

Name: _____

Clouds Types

Clouds are a collection of very small droplets of water, or ice crystals. These droplets are so small, and so light, they can float in the air. Clouds look different and have different names depending on how high or low they are in the sky.

There are three main groups: High clouds (18,000+ ft) are called ***Cirrus***; Middle clouds (6,500 to 18,000 ft) are called ***Alto***; Low clouds (up to 6,500 ft) are called ***Stratus***. Clouds that are very tall, having vertical length, are called ***Cumulus***, or ***Cumulonimbus***.

Directions: Read the descriptions of the different types of clouds. Draw a sky scene that shows each type of cloud and where it would be positioned in the sky.

Cirrus clouds: composed of ice, they are thin and wispy, long and white.

Cirrostratus clouds: thin, sheetlike high clouds so thin that the sun and moon may be visible through them. Often they cover the entire sky.

Cirrocumulus clouds: small, rounded, white puffs that form in long rows, resembling fish scales.

Altostratus clouds: gray or blueish gray composed of ice crystals and water droplets, usually covering the entire sky.

Alto cumulus clouds: made of water droplets appearing in groups as puffy gray masses. Seeing these in the morning may indicate thunderstorms later in the day.

Stratus clouds: grayish clouds that often cover the entire sky, resembling fog. Sometimes mist or drizzle may be falling.

Stratocumulus clouds: low, puffy, gray clouds forming in rows with blue sky peeking through. Rain is not usually associated with these clouds, however they may turn into nimbostratus clouds.

Nimbostratus clouds: dark, gray, and wet looking accompanied by continuous, moderate to light rain or snow.

Cumulus clouds: white, puffy clouds that resemble pieces of cotton. Their base is flat and their tops are rounded.

Cumulonimbus clouds: thunderstorm clouds, flat on the bottom, tall, and possibly flat on the top, like anvil, these clouds are associated with heavy rain, snow, hail, lightning and tornadoes.

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