

Glossary

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atmosphere

The air around us

atom

The smallest unit that anything can be easily broken down into, containing protons, neutrons and electrons

biodiversity

The range or variety of living things in a particular area

biosphere

The part of the Earth system to do with all living things

carbon

A natural chemical element found in all living, or once living things

carbon cycle

Just as the "water cycle" describes the transfer of water molecules between rivers, oceans, land and the atmosphere, the "carbon cycle" refers to the flow of carbon through different parts of the Earth system - including the air and the bodies of plants and animals

carbon dioxide

When a carbon atom joins with two oxygen atoms, a lot of carbon dioxide comes from burning things containing carbon

chemical compounds

Molecules made up of different types of atoms bonded together

chlorine

A chemical element that can be added to city drinking water supplies to kill harmful bacteria.

climate

The average weather over many years

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climate change

Rapid change in climate due to human activity (mainly burning fossil fuels) increasing heat trapping [greenhouse](#) gases in the atmosphere

community

All the living things in a particular area

condensation

The process of changing water from a gas to a liquid is called condensation

contamination

Where something unwanted or harmful enters something useful e.g. sewage contaminating the drinking water.

ecosystem

This is all the living (e.g. animals, plants) and non-living (e.g. light, water) things within a particular area

evaporation

The process of changing water from a liquid to a gas is called evaporation

food web

This shows what eats what in a community

global warming

When the average temperature on earth naturally rises

greenhouse effect

The natural way the earth is warmed 33 degrees by its atmosphere

greenhouse gases

Gases which trap heat in the atmosphere. The main greenhouse gases are water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone.

hydrosphere

All the waters on the Earth's surface, such as lakes and seas

hypothesis

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An explanation of why things happen that can be tested by scientists

impermeable

does not allow fluid to pass through

infrastructure

Services such as roads and water systems.

mass

The quantity of matter contained in an object

matter

Anything that takes up space and has mass - everything around us

methane

A greenhouse gas CH₄ produced from the breakdown of once living things

molecule

A group of atoms bonded together

nitrous oxide

Sometimes called laughing gas, a greenhouse gas produced by bacteria and by people through agriculture

organism

A living thing

ozone

A gas made up of three oxygen atoms which is naturally present in the upper atmosphere, it helps protect Earth from harmful UV radiation

particles

A very small amount of something, or the smallest possible part of something

permeable

allows fluid to pass through

pH

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A measure of how acidic (or alkaline) a substance is

photosynthesis

The process that plants carry out to harness the sun's energy and carbon dioxide to make sugars for food

pressure

The force of something upon a surface eg air pressure is the force or weight of air above a particular point on the Earth's surface

sewage

Human waste and waste water which needs to be treated at a wastewater treatment station before it can be released back into the environment

stormwater

Rain water that has drained off buildings, solid surfaces and roads

transect

A line made through an area to be studied along which samples are taken

utilities

Services such as water pipes and power lines.

wastewater

Any water including sewage that has been used and needs to be treated before it can be discharged back into the environment

weather

Day to day changes in the atmosphere

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