

CLOUD IDENTIFICATION CHART

A Visual Guide to Common Formations

HIGH ALTITUDE (ABOVE 20,000 FT)

CIRRUS ILLUSTRATION

Cirrus

Thin, wispy, feathery strands of ice crystals. Often called "mare's tails."

CIRROCUMULUS ILLUSTRATION

Cirrocumulus

Small, white rippled patches. Looks like fish scales (mackerel sky).

MIDDLE ALTITUDE (6,500 - 20,000 FT)

ALTOCUMULUS ILLUSTRATION

Alto cumulus

White or grey patches/round masses. Often appears as rolls or clumps.

ALTOSTRATUS ILLUSTRATION

Altostratus

Grey or blue-grey sheet covering the sky. Sun may shine through weakly.

LOW ALTITUDE (BELOW 6,500 FT)

CUMULUS ILLUSTRATION

Cumulus

Fluffy, white cotton-like clouds with flat bases. Indicates fair weather.

STRATUS ILLUSTRATION

Stratus

Uniform grey layer covering the entire sky like a heavy blanket or fog.

VERTICAL DEVELOPMENT

CUMULONIMBUS ILLUSTRATION

Cumulonimbus

Dense, towering vertical cloud. Associated with thunderstorms and anvils.

Field Observation Template • Educational Reference Only