

Summary: Climate Regions

Weather and Climate

Weather is the day-to-day conditions in the atmosphere. Air movement causes weather conditions to change. Weather conditions are factors like wind speed and direction, precipitation, and temperature. Weather conditions determine the climate of a region. Climate is the usual weather conditions in a place over a long period of time.

Three things affect climate. The first is latitude. Places far from the equator get less heat from the sun and are colder. The second is distance from a big body of water. Places closer to an ocean have a smaller change in temperature between seasons. Third, the elevation of a region affects temperature.

A Land of Many Climates

The United States has six climate regions. They are based on temperature and precipitation. Tropical regions are warm all year. Hawaii is in a tropical wet subregion. Dry regions get little precipitation. The region near the Rocky Mountains is dry. The mild mid-latitude regions have hot summers and mild winters. California is in this region.

Severe mid-latitude climates in the middle of the United States have cold winters. Polar regions such as Northern Alaska are colder year-round. The highland climate region is in the mountains, which are cooler and wetter than the lower land around them.

Climate and People

Climate affects how people live. People heat or cool their houses. People in dry regions must use water carefully to have enough to drink and water crops.

Climate also affects the economy. In Maine or Alaska, the growing season is short, so people cannot farm all year long. But California has two growing seasons, and farming is very important to the economy.

Extreme weather, like hurricanes, tornadoes, and blizzards, can destroy buildings and crops. Burning fossil fuels may be changing weather patterns by warming the earth.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

precipitation *noun*, water that falls to the earth as rain, snow, sleet, or hail

temperature *noun*, a measure of how hot or cold the air is

climate *noun*, the usual weather conditions in a place over a long period of time

elevation *noun*, the height of the land



After You Read

REVIEW What causes daily changes in the weather? Underline the sentence that tells what causes weather conditions to change.

REVIEW What factors are used to divide the United States into climate regions and subregions? Circle the sentence that tells what climate regions are based on.

REVIEW In what ways are people affected by extreme weather events? Draw a box around the sentence that tells what extreme weather does to people and their surroundings.