

Oceanography

Oceanography is the study of oceans. An **ocean** is a very large body of salt water. Oceans cover more than 70 percent of the earth's surface.

There are five oceans. The three big oceans are the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and the Indian Ocean. The other two oceans are the Arctic Ocean and the Antarctic Ocean. The Arctic Ocean, the smallest and shallowest ocean, is covered by ice for half the year. The Pacific Ocean is the largest and deepest ocean. It covers about one-third of the earth's surface.

Although the words "sea" and "ocean" are often used to mean any large body of salt water, scientists use the two terms to mean different bodies of water. Like an ocean, a **sea** is also a body of salt water, but usually it is partly or entirely surrounded by land.

In ancient times, people who lived around the Mediterranean believed there were only seven seas: the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Black Sea, the China

Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the Indian Ocean. However, the earth has about seventy seas. The South China Sea is the largest sea. The Dead Sea is so salty that nothing lives in it; but because it is so salty, the sea is very dense and heavier than other seas. This high salt content makes floating very easy in the Dead Sea.

A **gulf** is part of an ocean or sea that extends into the land. The Gulf of Mexico, the Gulf of California, and the Persian Gulf are three of the world's gulfs.

Nearly 97 percent of the earth's water is the salt water found in oceans and seas. This means only about 3 percent of the earth's water is fresh, or drinkable. Although icebergs float in saltwater oceans, icebergs are made of fresh water from fallen snow that is packed down and frozen. Water in oceans and seas looks blue or green, but it is actually colorless. The water appears to be blue or green because blue and green light from the sun reaches deeper than the other colors.

Answer the Following

1. Name the five oceans. _____

2. What is the difference between a sea and an ocean? _____

3. What is a gulf? _____
4. How are oceans, seas, and gulfs related? _____

