Global English News

Water: The World's Most Important Resource

Water is the most **essential** thing on our planet. Every living **creature** needs it to survive, from tiny insects to **enormous** whales. A person can survive for several weeks without food, but only a few days without water. In fact, water makes up about sixty percent of the human body. We drink it, we cook with it, and we use it to grow our food. Because water is everywhere around us, in rivers, rain, and oceans, it is easy to forget how **precious** it really is. Without a steady **supply**, life on Earth would simply stop.

Most of the water on Earth is not for drinking. About ninety-seven percent of it is salt water in the ocean. Only a small amount is fresh water that people can use. Much of this fresh water is **frozen** in ice or hidden deep **underground**. This means the amount of water we can actually **access** is very limited. Rivers, lakes, and rain provide most of the fresh water for daily human use. As the world's population grows, the **demand** for this **scarce** resource keeps rising. Scientists warn that fresh water may become harder to find in the future.

Growing food requires a huge amount of water. In fact, **agriculture** uses more fresh water than any other human activity. Farmers use **irrigation** systems to bring water directly to their crops. This process helps plants grow strong, even in areas with little rain. However, some irrigation methods waste a lot of water through **evaporation** or leaks. Modern farmers are now adopting more **efficient** techniques to **conserve** this vital resource. Drip irrigation, for example, delivers water straight to the roots of each plant. These smarter methods can reduce water waste while still producing plenty of food.

Not everyone in the world has enough clean water. Millions of people live in regions where water is hard to **obtain**. Long periods without rain, called **droughts**, can make the problem even worse. During a **severe** drought, rivers and wells can dry up completely. This forces communities to travel long distances just to collect water for their families. Climate change is making droughts more frequent and more intense in many parts of the world. Without action, water **shortages** could affect even more people in the coming decades. Governments and organizations are working hard to find lasting solutions to this **challenge**.

Clean water is not just about having enough, it is also about **quality**. Water **pollution** can make it unsafe to drink or use. Chemicals from factories, garbage, and waste can **contaminate** rivers and lakes. This contamination can harm fish, plants, and the people who depend on that water. In some places, communities must treat their water carefully before it is safe to drink. Water treatment plants remove harmful **substances** and germs from the water we use. Protecting our water sources from pollution benefits both people and the environment. Everyone can help by **disposing** of chemicals and trash properly.

Fortunately, everyone can help protect this important resource. Simple **habits**, like turning off the tap while brushing your teeth, can save a surprising amount of water. Fixing a leaky **faucet** at home also prevents unnecessary waste. On a larger scale, cities are exploring new technologies like **desalination**, which turns salt water into fresh water. Recycling **wastewater** is another creative solution that many communities now use. Education plays a huge role too, since people who understand the value of water tend to use it more wisely. Small individual actions, combined with smart public **policies**, can make a real difference for future generations.

Beyond the Headlines

Here is something amazing to think about: the water you drink today is incredibly old. In fact, it is the exact same water that has existed on Earth for billions of years! Water constantly **recycles** itself through a process called the water cycle. It evaporates from oceans, forms clouds, falls as rain, and **eventually** returns to rivers and seas. This means the water in your glass might have once been part of an **ancient** ocean, or even inside a **dinosaur** millions of years ago! Earth does not create new water; it simply **reuses** the same supply over and over again. So the next time you take a sip, remember you are drinking a tiny piece of history.

Vocabulary

Paragraph 1

essential (adj.)	(adj.) very necessary; needed very much. *"Sleep is **essential** for good health."*
creature (n.)	(n.) a living animal or being. *"A whale is a huge **creature** that lives in the ocean."*
enormous (adj.)	(adj.) very, very big. *"The **enormous** whale swam near the boat."*
precious (adj.)	(adj.) very valuable and important. *"Family time is **precious** to me."*
supply (n.)	(n.) the amount of something that is available. *"The store has a large **supply** of apples."*

Paragraph 2

frozen (adj.)	(adj.) changed into ice; very cold and solid. *"The **frozen** lake was safe to walk on in winter."*
underground (adj.)	(adj.) below the surface of the earth. *"Miners work in **underground** tunnels."*
access (v.)	(v.) to reach or get something. *"We can **access** clean water from the tap."*
demand (n.)	(n.) a strong need or want for something. *"The **demand** for fresh vegetables is high in summer."*
scarce (adj.)	(adj.) not enough; hard to find. *"Clean water is **scarce** in some deserts."*

Paragraph 3

agriculture (n.)	(n.) the practice of growing crops and raising animals for food. *"**Agriculture** is important in rural areas."*
irrigation (n.)	(n.) a system for supplying water to land or crops. *"**Irrigation** helps farmers grow crops in dry regions."*
evaporation (n.)	(n.) the process of a liquid turning into gas. *"**Evaporation** causes puddles to disappear on hot days."*
efficient (adj.)	(adj.) able to do something well without wasting time or resources. *"An **efficient** washing machine uses less water."*
conserve (v.)	(v.) to use something carefully so it lasts longer. *"We should **conserve** energy at home."*

Paragraph 4

obtain (v.)	(v.) to get something, often with effort. *"It can be hard to **obtain** clean water in a desert."*
droughts (n.)	(n.) long periods of time with little or no rain. *"Farmers struggle to grow crops during **droughts**."*
severe (adj.)	(adj.) very serious or extreme. *"The city faced **severe** flooding last year."*
shortages (n.)	(n.) situations where there is not enough of something. *"The **shortages** left store shelves empty."*

challenge (n.)	(n.) a difficult task or problem. *"Learning a new language is a big **challenge**."*

Paragraph 5

quality (n.)	(n.) how good or bad something is. *"The **quality** of the food was excellent."*
pollution (n.)	(n.) harmful substances that damage air, water, or land. *"**Pollution** from cars affects the air we breathe."*
contaminate (v.)	(v.) to make something dirty or impure. *"Oil spills can **contaminate** the ocean."*
substances (n.)	(n.) particular kinds of matter with specific qualities. *"Some **substances** are dangerous if not handled carefully."*
disposing (v.)	(v.) throwing away or getting rid of something. *"**Disposing** of old batteries safely is important."*

Paragraph 6

habits (n.)	(n.) things you do regularly, almost without thinking. *"Good **habits** are important for a healthy life."*
faucet (n.)	(n.) a device that controls water flow from a pipe. *"Please turn off the **faucet** after washing your hands."*
desalination (n.)	(n.) the process of removing salt from seawater. *"**Desalination** provides fresh water in some coastal cities."*
wastewater (n.)	(n.) dirty water that has been used and needs to be cleaned. *"The plant treats **wastewater** before releasing it into the river."*
policies (n.)	(n.) official plans or rules made by a government or organization. *"New **policies** aim to reduce water waste."*

Beyond the Headlines

recycles (v.)	(v.) uses something again instead of throwing it away. *"The factory **recycles** plastic bottles into new products."*
eventually (adv.)	(adv.) after some time; in the end. *"After looking for hours, we **eventually** found the lost keys."*
ancient (adj.)	(adj.) very old; from a long time ago. *"Scientists study **ancient** civilizations to learn about history."*
dinosaur (n.)	(n.) a large reptile that lived millions of years ago. *"The museum has a giant **dinosaur** skeleton."*
reuses (v.)	(v.) uses something again. *"She **reuses** glass jars to store food."*

Language Review

Exercise A — True or False

Read each statement. Write True or False on the line.

1. Water makes up about sixty percent of the human body.	_____
2. Most of Earth's water is fresh water that people can drink.	_____
3. Agriculture uses less water than any other human activity.	_____
4. Drip irrigation delivers water straight to the roots of each plant.	_____
5. Droughts have become less frequent because of climate change.	_____
6. Water treatment plants remove harmful substances and germs from water.	_____
7. Desalination turns fresh water into salt water.	_____
8. The water we drink today has existed on Earth for billions of years.	_____

Exercise B — Matching

Match each word in Column A with its meaning in Column B. Write the correct letter.

Column A	Column B
1. essential	a. a device that controls water flow from a pipe
2. scarce	b. the process of removing salt from seawater
3. agriculture	c. harmful substances that damage air, water, or land
4. droughts	d. very old; from a long time ago
5. pollution	e. very necessary; needed very much
6. faucet	f. not enough; hard to find
7. desalination	g. long periods of time with little or no rain
8. ancient	h. the practice of growing crops and raising animals for food

Exercise C — Multiple Choice

Choose the best answer (a, b, c, or d) for each question.

1. What percentage of the human body is made up of water?

a. About 60%
b. About 30%
c. About 90%
d. About 10%

2. What percentage of Earth's water is salt water?

a. About 50%
b. About 97%
c. About 25%
d. About 75%

3. Which human activity uses the most fresh water?
a. Cooking
b. Cleaning
c. Agriculture
d. Drinking

4. What does drip irrigation do?
a. Floods entire fields with water
b. Removes salt from seawater
c. Collects rainwater from rooftops
d. Delivers water straight to plant roots

5. According to the article, what is making droughts more frequent and intense?
a. Climate change
b. Agriculture
c. Pollution
d. Overpopulation

6. What do water treatment plants remove from water?
a. Minerals only
b. Harmful substances and germs
c. Color
d. Temperature

7. What does desalination do?
a. Turns fresh water into salt water
b. Removes pollution from rivers
c. Turns salt water into fresh water
d. Freezes water into ice

8. According to Beyond the Headlines, how old can the water we drink be?
a. A few decades
b. A few hundred years
c. A few thousand years
d. Billions of years

Exercise D — Discussion Questions

Talk about these questions with a partner or in a small group.

1. How much water do you drink every day?

2. What are some ways you can save water at home?
3. Have you ever experienced a drought or a water shortage? What was it like?
4. Why do you think it is important to keep our rivers and oceans clean?
5. What is one new fact about water that surprised you from this article?