



What Is Lightning?



by Ellen Lawrence

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Flash! Bang!



It's a hot summer evening and a thunderstorm has begun.

The sky is filled with huge, dark clouds, and raindrops are starting to fall from the sky.

Suddenly, a jagged flash of light shoots from the clouds. It's lightning!

Within seconds, thunder fills the air with loud bangs.

What do you think causes lightning?





It's possible to see
lightning from 100 miles
(161 km) away.

Inside a Thunderstorm Cloud

Lightning is created inside a thunderstorm cloud. How?

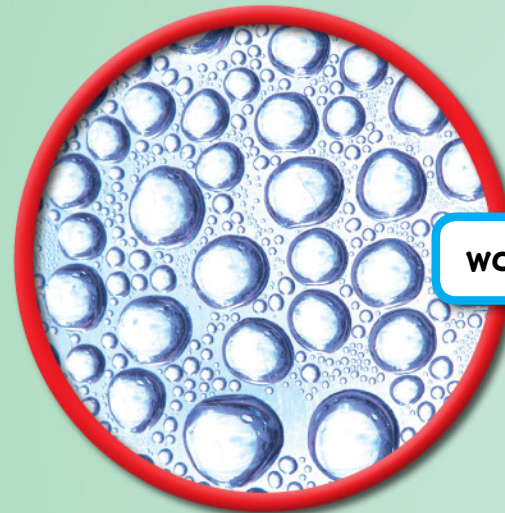
First, a cloud forms from billions of tiny droplets of water.

The cloud grows bigger and moves higher in the sky, where the air is very cold.

Then, ice **crystals** form in the cloud and mix with the droplets of water.

The crystals and water droplets move constantly.

As they move, something amazing happens in the cloud.



water droplets



ice crystals

The type of cloud where a thunderstorm forms is called a cumulonimbus (*kyoo-myuh-loh-NIHM-buss*) cloud. It may be several miles wide and 10 miles (16 km) tall!

cumulonimbus cloud

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Read More

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Lawrence, Ellen. *What Is Weather? (Weather Wise)*. New York: Bearport (2012).

Learn More Online

To learn more about lightning and thunder, visit www.bearportpublishing.com/WeatherWise

About the Author

Ellen Lawrence lives in the United Kingdom. Her favorite books to write are those about animals and nature. In fact, the first book Ellen bought for herself, when she was six years old, was the story of a gorilla named Patty Cake that was born in New York's Central Park Zoo.

Answers for Page 22

When you rubbed the balloon on your hair, you created a type of electricity called static electricity. The electricity made a spark that was attracted to the spoon. Just as the ice crystals in a cloud crash into each other and make electricity, the balloon and your hair made electricity when they were rubbed together. Then the electricity spark struck the spoon, just like a bolt of lightning strikes objects on the ground.

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What Is Lightning?

Flash! A bright, jagged line suddenly appears in the sky—and then it's gone in a second. In *What Is Lightning?*, read all about this amazing weather event, from its formation in storm clouds to the booming thunder that follows a strike. Forecast for this book: electrifying fun!

Fog, Mist, or Haze?

**How Are Rain, Snow,
and Hail Alike?**

What Are Clouds?

What Is Climate?

What Is Lightning?

**What Is the
Water Cycle?**

What Is Weather?

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