

Name: _____

What are Clouds?



Clouds are made from many tiny droplets of water or ice crystals so small that they are called vapor. Clouds form when the water on earth evaporates into the sky. Clouds are mostly white because they are actually reflecting the light from the sun. When clouds get more and more moisture, they get full and that is when rain (precipitation) will happen. Clouds come in many different sizes and shapes. Clouds can be very high and they can be very low in the sky. There is often more than one type of cloud in the sky. Weather forecasters observe the cloud types and whether or not they are increasing or decreasing to help them determine what the weather forecast will be. There are many combinations of cloud types but the four main cloud types are: cumulus, cirrus, stratus and cumulonimbus. The cumulus clouds are thick and white with puffy tops and flatter bottoms, the weather is usually fair when cumulus clouds are present, although they can also mean a short, light, rain. Cirrus clouds are thinner clouds and very wispy like, the weather is usually fair with cirrus clouds as well. Stratus clouds come in layers and are flat and thin. When stratus clouds are high in the sky, the weather is usually dry and cloudy, when the stratus clouds are low in the sky, it could mean a light rain or drizzle and/or fog. Fog is really just a low cloud that is on and just above the ground. Cumulonimbus are big heavy clouds that are usually very tall clouds with puffy tops that are often gray. Cumulonimbus clouds can mean stormy weather. Rain, snow, sleet and hail are all forms of precipitation that can occur as clouds become heavy. The wind causes the clouds to change their shape frequently.

Questions:

- ① In your words, explain what clouds are.
- ② What are the main types of precipitation?
- ③ Describe a cumulus cloud and forecast the weather for cumulus clouds.
- ④ Explain what fog is.
- ⑤ What clouds would be in the sky during a storm?
- ⑥ Why are clouds often white?