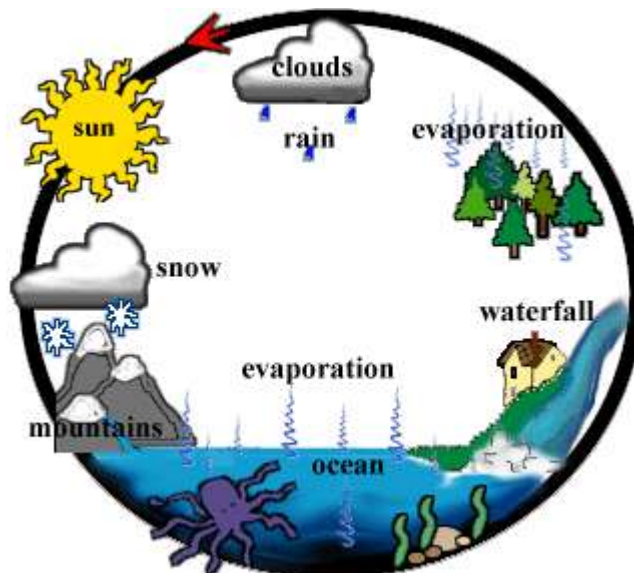


The Water Cycle

The sun acts as a pump, keeping water going around and around.



1. **Condensation:** Water vapor forms clouds. When the clouds cool, the vapor becomes liquid.
2. **Precipitation:** Liquid is heavier than vapor. Gravity pulls the liquid down on the earth as rain.
3. **Runoff:** When the rain hits the earth, it runs across the land into lakes, streams, and oceans.
4. **Percolation:** Some of the rain soaks into the ground and travels through rocks, gravel and sand.
5. **Groundwater:** Water that percolates down through the ground is stored in aquifers.
6. **Discharge:** Some ground water eventually travels back to the earth's surface.
7. **Evaporation:** The sun heats surface water, making it into vapor that rises into the sky.



Sponsored by the Minnesota Rural Water Association

Photo: Courtesy of United States Environmental Protection Agency