

Glaciers are slow-moving masses of ice and snow. They form in places where more snow is falling than melting. These conditions are found high in the mountains and near the North and South Poles.

There are two common types of glaciers: **alpine** or **valley glaciers** and **continental glaciers**. Alpine glaciers usually form in high mountains. Continental glaciers form over large areas of land in the polar regions.

Glaciers form where it is cold year-round. They need snow to grow larger. It is very cold in Antarctica, but it is also very dry. Little snow falls, so glaciers there grow slowly. Glaciers form and grow more quickly in areas that receive more snowfall.



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Ice breaking off a glacier

WOWSER!

If all the glaciers on Earth were to melt, the oceans would rise by as much as 46 meters (150 ft.).

Glaciers are on the move. As snow piles on top of a glacier, the added weight pushes down on the lower layers. The weight of the deeply packed snow squeezes the lower layers into ice. The ice causes the glacier to slide—very slowly—down the side of a steep mountain or outward across a continent.

The movement of glaciers can change the land around them. Glaciers act like giant bulldozers. They carve out valleys and shape mountains. They pick up large amounts of rock and dirt, depositing it along the side or at the end of the glacier.

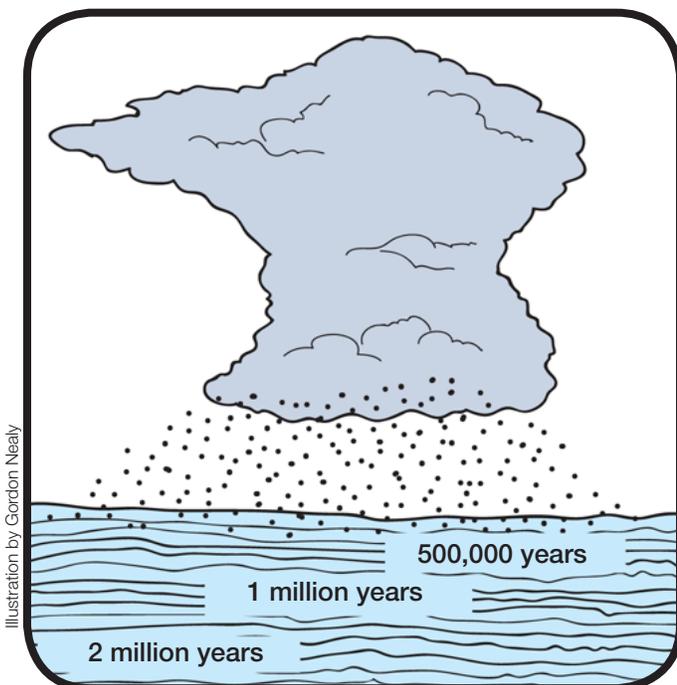


Illustration by Gordon Nealy

Glaciers are layers of snow built up over many years.

✓ Brain Check

- Where are glaciers found?
- Why do glaciers move?
- How do glaciers affect land?