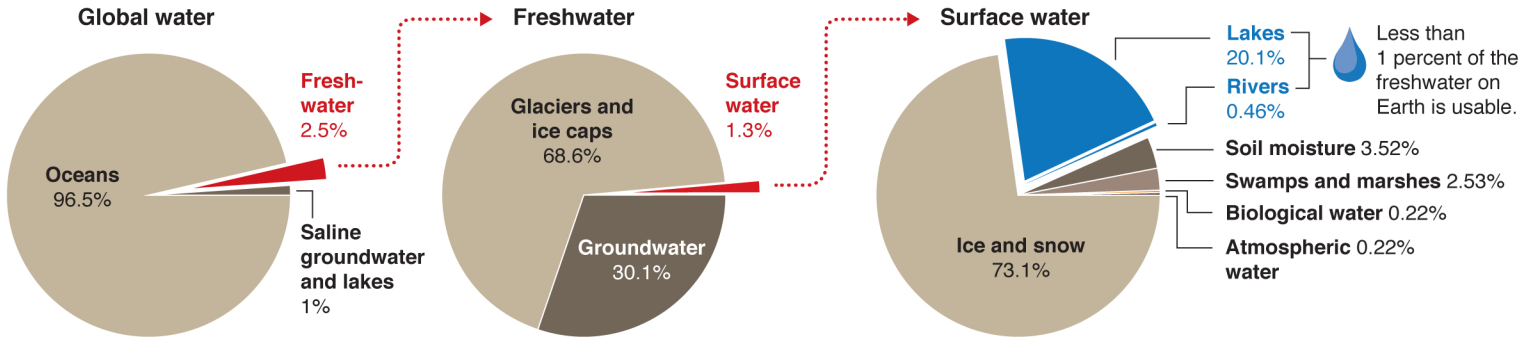


The Water Cycle

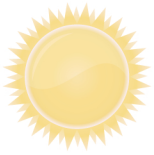


When you get thirsty, you might simply reach for a glass and fill it with water from the tap. That water might have fallen from the sky as rain just last week. But the same water has been around for pretty much as long as the Earth has. Earth's water is always in motion—a continuous cycle on, above, and below the surface. This is the water cycle.



Condensation

Water vapor in the air cools down and changes back into liquid, forming clouds.



Evaporation

Water on the surface of rivers, lakes, and oceans heats up and becomes vapor, or steam, which goes into the air.

Water storage in the atmosphere

Precipitation

Condensed water vapor that falls to the Earth's surface such as rain, snow, and hail.

Water storage in ice and snow

Transpiration

Once absorbed water reaches the leaves of a plant, some evaporates into the air.

Runoff

Water from rain or melted snow moves across the land, running into lakes and oceans.

Infiltration

Water flows from the surface into the ground and becomes soil moisture or groundwater.

Freshwater storage

Groundwater discharge

Water storage in oceans