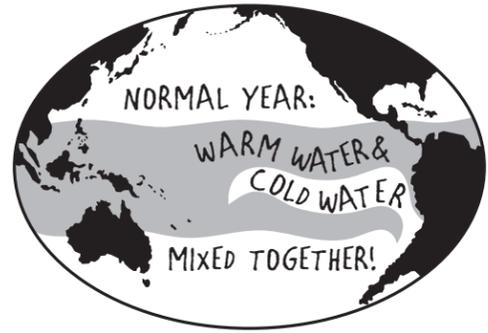


Why does El Niño make it rain in Arizona?



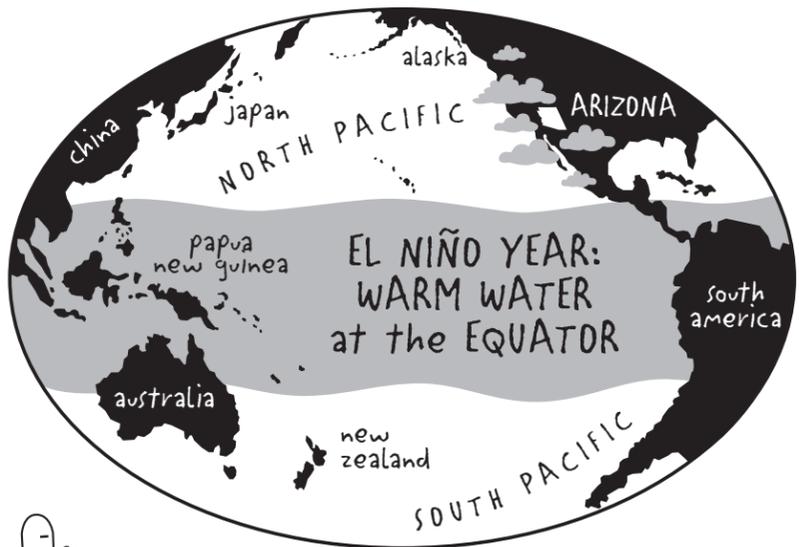
Every 2 to 7 years, a large pool of warm water builds up in the Pacific Ocean, along the equator, near the west coast of South America. The warm water heats the air above it, affecting the air pressure, the sea level and the winds that blow across the Pacific. All these factors affect weather around the world, causing heavy rains in dry areas (Arizona) and droughts in places that are normally humid. This condition is called "El Niño".

Weather depends a lot on ocean temperatures. Where the ocean is warm, more clouds form and more rain falls in that part of the world. In the Pacific Ocean, near the equator, the sun makes the water especially warm on the surface.

In normal years, strong winds along the equator push the warm surface water westward toward Indonesia. When this happens, colder water from underneath rises up towards the surface and keeps the ocean cool.

Recent El Niño years have been 1969, 1972-73, 1976, 1982-83, 1986-87, 1991-92 and 1997.

Every 2 to 7 years, warm water builds up in the Pacific Ocean, near South America. The warm water heats the air above it, affecting air pressure, the sea level and the winds that blow across the Pacific. This is called 'EL NIÑO' and it affects weather all around the world, causing heavy rains in dry areas (Arizona) and droughts in places that are normally rainy.



Weather depends on ocean temperatures. Where the ocean is warm, more rain falls in that part of the world. In El Niño years, the Pacific Ocean is extra warm on the surface. In normal years, strong winds push the warm surface water west toward Indonesia. When this happens, colder water from underneath rises up towards the surface and keeps the ocean cool.



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