

## Energy Flow

Energy flows through a system. This is unlike matter, which cycles through a system. In the nutrient cycle, the matter that makes up the nutrients, such as carbon and oxygen, go through the cycle, and can keep going through it again and again. Energy does not continually cycle through the system as does the matter. Sun energy is introduced into the nutrient cycle by producers, such as plants, which store it as *chemical potential energy*. This *chemical potential energy* is then passed through the nutrient cycle along with the matter in the form of food. When the potential chemical energy is used to do work, most of it is transformed into heat energy. This heat energy flows out of the nutrient cycle and eventually radiates out into space.