

The Ice Pop Mystery



Figure 1: A sunny backyard scene showing a melting ice pop dripping onto a picnic table, with a water bottle nearby releasing a faint wisp of steam

Maya's ice pop dripped fast in the sun. "It's melting into a puddle!" she groaned. Her brother Sam grinned. "That's particles for you."

"Particles?"

"Tiny bits matter is made of. In your frozen ice pop, they're packed close, just vibrating in place. That's a solid."

"So the puddle?"

"Liquid. The particles got extra wiggly, spread apart, and now they slide past each other."

Maya watched steam rise off her water bottle cap left in the sun. "And that?"

"Gas. Particles fly apart in every direction, barely holding together."

"So solid is squished, liquid is loose, gas is wild?"

"Exactly. Solids stick tightest, gases barely stick at all."

Maya smiled. "My ice pop just taught me science."

Words to know

- **particle:** A tiny piece of matter too small to see, that all matter is made of
- **solid:** A state of matter where particles are packed close and vibrate in place
- **liquid:** A state of matter where particles have space to slide past each other
- **gas:** A state of matter where particles have lots of space and move freely in all directions
- **attractive forces:** The pull between particles that holds them together, strongest in solids and weakest in gases

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