

Estimating Wind Speeds

The Beaufort Scale

Here's a way to estimate how fast the wind is blowing without any fancy instruments.

The Beaufort Scale was originally developed in 1806 by Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort.














The Beaufort scale is divided into a series of speeds, from 0 for calm winds to 12 and above for hurricanes.

Each value represents a range of wind speeds with descriptions of the effects on surface features.

Here's a version of the Beaufort scale for you to print out.

Use this one to look at things around your neighborhood.

Beaufort Scale

Beaufort number	Wind Speed (mph)	Seaman's term		Effects on Land
0	Under 1	Calm		Calm; smoke rises vertically.
1	1-3	Light Air		Smoke drift indicates wind direction; vanes do not move.
2	4-7	Light Breeze		Wind felt on face; leaves rustle; vanes begin to move.
3	8-12	Gentle Breeze		Leaves, small twigs in constant motion; light flags extended.
4	13-18	Moderate Breeze		Dust, leaves and loose paper raised up; small branches move.
5	19-24	Fresh Breeze		Small trees begin to sway.
6	25-31	Strong Breeze		Large branches of trees in motion; whistling heard in wires.
7	32-38	Moderate Gale		Whole trees in motion; resistance felt in walking against the wind.
8	39-46	Fresh Gale		Twigs and small branches broken off trees.
9	47-54	Strong Gale		Slight structural damage occurs; slate blown from roofs.
10	55-63	Whole Gale		Seldom experienced on land; trees broken; structural damage occurs.
11	64-72	Storm		Very rarely experienced on land; usually with widespread damage.
12	73 or higher	Hurricane Force		Violence and destruction.

Source: <http://www.mountwashington.org/education/center/arcade/wind/beaufort.html>