

## Part B – Characteristics of Ocean Water

The average density of surface ocean water is 1.025 g/mL, but this varies from place to place, and with seasons. Variations in *salinity* and *temperature* are the two most important factors in creating the density differences that create deep-ocean circulation, which will be studied in greater detail below.

*Salinity* is the amount of dissolved material in water. It is typically expressed as parts per thousand (‰), called 'per mil'. Per mil means 'per 1000 parts', in contrast to 'percent', which is 'per 100 parts' (%). This concentration is a weight ratio: typical sea water has a salinity of about 35‰, meaning one kilogram (1000 grams) of sea water contains about 35 grams of dissolved salts. Although there are many dissolved salts in seawater, sodium chloride (NaCl) is the most abundant.

Variations in the salinity of seawater are influenced primarily by changes in the water content of the seawater. In regions where evaporation rates are high, removing the water and leaving behind the salts increases the concentration of dissolved material in seawater. Alternatively, in areas of high precipitation and high runoff from rivers and streams, the additional water dilutes the seawater and lowers the salinity. Because the factors that influence the concentration of salts in seawater vary, the salinity of seawater also varies with latitude and depth.

Seawater *temperature* is the most extensively determined variable of the oceans because it is easily measured and has an important influence on marine life. Like salinity, ocean water temperatures vary from equator to pole and vary with depth. Temperature, like salinity, also affects the density of seawater, but density of seawater is more sensitive to temperature fluctuations than salinity. Cool surface water, which has a greater density than warm water, forms in the Polar Regions, sinks and flows towards the tropics.

To study the effects of temperature and salinity on the density of water, locate the following lab equipment: graduated cylinder, small beaker, dye/food coloring and small test tubes. Follow the directions outlined below for each of the two activities.

**Activity 1: Temperature-Density Experiment**

Procedure:

1. Fill the graduated cylinder with cold tap water to the 100 mL mark.
2. Put 2-3 drops of dye in a small test tube and fill it  $\frac{1}{2}$  full with hot water.
3. Pour the contents of the test tube slowly into the cylinder and record your observations here:

4. Empty the cylinder and refill it with hot water to the 100 mL mark.
5. Add a test tube full of cold water and 2-3 drops of dye to some ice in a beaker. Stir the solution for a few seconds. Fill the test tube  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with some liquid (leaving ice behind) from your beaker. Pour this cold liquid slowly into the cylinder and record your observations here:

**6. Thoroughly clean and rinse all glassware before starting Activity 2.**

**Questions:**

1. Given equal salinities, which temperature of water has the greater density? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Write a brief summary of your temperature-density experiment.

**Activity 2: Salinity-Density Experiment**Procedure:

1. Place a rubber band at the 75 mL line of the graduated cylinder and fill the cylinder with cool tap water to the 100 mL line.
2. Place several drops of food coloring into a small test tube and fill the test tube about  $\frac{1}{2}$  full of Solution A. Slowly pour the solution in to cylinder and observe what happens. Briefly describe your observations here:
3. Repeat these steps two more times but now measure the time required for the front edge of the saltwater to travel from the rubber band at 75 mL line to the bottom of the cylinder. Record the times for each test in Table 1, below. Be sure to drain the cylinder after each trial and refill it with fresh water and use the same amount of solution with each trial.
4. Determine the travel time two times for Solution B exactly as you did with Solution A and enter your measurements in the data table.
5. Thoroughly clean all of the glassware and return it to the bin.

**Table 1: Experimental Data for Density of Saline Solutions**

<b>Solution</b>	<b>Timed Trial #1</b>	<b>Timed Trial #2</b>	<b>Average of trials</b>
A			
B			

**Questions:**

1. Which solution has the greater density? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which solution has the greatest salinity? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Write 2-3 sentences summarizing the results of the salinity-density experiment.

**For Further Thought:**

Table 2 lists the approximate surface water salinity values at various latitudes in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Using the data, construct a salinity curve for each ocean on the graph (Figure 2) provided on the next page. Use a *different colored pencil for each ocean*. Answer the questions on page 3.11 using the graph and your textbook for reference.

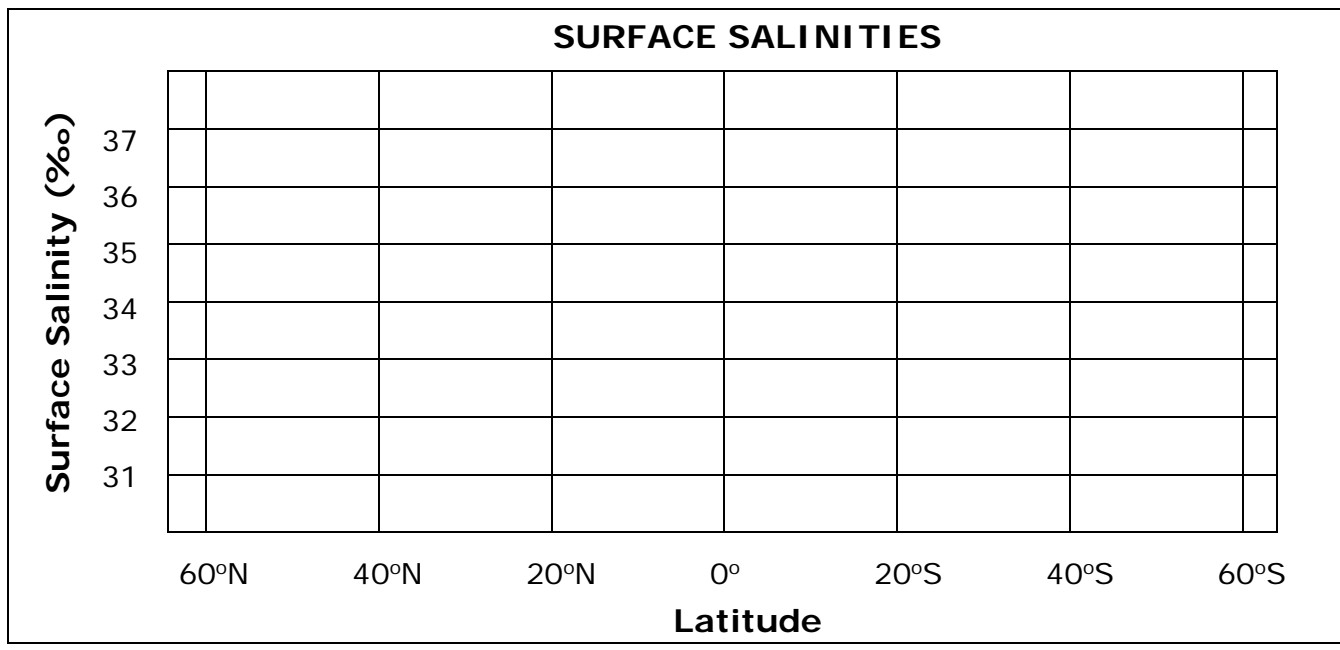
**Table 2:** Surface water salinity in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Latitude	Atlantic Ocean	Pacific Ocean
60°N	33.0‰	31.0‰
50°N	33.7‰	32.5‰
40°N	34.8‰	33.2‰
30°N	36.7‰	34.2‰
20°N	36.8‰	34.2‰
10°N	36.0‰	34.4‰
0°	35.0‰	34.3‰
10°S	35.9‰	35.2‰
20°S	36.7‰	35.6‰
30°S	36.2‰	35.7‰
40°S	35.3‰	35.0‰
50°S	34.3‰	34.4‰
60°S	33.9‰	34.0‰

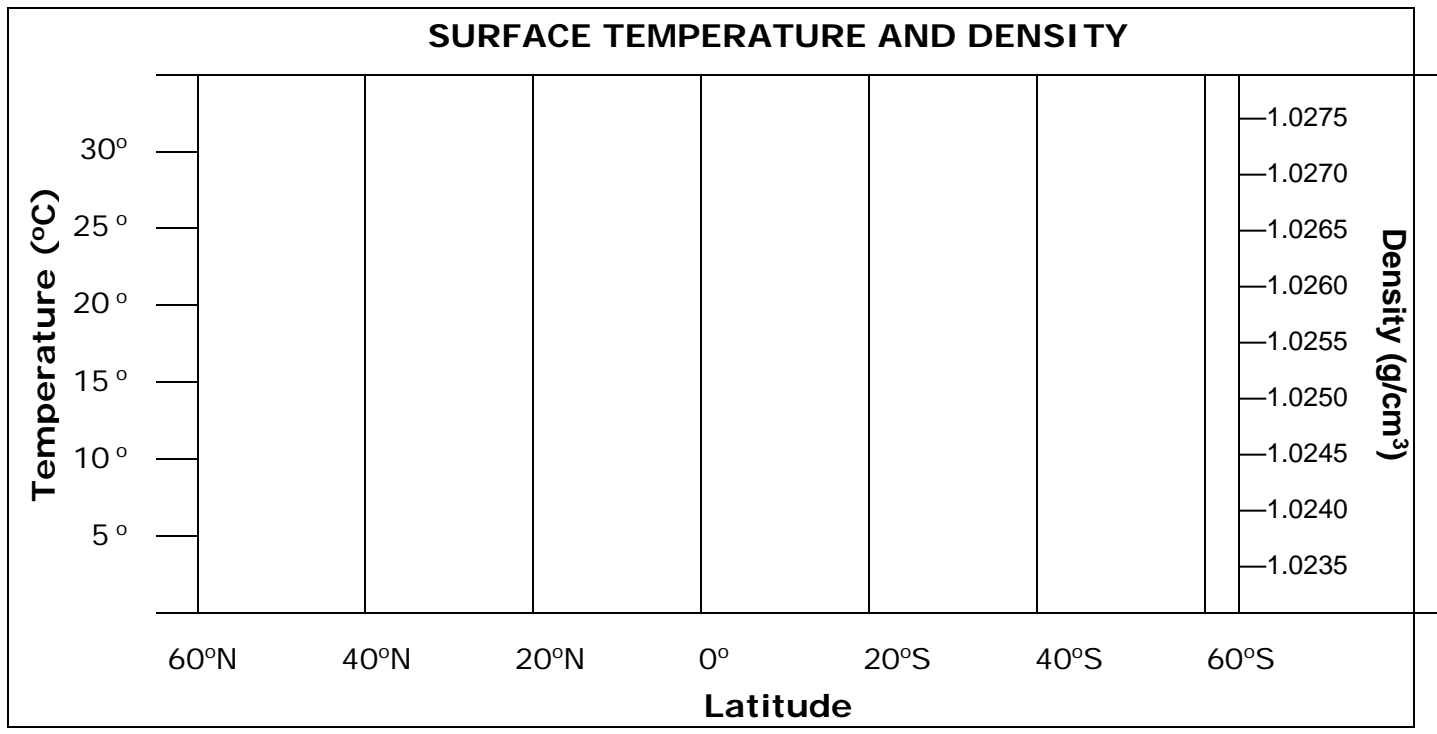
Using the data in Table 3, construct a graph showing both temperature and density of sea water. Use Figure 3, on the next page, and plot a colored line for temperature, and a separate differently-colored line for density on the same graph. Answer the questions on page 3.12 using the graph and your textbook for reference.

**Table 3:** Average surface water temperature and density of seawater at various latitudes.

Latitude	Surface Temperature	Surface Density
60°N	5	1.0258
40°N	13	1.0259
20°N	24	1.0237
0°	27	1.0238
20°S	24	1.0241
40°S	15	1.0261
60°S	2	1.0272



**Figure 2: graph of surface salinity of world oceans by latitude**  
Use data in Table 2 to plot the salinity at various latitudes



**Figure 3: Graph of surface water temperature and density of world oceans by latitude**

Use data in Table 3 to plot the temperature and density at various latitudes

**Questions about the graph you plotted in Figure 2:**

1. At which latitudes are the highest surface salinities located?
2. What are the two factors that control the concentration of salts in seawater?
3. What is the reason for the difference in surface water salinity between equatorial ( $0^{\circ}$ ) and subtropical regions ( $20\text{-}30^{\circ}$ ) in the Atlantic Ocean?  
(HINT: Refer to Fig. 14.2, p. 435, in *Earth Science 14<sup>th</sup> ed.* by Tarbuck, et al.).
4. Which ocean, the Atlantic or the Pacific, has higher average surface salinities?
5. Suggest a reason for the difference in average surface salinities between the oceans.

**Questions about the graph you plotted in Figure 3:**

6. Briefly describe the overall relationship between temperature and density.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Describe the surface temperature and surface density of ocean waters in equatorial regions.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Describe the surface temperature and surface density at high latitudes.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What is the reason for the fact that higher average surface densities are found in Southern Hemisphere?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Refer to the density curve in Figure 3. What evidence supports the fact that temperature more than salinity is the controlling factor of density of seawater? (Hint: see useful websites)