

CLOUD IDENTIFICATION CHART

Atmospheric Science Field Guide

Observer: _____

HIGH CLOUDS (Above 6,000m / 20,000ft)

Cirrus (Ci) Wispy, feathery strands composed of ice crystals. "Mare's tails." *Indicates change in weather.*

Cirrocumulus (Cc) Small white ripples or grains. "Mackerel sky." *Fair but cold weather.*

Cirrostratus (Cs) Thin, transparent veil. Creates halos around the sun/moon. *Rain/snow within 24 hours.*

MIDDLE CLOUDS (2,000m - 6,000m)

Alto cumulus (Ac) White/gray patches or round masses. Size of a thumb at arm's length. *Potential thunderstorms later.*

Altostratus (As) Gray/blue-gray sheet. Sun appears as a "watery" disk. *Continuous rain likely.*

Nimbostratus (Ns) Dark, thick, featureless layer blocking all sunlight. *Steady, prolonged precipitation.*

LOW CLOUDS (Below 2,000m)

Cumulus (Cu) Detached, puffy cotton balls with flat bases. *Fair weather (Humilis).*

Stratus (St) Uniform gray layer resembling fog that does not touch the ground. *Light mist or drizzle.*

Stratocumulus (Sc) Low, lumpy, rolling masses. Size of a fist at arm's length. *No immediate precipitation.*

VERTICAL DEVELOPMENT

Cumulonimbus (Cb) Dense, towering "Thunderhead" with an anvil-shaped top. Extends through all altitude levels. *Severe storms, lightning, and heavy rain.*

REFERENCE ONLY ~~â€¢~~ CLOUD CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM ~~â€¢~~ WMO STANDARDS