

Talking about clouds

Reading and Discussion

The air is full of invisible, floating water droplets called **water vapor**. These droplets have **evaporated** from rivers, lakes and the sea. The heat of the sun warms the **moisture-laden** air and causes it to rise. When the air cools, the water vapor **condenses**, collecting around tiny particles of dust in the air. It then becomes visible as a cloud. As more and more water droplets or ice crystals are formed, they become heavy and fall to the earth as rain, hail or snow. We call this **precipitation**.

We identify clouds according to their shapes. There are three main types of clouds:

- **Cumulus:** These clouds are lumpy, like piles of soft cotton wool and often reach high into the sky with flat bases and round, fluffy tops.
- **Cirrus:** These clouds are thin and feathery. They are **high-level** clouds, which means they occur above 20000 feet and are usually made up of ice crystals.
- **Stratus:** These clouds are generally smooth and dark, and they cover most of the sky. They are **low-level** clouds, which means they occur below 6500 feet, and often bring rain.

Thunderheads are also cumulus clouds but they are called **cumulonimbus**. Other cloud mixtures such as **stratus-cumulus** or **cirro-cumulus** can occur as well. The cloud's name also depends on the level of the cloud. **Alto** means high, so **alto-stratus** clouds are higher than stratus clouds, and **alto-cumulus** clouds are higher than cumulus clouds.

Name _____

Date _____

Activities

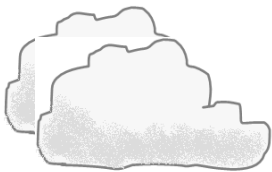
A: What do you know about clouds?

Can you fill in the missing words in the following sentences?

1. The invisible floating water droplets in the air are called _____.
2. The water in the air has _____ from rivers, lakes and the sea.
3. The moisture-laden air _____ when it is warmed by the sun.
4. When the air cools the water vapor _____.
5. When rain, hail or snow fall to the earth we call this _____.

B: Can you recognize these clouds?

Underneath each picture write the name of the cloud type and describe it.



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Name _____

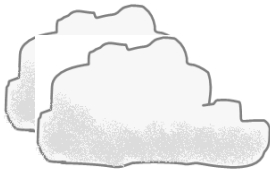
Date _____

Answer Sheet

Activity A

1. The invisible floating water droplets in the air are called water vapor.
2. The water in the air has evaporated from rivers, lakes and the sea.
3. The moisture-laden air rises when it is warmed by the sun.
4. When the air cools the water vapor condenses.
5. When rain, hail or snow fall to the earth we call this precipitation.

Activity B



Cumulus clouds are lumpy, like piles of soft cotton wool and often reach high into the sky with flat bases and round, fluffy tops.



Stratus clouds are generally smooth and dark and they cover most of the sky. They are **low-level** clouds, which means they occur below 6500 feet, and often bring rain.



Cirrus clouds are thin and feathery. They are **high-level** clouds, which means they occur above 20000 feet, and are usually made up of ice crystals.