Avalanche

The avalanche is a type of natural disaster. Would you know an avalanche if you saw one? An avalanche is a large amount of [snow](https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/snow/400182) that rapidly moves down a slope. The most aggressive avalanches can cause damning devastation and can reach speeds of over 200mph. They can be deadly because they will bury or sweep away anything in its path. Although, they can give out some warning signs that allow people to get to safety. People in mountainous areas protect themselves from avalanches in several ways. Special fences can be used to help hold snow in place, as well as barriers help to stop sliding snow or change its direction.

What do they look like?

Avalanches come in many shapes and sizes. Many are small slides of powdery snow. However, catastrophic avalanches occur when huge pieces of snow break loose from a mountainside. The snow shatters like broken glass as it races downhill. Heavy snowfall, strong wind, and rising temperatures can all loosen snow on a slope. Other things such as falling rocks, ice and even the movement of a skier can trigger an avalanche.

Location

The highest number of avalanches are found in the Alps, a mountain range in Europe. However, avalanches can occur in any mountainous area. They are more likely to happen on a steep slope without trees or large rocks as these things help to keep snow in place.

Fun Fact

Finally, explosives help to clear snow from places where avalanches are likely to occur. Additionally, experts can tell when the risk of an avalanche is low, medium or high. If you go to the mountains, you might see signs detailing the risk. Do you still want to climb that mountain?