

Maya Discovers Particles



Figure 1: A girl in a kitchen holding an ice cube over a steaming mug of hot chocolate

Maya watched steam rise from her hot cocoa. "Where does it go?" she asked her dad.

"It's the same cocoa," he said, "just in a different form. Everything is made of tiny particles, always moving. In your cup, they're close together and stuck in place. In the steam, they spread out and zoom around."

Maya held an ice cube. Cold and hard. Particles barely moving, packed tight.

Then she watched it melt into water. The particles loosened up, sliding past each other.

"The particles are the same," Dad said, "but how they move changes everything. Solids, liquids, gases. It's all about how close together the particles are and how fast they move."

Maya smiled. The whole world made sense now.

Words to know

- **particles:** tiny pieces that make up all matter, too small to see
- **solid:** matter that holds its shape, like ice or a rock
- **liquid:** matter that flows and takes the shape of its container, like water
- **gas:** matter that spreads out to fill all the space around it, like steam

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