

Rain is a part of Earth's endless water cycle. At the beginning of the cycle, sunlight heats up water on Earth's surface. The heat causes the water to evaporate, or to turn into water vapor. This water vapor rises into the air. As the water vapor cools, it turns back into water, in the form of droplets. The droplets form around dust and other particles through a process called condensation.

Clouds form from large numbers of these droplets. In a cloud, droplets come together with other droplets to form larger drops of water. Eventually, the drops become too heavy to stay in the cloud. They fall to Earth as rain. Then the water cycle begins again.

Sometimes drops of water freeze into ice crystals in the clouds. Sometimes the ice crystals melt as they fall toward the ground. This is another way that rain forms.



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How does rain form?

Water droplets form from warm air. As the warm air rises in the sky it cools. Water vapor (invisible water in the air) always exists in our air. Warm air holds quite a bit of water. For example, in the summer it is usually very humid. When enough of these droplets collect together, we see them as clouds. If the clouds are big enough and have enough water droplets, the droplets bang together and form even bigger drops. When the drops get heavy, they fall because of gravity, and you see and feel rain.

