

CURIOSITY AT HOME

OBSERVING OUR OCEANS



The North and South poles are covered by ice. At the North Pole, sea ice—made of saltwater—floats on the Arctic Ocean, like ice cubes in a glass of water. At the South Pole, giant ice sheets—made of freshwater—cover the continent of Antarctica. As Earth warms due to climate change, some of this ice will melt. How will the difference in ice formation at the North and South poles affect sea level rise?

MATERIALS

- Measuring cup
- Water
- Mixing bowl
- Tablespoon
- Salt
- Mixing spoon
- Ice cube tray
- Tape and marker
- 2 identical transparent containers (4–6” wide)
- Dry erase marker (optional)
- Material for an “island” (1–2” wide), modeling clay or rocks work well
- Ruler

PROCEDURE

- Combine 4 1/4 cups of water with 2 Tbsp. of salt. Mix until the salt dissolves.
- Using tape and a marker label one handle of the ice cube tray saltwater and the opposite handle freshwater.
- In your ice cube tray, fill the 4 cubes closest to the handle labeled saltwater with saltwater. Fill the 4 cubes closest to the handle labeled freshwater with tap water. Wait for your ice cubes to freeze.
- Using tape and a marker, label one container “sea ice”. Fill it with 1 cup of saltwater.
- Using tape and a marker, label the second container “ice sheet”. Fill it with 1 cup of saltwater. Place your “island” in the center of the container. It should stick out above the surface of the water.
- To the sea ice container, add 2 saltwater ice cubes. Make sure they are floating and not touching the bottom of the container. Using a dry erase marker or tape, mark the water level on the side of the container.
- In the ice sheet container, stack 2 freshwater ice cubes on top of your “island”. Mark the water level on the side of the container using a dry erase marker or tape.
- Wait 1 hour. Return and mark the new water levels.
- Using a ruler, measure the difference in water levels in cm.

WHAT DO YOU OBSERVE?

- Which caused the water level to rise more: the melting of sea ice or the ice sheet?
- How might rising sea levels affect people who live near the coast?

Experiment continued on next page...



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K-2 GRADE EXPLORATION

- Why does ice melt?
- What happened to the water level in each container? Why do you think the water in one container rose but did not in the other container? (You can explore this further by noting the existing water level mark on the container. Add more ice to the container and mark the new level of the water. Let this ice melt and note the water level.)
- Why might the ice at the North and South Pole to be melting?
- If the ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica melt, where do you think that water will go?



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