

What is a River?

A river is fresh water that flows through channels. Most rivers have an upper, middle and lower course. Nearly all rivers flow into a large body of water such as the sea or large lake.

HOW ARE RIVERS FORMED: Rivers are formed when streams meet and merge together, these streams are known as tributaries. It takes lots of tributaries to form a river.

QUESTION: How many tributaries feed into the Gaunless?

A river begins at its source. This is usually in high ground such as hills or mountains where rain or melting snow and ice collect to form tiny streams. The source could also be a lake with an out-flowing stream or a spring bubbling from the ground.

YOUNG RIVER The Upper Course: This is the beginning of a river, which usually starts in the hills and mountains with narrow fast flowing channels cutting through rocky hills and mountains. The river erodes downwards, carving out the ground, forming v-shaped valleys. It has lots of energy, wearing away (eroding) the riverbed and transporting rocks and boulders. As more and more tributaries join the river, the volume of water increases and the river gets wider and faster as it moves downhill. The features of an upper course river are - Rapids, gorges and waterfalls, steep valley sides, downward erosion.

MIDDLE AGED RIVER The middle course: As the land gets flatter the river moves into its middle course. The river erodes the banks, as well as the bed of the river, making the river channel wider and deeper and the river begins to loop and curve, or meander. In its middle course the path of the river is under constant change as the river erodes, transports and deposits stones, gravel, soil and other material. Deposition happens when the current of the river loses the force to carry material, so it drops it to the riverbed. The features of a middle course river are - erosion, deposition, wider and deeper channels, meanders, slip-off slopes, oxbow lakes, sedimentary rock and floodplains

OLD RIVER The lower course: This is where the river nears the sea. The river is at its widest here, with the biggest volume of water. The surrounding land is flat, with floodplains and gentle, wide valleys. The water slows down as it meets the sea and deposition takes place at the estuary where the river deposit large amounts of sediments such as mud and sand. In some rivers these mud and sand deposits will form deltas where the river splits into many different channels. Estuaries are a mixture of freshwater and saltwater. This is called brackish water and many different species of plants and animals live here that can't live in a river, or in the sea.

The features of a lower course river are - Deltas, floodplains, estuary