

# What Is Geography?

## Physical Geography

The study of processes occurring on and beneath the earth's surface is physical geography. For example:

Volcanoes are found in the state of Hawaii. Volcanoes erupt because of movement of landmasses deep within the earth.

A scientist who studies volcanoes is studying physical geography because he or she is interested in learning about the eruption process of volcanoes.

Let's try another example:

Large sheets of ice or glaciers are located on the north and south poles of planet Earth. Each year scientists study how much the ice sheets melt.

A scientist who studies ice sheets or glaciers is interested in learning how the earth's temperature causes the ice sheets to melt.

Let's try one more example:

The wind on the beach causes sand to blow every year. Sometimes the wind blows so hard that entire piles of sand, called dunes, blow away. When sand blows away, it is called erosion. Erosion can change the shape and size of the beach.

A scientist who studies beach erosion is interested in learning how wind impacts the earth's surface.

## Check for Understanding: Human vs. Physical Geography Quiz

Read the statements below and decide if the example is human or physical geography.

1. Women gather firewood. Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
2. The earth has four hurricanes during the summer. Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Rainstorms cause flooding. Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Bobby builds a tree house. Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Adria runs through the forest. Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Los Angeles experiences a series of small tremors. Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Sierra tills the soil and plants a garden. Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Jacque collects river rocks for her dad's water garden. Answer: \_\_\_\_\_