

5th Grade Science Vocabulary Words

abiotic factor A nonliving part of an ecosystem.

acceleration Change in velocity with respect to time.

action The force one object applies to a second, as in Newton's third law of motion, which states, "For every action, there is an equal but opposite reaction." See reaction.

adaptation A characteristic that enables a living thing to survive in its environment.

air mass A large region of the atmosphere where the air has similar properties throughout.

air pressure The force put on a given area by the weight of the air above it.

anemometer A device that measures wind speed.

atmosphere The blanket of gases that surrounds Earth.

balanced forces When two forces cancel each other out.

barometer A device for measuring air pressure.

basin The floor of an ocean, containing mountains, valleys, and plains.

biome One of Earth's large ecosystems, with its own kind of climate, soil, plants, and animals.

biotic factor A living part of an ecosystem.

carbon cycle The continuous exchange of carbon dioxide and oxygen among living things.

carnivore An animal that eats another animal.

cirrus cloud A high-altitude cloud with a featherlike shape, made of ice crystals.

cleavage The tendency of a mineral to break along flat surfaces.

climate The average weather pattern of a region.

cold front A front where cold air moves in under a warm air mass.

commensalism A relationship between two kinds of organisms that benefits one without harming the other.

community All the living things in an ecosystem.

condensation The changing of a gas into a liquid. —condense v.

consumer Any animal that eats plants or eats other plant-eating animals.

convection cell a circular pattern of air rising, air sinking, and wind.

Coriolis effect The curving of the path of a moving object caused by Earth's rotation.

Cumulus Cloud A puffy cloud that appears to rise up from a flat bottom.

deciduous forest A forest biome with many kinds of trees that lose their leaves each autumn.

decomposer Any of the fungi or bacteria that break down dead plants and animals into useful things like minerals and rich soil.

delta Fan-shaped region formed by deposits of sediments found at the mouth of a river.

deposition The dropping off of bits of eroded rock.

desert A sandy or rocky biome, with little precipitation and little plant life.

downdraft A downward rush of air caused by the falling of rain during a thunderstorm.

ecosystem All the living and nonliving things in an environment, including their interactions with each other.

effort arm The part of a lever that applies force to the resistance arm.

erosion The picking up and carrying away of pieces of rocks.

evaporation The slow changing of a liquid into a gas.

extinct A species that has died out completely.

fault A crack in Earth's crust whose sides show evidence of motion.

flood plain Land that is likely to be underwater during a flood.

fold mountain A mountain made up mostly of rock layers folded by being squeezed together.

food chain The path of the energy in food from one organism to another.

food web The overlapping food chains in an ecosystem.

force a push or pull exerted by one object on another, causing a change in motion.

friction A force that opposes the motion of one object moving past another.

front A boundary between air masses with different temperatures.

grassland A biome where grasses, not trees, are the main plant life. Prairies are one kind of grassland region.

gravity The force of attraction between any two objects due to their mass.

habitat The place where a plant or animal naturally lives and grows.

hardness How well a mineral resists scratching.

herbivore An animal that eats plants, algae, and other producers.

high-pressure system A pattern surrounding a high pressure center, from which winds blow outward. In the Northern Hemisphere these winds curve to the right in a clockwise pattern.

humidity The amount of water vapor in the air.

hurricane A very large, swirling storm with very low pressure at the center.

igneous rock A rock formed when melted rock material cools and hardens.

inclined plane A slanted surface used to move objects higher or lower.

inertia The tendency of a moving object to keep moving in a straight line or of any object to resist a change in motion.

land breeze Wind that blows from land to sea.

lever A simple machine made of a rigid bar and a fixed pivot point, called the fulcrum.

limiting factor Anything that controls the growth or survival of a population.

low-pressure system A pattern surrounding a low-pressure center, in which winds blow in toward the center. In the Northern Hemisphere, these winds blow to the right in a counterclockwise pattern.

luster The way light bounces off a mineral's surface.

mass A measure of the amount of matter in an object.

meander Bends or s-shaped curves in a river.

metamorphic rock a Rock formed under heat and pressure from another kind of rock.

mineral a solid material of Earth's crust with a definite composition.

nitrogen cycle The continuous trapping of nitrogen gas into compounds in the soil and its return to the air.

nonrenewable resource A resource that cannot be replaced within a short period of time or at all.

omnivore An animal that eats both plants and animals.

organism Any living thing that can carry out its life on its own.

plate One of the moving pieces of Earth's crust that has been broken by upward pressure from the mantle.

precipitation Any form of water particles that falls from the atmosphere and reaches the ground.

predator An animal that hunts other animals for food.

prey a living thing that is hunted for food.

producer Any of the plants and algae that produce oxygen and food that animals need.

pulley A wheel and rope that changes the direction of force.

reaction The force with which an object responds to an action, as in Newton's third law of motion.

relative humidity a comparison between how much water vapor is in the air and how much the air could hold at a given temperature if it were full, or saturated.

rock cycle rocks changing from one into another in a never-ending series of processes.

runoff Precipitation that flows across the land's surface or falls into rivers and streams.

savanna A tropical grassland with some trees and shrubs.

sea breeze wind that blows from sea to land.

sediment Pieces of material carried and deposited by water or wind.

sedimentary rock A rock made up of bits of rock joined together

simple machine A machine with few moving parts, making it easier to do work.

speed how fast an object's position changes with time at any given moment.

stratus cloud a cloud that forms in a blanketlike layer.

taiga a cool forest biome of conifers in the upper Northern Hemisphere.

thunder The noise caused by lightning-heated air during a thunderstorm.

tropical rain forest a hot biome near the equator, with much rainfall and a wide variety of life.

troposphere the layer of the atmosphere closest to Earth's surface.

tundra Large, treeless plain in the arctic regions, where the ground is frozen all year.

unbalanced forces Forces that do not cancel each other out when acting together on a single object.

velocity the speed and direction of a moving object.

warm front a front where warm air moves in over a cold air mass.

water cycle the continuous movement of water between Earth's surface and the air, changing from liquid to gas to liquid.

water vapor water in the form of a gas.

weather What the lower atmosphere is like at any given place and time.

weathering breaking down rocks into smaller pieces.

weight The force of gravity between Earth and an object.

wheel and axle a wheel with a rod through the middle.