

THE CARBON CYCLE VOCABULARY

Carbon: An abundant element that combines with oxygen and hydrogen to form the organic compounds that make up organisms.

Carbon Cycle: The flow of carbon in the form of carbon dioxide molecules between the earth's surface and atmosphere.

Consumers: Organisms, primarily animals, that get their food from producers. They feed on green plants or on other animals that eat plants.

Decomposers: A specific type of consumer that feeds on dead plant or animal matter. Examples are bacteria and fungi.

Fossil Fuels: The carbon-rich matter from plants and animals that has been trapped in the earth's crust and can be burned to release energy. Examples are coal, gas, and oil.

Greenhouse Effect: The trapping of reflected heat from the sun by the earth's atmosphere, especially carbon dioxide. An increase in the amount of carbon dioxide may result in a warming of the earth.

Photosynthesis: The food-making process of the natural world.

Producers: Green plants that produce food by photosynthesis.

Respiration: The breakdown of food with the release of energy and carbon dioxide. It takes place in all living things.