

High clouds These are usually 6000m (20,000ft) or more above the earth.

Cirrostratus

In Latin cirrus means a lock of hair and stratus means flat. These clouds are almost transparent and can stretch for many miles. Cirrostratus means that rain is on the way.

Cirrus

In Latin cirrus means a lock of hair and these clouds look wispy, like strands of hair. These clouds are often the whitest in the sky and catch different colours at sunset. They indicate that a change of weather is on the way.

Cirrocumulus

In Latin cirrus means a lock of hair and cumulus means a "heap". These clouds look like lots of little patches of small white cloudlets. They are made up of ice crystals and sometime look like fish scales. They indicate nice weather. Get outside and do something fun!

Mid-height clouds These are usually between 2000m (6,500 ft) and 6000m (20,000 ft) above the earth.

Altostratus

In Latin alto means high and stratus means flat. These mid-level clouds are often blue or grey and cover the whole sky. The sun or moon can shine through them. Altostratus means that a change of weather is coming.

Alto cumulus

In Latin alto means high and cumulus means a "heap". They look like mid-level round clumps, called cloudlets. These clouds are made up of ice crystals and water. They indicate settled weather.

Nimbostratus

In Latin nimbus means rain cloud and stratus means flat. The featureless grey clouds cover the whole sky. The sun can't shine through them, and they bring persistent rain or snow. A day to take an umbrella or stay in bed!

Stratus

In Latin stratus means flat. These clouds can be very low as fog or mist. They are flat and featureless and can be white to grey. They can often bring drizzle.

Stratocumulus

In Latin stratus means flat and cumulus means a "heap". They can be bright white to dark grey, usually with gaps between them. They can indicate any kind of weather but usually not rain, even when they are grey.

Cumulus

In Latin cumulus means a "heap". Cumulus are little, fluffy clouds that are individual. They are the shape that most people associate with a cloud (and the shape of your My Very Own Cloud!). They are often brightly lit by the sun. You usually see them on sunny days. Get out your sunglasses!

All-height clouds

Cumulonimbus

In Latin cumulus means a "heap" and nimbus means rain cloud. These towering, giant clouds are the only clouds that product thunder and lightning. They get taller and taller and have the same energy as 10 atomic bombs. They bring extreme weather such as thunderstorms, torrential rain or hail and tornadoes.

Clouds