

FREE PRINTABLE RESOURCE

WEATHER SIGNS FIELD CARD

Clouds, wind, pressure, and the sky itself. Four signals, no signal required.

CLOUDS: WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- ☐ **Thin, wispy, high cirrus streaks appear**
UCAR: Often the first sign of an approaching warm front, far ahead of any rain
- ☐ **Cirrus thickens into a hazy sheet (cirrostratus)**
Sometimes with a visible ring around the sun or moon. Front is getting closer
- ☐ **Sheet lowers and darkens into altostratus, then stratus**
UCAR: rain becomes possible, usually within about six hours
- ☐ **A puffy cumulus cloud grows taller instead of dissolving**
Watch it. This is the buildup phase of a storm cloud
- ☐ **Tall tower with a flat, anvil-shaped top: cumulonimbus**
NOAA: produces heavy rain, hail, lightning, and tornadoes

WIND: WHAT A SHIFT MEANS

- ☐ **Warm front approaching: slow build, high clouds first**
UCAR: Clouds lower and thicken over hours; rain becomes likely as it nears
- ☐ **Cold front approaching: fast, hard change**
Gusty winds, sudden temperature drop, heavy rain, possible hail/thunder/lightning
- ☐ **Wind suddenly swings to a new direction and gusts**
UCAR: the front is passing right now, not approaching
- ☐ **Wind won't settle on one direction for days**
Stationary front nearby. Cloudy, unsettled weather until it commits one way

PRESSURE: THE INSTRUMENT MOST PEOPLE SKIP

Falling pressure means a low is approaching or strengthening. National Weather Service: "pressure falling rapidly" is a decrease of 0.06 inch of mercury or more per hour, totaling at least 0.02 inch.

- ☐ **Barometer dropping slowly over many hours**
A system is easing in gradually. Still worth watching
- ☐ **Barometer dropping fast (NWS threshold above)**
Steeper pressure gradient. Expect stronger wind and precipitation, sooner
- ☐ **Barometer rising**
Sinking, drying air moving in. Good sign for the next day or two
- ☐ **Pressure changes from falling to rising**
UCAR: this happens right at the moment a cold front passes

RED SKY: THE REAL PHYSICS

- ☐ **Red sky at sunset, looking west**
NOAA/NWS Ocean Prediction Center: high pressure and fair weather are headed your way
- ☐ **Red sky at sunrise, looking east**
Clear high pressure has passed. Whatever's coming from the west hasn't arrived yet
- ☐ **Only reliable in the mid-latitudes**
Where weather systems track west to east. Treat as one signal among several

READ THEM TOGETHER

- ☐ **Cirrus thickening + wind shifting + pressure falling + red sunrise**
All four pointing the same way is about as close to a forecast as the sky gives without a satellite

Today's pressure reading: _____

Full guide: tacticalbox.com/blogs/tacticalbox-blog/reading-weather-signs-without-a-forecast

Sources: NOAA JetStream cloud reference; UCAR Center for Science Education (weather fronts, cloud formation); National Weather Service glossary (pressure terminology); NOAA/NWS Ocean Prediction Center (red sky science, via Scientific American).