

The Precipitation Family

By Emily Tran

Snowman Hello there! We are the Precipitation family, and we are all forms of water that fall from the sky. Just like you and your brothers and sisters, we are similar in some ways and different in others. Let us introduce ourselves.

Hi, I'm **Rain**! I'm sure you've met me on some gloomy and wet days. You may think that I magically fall from the sky but here's the real story. Because I am way up in the atmosphere where the weather is extremely cold, I don't form until ice particles falling from the clouds meet warmer air. The warmer air makes the ice melt, creating wonderful me! Therefore, all rain starts as ice.

I'm **Snow**. I, like Rain, also form from ice. Ice crystals are water particles that have frozen around dust particles that have been carried up into the atmosphere by the wind. I'm made up of many ice crystals stuck together to form snow crystals.

Now that you know how Rain and Snow form, you'll find out all about me! I'm Sleet. Remember when Rain talked about ice particles falling and meeting warmer air? I form if the temperature higher up in the atmosphere is warm enough to melt ice but the air temperature near the ground is at or below freezing. This means that I am made up of lots of frozen raindrops.

Hail is my name. I start out as rain. Sometimes upward blowing winds, called **updrafts**, blow rain up into the atmosphere instead of down towards the ground. When I move up, I meet colder air causing me to freeze into ice. More drops of water hit and stick to me. When I start to fall down, more updrafts may cause me to go through the process several times until I become too heavy. I can be very large by the time that I hit the ground. In fact, I can be as big as softballs!

So now that you've met our family and have an understanding of how we're formed, can you tell the difference between the four types of precipitation? We hope to see you outside soon!

