

# Biome Basics

*(adapted from edHelper.com)*

There are places on earth that are unlike others. Each type of place is called a biome. A biome is a large area having a different climate and particular types of plant and animal life. There are several different types of biomes. There are deserts where there is little rainfall. There are rainforests where it rains up to 150 inches per year. The plants and animals that live in these places are very different from each other.

Physical things such as climate and geography determine what things can live in an area. Climate is the general weather of an area over a long period of time, including its seasonal changes. The climate of an area largely depends on its location on Earth. Areas close to the equator receive more direct sunlight than areas close to the poles. Therefore, areas closer to the equator are warmer year-round. Areas nearer the poles have short summers and cold winters.

Every biome is home to a special group of plants. That's because the climate mostly determines what plants can grow in an area. The plants are well suited to living in that climate and to growing in the soil found there.

Every biome is also home to a special group of animals. In one way or another, the animals depend on the plants to survive. Some animals eat the plants for food. Others may depend on plants for shelter. Animals need to adapt to the climate. They may have layers of fur that help to keep them warm. They may also have very thin fur or covering for hot weather.

The plants and animals that live in a certain type of biome are suited to living in that environment. All the plants and animals in a biome form a community. In that community, every living thing depends on other community members to survive. A biome's climate, soil, plants and animals are all connected this way.

As usual, when people try to sort things into categories, they have different ways of doing so. With biomes, scientists have different ways of categorizing them. As a result, you may see different numbers of biomes given and even different names. To make it even more confusing, biomes are often given local names. One book may say that there are 5 biomes, another claims 15, and another states 9. So, exactly how many biomes do we have? Well, the answer to that question depends on how detailed your source of information classifies a biome. Here we are going to focus on 5. They are aquatic, deserts, forests, grasslands and tundra.

The aquatic biome is the largest biome. Water covers nearly 75% of the earth's surface. Aquatic biomes are often divided into two basic categories: freshwater and ocean. Freshwater includes ponds, rivers and lakes. Oceans are very large bodies of water that dominate the Earth's surface.

Deserts are the driest places on Earth. They have very little rain during the year. The plants that are in the desert have to survive the low amount of rain.

Forests are trees and other plants that cover a large area. These trees and plants grow in groups that are very dense. Depending on the climate, different types of trees and plants grow in the forest. There are tropical rainforests, tropical dry forests, cold climate forests and temperate forests.

Grasslands are areas that are covered with grass and very few trees. You know them as prairies in the United States. There are very hot summers and very cold winters in grassland areas. Grasslands have some rain. However, the rain is not enough for trees to grow there.

Tundras are the coldest of all the biomes. If you were to visit Antarctica or Alaska, you would be visiting a tundra. Tundras have summers that are not very hot. The winters are extremely cold. There are plants that grow in the tundra. However, there are not any trees.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Match definition to word.**

- |       |               |  |
|-------|---------------|--|
| _____ | 1. Aquatic    | A. a large area having a different climate and particular types of plant and animal life     |
| _____ | 2. Biome      | B. areas that are covered with grass and very few trees                                      |
| _____ | 3. Climate    | C. coldest of all the biomes   |
| _____ | 4. Community  | D. the driest places on Earth  |
| _____ | 5. Deserts    | E. group of plants and animals that depend on each other to survive                          |
| _____ | 6. Forests    | F. the general weather of an area over a long period of time, including its seasonal changes |
| _____ | 7. Grasslands | G. the largest biome   |
| _____ | 8. Tundra     | H. trees and other plants that cover a large area  |

**Fill in the blanks from the word bank.**

1. The climate of an area largely depends on its \_\_\_\_\_ on Earth.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ mostly determines what plants can grow in an area.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ are well suited to living in that climate and to growing in the soil found there.
4. Animals need to \_\_\_\_\_ to the climate.
5. All the plants and animals in a biome form a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ covers nearly 75% of the earth's surface.
7. Deserts have very little \_\_\_\_\_ during the year.
8. Forests are trees and other plants that cover a \_\_\_\_\_ area.
9. Grasslands do not have enough rain for \_\_\_\_\_ to grow there.
10. Tundras winters are extremely \_\_\_\_\_.

**Word bank**

adapt  
location

climate  
Plants

cold  
rain

community  
trees

large  
Water

