

The OPAL Cloud Guide

High clouds



Cirrocumulus



Cirrus



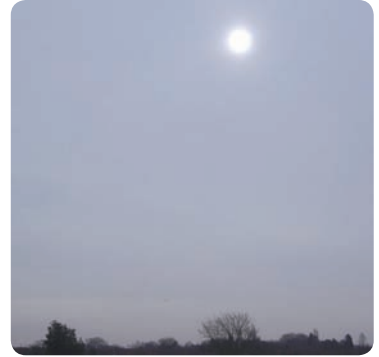
Cirrostratus

Medium clouds



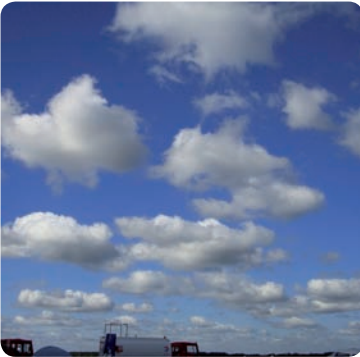
Alto cumulus

Use the photographs on this side and the table overleaf to help you identify the clouds in the sky



Altostratus

Low clouds



Cumulus



Stratocumulus

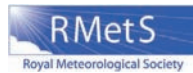


Stratus

Rainy clouds



Cumulonimbus



Nimbostratus

To help identify the type of cloud in the sky, ask yourself these questions

- 1** Is the base of the cloud high, medium or low? (left-hand column of the table below)
- 2** Is the cloud flat with few features, is it bubbly, or does it have some other sort of structure? (select from descriptions in top row)
- 3** Is rain falling or does it seem likely to fall? (select from lowest row)

Then use the table below, and photographs overleaf, to identify it.

Cloud base	Bubbly appearance	Other sort of structure	Flat with few features
HIGH Above 6000 metres	Cirrocumulus Not a common type. Sometimes dappled or rippled. Sun visible.	Cirrus Sometimes delicate, hair-like strands. Sometimes thicker blobs.	Cirrostratus A veil of white thin cloud. Sun clearly visible with shadows. Often with halo.
MEDIUM 2000 to 6000 metres	Alto cumulus Broken into small flat clouds, often regularly arranged. No rain or snow.		Altostratus Thicker than cirrostratus; sun visible as disc. No shadows or halo.
LOW Below 2000 metres	Cumulus Small cumulus have cotton wool shape. Often grow to bunch together. No rain.	Stratocumulus Common. Sometimes covering whole sky, sometimes more like flattened cumulus.	Stratus Grey, flat and boring, no sun visible. Drizzle may fall. Called hill fog on high ground.
LOW Rain falling	Cumulonimbus Cumulus grown tall and dark. Showers likely. Top can be very high, sometimes feathery or flat.		Nimbostratus Thick dark stratus, giving rain which is often heavy and prolonged. Difficult to photograph.

Written by Geoff Jenkins. All photographs (except Cumulonimbus) are © Geoff Jenkins 2011. Cumulonimbus photograph is © Steve Robson 2011.

