

The Whys of Weather: Clouds

by ReadWorks



Have you ever looked up at clouds and wondered where they come from or what they are made of? Clouds can be different shapes, but they are all mostly made of water.

There are always small particles of water in the air that people can't see. A lot of these tiny particles of water are in the form of a gas called water vapor. Most of the water vapor in the air comes from the oceans. This happens when liquid water toward the surface of the oceans is warmed, usually by the sun. Eventually, the warmed water becomes water vapor, rising into the air.

To make clouds, the water particles in the air have to come together, but they can't come together as water vapor. They need to be liquid water or ice crystals. Water vapor can turn into liquid water through a process called condensation.

In the air, liquid water can stick to specks of dust, water drops, or ice crystals. This forms cloud droplets. Lots of cloud droplets together form clouds.