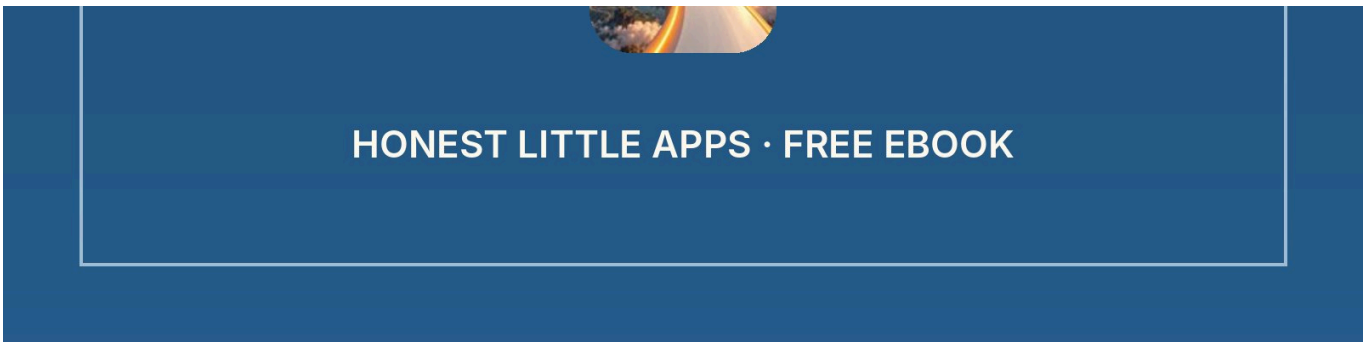
33 Weather Facts

Lightning, hail, clouds and storms, sourced





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A weather fact for each day of the month, with sources like NOAA and the Met Office named where it matters.

Day 1

A lightning bolt can heat the air to around 30,000 K, about five times hotter than the Sun's surface (NOAA).

Day 2

Count the seconds between flash and thunder. Divide by 5 for miles, or by 3 for kilometres.

Day 3

'When thunder roars, go indoors' is the National Weather Service's rule. If you can hear thunder, you're close enough to be struck.

Day 4

A tropical storm becomes a hurricane when sustained winds reach 74 mph (119 km/h).

Day 5

The Atlantic hurricane season officially runs from June 1 to November 30.

Day 6

To see a rainbow, the Sun has to be behind you and rain in front of you.

Day 7

The highest wind gust on record not linked to a tornado was 408 km/h, at Barrow Island, Australia, during Cyclone Olivia in 1996 (WMO).

Day 8

The WMO lists 56.7°C (134°F), Death Valley, 1913, as the hottest air temperature on record. Some researchers dispute it.

Day 9

The coldest air temperature ever measured was −89.2°C, at Vostok Station, Antarctica, in 1983.

Day 10

Snowflakes are almost always six-sided because ice crystals form in a hexagonal pattern.

Day 11

Fog is simply a cloud touching the ground.

Day 12

When air cools to its dew point, water vapour condenses. That's how dew, fog and clouds form.

Day 13

Since 2007 the US has rated tornadoes on the Enhanced Fujita scale, from EF0 to EF5, based on damage.

Day 14

The United States records more tornadoes than any other country, typically more than 1,000 a year.

Day 15

Jet streams are rivers of fast wind about 9–12 km up, often blowing at over 100 mph.

Day 16

Thunderstorm clouds (cumulonimbus) can tower more than 12 km into the sky.

Day 17

The largest US hailstone on record fell in Vivian, South Dakota, in 2010. It was 8 inches across.

Day 18

El Niño is a warming of the tropical Pacific that shifts rainfall and temperatures around the world.

Day 19

Because of the Coriolis effect, hurricanes spin counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern.

Day 20

A hurricane's eye is often calm and clear, and typically 20–40 miles across.

Day 21

A watch means conditions are right for severe weather. A warning means it's happening or about to. Act on warnings.

Day 22

The heat index combines temperature and humidity: humid air slows sweat evaporation, so it feels hotter.

Day 23

Wind chill is how cold it feels on skin when wind strips heat away. The thermometer doesn't change.

Day 24

Steadily falling air pressure usually means unsettled weather is on the way.

Day 25

Clouds look white because their droplets scatter all colours of light equally. Thick clouds look grey because less light gets through.

Day 26

Falling raindrops aren't teardrop-shaped. Small ones are round, and bigger ones flatten like a burger bun.

Day 27

Mawsynram and Cherrapunji in northeast India are among the wettest places on Earth, averaging around 11–12 metres of rain a year.

Day 28

Parts of Chile's Atacama Desert are so dry that some weather stations have never recorded rain.

Day 29

Lightning strikes Earth about 44 times every second, roughly 1.4 billion flashes a year (NOAA).

Day 30

The official Atlantic hurricane season ends today, although storms can occasionally form outside it.

Day 31

Ball lightning has been reported for centuries but is still poorly understood.

Day 32

The WMO retires a hurricane's name when the storm was especially deadly or costly, so it's never used again.

Day 33

Atlantic hurricane season runs June 1 – November 30. Check your local emergency plan and supplies.

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