CLOUDS

There are usually quite a few clouds in the sky above Ireland. Some are small and some are big. Some are even fluffy.

Clouds come in many different colours. They can be white, grey, black or even red. Normally we can tell whether or not it's about to rain depending on the colour of the sky. If we didn't have any clouds there would be no rain, hail, sleet or snow!

Cirrus: High ice clouds that look like wispy curls of hair.

Cirrocumulus: Thin sheets of ice that form into small blobs or ripples. These clouds often signal unsettled weather.

Cirrostratus: Thin sheet of ice. Sometimes these clouds make a halo effect around the sun. When you see this effect it means that rain is approaching.

Altocumulus: Thin sheet of white or grey cloud, broken into blobs, rolls, waves or bands.

Altostratus: Layer of thin, grey cloud, through which sunlight is often visible. If the cloud thickens then rain is likely.

Nimbostratus: Thick grey sheets of cloud. They make rain and snow. "Nimbus" is the Latin word for rain.

Stratocumulus: Layer of low cloud broken into rolls or patches. These types of clouds often form a regular pattern.

Stratus: Low, grey blankets of cloud which sometimes produce light rain and drizzle.

Cumulus: Fluffy clouds with a flat base. The tops look like cotton wool.

Photos & text courtesy of Met Éireann

Cumulonimbus: Towering cumulus clouds often indicate a thunderstorm is on the way!

How clouds are made: Clouds form when moist air rises high up in the sky, cools and saturates. Moist water vapour condenses into tiny water droplets to form a cloud. Different clouds form depending on how the moist air rises.

The information on this page is from Met Éireann's Primary School Resources page on www.met.ie/education, where parents, teachers and children will find resources on weather-related topics that have been designed for use in primary schools in Ireland.