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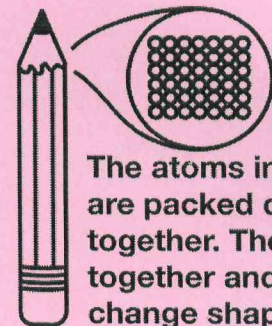
Why Does Matter Matter?

by Kelly Hashway

What do trees, air, and water have in common? They all have matter. That means they take up space. You might be wondering why these things look so different if they all have matter. Everything found on Earth can be grouped into one of three states of matter: solid, liquid, or gas. In order to figure out which state of matter an object fits in, we have to examine its properties. The properties we look at are shape, mass, and volume. Mass is the amount of matter an object has, and volume is the amount of space the matter takes up.

Solids are easy to recognize. They have definite shape, mass, and volume. Trees are solids. They are made up of tiny particles called atoms. These atoms are packed closely together, and they hold the solid in a definite shape that does not change. If you look around your house, you will see lots of solids. Televisions, beds, tables, chairs, and even the food you eat.

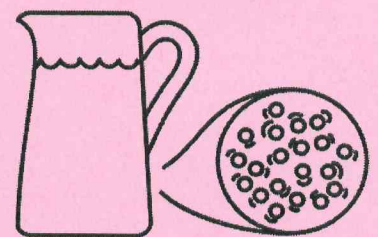
Solid



The atoms in a solid are packed closely together. They bond together and do not change shape.

Liquids do not have definite shape, but they do have definite mass and volume. Liquids are similar to solids because their atoms are close together, but what makes a liquid different is that those atoms can move around. Liquids can change shape by flowing. If you've ever spilled a glass of milk, then you know it spreads out across the floor. It does this because the milk is taking the shape of the floor. Since liquids do not have a definite shape of their own, they will take the shape of their containers. This is why the same amount of milk can look different in a tall glass, a wide mug, or spread out on your kitchen floor.

Liquid



The atoms in a liquid are close together. They slide around.