**Features of a River**

* The start of a river is called the source. The source can sometimes be a lake, a marsh, a bog or a spring. The source is usually in the mountains.
* A tributary is a stream or smaller river that flows into another larger river.
* V-shaped valleys are found higher up on a river’s course. There are steep slopes and a narrow river bed.
* U-shaped valleys are lower down on the river’s course. The slopes are more gentle and rolling. There is a wide river bed and the river will also be wider in this valley.
* A waterfall is a cascade of water falling from a height. It is formed when a river or stream flows over a very steep rock face or cliff.
* A meander is a curve that occurs as the river moves through increasingly flat land. It looks snake-like in its shape. The curve in the meander changes over time. The river is continually eroding – sediment (solid material) is picked up on the outside of the curves as the river is flowing fast here. The river drops it on the inside of curves as the river flows more slowly on the inside.
* The wide part of the river near the sea is called an estuary. The mouth of the river is where the tide meets the river’s stream.
* When a river meets the sea, it may form a delta. A delta is a 'D' shaped mass of channels which is formed when the river deposits its material faster than the sea can remove it.

**River Colne**

The River Colne is a minor river in Essex that flows through [Colchester](http://www.information-britain.co.uk/hoteltowns.cfm?town=Colchester&county=26) (it is 18km long). It is not a tributary of a larger water course and issues directly into the sea via an estuary near [Brightlingsea](http://www.information-britain.co.uk/county26/townguideBrightlingsea/) and Mersea Island. The river runs through the Colne Valley which has a flood plain (spanning around 300 metres) when it reaches Colchester. The land along the river here has remained as pasture because the river only needs to rise two feet to burst its banks. As it passes near to Colchester North Railway Station, the Colne runs under a bridge and is directed into a concrete-lined basin that served as an open-air bathing facility until the 1960s. The basin is now in use by canoeists.

The river then meanders under a road bridge at the bottom of North Hill before rushing over a weir used for discharge control at Middlemill, once the site of a mill. Footbridges cross the river to link the town centre to the residential areas that lie on the north side of the flood plain. This area occasionally floods during heavy or sustained rainfall. The river runs along one side of a small lake before falling over another large weir and leaving Colchester. From this point on the River Colne is tidal. Downstream of Colchester the Colne flows through Wivenhoe and past the tidal barrier before joining the sea at the estuary by Brightlingsea.

**River Facts**

Some rivers around the world are famous for being long, wide or fast-flowing. The Nile river in Africa is the longest river in the world. It is 6,650km long. The Nile river basin covers eleven countries and flows into the Mediterranean Sea. The Amazon river in South America is the world’s widest river. At its widest point, the river is about 11km wide. This river feeds the famous Amazon rainforest and is also the fastest-flowing river in the world.