Vocabulary box

Weather: Weather refers to atmospheric conditions that occur locally over short periods of time—from minutes to hours or days. Familiar examples include rain, snow, clouds, winds, floods or thunderstorms.

Climate: Climate refers to the long-term regional or even global average of temperature, humidity and rainfall patterns over seasons, years or decades.

Greenhouse gases: Earth’s greenhouse gases trap heat in the atmosphere and warm the planet.

Greenhouse effect: Identified by scientists as far back as 1896, the greenhouse effect is the natural warming of the earth that results when gases in the atmosphere trap heat from the sun that would otherwise escape into space.

Global warming: Global warming is the long-term heating of Earth’s climate system observed since the pre-industrial period (between 1850 and 1900) due to human activities, primarily fossil fuel burning, which increases heat-trapping greenhouse gas levels in Earth’s atmosphere.

Climate change: Climate change is a long-term change in the average weather patterns that have come to define Earth’s local, regional and global climates. These changes have a broad range of observed effects that are synonymous with the term.