

# IDENTIFYING CLOUDS

Clouds are classified into a system that uses Latin words to describe the appearance of clouds as seen by an observer on the ground.

<b>Latin Root</b>	<b>Translation</b>
Cumulus	Heap
Stratus	Layer
Cirrus	Curl of Hair
Nimbus	Rain

<b>Cloud type</b>	<b>Precipitation type</b>	<b>Composition</b>
*Cirrus	Rain, snow, ice pellets – showers or flurries	Mainly ice crystals
Alto cumulus	Rain, snow, ice pellets - intermittent	Droplets or ice crystals
Altostratus	Rain, snow, ice pellets – intermittent or continuous	Droplets or ice crystals
*Stratus	Drizzle or snow grains	Droplets or ice crystals
Strato cumulus	Rain, snow, ice pellets - intermittent	Droplets or ice crystals
Nimbostratus	Rain, snow, ice pellets - continuous	Droplets or ice crystals
*Cumulus	Rain, snow, ice pellets – showers or flurries	Droplets or ice crystals
*Cumulonimbus	Rain, snow, ice pellets, hail – showers or flurries	Droplets or ice crystals
*Fog	No precipitation	Suspended water droplets

\*a picture of these cloud types can be found on the other side of the page.

**High-Level Clouds** = cirrus and cirrostratus  
**Mid-Level Clouds** = alto cumulus and altostratus  
**Low-Level Clouds** = nimbostratus and strato cumulus

# Common Cloud Types



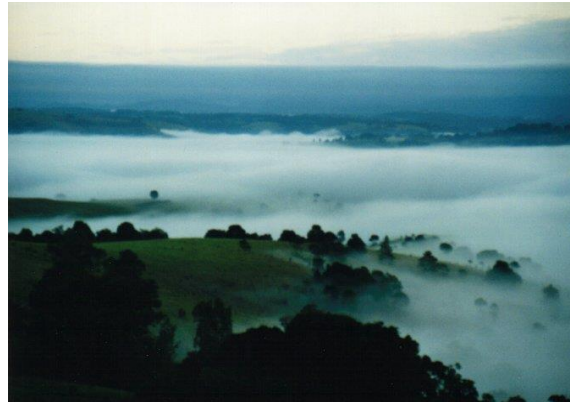
Cirrus



Cumulus



Stratus



Fog



Contrails  
(not natural clouds!)



Cumulonimbus