WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

MIDDLE-LEVEL CLOUD CLASSIFICATION AID

START HERE

Learn how to classify middle-level clouds (with a base 2 – 6 km above the Earth's surface) using this flow chart from the International Cloud Atlas. The name under each image refers to the cloud's genera followed by its species, variety or other feature; the code appears in parentheses. This makes it possible to classify the view of the sky more precisely.

Is Altocumulus present? ✓ ✗

Is the sky chaotic? ✗ ✓

Are there turrets or tufts? ✓ ✗

Is the greater part of Altostratus thin? ✓ ✗

Altostratus translucidus (C_M 1)
Reveals the position of the Sun or the Moon; no halo phenomena.

Altocumulus castellanus / floccus (C_M 8)
cas: turrets arranged in lines. flo: cumuli form tufts.

Chaotic sky (C_M 9)
Broken cloud sheets of Altocumulus and others at different levels.

Are Altostratus or Nimbostratus present? ✓ ✗

Altocumulus + Altostratus, Altocumulus + Nimbostratus (C_M 7)
Altocumulus together with Altostratus or Nimbostratus in one or more levels; Altocumulus can be below or above Altostratus, Nimbostratus.

Altostratus opacus (C_M 2)
Dense Altostratus, hiding the Sun and the Moon.

Is the cloud base diffuse and lowering? ✓ ✗

Nimbostratus (C_M 2)
Usually continuous precipitation occurs.

Are Altocumulus formed by spreading out of Cumulus or Cumulonimbus? ✓ ✗

Altocumulus cumulonimbogenitus / cumulogenitus (C_M 6)
Flattening of cloud tops occurring when cloud grows into a stable layer.

Altocumulus opacus (C_M 7)
Thick patches or sheets.

Altocumulus duplicatus (C_M 7)
Thin or thick patches or sheets.

Is Altocumulus invading the sky? ✓ ✗

Altocumulus invading the sky (C_M 5)
One or more thin cloud layers in bands.

Altocumulus translucidus (C_M 3)
Patches or sheets at a single level.

Are Altocumulus semitransparent? ✓ ✗

Are Altocumulus at two or more levels? ✗ ✓

Is Altocumulus continually changing? ✗ ✓

Altocumulus lenticularis (C_M 4)
Smooth lenticular elements at one or more levels.