

SCIENCE · GRADES 3–4

The Water Cycle

How water moves around the Earth

Four key stages

1

Evaporation

Heat from the Sun turns water into water vapor (a gas).

Example: A puddle drying up in the sun.

2

Condensation

Vapor cools as it rises and turns back into tiny droplets — these form clouds.

Example: A cold glass on a warm day fogs up on the outside.

3

Precipitation

When droplets in clouds get heavy enough, they fall as rain, snow, sleet or hail.

Example: Rain falls when clouds are full.

4

Collection

Water collects in oceans, lakes, rivers and groundwater. Then the cycle repeats.

Example: All rivers eventually flow to the sea.

Apply

1. Where does the energy for the water cycle come from?
2. Why do clouds form high in the sky and not at ground level?
3. Where might a single drop of rain travel after it falls?
4. Could the water you drink today have once been drunk by a dinosaur? Explain.

