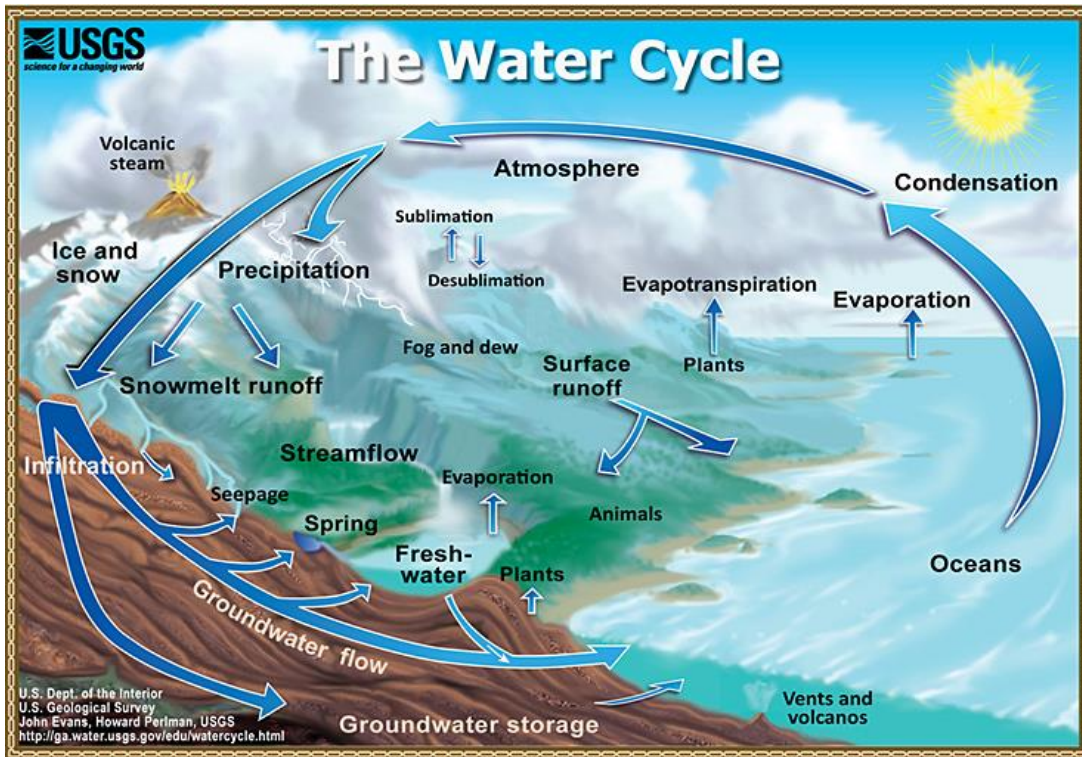


# The Water Cycle

Adapted from: <http://www.k12reader.com/worksheet/water-cycle/>

The water cycle is the continuous movement of water as it changes from one state to another throughout the Earth. Water on Earth can be found in three forms: ice, water, and water vapor.



When the heat of the sun shines on water, the water evaporates, rising into the air as water vapor. As it moves higher into the sky, it cools. The cooled water vapor begins to form water drops, which gather together as clouds. This process is called condensation. The drops of water join together in the cloud. Finally, the cloud becomes so heavy that the drops start to fall. Any form of water that falls from the sky is called precipitation. Precipitation will take on different forms such as rain, snow, sleet, or hail.

No matter what form the precipitation takes, much of it will become runoff and find its way back to the sea. Most of the water will join surface water in lakes and streams or soak into the ground and become groundwater. Some groundwater is absorbed by plant roots and ends up as water vapor from the leaves of plants. Some water will spend some time atop mountains as ice and snow. Over time, all water keeps moving and returns to the water cycle at different stages and in different states. The water cycle never ends.