Cloud identification guide

Is lightning seen or thunder heard?

→ yes → **Cumulonimbus Cb** — Huge cloud tower, sometimes with anvil. Thunderstorm possible.

→ no →

Individual bulging heaps or domes clearly visible?

→ yes → **Fuzzy outlines at the upper third part of the cloud?**
- yes → **Cumulonimbus Cb**
- no → **Cumulus Cu** — Isolated, puffy cloud with sharp outlines.

→ no → **Is there a uniform, continuous or broken layer, that has no rolls or elements?**

→ yes → **Does the Sun or Moon appear as a bright patch?**
- yes → **Cirrostratus Cs** — Transparent milky or fibrous veil, casts shadow, produces halo.
- no → **Elevated grey or bluish to dark grey sheet-like layer?**
  - yes → **Altostratus As** — Smooth, extensive layer; casts no shadow, even if Sun/Moon is recognizable as a blurred dot.
  - no → **Dense, extensive, lower layer with diffuse or "wet" appearance?**
    - yes → **Nimbostratus Ns** — Dark rain cloud or bright snow cloud. Usually continuous rain, snow or ice pellets.
    - no → **Stratus St** — Grey-whitish low layer, sometimes with drizzle or snow grains. If Sun/Moon is visible its outline is clear. Can occur in fragments.

→ no → **Are there white, wispy fibres or filaments?**

→ yes → **Cirrus Ci** — Hooks, feathers, bands or patches with silky shimmer.

→ no → **Is each element smaller than 1 finger (arm outstretched)?**
- yes → **Cirrocumulus Cc** — Thin, pure white fields of small grains or ripples at a high level. Size < 1°
- no → **Is each rounded element 1-3 fingers in size?**
  - yes → **Altocumulus Ac** — White/grey patches (turreted, lens shaped or balls of cotton), sheets or structured layer with undulations or rolls. Size 1° – 3°
  - no → **Stratocumulus Sc** — Grey or whitish fields, rolls or bundle, with rounded edges, at low level; regularly arranged elements. Size 5° – 10° (full hand)

Stratus-type clouds