

The Earth's Atmosphere: Thinner than the Skin of an Apple!



❶ The sky looks so big. But only a very small part of it is the earth's *atmosphere*. Imagine the skin on an apple. That is what the atmosphere is like — a very thin skin around our planet!



❸ These gases are called "*greenhouse gases*." They act like a greenhouse, trapping the sun's heat in the atmosphere.



❷ The Earth's atmosphere is made up of a blend of gases that make life on Earth possible. The gases act like a shield and a blanket. As a shield, the gases block much of the Sun's ultraviolet radiation. As a blanket, they trap some of the sun's heat and keep the planet warm.



❹ The atmosphere is so thin that human activities can have a big effect on it. When we burn *fossil fuels*, we release greenhouse gases. Scientists say we have released so much greenhouse gas that we are rapidly changing the chemical make-up of the atmosphere.

Sources: <www.enchantedlearning.com>; *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore, 2006, p. 22.