

# Oceans

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## Glossary

**abyssal plain** large, flat area on the ocean floor

**atoll** ring-shaped island formed by coral reefs around an underwater volcano

**bay** small area of ocean that is partly enclosed by land

**continental rise** gentle rise at the base of the steeper continental slope

**continental shelf** gently sloping underwater edge of a continent

**continental slope** ocean floor from the edge of the continental shelf to the continental rise

**coral reef** ridge of coral near the surface of the ocean in warm, shallow water

**crest** highest point of a wave

**current** river of water that flows through the ocean

**deep-water current** ocean water that sinks and flows at deep levels because it is more dense than the water around it; also called *density current* or *convection current*

**density** amount of matter in a given volume of something

**desalination** process that removes salts from ocean water

**estuary** area where a river flows into the ocean

**gulf** large area of ocean that is partly enclosed by land

**headland** point of high land jutting out into water

**hydrothermal vent** hot-water spring on the ocean floor, usually on mid-ocean ridges

**intertidal zone** area along a shore that is covered with water at high tide and exposed to air at low tide

**jetty** structure built to stick out into the water from the shoreline

**marine biologist** scientist who studies living things in oceans

**mid-ocean ridge** underwater mountain range where sea-floor spreading happens

**near-shore zone** shallow part of the ocean that extends from the breaking waves to water 200 meters (656 feet) deep

**nekton** living things that are able to swim through ocean water to search for food

**ocean** large body of salty water

**ocean basin** deep part of the ocean beyond the continental rise

**open-ocean zone** part of the ocean that is 200 meters (656 feet) deep or greater

**plankton** tiny living things that drift with the ocean currents

**rift** valley that runs along the top of a mid-ocean ridge

**salinity** measure of how salty water is

**sea-floor spreading** formation of new ocean floor where plates move apart

**seamount** underwater volcano

**shoreline** area where the ocean meets land

**submersible** underwater vehicle

**surface current** current that flows at the ocean's surface

**tide** regular, alternating rise and fall of the ocean's surface level, caused mostly by the Moon's gravity

**tide pool** small pool of water left behind along a shoreline at low tide

**trench** deep, narrow valley in the ocean floor

**trough** lowest point of a wave

**upwelling** upward movement of deep water to the surface, especially along some shores

**water cycle** movement of water between Earth's land, air, and bodies of water

**water pressure** force caused by the weight of water pushing down on something

**wave** rhythmic movement that carries energy through matter or space