

Weather and Climate: The seasons

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Summer brings wildflowers to Mount Rainier National Park in Washington state. Yet the mountain stays cold and snowy on top. Photo by: Peter Stevens via Flickr.

The four seasons are winter, spring, summer and autumn, or fall. These parts of the year make a cycle. That means they happen in the same order every year. This is why the weather changes in predictable ways.

The seasons are not the same everywhere. At the top and bottom of the Earth are the poles, where it stays cold all year. Halfway between the poles is the equator, where it stays warm all year. The equator is an imaginary line around Earth's middle. The seasons change the most between the equator and the poles.

Autumn

Autumn, or fall, is after summer and before winter. It gets cooler during this season. Autumn begins on a day when the night is just as long as the day. This happens in mid-September above the equator and in mid-March below it.

In autumn, leaves change color. They fall from the trees. Animals grow thicker coats or store food for winter. Some birds fly to warmer places. They will not return until spring.

People gather crops in autumn. All around the world, there are fall festivals. These events celebrate the harvest. The people give thanks for what they have grown.

Winter

Winter is after



autumn and before spring. It is the coldest season. The weather can be rainy and snowy, too.

Winter begins on the day with the shortest day and longest night. This happens in mid-December above the equator and in mid-June below it.

In winter, some animals sleep. They hibernate until spring. Some plants stop growing. Other plants die, leaving their seeds behind. These seeds wait for spring. They will grow when the weather warms up again.

Many people like winter. They get to ski, ice skate and sled. Other people feel sad during this season, though. There is not a lot of sunlight in winter. This can make people feel gloomy. For hundreds of years, winter celebrations have helped cheer people up.

For example, long ago, the Romans used to have a seven-day party. It was called Saturnalia. During this party, people stopped work, gave gifts and were merry. Christmas, Hanukkah and the Chinese New Year are popular winter holidays today. People celebrate them in similar ways.

Spring

Spring is the season between winter and summer. It begins on another day when the night is just as long as the day. This happens in mid-March above the equator and in mid-September below it.

In spring, the weather gets warmer. Plants begin to grow again. Animals make nests and have babies. Many celebrate these changes with spring festivals. Noruz is one example. This festival marks the waking up of nature. The country of Iran celebrates Noruz.



Summer

Summer comes after spring and before autumn. It is the warmest season. Summer begins on the day with the longest day and shortest night. This is in mid-June above the equator and in mid-December below it.

Plants grow the most in summer. The days are long and warm. It is a good season to celebrate. All summer long, people get together to have fun.



Quiz

- 1 Which describes the autumn season?
- (A) This is the coldest season. The days are very short and nights are long and many animals hibernate.
 - (B) Days are long and it is the warmest season of the year.
 - (C) The weather starts to get warmer and plants begin to grow and have babies.
 - (D) Leaves are changing color and falling from trees. Animals begin to grow thicker coats and store food for the next season.
- 2 What information do you get from the introduction [paragraphs 1-2]?
- (A) The equator is where the seasons change the most.
 - (B) The order of the seasons can change each year.
 - (C) Weather changes based on the order of the seasons.
 - (D) The equator runs through the Earth's poles.
- 3 Most of the animals in your area are not able to be seen. They must be hibernating. The plants you see have either died or stopped growing. You notice the days do not have a lot of sunlight and people feel gloomy. Which season are you in?
- (A) winter
 - (B) spring
 - (C) summer
 - (D) fall
- 4 Which sentence from section "Winter" explains why people feel sad during the winter?
- (A) In winter, some animals sleep.
 - (B) They get to ski, ice skate and sled.
 - (C) There is not a lot of sunlight in winter.
 - (D) This can make people feel gloomy.
- 5 What would you most likely see and feel in spring time?
- (A) snow, most animals sleeping, many plants are dead or have stopped growing
 - (B) leaves changing color, animals starting to store food
 - (C) warmer weather, plants beginning to grow, animals making nests and having babies
 - (D) plants are growing a lot, days are long and warm, good season to celebrate with friends
- 6 What is the MAIN idea of the section "Autumn"?
- (A) In autumn, it begins to get cooler and people harvest crops.
 - (B) In autumn, all the animals leave to get ready for the winter.
 - (C) In autumn, the equator determines the weather.
 - (D) In autumn, the days are longer than the nights.

- 7 Weather changes in a cycle throughout the year. The cycle is made of four seasons: winter, spring, summer and autumn, or fall. The seasons are not the same everywhere on Earth. Where on Earth do seasons change the most?
- (A) Seasons change most between the equator and poles.
 - (B) Seasons change most at the ocean areas.
 - (C) Seasons change most at Earth's poles.
 - (D) Seasons change most in dry areas.
- 8 Which sentence from the article BEST states a MAIN idea of the entire article?
- (A) The four seasons are winter, spring, summer and autumn, or fall.
 - (B) That means they happen in the same order every year.
 - (C) Halfway between the poles is the equator, where it stays warm all year.
 - (D) The equator is an imaginary line around Earth's middle.