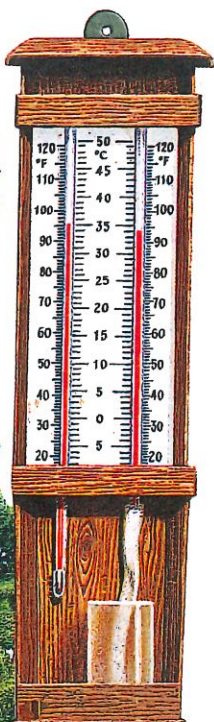




• THE DAILY WEATHER •

Temperature and Humidity

Hot and sticky
This hygrometer
shows a 90 per cent
humidity reading.



If you were standing in the Sahara Desert, the air would feel hot and dry. If you were lying on a tropical beach, it would feel hotter, even though the temperature may be the same in both places. The reason for this difference is humidity—the amount of moisture or water vapour in the air. Humans can only tolerate a certain range of temperature and humidity. Sweating helps to keep the body cool. But if the air is very humid, water does not evaporate so easily and sweat remains on the skin. This can be uncomfortable and makes you feel hotter. Humidity is measured with an instrument called a hygrometer. A simple hygrometer uses two thermometers: one has a bulb that is surrounded by a wet cloth, while the other is dry. If the air is very dry, the “wet bulb” is cooled rapidly by evaporation. But if the air is very humid, little evaporation occurs and the reading of the two thermometers is almost the same.

GROWING CONDITIONS

A desert and a rainforest often have similar air temperatures, but lush vegetation can only grow in the rainforest because the air is very moist, or humid. The heat of the desert, however, is very dry. This lack of moisture means that few plants can survive in these conditions.

KEEPING COOL

In hot weather, or when we exercise, our body temperature may rise above 37°C (98.6°F). Special glands on the surface of the skin release sweat. The evaporation of this watery fluid cools our bodies.

