



Climate Zones



Earth has three main climate zones—tropical, temperate, and polar which can be further divided into smaller zones, each with its own typical climate. A region's climate, together with its physical characteristics, determines its plant and animal life. The weather changes in different parts of the world and where there are similar weather patterns this is known as Climate. At the top of the Earth, there is an arctic climate and some of the coldest temperatures in the world are found here. Temperate climate zones lie in the middle latitudes, in the regions of the Earth between the tropics and the polar regions. As you approach the equator, you find Mediterranean and desert climates and at the equator there is a tropical climate.

Key Knowledge

Temperate Climate

Temperate means moderate. Unlike in the tropics, temperatures can change greatly, between summer and winter. So, most places with a temperate climate have four seasons: summer, autumn, winter and spring.



Tropical Climate

A tropical climate is a type of climate typical in the tropics. It is a damp climate in which all twelve months have mean temperatures above 18°C (64.4 °F). Tropical Climates have almost continuous rainfall throughout the year, usually in the afternoon.



Subtropical Climate

Subtropical climates are found in the parts of the world that are immediately south or north of the tropics and have very hot weather at some times of the year. Subtropical regions are cooler than countries found on the Equator.



Polar Climate

Polar climates are cold and dry, with long, dark winters. In the tundra (a treeless region bordering the Arctic), temperatures rise above freezing for only a few months each year.



Key Vocabulary

climate change	Climate change includes major changes in temperature, precipitation (rain/snow), or wind patterns that occur over several decades or longer.
dry	Not wet or moist. Not much rainfall.
equator	The equator is an imaginary line around the middle of Earth. It is halfway between the North Pole and the South Pole.
humidity	The amount of water vapour in the atmosphere.
hurricanes	A storm with a strong wind.
lines of latitude	Latitude and longitude are a system of lines used to describe the location of any place on Earth. Lines of latitude run in an east-west direction across Earth. Lines of longitude run in a north-south direction. Although these are only imaginary lines, they appear on maps and globes as if they actually existed.
lines of longitude	
microclimate	A small area with a different climate to its surroundings is said to have its own microclimate.
Northern hemisphere	The Northern Hemisphere is the half of Earth that is north of the Equator.
Southern hemisphere	The Southern Hemisphere is the half of Earth that is south of the Equator.
seasons	Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer.
tropical	Relating to places near the equator.
Tropic of Cancer	The Tropic of Cancer, which is also referred to as the Northern Tropic, is the most northerly circle of latitude on Earth at which the Sun can be directly overhead.
Tropic of Capricorn	The Tropic of Capricorn, which is also referred to as the Southern Tropic, is the most southerly circle of latitude on Earth at which the Sun can be directly overhead.

