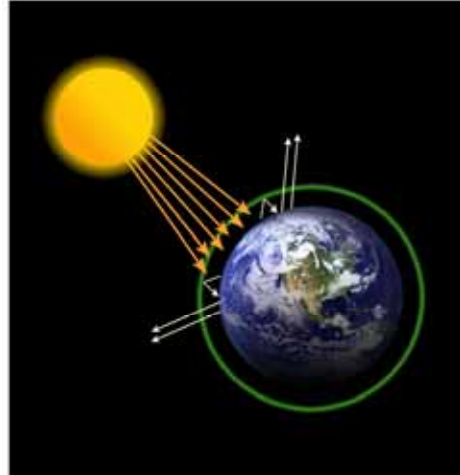


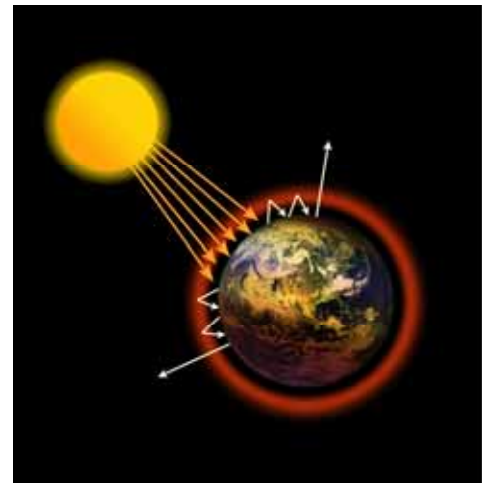
## How Does Global Warming Work?



*The Atmosphere Regulates Earth's Temperature*

The atmosphere serves an important function in regulating the average temperature of our planet. As Earth receives energy from the sun, about one-third is reflected back into space by the atmosphere and by clouds and light-colored surfaces like snow-pack. The rest warms the atmosphere, land and oceans, which release long-wave radiation. The atmosphere absorbs part of this outgoing radiation and keeps the earth warm enough to support life, but not too warm.

Global Warming describes what happens when this balance is thrown off by the buildup of certain gases emitted when humans burn fossil fuels and cut down forests. Carbon dioxide, for example, is emitted when coal is burned to produce electricity. Too much carbon dioxide has the effect of trapping heat as it tries to escape into space. The result is similar to putting too many blankets on the bed at night, causing the body—or in this case the planet—to overheat.



*If Heat Cannot Escape, the Planet Overheats*