

Flashback: 4 Billion Years

The Formation of Our Oceans

<p>4 billion years ago, there was no Earth. Only PROTOEARTH, a soft ball of rock and gas with no oceans.</p>	<p>Through a process called outgassing, vapors from PROTOEARTH were released through cracks in the rock and formed an early atmosphere enveloping PROTOEARTH.</p>	<p>Over time, the planet cooled and the water vapor that was released through outgassing, condensed, fell to Earth, and collected in low areas.</p>
<p>These early oceans were also filled with water that came from the frequent comets and other space debris that fell to Earth.</p>	<p>During this time, there was nearly non-stop rainfall. The persistent rain that fell on Earth's rocky surface dissolved many elements and carried them into the newly forming oceans, making them salty!</p>	<p>Eventually, cosmic activity slowed down, a chemical balance was reached, and the Earth's oceans were formed.</p>