

Know Your Clouds

Name: _____

Date: _____

Class: _____

Read the lesson at myweatherrock.com/journal/explainers/know-your-clouds (or the printed copy), then answer below.

Remember

There are ten basic clouds, and each one is a hint about what the sky does next. Wisps and veils up high mean change may be a day out, and a halo around the sun or moon often runs 12 to 24 hours ahead of rain or snow. Gray sheets mean steady rain on a schedule. Heaps tell you about the afternoon: flat-bottomed puffs are fair weather, puffy rows on a sticky morning hint at late-day thunderstorms, and a tower with an anvil top is a thunderstorm now. This page is the spotter's guide; how clouds form is the flagship lesson's job, and how much sky they cover is sky-cover's.

Questions

1. There is a pale ring around the moon tonight. What is the sky telling you?

- ☐ A. Nothing, rings are random
- ☐ B. A cirrostratus veil is overhead, and rain or snow often arrives within 12 to 24 hours
- ☐ C. A storm is hitting within the hour

2. It is a warm, sticky summer morning and the middle sky is full of puffy rows. The cloud chart's tip?

- ☐ A. A cold snap is coming
- ☐ B. Thunderstorms possible by late afternoon
- ☐ C. It will drizzle within the hour

3. The sun looks like a flashlight behind frosted glass. Which cloud, and what does it usually mean?

- ☐ A. Cirrus, fair weather ahead
- ☐ B. Altostratus, steady rain often gathering
- ☐ C. Cumulus, a nice afternoon

4. Which cloud has already stopped hinting and started doing?

- ☐ A. Nimbostratus, the dark sheet with steady rain falling
- ☐ B. Cirrocumulus, the mackerel sky
- ☐ C. Stratocumulus, the lumpy rolls

5. A fair-weather cumulus becomes worth watching when:

- ☐ A. It drifts in front of the sun
- ☐ B. It grows taller than it is wide, and keeps going
- ☐ C. It turns slightly gray on the bottom

In your own words

You wake to a milky white sky with a pale ring around the sun. Name the cloud, and explain what you would tell your family about tomorrow's picnic plans.

Answer key (for the teacher)

1. There is a pale ring around the moon tonight. What is the sky telling you?

B. A cirrostratus veil is overhead, and rain or snow often arrives within 12 to 24 hours — The halo is light bending through the ice crystals of a cirrostratus veil, and the NWS cloud chart puts precipitation often 12 to 24 hours behind it. It is a hint about tomorrow, not tonight.

2. It is a warm, sticky summer morning and the middle sky is full of puffy rows. The cloud chart's tip?

B. Thunderstorms possible by late afternoon — Altocumulus on a warm, humid morning is the chart's classic late-afternoon thunderstorm hint. Check back on that sky after lunch.

3. The sun looks like a flashlight behind frosted glass. Which cloud, and what does it usually mean?

B. Altostratus, steady rain often gathering — A gray sheet with the sun dimly visible is altostratus, and it often means steady rain is organizing, frequently as part of a warm front's long schedule.

4. Which cloud has already stopped hinting and started doing?

A. Nimbostratus, the dark sheet with steady rain falling — Nimbostratus is settled-in, hours-long rain, present tense. The mackerel sky and the lumpy rolls mostly just decorate the day.

5. A fair-weather cumulus becomes worth watching when:

B. It grows taller than it is wide, and keeps going — Height against width is the ambition test. A puff climbing taller than its own base is on the road that ends in a tower, and the thunderstorm recipe explains the rest of that road.