

# Water as a Precious Resource

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Water is a limited resource. It is needed for all living things and must be managed well to ensure we have enough for our needs and to protect our environment.

All living things need water. Water is a limited resource and needs to be managed well.

Water is a precious resource. We can't live without it. If you look at a map of the world you will see that much of our planet is covered in water. Our oceans are not the only source of water. Water is also present under the ground and as vapor in the air. Clouds formed by this vapor ensure that water falls back down to Earth as rain, sleet, snow or hail.

## Oceans of water

There is a lot of water all around us but most of this is not freshwater. Ocean water has too much salt in it for us to drink. Much of the water that falls back to Earth in one form or another becomes runoff. It travels some distance over land before making its way back to one of Earth's oceans. As it travels over land, the water picks up salts and minerals from the rocks and soil and washes them into the ocean. The deposits have built up over many years. That is why ocean water is so salty.

## Freshwater

Approximately 97% of Earth's water is salt water. That leaves only about 3% that is freshwater for meeting the needs of people, plants and animals.

Only about a third of our freshwater is available for us to use. The rest is frozen solid in glaciers, in the snow on high mountaintops and in the polar ice caps.

The freshwater we use comes from surface water and groundwater. Surface water is water we can see in ponds, rivers, lakes and streams. Groundwater is water that seeps down into the ground and collects in the spaces between rocks and soil underground.

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"Water is a limited resource and less than one percent of Earth's water is available as freshwater for drinking"

*What are the main sources of water in your area?*

*What does this make you wonder about the future of these water sources?*

## Protecting water

It is important to protect our water supplies from pollution. Once the water becomes polluted, it can be difficult or even impossible to clean.

Chemicals, like cleaning supplies, paints and other toxins, can seep into the ground and make the water unusable. People must dispose of their waste products appropriately so we will have plenty of freshwater in the future.

Streams, rivers and lakes provide habitat for certain types of aquatic plants, fish, insects and birds. Some of these organisms need very pure freshwater.

Almost all organisms on Earth today contain at least 50% water in their bodies. Living things use water to transport nutrients, hormones and oxygen to their cells, cleanse waste from their systems and cool their bodies.

[Ready for a quiz?](#) [3]

Welcome to this interactive activity for the LEARNZ *People and Water* virtual field trip.

Before trying this activity you may wish to view the web page "[Water as a Precious Resource](#)".

Have fun!



[3]

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We can't live without water. If you look at a map of the world you will see that much of our Earth is covered in water. Most of our water is sea water. There is freshwater in ponds, lakes, streams and rivers. Freshwater is also found under the ground and as vapor in the air. Clouds form from this vapor and water falls back down to Earth as rain, sleet, snow or hail.

## Oceans of water

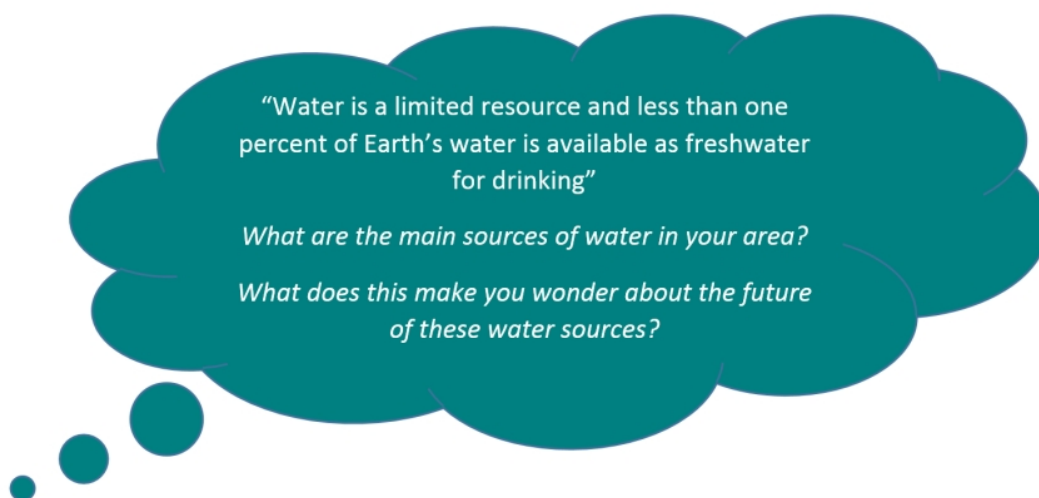
There is a lot of water all around us but most of this is not freshwater. Sea water has too much salt in it for us to drink. Most of the water that falls back to Earth becomes runoff. It travels some distance over land before making its way back to the sea. As it travels over the land, the water picks up salts and minerals from the rocks and soil and washes them into the ocean where it has built up over many years. That is why ocean water is so salty.

## Freshwater

Approximately 97% of Earth's water is salt water. That leaves only about 3% that is freshwater for meeting the needs of people, plants and animals.

We can only use about a third of this freshwater. The rest is frozen solid in glaciers, in the snow on high mountaintops and in the polar ice caps.

The freshwater we use comes from surface water and groundwater. Surface water is water we can see in ponds, rivers, lakes and streams. Groundwater is water that seeps down into the ground and collects in the spaces between rocks and soil underground.



## Protecting water

It is important to protect our water supplies from pollution. Once the water becomes polluted, it can be hard or even impossible to clean.

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Plants and animals also rely on freshwater. Streams, rivers and lakes are home to many types of aquatic plants, fish, insects and birds. Some of these organisms need very pure freshwater.

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*People and Water* virtual field trip.

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Have fun!



[3]

Māori keywords:


Audio Māori keywords:

- [rauemi - resource](#) [4]
- [taonga - treasure](#) [5]
- [wai - water](#) [6]
- [whakahaere - manage](#) [7]
- [wai māori - freshwater](#) [8]
- [wainuku - groundwater](#) [9]
- [moana - sea](#) [10]

*Do you think we will we ever run out of water?*

*Do you think we will we ever run out of water?*

## Water as a Precious Resource

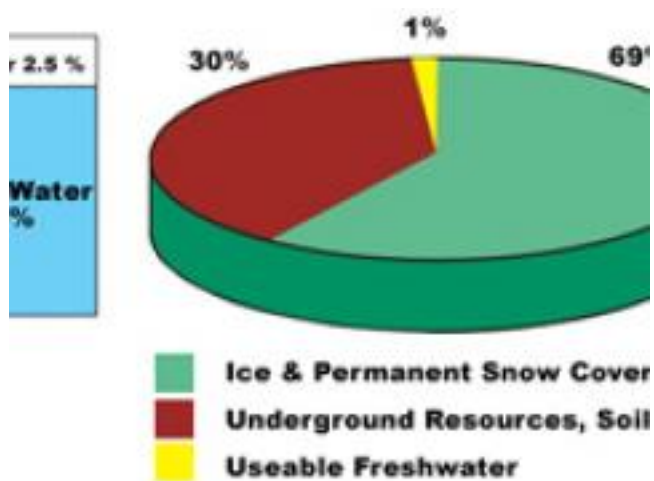
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[11]

Nearly three quarters of the Earth's surface is water so it is often called the Blue Planet. Image: NASA: Harrison Schmitt & Ron Evans.



[12]

What proportion of Earth's water is drinkable? Image: UNESCO.



[13]

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Only a very small proportion of the Earth's water is drinkable. Why is this?  
Image: LEARNZ.



[14]

Water vapour is invisible and can only be seen when it cools and condenses into clouds or water droplets on cold surfaces. Image: LEARNZ



[15]

About 90 percent of the freshwater on Earth is frozen. Image: LEARNZ.

**Source URL:** <https://www.learnz.org.nz/node/1813>

### Links

[1] <https://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/water-as-a-precious-resource.mp3?uuid=600c4ca5a7775>

[2] <https://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/water-as-a-precious-resource-asy.mp3?uuid=600c4ca5a725d>

[3] [http://activities.learnz.org.nz/wt172/wt172-a01-water-as-a-precious-resource/quiz\\_html5.html](http://activities.learnz.org.nz/wt172/wt172-a01-water-as-a-precious-resource/quiz_html5.html)

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- [5] [https://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/taonga\\_0.mp3?uuid=600c4ca5a79bb](https://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/taonga_0.mp3?uuid=600c4ca5a79bb)
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- [10] [https://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/moana\\_6.mp3?uuid=600c4ca5a7e79](https://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/moana_6.mp3?uuid=600c4ca5a7e79)
- [11] <https://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/b-wp172-01-water.jpg>
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