

## 1. Cumulus

**Etymology:** *Cumulus* = “heap” or “pile”

**Description:** Puffy, white clouds with flat bottoms and rounded tops that usually form at low altitudes around 1,000 to 2,000 meters. They develop when warm air rises gently from the ground.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cumulus\\_cloud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cumulus_cloud)

**When they appear:** On calm and sunny days when the surface heats the air. They usually signal fair weather but can grow into storms if conditions become unstable (uh-oh!).

*Note: In the cumulus family, you may find the baby brother, Cumulus humilis, a less voluminous, flatter form of cumulus that stays low and doesn't grow upward. A little, lonesome cloud, hovering alone in the middle of the big, big, big blue sky :(*

<https://weather.metoffice.gov.uk/learn-about/weather/types-of-weather/clouds/low-level-clouds/cumulus>

## 2. Stratus

**Etymology:** *Stratus* = “spread out” or “layer”

**Description:** These form a thick, gray layer that covers the entire sky like a blanket. They are very low-level clouds, typically found below 2,000 meters. Once they touch the ground, stratus clouds get promoted to the “fog” status :)

**When they appear:** During cool, calm, and humid weather, often in the morning. They can bring light mist or drizzle and reduce visibility. Turn on those fog lights !

<http://australiasevereweather.com>

## 3. Cumulonimbus

**Etymology:** *Cumulus* = “heap” + *Nimbus* = “rainstorm”

**Description:** These are towering storm clouds that grow vertically from near the ground up to over 12,000 meters. They have dark, flat bases and huge, anvil-shaped tops.

**When they appear:** On hot, humid days with strong rising air. Cumulonimbus clouds are responsible for thunderstorms, lightning, heavy rain, hail, and sometimes tornadoes (yikes!).

<https://earthsky.org/earth/what-are-cumulonimbus-clouds-thunderheads/>

## 4. Cirrus

**Etymology:** *Cirrus* = “curl of hair”

**Description:** Cirrus clouds are high, thin, and wispy, made of ice crystals (pretty!). They form at altitudes above 6,000 meters, often well into the upper troposphere (whatever that means).

**When they appear:** On fair days, often ahead of a warm front or weather system. They're usually an early sign that a change in the weather is coming (change is always good I guess).

<https://www.whatsthiscloud.com/cloud-types/cirrus>

## 5. Altocumulus

**Etymology:** *Altus* = “high” + *Cumulus* = “heap”

**Description:** Altocumulus clouds appear as gray or white patches, often in ripple-like patterns. They form in the middle level of the atmosphere, between 2,000 and 6,000 meters.

**When they appear:** In the morning or early afternoon on warm, humid days. Their presence can signal developing instability and possible thunderstorms later (Ooo...).

<https://cloudappreciationsociety.org/cloud-library/altocumulus/>