Making Rain

When air that's full of water vapor cools, it changes the gas back to a liquid in the form of tiny water droplets. This is **condensation**. Water continues to condense, forming the clouds in our sky.

When the clouds get so large and heavy that the air can't support them anymore, the water falls as **precipitation**, more commonly known as rain, sleet, snow, or hail.

Condensation

You don't have to look to faraway clouds to see condensation in action. As your glass of water cools the air around it, there is less heat energy for individual water molecules to move around. These molecules join together, forming the water droplets on the outside of your glass. We call this condensation.

The Water Cycle

The water cycle is the continuous movement of water on, in, and above Earth. It has four parts:

Evaporation. The Sun heats up water in oceans, rivers, and lakes, causing the water to turn into vapor that rises into the air.

Condensation. Once in the air, the vapor cools and liquifies, forming clouds.

Precipitation. When so much water condenses that the air can't hold it anymore, the heavy clouds allow the water to fall back to Earth in the form of rain, hail, sleet, or snow.

Collection. The water may fall back into the oceans, rivers, or lakes, or it may end up on land. If it ends up on land, it may soak into Earth, becoming part of its groundwater, or it may run over the soil and collect back into the oceans, rivers, and lakes. This is where the cycle starts over again.