How oxygen increased: Worksheet 9.3

Evolution of the atmosphere

One theory that has a lot of support from scientists is that the early Earth had no atmosphere. The gases in the first atmosphere escaped from inside the Earth as volcanoes erupted.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Time (millions of years ago)** | **Gases in the atmosphere** | | |
| **Carbon dioxide (%)** | **Oxygen (%)** | **Nitrogen (%)** |
| 4500 | 90 | 0 | 10 |
| 3500 | 21 | 0.5 | 40 |
| 2500 | 10 | 5 | 60 |
| 1500 | 5 | 18 | 75 |
| 500 | 1 | 21 | 78 |

The table shows how scientists think the main gases in the atmosphere changed over time. Plot the values for each gas on the axes below. Use a different colour for each gas.

