

GEOGRAPHY · Y3-Y6

Rivers

Knowledge Organiser — KS2 Geography

Key vocabulary

- 1 Source**
Where a river begins, often high up in mountains or hills.
- 2 Mouth**
Where a river ends, usually flowing into the sea, ocean or lake.
- 3 Tributary**
A smaller river that flows into a larger one.
- 4 Confluence**
Where two rivers meet.
- 5 Estuary**
Wide tidal mouth of a river where fresh water meets salt water.
- 6 Meander**
A bend or curve in a river.
- 7 Erosion**
When the river wears away rock or soil.
- 8 Deposition**
When the river drops material it has been carrying.



9

Water cycle

Continuous movement of water between sea, sky and land.

10

Floodplain

Flat land beside a river that floods when the river overflows.

11

Delta

Triangular area of land formed where a river meets the sea, made of dropped sediment.

12

Waterfall

Where a river drops vertically over a cliff.

the water cycle

How rivers fit into Earth's water cycle

- 1. EVAPORATION — sun heats water in oceans and lakes; water turns to vapour (a gas).
- 2. CONDENSATION — vapour rises and cools, forming clouds.
- 3. PRECIPITATION — water falls as rain, snow, hail, or sleet.
- 4. COLLECTION — water collects in rivers, lakes, and the ground.
- 5. The water flows back to the sea — and the cycle starts again.
- The same water has been cycling round Earth for billions of years!

river's journey

Three stages from mountain to sea

- UPPER COURSE (near the source): river is small, fast, narrow. Cuts steep V-shaped valleys. Lots of erosion.
- MIDDLE COURSE: river slows and widens. Forms meanders (curves) as it bends through the landscape.
- LOWER COURSE (near the mouth): river is wide and slow. Drops material (deposition). Forms floodplains and deltas.
- Tributaries (smaller rivers) join the main river along the way.



- The mouth is where the river meets the sea. It can be an estuary (wide, tidal) or a delta (triangular, with many channels).

rivers of the world

Length, location, why they m

- NILE (Africa) — 6,650 km. Longest river in the world. Flows through Egypt — life of Ancient Egypt.
- AMAZON (South America) — 6,400 km. Carries more water than any other river. Flows through rainforest.
- YANGTZE (China) — 6,300 km. Longest river in Asia. Hundreds of millions of people live along it.
- MISSISSIPPI (USA) — 3,730 km. Major US river. Drains huge area of central USA.
- GANGES (India) — 2,525 km. Sacred river in Hinduism.
- DANUBE (Europe) — 2,850 km. Flows through 10 countries.
- THAMES (UK) — 346 km. Flows through London.
- SEVERN (UK) — 354 km. Britain's longest river.

Why rivers matter

Then and now

- Drinking water for billions of people
- Irrigation — water for crops to grow
- Transport — boats and ships carry goods up and down rivers
- Power — fast-flowing rivers can be used to make electricity (hydroelectric power)
- Food — fish and other river creatures
- Most major cities of the world were built on rivers (London, Paris, New York, Cairo, Tokyo)
- Rivers shape the land — over millions of years, they cut valleys and gorges





Famous example: the Grand Canyon was carved by the Colorado River

