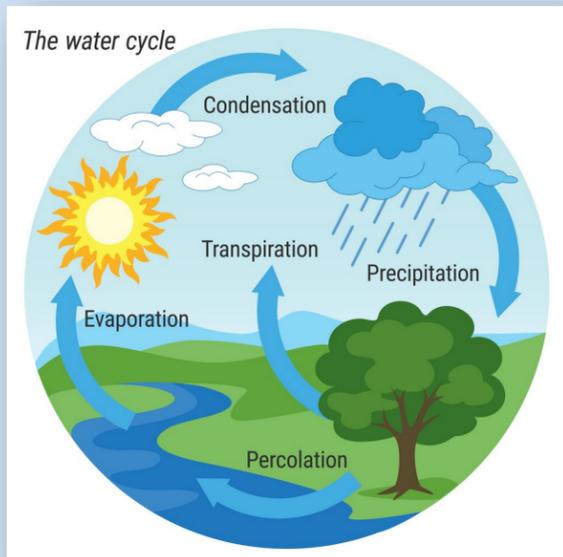


# A Piece of the Water Cycle: Precipitation

The water cycle is a system where water is continually moving from earth to the atmosphere and back again. You may see it in water rushing downhill; puddles evaporating on a hot day; and storms unleashing rain and snow. But how is water held in the atmosphere, and why does it fall back to the earth?



## Materials

Glass Jar  
Shaving Cream  
Food Coloring  
Eye Dropper

## Try This!

1. Fill the jar  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of water.
2. Fill the top of water with foam shaving cream. This is your "cloud" of water vapor and ice crystals.
3. Mix a separate bowl of water and food coloring.
4. Using a dropper, start adding the colored water to the shaving cream. This is your cloud collecting water from the atmosphere.
5. Continue adding food coloring and watch how the cloud slowly condenses. What happens when it can no longer hold water?

## What's Happening?

### Precipitation Means *Falling*

This activity illustrates clouds as water vapor and ice crystals that turn into *precipitation* as the cloud condenses. The shaving cream represents a cloud gathering water as food dye is added, and then releasing the dye as precipitating "rain" while it slowly collapses and is unable to retain the water. Precipitation doesn't just have to be rain! In weather, it's water in any form falling from the atmosphere. Rain, snow, sleet, you name it!

