

Exploring the Water Cycle Teacher Demonstrations

Here are the directions for the Teacher Demonstrations. You will need to set most of these up in advance. They can be done over two separate days. If time permits, many of these could be done as hands-on activities for students.

Labels for each stage in the water cycle are included at the end of this document to match the diagram in the student capture sheet. This is optional, but may help some students match the term to the concept being demonstrated.

Evaporation:

Note: Be sure to emphasize to the students that the SUN is the heat source that drives the water cycle. You could even put a cut-out of the sun in front of the Bunsen burner so they keep this in mind.

Materials:

- Safety equipment - goggles, gloves for heat protection, apron
- Beaker with approximately 200 mL water
- Bunsen burner or hotplate
- Beaker tongs
- If using a Bunsen burner ◦ striker/lighter ◦ ring stand, with beaker platform and screen
- Water Cycle Labels (optional)

Procedures:

- Ask the students, "What will happen when heat is added to this beaker of water?" Wait for responses.
- Turn on heat lamp to represent the incoming solar radiation, and light the Bunsen burner.
- Tell them that the beaker is representing large bodies of water such as oceans. The Bunsen burner represents the heating of the water as it absorbs the Sun's radiation.
- Ask the students, "What happens to the water as it receives heat energy from the Sun?" Emphasize the fact that the water temperature will increase the longer the water is exposed to the Sun's energy. (The Bunsen burner is used just to save time for the demonstration.)
- Ask, "What phase change is occurring in the water?" (It is going from liquid to gas.)
- Explain that the molecules of water are getting more excited and moving faster. This added energy allows them move apart and become a gas - just like the water on Earth's surface does every day.

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Transpiration:

Note: This demo needs to be set up the day before. This should only take a couple minutes of class time.

Materials:

- potted plant: At least a day or two before the demonstration, place a bag over the plant. Be sure it is well-watered. Tie the bag off so it is tightly closed but not damage the plant. The objective is to have water transpire into the bag so the students will see this process.
- clear plastic bag
- string or rubber band

Procedures:

1. Carry the plant around the room to show that there is water in the bag. (If you feel that there is not enough water in the bag, you can spray a little in before class begins and retie the bag.)
2. Ask the students how the water got in there. Explain that the plants take in water through their roots. The water is moved throughout the plant and then evaporates through its pores and stomata. Also, this process happens continually, wherever there are plants.

Condensation:

Note: If you have enough mirrors, you could hand them out to each group and have the students breath on them in place of you doing this.

Materials:

- cold, drink can (kept cold in fridge or small cooler.)
- Mirror (optional)

Procedures:

1. Wipe off the outside of the can so that it is dry.
2. Hold the can about a foot or so, over the ‘ocean’ beaker. Hold it there for about ten to fifteen seconds or until you see condensation forming on the can.
3. Either pass the can around the room, or walk around with it so that the students can see the condensation forming on the can.
4. As you move about, ask the students, “*Where did the water on the outside of the can come from?*” Solicit responses, but be sure they understand that the water vapor that condensed was in the air.
5. Optional: You can skip the following steps, do them yourself, or have the students complete them with their own set of mirrors.
 - a. Show the students that the mirror is clean.
 - b. Breathe on it and show them the cloudy mirror. Ask, “*What is making it foggy?*” (The water vapor from your breath that is condensing on it. The mirror is cool enough to condense the water for at least a short time.)

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Use Condensation to Make a Cloud:

Note: The procedures for this demonstration are written for students to follow. The teacher can easily adapt them to do it herself/himself. If sets of materials are prepared in advance, this could be done as a group activity. To save time, have a container (materials tub) for each group ready to hand out before class begins. If this will not fit your schedule, this can also be done as a teacher demo. Be sure to use all safety equipment for this activity.

Materials: (per group)

- Goggles and lab apron for each participant
- 2-liter clear soda bottle - with cap, and about 40 mL H₂O
- 1 match
- 1 match striker
- warm tap water (fill the 2-liter bottles with about 2 inches)

Procedures:

1. With the lids on the bottles, shake them for three to 5 seconds so that there will be plenty of water vapor in the bottle.
2. Squeeze the bottle very hard and then release the pressure quickly. Explain that when a compressed gas (the air inside the squeezed bottle) expands rapidly (releasing the squeeze quickly), it cools. An everyday example of this is the way a metal hairspray or deodorant can feels cooler after it is used.
3. Ask what they see form inside the bottle. (No clouds should form, but there may be a little condensation on the sides of the bottle.) Ask why this happened. (Some of the water vapor cooled and condensed back into a liquid on the sides of the bottle, but NOT in the air.)
4. Tell the students to take off the bottle cap and, working as a team, they will add smoke to the bottle.
 - a. One partner holds the bottle on the lab table.
 - b. Another partner holds the cap.
 - c. A third partner lights the match, counts to 3, and drops it into the bottle.
 - d. The first partner then quickly replaces the cap, tightly.
5. Repeat step two above. The quickly cooling air should now form a cloud in the bottle. (It may take two or three squeezes for some students to get the cloud to form.) Explain that this happens because the water vapor has condensation nuclei (the smoke particles) on which to condense. The tiny smoke particles are like the soda can and mirror in the previous demo.
6. Have students open the bottles and GENTLY squeeze out the cloud and smoke. Then they should replace the caps and return everything to the tubs.
7. Students should complete the condensation part of the Capture Sheet as the teacher collects the materials tub.

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Infiltration:

Note: This is a simple version of this demo. You can make it more complex with a number of different soil and rock types. This demo is intended to show the basics of infiltration.

Materials:

- 1 clear plastic bottle (wide mouth preferred) set up so that water will infiltrate through soil and gravel and into the bottom of the bottle. Cut around the bottle so a little more than ½ the bottle makes up the bottom part.
- Tie or rubber band a piece of panty-hose, fiberglass screen, or cheesecloth over the open neck of the bottle in place of the cap. This will create a funnel with a filter.
- Turn the funnel over and place a layer of gravel about 2cm thick in it.
- Place 1 to 2 cm of soil over the gravel.
- Place the funnel onto the bottom piece of the bottle and tape it to the bottom part so that it won't slip or shift during the demo.

Procedures:

1. Pour water into the set-up until it starts to flow through the gravel and into the bottom part of the bottle.
2. If there is excess water left 'above ground', ask the students what would happen to it if the soil on were on a slope. Lead them to understand that water that does not infiltrate creates runoff – like water running down a street after a storm, or water in a river.
3. Students should fill in the capture sheet while you prepare for the next demo.

Freshwater from Saltwater:

Note: Students have often asked how freshwater comes from the ocean. The day before you teach this lesson, make a saturated solution of saltwater. Then, vaporize (evaporate) the water by heating it over a hot plate or Bunsen burner. Have it set aside to show the students.

Materials:

- saturated solution of saltwater (2 cups salt to 1 cup water)
- beaker
- hot plate or Bunsen burner

Procedures:

1. Students predict the answer to the question on the Student Capture Sheet.
2. Pass around the saltwater beaker that you evaporated in advance, so the students can see the salt crusted on the bottom. Explain that the water absorbed enough energy to turn from liquid to a gas (evaporate) but the salt remained behind. In the ocean, the salt would mix with the water that did not evaporate.

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Optional labels to use for each demonstration:

THE WATER CYCLE

Evaporation

Condensation

Precipitation

Runoff



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Infiltration

Groundwater Flow

Solar Radiation

