the sun heats up water in rivers, lakes, and oceans and turns it into a gas called water vapor. This water vapor is very light, so it rises up into the air. You can see evaporation when a puddle dries up on a sunny day. The water didn't disappear; it just turned into a gas and went into the sky.

##Step 2: Condensation - Forming Clouds

Condensation is the opposite of evaporation. As the water vapor rises higher into the sky, it gets cold. This cold air turns the water vapor back into tiny little liquid water droplets. These droplets group together with dust particles to form clouds. When you see a cloud, you are looking at millions of tiny water droplets.

##Step 3: Precipitation - Water Comes Down

Precipitation is when so much water has condensed in a cloud that the air can't hold it anymore. The clouds get heavy and the water falls back to the Earth in the form of rain, snow, sleet, or hail. This is how the land gets the water it needs for plants and animals to live.

##Step 4: Collection - Gathering the Water

Collection is the final step. When water falls back to Earth as precipitation, it gets collected in different places. It might fall into oceans, lakes, and rivers. It can also soak into the ground and become groundwater for plants to drink. From these places, the sun will start the whole cycle over again by evaporating the water.

##Summary and Recap

So, the water cycle has four main parts. First, **evaporation** turns water into a gas that goes up. Second, **condensation** turns that gas back into water droplets to form clouds. Third, **precipitation** is when that water falls back down as rain or snow. Finally, **collection** is when the water gathers in lakes and oceans, ready to start its journey all over again.