Swiss glaciers lose 5% after heatwaves

LEVEL B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word glacier?
2. Have you ever experienced a heatwave? What was it like?
3. How can winter snowfall affect the next summer in the mountains?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

glacier
A large mass of moving ice found in high mountains.

heatwave
A long period of very hot weather.

melt
To change from solid to liquid because of heat.

record
The highest or lowest level ever measured.

warn
To tell people about danger so they can be careful.

percentage
An amount out of every hundred.

snowfall
The amount of snow that falls during a period.

temperature
How hot or cold the air is, measured by a number.

III. READING

Scientists in Switzerland warned that the country's glaciers have had a catastrophic year. They said the ice loss reached about 5% in 2026, which is an enormous percentage for a single year. The glaciers kept melting after a winter with too little snowfall and a summer of heatwaves.

Researchers said temperatures were at record highs across Europe this summer. Because there was not enough fresh snow to protect the ice, dark glacier surfaces absorbed more sunlight and melted faster. Experts explained that a healthy winter snow layer can slow spring and summer melt, but this year it was thin.

They added that repeated heat made recovery impossible. Switzerland is known for its mountain tourism, and scientists warned that more years like this could reshape its icy landscape.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **Al Jazeera***: "'Catastrophic year' as Swiss glaciers lose 5%...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What percentage of glacier ice was lost in 2026?
2. What two seasons are linked to the ice loss?
3. What summer event made the melt worse?
4. Why did the glaciers absorb more sunlight than usual?
5. Where were temperatures at record highs this summer?

V. DISCUSSION

1. How might glacier loss affect travel and jobs in Switzerland?
2. What actions could reduce melt during future heatwaves?
3. Should countries warn tourists when temperatures hit record highs?
4. What changes have you noticed in local weather recently?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Reported speech

Use a past reporting verb (said, warned, explained) + that-clause to report statements. After a past verb, tenses usually shift back: am/is/are → was/were; do → did; will → would; can → could; past → had + pp. For example: "Scientists say the ice is melting" becomes "Scientists said the ice was melting".

> *"They said* **the ice loss reached about 5% in 2026**.*"*
>
> *"Researchers said* **temperatures were at record highs across Europe this summer**.*"*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence in reported speech: put the words in brackets one tense back.

1. Scientists said fresh snow (protects) ___ the ice. _____
2. They said dark surfaces (are absorbing) ___ more sunlight. _____
3. Experts said the snow layer (is) ___ thin that year. _____
4. Experts added that the ice (can't) ___ recover. _____
5. Researchers said the winter (brought) ___ too little snow. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach key terms with images: glacier, heatwave, snowfall, percentage; check pronunciation of Switzerland and Europe.
- Run the reading twice: first for gist, then for details. Pair students for the five questions before a quick whole-class check.
- For discussion, set small groups and ask for one concrete impact and one practical action per group; keep the focus on travel, safety, and local examples, not personal blame.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Elicit quick ideas, then ask groups to name one job at risk and suggest how it could adapt.
2. Prompt students to think of shade, early openings, or snow fencing; ask for pros and cons.
3. Take a quick show of hands, then pair opposing views to agree on clear warning rules.
4. Have students compare this year with five years ago; encourage simple examples from daily life.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word notice for visitors explaining why glaciers melted faster in 2026 and how to stay safe; swap and peer-edit.

Presentation: In small groups, prepare a 2-minute poster showing how low snowfall and heatwaves speed up melt, using examples from the text.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Reported speech

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What percentage of glacier ice was lost in 2026?
   About 5%.
2. What two seasons are linked to the ice loss?
   Winter and summer.
3. What summer event made the melt worse?
   Heatwaves.
4. Why did the glaciers absorb more sunlight than usual?
   Too little fresh snow left dark ice exposed.
5. Where were temperatures at record highs this summer?
   Across Europe.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence in reported speech: put the words in brackets one tense back.

1. Scientists said fresh snow ___ the ice. **protected**
2. They said dark surfaces ___ more sunlight. **were absorbing**
3. Experts said the snow layer ___ thin that year. **was**
4. Experts added that the ice ___ recover. **couldn't / could not**
5. Researchers said the winter ___ too little snow. **had brought**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use a past reporting verb (said, warned, explained) + that-clause to report statements. After a past verb, tenses usually shift back: am/is/are → was/were; do → did; will → would; can → could; past → had + pp. For example: "Scientists say the ice is melting" becomes "Scientists said the ice was melting".

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