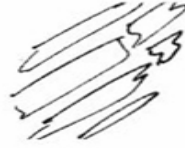## ALTOCUMULUS

These middle altitude versions of stratocumulus appear as large gray puffs. Their appearance on a humid summer morning indicates an afternoon thunderstorm.
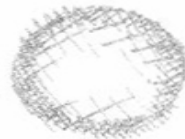
ALTOSTRATUS

These gray to bluish-gray middle altitude clouds usually cover the complete sky. The Sun may be visible through some of the thinner sections, but there isn't the halo effect that occurs with cirrostratus clouds. They form ahead of a front and their presence usually indicates widespread continuous precipitation will follow.

CIRROCUMULUS

High altitude ice clouds with a patchy or white puff type of appearance. They seldom cover the sky completely and can indicate precipitation within 24 hours.

CIRROSTRATUS

These high altitude clouds can be so thin that they are only visible as a halo around the Sun or moon. This halo effect is caused by ice crystals in the clouds which bend the light rays. They occur before the arrival of a warm front. Their presence indicates rain or snow within the next 24 hours.

CIRRUS

Thin, wispy high altitude clouds that often have a hair-like or filament appearance. These clouds generally travel from west to east pointing to fair weather.

CUMULONIMBUS

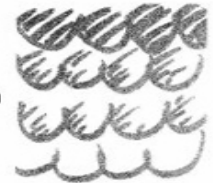These cauliflower-like clouds can produce lightning, thunder, hail, heavy rain and can spawn tornadoes.

CUMULUS

Low altitude clouds with flat bases and puffy tops indicating fair weather. If conditions in the atmosphere become unstable they can develop into *cumulus congestus* or even *cumulonimbus* clouds.
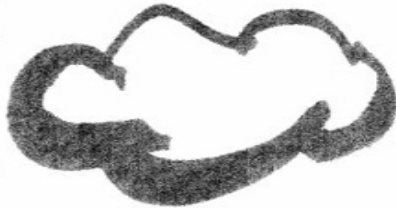
MAMMATUS

Pouch-like clouds found underneath a thunderstorm. They usually indicate the storm is weakening.

NIMBOSTRATUS

A very dark and gray-colored cloud which brings continuous precipitation. While they seldom bring heavy rain, precipitation can last for more than a day.

STRATOCUMULUS

These low altitude clouds can form from old stratus or cumulus clouds that are spreading out. They are gray or whitish in color with round bases. Precipitation rarely falls from these clouds.

STRATUS

Usually the lowest of the low clouds they cover the entire sky. These gray clouds can look like a layer of fog. While light drizzle can accompany these clouds, precipitation rarely comes from stratus.

Passport to Weather and Climate, Activity 3.2.1, *Reading the Sky*