**Vocabulary:** **Seasons: Why do we have them?**



**Vocabulary**

* Direct sunlight – sunlight that strikes Earth’s surface at close to a 90° angle.
* Earth’s axis – an imaginary line through the center of Earth that connects the North Pole to the South Pole.
	+ Earth rotates about its axis once every 24 hours.
	+ Earth’s axis is tilted at an angle of 23.5 degrees.
* Equator – an imaginary horizontal line around the middle of Earth.
* Northern hemisphere – the half of Earth north of the equator.
* North Pole – the northernmost point on Earth.
* Indirect sunlight – sunlight that strikes Earth’s surface at an acute angle (less than 90˚).
* Season – one of the major divisions of the year, usually based on regular weather changes.
	+ In most places, the year is divided into four seasons: winter, spring, summer, and autumn (fall). Each season is three months long.
	+ In tropical regions, average temperatures do not change much during the year. In these regions, it is common to refer to the “rainy season” and the “dry season.”
* Solstice – one of two days during the year on which the direct rays of the Sun reach the farthest from the equator.
* Southern hemisphere – the half of Earth south of the equator.
* South Pole – the southernmost point on Earth.
* Summer solstice – the first day of summer.
	+ The summer solstice is the longest day of the year. North and south of the tropics, it is also the day when the noon Sun is highest in the sky.
	+ In the northern hemisphere the summer solstice occurs on or near June 21.
	+ In the southern hemisphere the summer solstice occurs on or near December 21.
* Winter solstice – the first day of winter.
	+ The winter solstice is the shortest day of the year. It is also the day when the noon Sun is lowest in the sky.
	+ In the northern hemisphere the winter solstice occurs on or near December 21.
	+ In the southern hemisphere the winter solstice occurs on or near June 21.