



INTRODUCTION: THE WATER CYCLE

The following diagram illustrates the water cycle which shows the continuous movement of water on, above, and below the Earth's surface. Each step in the water cycle is represented by a black arrow and is accompanied by a braille square with a letter identifying it. The cycle begins with the cloud at the top left of the page and proceeds in a counter-clockwise direction. The cloud shows raised drops of rain coming down from it which fall onto the mountain below. This is the step of the water cycle called precipitation. The next step in the water cycle is called infiltration. In this step precipitation seeps into soil. The precipitation then seeps into groundwater stores or enters large bodies of water, such as lakes, seas, and oceans through runoff and rivers. Once the precipitation has been collected in bodies of water or taken up by trees and other plants, heat from the sun causes the water to evaporate or transpire into the atmosphere and transforms the water into water vapor. The final step in this cycle is condensation. As the water vapor in the atmosphere cools, it condenses together to form clouds and liquid water, where the process begins again as the cloud releases precipitation.

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