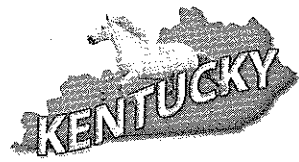


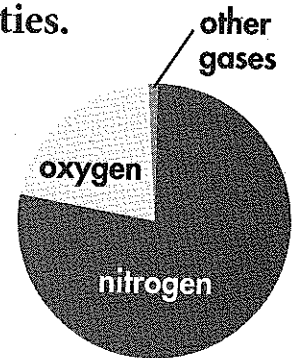
Name _____



What are some properties of Earth's atmosphere?

Earth's **atmosphere** is a blanket of air that surrounds our planet. The atmosphere is mostly a mixture of **gases**. You cannot taste, see, or smell these gases. Each kind of gas has its own **properties**.

Two gases—nitrogen and oxygen—make up most of the atmosphere. Living things need oxygen to get energy from food. Nitrogen is an important part of the cells of all living things.



The atmosphere also has very small amounts of other gases. These gases are only a very small part of the atmosphere, but they are very important to life on Earth. One gas, water vapor, is an important part of Earth's water cycle. The water cycle gives all living things on Earth the water they need. The amount of water vapor in the air changes from place to place and from day to day.

An important gas in the atmosphere is a kind of oxygen called ozone. This gas forms a layer high in the atmosphere. Ozone absorbs some rays in sunlight that can harm living things on Earth. Too much of these rays can cause sunburn and cancer in people. The rays also can harm eyesight. Ozone keeps most of these harmful rays from reaching Earth's surface.

Other gases and small pieces of solids, such as dust and pollen, also can be found in the atmosphere. These gases and solids can affect weather and the health of living things on Earth.