



Why Are Oceans Important?

If you dropped from outer space to a spot on Earth, chances are you would land in the ocean. Almost three-quarters of the Earth's surface is covered by ocean water. By size alone, the ocean is an important place to study. It is no coincidence that most of the world's population lives near water. The organisms that live in the ocean are an important source of food. Throughout history explorers sailed across the ocean to travel to "new" lands.



Other important features of the oceans may not be so obvious. Here are just two examples: The ocean regulates global climate by absorbing and releasing heat. Also, without processes that operate on the ocean floor, there would be no mountains. Understanding the processes that go on in the oceans will help you to appreciate how the oceans support life and shape the world.

What Will You Investigate?

Learning about the oceans will help you appreciate how important they are and how they fit into the Earth System. Here are some of the things that you will investigate:

- the properties of seawater;
- how ocean water circulates and how currents are formed;
- features of the ocean floor and how the ocean floor is mapped;
- how the ocean floor got its shape.



You will need to practice your problem-solving skills and be good observers and recorders as you work together with other members of your class.

In the last investigation, you will have an opportunity to apply all that you have learned about oceans. You will create a model of a place in the ocean that you could use to teach other students.