



Rivers

All rivers start at the highest point in an area. As the river flows **downstream**, it gains more water from other streams, rivers, springs, added rainfall, and other water sources.

What is a river?

A river is freshwater flowing across the surface of the land, usually to the sea.

The River Channel

Rivers flow in channels. The bottom of the channel is called the **bed** and the sides of the **channel** are called the **banks**.

Where do rivers begin?

Rivers begin at their **source** in higher ground such as mountains or hills in **valleys** (low areas of land), where rain water or melting snow collects and forms tiny streams. On middle and lower courses rivers **meander** (bend and curve).

How are rivers formed?

When one stream meets another and they merge together, the smaller stream is known as a **tributary**. It takes many tributary streams to form a river.

How do rivers grow?

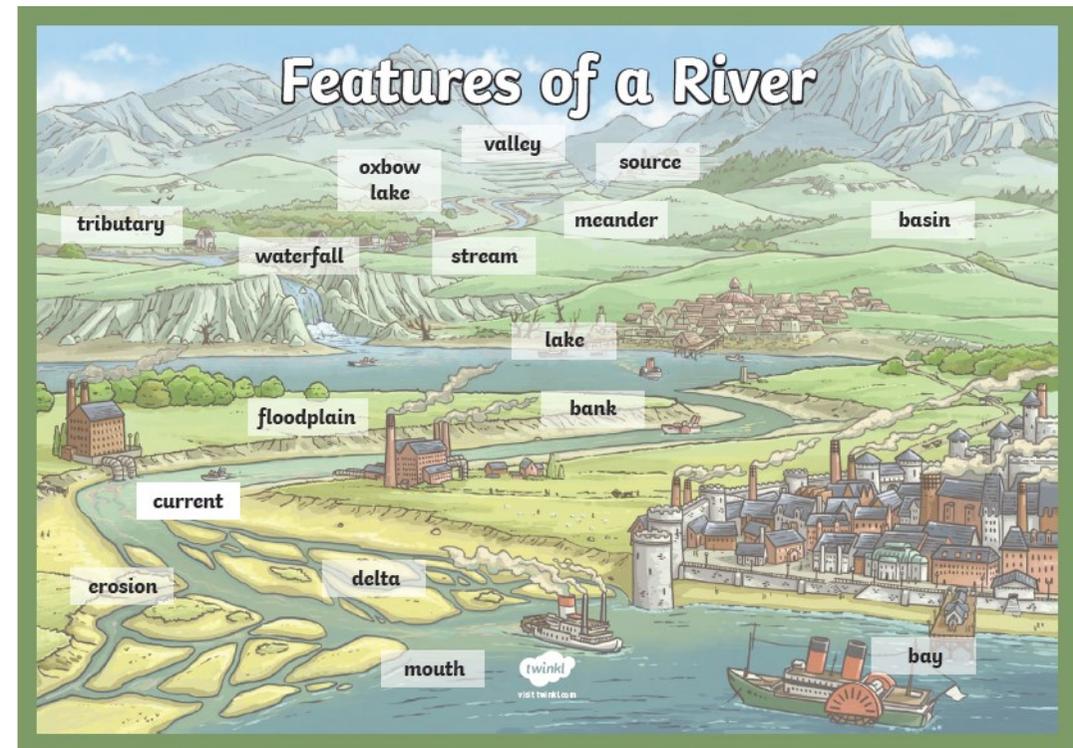
A river grows larger as it collects water from more tributaries along its course.

Where do rivers end?

The great majority of rivers eventually flow into a larger body of water, like an ocean, sea, or large lake. The end of the river is called the **mouth**.

What do rivers provide?

Most settlements were built along major rivers. Rivers provide us with food, energy, recreation, transportation routes, and of course water for irrigation and for drinking. **Flood plains** (flat land next to a river) provide good farmland.



Famous Rivers

River Thames is the longest river in England and is 346km long. It flows into the North Sea.

River Nile is the longest river in Africa and is 6,650km long. It flows into the Mediterranean.

River Amazon is the longest river in South America and is the longest river in the world. It is 6,840km and flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

