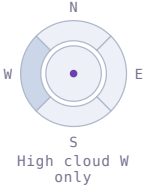
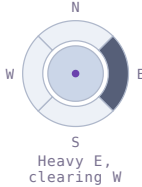
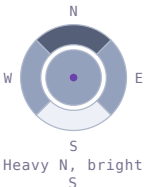
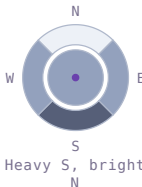
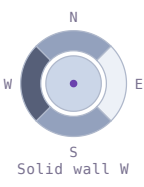
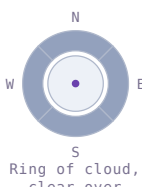
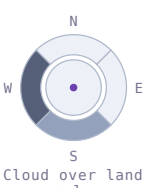
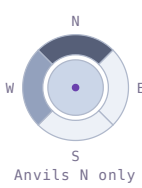
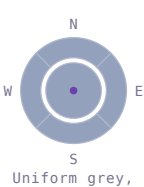
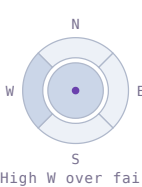


THE PRINCIPLE West ahead, east behind What stands in the western sky is what you are going to get. What stands in the east is what you have already had.	NORTH AND SOUTH Which side of the track The flanks say where the low's centre will pass. North of you gives the classic front sequence; south keeps you in cold air throughout.	THE DRILL Horizon first, overhead last New weather appears at the horizon. For each quarter note cloud height, base darkness, and whether the horizon under it is sharp or soft.	THE TRAP Backlit cloud looks worse Morning: the whole east is backlit. Evening: the whole west. Check where the sun is before calling a quarter heavy. Commonest false alarm there is.
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TEN SWEEPS AND WHAT THEY SAY – OUTER RING IS THE HORIZON, CENTRE IS OVERHEAD

 High cloud W only	Thin high cloud in the west, clean elsewhere The west is where your weather is made. Ice cloud from that quarter with the rest of the sky clean is a front 24–48 hr off and genuinely on its way.	 Heavy E, clearing W	Heavy in the east, opening up in the west The most reassuring sweep there is. East holds what has crossed you; west is empty. Improving, and likely to keep improving.
 Heavy N, bright S	Low and heavy north, brighter south The low's centre passes north of you — you are on its warm flank. Full sequence: warm front, warm sector, cold front, wind veering throughout.	 Heavy S, bright N	Low and heavy south, brighter north Low tracking south; you stay in cold air. No warm sector, no clean clearance — wind E backing NE, often longer, colder and wetter.
 Solid wall W	A wall of tall cloud across the western sky Continuous, dark end to end. A squall line, arriving as one thing. Watch the ends to judge your pass; you cannot dodge through the middle.	 Ring of cloud, clear over	Cloud all round the horizon, clear overhead A subsidence hole under a ridge — sinking air has scoured the sky above you. Best weather available, but a hole, and holes move and fill.
 Cloud over land only	Building over the land, nothing over the water Sea breeze convergence. Storms ashore, clear offshore. The dominant afternoon pattern on a subtropical coast — a filthy sky over the beach, fine two miles out.	 Anvils N only	Anvils to the north only, quiet elsewhere The track runs north of you. On the edge, not in it. High cloud creeping over is anvil blow-off. Sweep again in an hour — tracks shift.
 Uniform grey, all round	The same flat grey in every direction No gradient anywhere: you are inside the system, not looking at it. The one sweep that returns nothing. Go to the glass.	 High W over fair below	Cirrus from the west over fair cumulus below Two stories, two heights, no conflict. The change arrives upstairs first. The fair cumulus is not a contradiction, it is a countdown.

Almost every unknown here is a missing time axis. A snapshot cannot say whether a thing is arriving or leaving. Which is why so many answers are simply: look again in an hour.

01

SETTLED

Puffs with flat bottoms, all one height
Shallow instability under a cap. Nothing has punched through, so something is holding them down.
NEXT Look again at noon. Still wider than tall, the day is yours. Any one climbing, the cap has broken.

03

SETTLED

Bright to windward, dark and heavy to leeward
Weather moving away from you. What is dark downwind has already crossed the water you are on.
NEXT The glass. Rising confirms a ridge behind. Still falling means the clearance is a gap, not an ending.

05

WATCH

Long parallel lines of cumulus to the horizon
Organised convection in rolls. The streets run with the wind aloft, and need 10–20 kn to form.
NEXT Take their bearing. That is your upper wind, free — crossed-winds without needing cirrus.

07

WATCH

Thin white streaks in one quarter only
Ice cloud with an edge, and edges belong to systems. But arriving and departing cirrus look identical.
NEXT Wait an hour. More sky covered = arriving. Less = going. One hour turns a coin-flip into a call.

09

WATCH

Blue gone milky, clean ring round the sun
A continuous ice sheet overhead. The 22° halo is refraction through hexagonal crystals.
NEXT The glass, then the sun in three hours. Falling pressure plus a watery sun is the warm front confirmed.

11

WATCH

Little battlements on a mid-level sheet at breakfast
Cold over warm aloft, already overturning. Instability present before the sun has done any work.
NEXT Watch the surface cumulus at midday. Turrets aloft plus growth below means the layers are about to meet.

13

WATCH

Two layers plainly moving different ways
Directional shear with height: you are inside a circulation, not a uniform airstream.
NEXT Back to the wind. High cloud left → right, deteriorating. Right → left, improving. Do it before the low cloud hides it.

15

ACT

Dark and heavy to windward, bright to leeward
The dark is upwind, so it is coming. The bright quarter is what you are leaving, not heading into.
NEXT Look at the base of the dark. Soft = rain and a dull afternoon. Hard-edged wedge or roll = gust front.

17

ACT

Grey streaks from a base, stopping short of the water
Rain evaporating on the way down: the air below is dry, and evaporation cools and densifies it.
NEXT Watch the water, not the cloud. A spreading ring of disturbed surface is the outflow landing.

19

ACT

A smooth lens hanging motionless over the headland
A standing wave — cloud still while the air pours through it. Strong steady wind aloft.
NEXT Nothing to check. Change the plan. Wide berth in the lee; gusts there can arrive vertically.

02

SETTLED

Cumulus going ragged and shrinking at teatime
Surface heating has stopped driving convection. Built by the sun, and the sun is going off duty.
NEXT Nothing needed. But hard-edged cumulus still growing at sunset is the anomaly worth chasing.

04

SETTLED

Anvil on the horizon, top streaming away
A cell travels roughly the way its anvil points. That one is going elsewhere.
NEXT Sweep the quarter it came from. Towers building there means a squall day, and the next may not be polite.

06

WATCH

Cloudless, glassy, and the horizon gone soft
Air near saturation with no wind to mix it. A soft horizon is suspended moisture.
NEXT Compare air and sea temperature. Air warmer than water is the fog signature. Sort sound signals now.

08

WATCH

Aircraft trails hanging and spreading
Upper air is moist — a trail only persists near ice saturation. Dry air erases it in seconds.
NEXT Look for natural cirrus with them. Trails plus thickening high cloud is far stronger than either alone.

10

WATCH

Rippled rows like fish scales, streaks above
Two independent signs at two levels — moisture and instability mid-level, ice cloud above.
NEXT Compare the layers' directions. A wide crossing angle means good organisation and tighter timing.

12

WATCH

Uniform grey, no texture, no shadows on deck
Real optical depth — loss of shadow is the measurement, not thin haze.
NEXT The glass decides. Steady = a dull day. Falling = altostratus, and you are on the clock.

14

WATCH

Towers leaning hard, tops raked downwind
Strong vertical shear. The tilt separates updraft from downdraft, so the cell does not choke itself.
NEXT Do not assume it passes like a shower. Track by bearing — steady and growing means it is coming.

16

ACT

Anvil on the horizon, top spreading toward you
Upper flow runs from it to you, and the cirrus overhead is already its outflow arriving early.
NEXT Bearing on the cell base, then again in ten minutes. Unchanged bearing is a collision. Alter now.

18

ACT

Ragged shreds racing beneath a grey sheet
Rain is reaching the surface and saturating the air below cloud base. And there is real wind down there.
NEXT Read the scud's direction. Best low-level wind indicator you have when the sea is confused.

20

ACT

Wind drops, light goes strange, tops go soft
The tower has glaciated. That is the moment a cumulus becomes a cumulonimbus. The calm is inflow.
NEXT Do not wait. This is the sequence where the lull fools people into standing on deck to watch.