

Vocabulary: Unit 11: Climate Change and Human Impact

interglacial period	A geological interval of warmer global average temperature lasting thousands of years that separates consecutive glacial periods within an ice age.
El Niño	An irregularly recurring flow of unusually warm surface waters from the Pacific Ocean toward and along the western coast of South America that prevents upwelling of nutrient-rich cold deep water and that disrupts typical regional and global weather patterns.
La Niña	An irregularly recurring upwelling of unusually cold water to the ocean surface along the western coast of South America that often occurs following an El Niño and that disrupts typical regional and global weather patterns especially in a manner opposite to that of El Niño.
Milankovitch cycles	Periodic variations in the Earth's position relative to the sun as the Earth orbits, affecting the distribution of the solar radiation reaching the Earth and causing climatic changes.
global warming	A gradual increase in the overall temperature of the earth's atmosphere generally attributed to the greenhouse effect caused by increased levels of carbon dioxide, chlorofluorocarbons, and other pollutants.
carbon source	Areas and activities that supply carbon to reservoirs.
carbon sink	A natural or artificial reservoir that accumulates and stores some carbon-containing chemical compound for an indefinite period.
carrying capacity	The largest number of individuals of a particular species that can survive over long periods of time in a given environment.
sustainable development	A mode of human development in which resource use aims to meet human needs while ensuring the sustainability of natural systems and the environment, so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come.