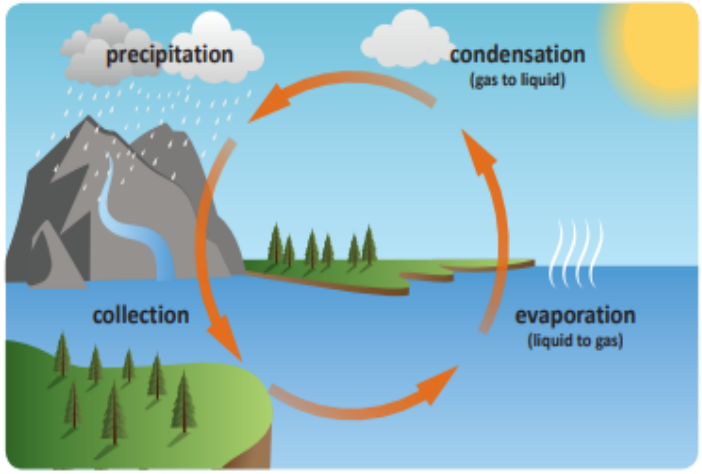
Misty Mountain, Winding River

Rivers

A river is a body of water that flows downhill, usually to the sea. Rivers start in mountains or upland areas and flow downstream, collecting water from small, narrow streams, springs, rainfall or other water sources on the way to the sea.

Water cycle

The water cycle is the journey water takes as it travels from rivers, lakes, seas and oceans into the sky and then back down to the ground. Water changes state as it goes around the cycle in four stages: evaporation, condensation, precipitation and collection.



River stages

The upper course

The upper course of a river is narrow. Water flows over the riverbed, carrying rocks that erode the land and create steep-sided, V-shaped valleys.

The middle course

The middle course of a river grows wider and deeper as the land becomes flatter. Bends called meanders form.

The lower course

The lower course is the widest part of a river. The land is flat, and the water flows into the sea at the river's mouth.

Mountains

A mountain is a large, raised part of the Earth's surface. A mountain's highest point is called its peak or summit. Mountains are at least 610m in height. A mountain range is a chain of mountains that are close together. They are usually arranged in a line connected by ridges.

Himalayas mountain range

Changing landscapes

Rivers, seas and oceans transform a landscape through erosion, deposition and transportation.

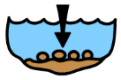
Erosion

Erosion is the wearing away and removal of rock and soil by means of wind or water.

Transportation

Transportation is when rocks and soil that have been dislodged and worn away by erosion are transported in flowing water.

Deposition



Deposition happens when flowing water slows down. Eroded rock and soil that have been transported are left behind.

Altitudinal zones

In mountainous areas, there are large differences in altitude. These differences mean that the climate, landscape and oxygen levels at the bottom of a mountain can be very different from those at the top. These differences create altitudinal zones, with each zone supporting a range of different plants and animals.