

Why We Have Seasons



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Many people think it is summer when Earth is closest to the Sun. That idea makes sense, but it is wrong. In the northern half of Earth, we are closest to the Sun in January, in winter, and farthest away in July, in summer.

Earth spins around an imaginary pole called its axis, one full turn each day. The spin gives us day and night. But the axis does not stand up straight. It leans over a bit.

As Earth travels around the Sun, its tilted axis always points the same way. Around June, the North Pole tilts toward the Sun. The Sun's rays hit the northern half of Earth more directly than at any other time of year, so it is summer there. Around December, the South Pole tilts toward the Sun, and it is winter in the north.

The two halves of Earth take turns. When it is summer in the northern half, it is winter in the southern half.

1. When is Earth closest to the Sun?

2. What does Earth's spin on its axis give us?

3. Why is it summer in the northern half of Earth in June?

4. In December it is winter in the north. What season is it then in the southern half of Earth? How do you know?

Answer key

Why We Have Seasons

1. When is Earth closest to the Sun?
In January.
2. What does Earth's spin on its axis give us?
Day and night.
3. Why is it summer in the northern half of Earth in June?
Because the North Pole tilts toward the Sun, so the Sun's rays hit the northern half more directly than at any other time of year.
4. In December it is winter in the north. What season is it then in the southern half of Earth? How do you know?
Sample answer: summer, because in December the South Pole tilts toward the Sun, and the two halves take turns.