

Earth's Atmosphere Today

TABLE 1.1 Composition of the Atmosphere Near the Earth's Surface						
PERMANENT GASES			VARIABLE GASES			
Gas	Symbol	Percent (by Volume) Dry Air	Gas (and Particles)	Symbol	Percent (by Volume)	Parts per Million (ppm)*
Nitrogen	N ₂	78.08	Water vapor	H ₂ O	0 to 4	
Oxygen	O ₂	20.95	Carbon dioxide	CO ₂	0.037	325 389
Argon	Ar	0.93	Methane	CH ₄	0.00017	1.7
Neon	Ne	0.0018	Nitrous oxide	N ₂ O	0.00003	0.3
Helium	He	0.0005	Ozone	O ₃	0.000004	0.04†
Hydrogen	H ₂	0.00006	Particles (dust, soot, etc.)		0.000001	0.01–0.15
Xenon	Xe	0.000009	Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)		0.00000002	0.0002
*For CO ₂ , 375 parts per million means that out of every million air molecules, 375 are CO ₂ molecules.						
†Stratospheric values at altitudes between 11 km and 50 km are about 5 to 12 ppm.						