

Vocabulary: Unit 8: Water on Earth

reservoir	A storage location for water.
water (hydrological) cycle	The movement of water around Earth's surface.
infiltration	The process by which water at the Earth's surface enters the ground.
transpiration	Water vapor leaving plants through their leaves.
dissolved load	Material, especially ions from chemical weathering, that are carried in solution by a stream.
suspended load	The portion of the sediment that is carried by a fluid flow which settle slowly enough such that it almost never touches the bed.
bed load	Particles in a flowing fluid that are transported along the bed.
gradient	The incline of a slope; increased gradient of a stream channel results in increased velocity of streamflow.
base level	The lowest point that a stream can be eroded to.
meander	A bend in a stream or river.
floodplain	An area of low-lying ground adjacent to a river, formed mainly of river sediments and subject to flooding.
delta	A triangular shaped deposit as a stream enters a body of water.
natural levee	A deposit of sand or mud built up along, and sloping away from, either side of the flood plain of a river or stream.
alluvial fan	A fan shaped deposit as a stream flows onto a broad, flat valley.
drainage basin	The entire area of land that contributes to a stream.
confluence	Where two streams come together.
tributary	A smaller stream that feeds into a larger stream.
youthful stream	A stream system that has no floodplain, steep banks, few meanders, and often has rapids and waterfalls.
mature stream	A stream system that has floodplains, some meanders, and is nearing base level.
old stream	A stream system that has many meanders, well-developed floodplains, many tributaries, oxbow lakes, and is very near the base level.
divide	A topographically high area that separates a landscape into different water basins.
aquifer	A body of permeable rock that can contain or transmit groundwater.
recharge	The amount of water in an area available to enter the ground.
water table	The upper limit of an aquifer; it can be visualized as the topmost "surface" of the water in the aquifer.
spring	A natural flow of water due to the intersection of the water table with the ground surface.
well	A manmade structure designed to reach groundwater by drilling or digging into the ground.
artesian spring	Spring water that naturally flows to the surface.
geyser	Heated groundwater that erupts from the ground under pressure.
subsidence	A lowering of the ground surface as groundwater is depleted from an aquifer.
saltwater intrusion	As coastal aquifers are depleted, ocean saltwater enters the aquifer and contaminates the water.
cone of depression	A lowering of the water table at the point at which a well draws water.
cavern/cave	A large underground chamber typically formed from the erosion of limestone bedrock.
sinkhole	A natural depression or hole in the ground caused by some form of collapse of the surface layer.
stalactite	A tapering structure hanging like an icicle from the roof of a cave, formed of calcium salts deposited by dripping water.
stalagmite	A mound or tapering column rising from the floor of a cave, formed of calcium salts deposited by dripping water.
column	A structure formed when a stalactite and stalagmite connect.

salinity	The amount of dissolved salt in water.
photic zone	The topmost layer of the water column where sunlight can penetrate.
aphotic zone	The layer of the water column where sunlight does not penetrate.
intertidal zone	The ocean zone between the high tide and low tide lines.
neritic zone	The ocean zone from the low tide line to the edge of the continental shelf.
oceanic zone	The ocean zone makes up all of the ocean from the edge of the continental shelf outward.
fetch	The distance traveled by wind or waves across open water.
storm surge	A rising of the sea as a result of atmospheric pressure changes and wind associated with a storm.
longshore current	Movement parallel to the shore caused by waves striking the shore at an angle.
wave-cut cliffs	Vertical rock formations that have been weathered by striking waves.
wave-cut platforms	Horizontal rock shelves created by wave erosion.
sea arch	An erosional feature created when waves cut through a cliff.
sea stacks	Isolated towers of rock created as waves erode cliffs.
beach	An accumulation of sand along a shoreline due to wave deposition.
spit	A depositional feature formed by sand and other sediment extending out from shore.
tombolo	A bar of sand joining an island to the mainland.
barrier island	A long, relatively narrow island running parallel to the mainland, built up by the action of waves and currents and serving to protect the coast from erosion.
groin	A long, narrow pile of rocks or cement built perpendicular to the shoreline to keep sand at that beach.
breakwater	A structure built in the water parallel to the shore in order to protect the shore from strong incoming waves.
seawall	A wall or embankment erected to prevent the sea from encroaching on or eroding an area of land; built into the mainland.
tides	The daily rise and fall of sea level at any given place.
tidal range	The difference between high tide and low tide.
spring tide	The exceptionally high and low tides that occur at the time of the new moon or the full moon when the sun, moon, and earth are approximately aligned.
neap tide	A tide of minimum range occurring at the first and the third quarters of the moon.
Coriolis Effect	How Earth's rotation steers winds and surface ocean currents; causes freely moving objects to appear to move to the right in the Northern Hemisphere and to the left in the Southern Hemisphere.
gyre	A ring-like system of ocean currents rotating clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and counterclockwise in the Southern Hemisphere.
thermohaline circulation	Circulation of ocean water caused by differences in density due to differing temperature and salinity.
downwelling	When cold, saline water sinks to the bottom of the ocean.
upwelling	When deep ocean water returns to the surface because it is displaced.
plankton	Any of the group of free-floating microscopic marine organisms.
phytoplankton	Microscopic organisms that float with the ocean's currents and produce their own food through photosynthesis.
zooplankton	Microscopic organism that float with the ocean's currents and eat phytoplankton as a food source.
benthos	Organisms found on the bottom, or in the bottom sediments, of an ocean, lake, or other body of water.
nekton	Aquatic animals that are able to swim and move independently of water currents.