

## The Weather

### Worksheet A

#### Speaking

Look at the following groups or pairs of words and discuss what the difference is between them:

- snow, sleet and hail
- a storm and a blizzard
- a breeze, a gale and a hurricane
- flooding and droughts
- mist and fog
- a shower and sunny spells
- rain and humidity
- a hurricane and a tornado

### Worksheet B

#### Pronunciation

Match the beginnings of six weather phenomena with the ends of the words. The words are all written in phonemic script, so this is how the words **sound** – **not** how we spell them.

a) 'blɪz	1) ts
b) 'hʌrɪk	2) dz
c) 'saɪkl	3) ədz
d) draʊ	4) ɪtɪ
e) hʃuː'mɪd	5) ənz
f) flʌ	6) əʊnz

Write the written word (i.e. how we spell it) and the corresponding phonemic script next to each other and practise saying them with the correct pronunciation and word stress.

## Worksheet C

### Collocations

It is useful to know which adjectives collocate strongly with which nouns. For example, we don't say "strong rain", but "heavy rain".

Can you match an adjective below in column A to a noun in column B so that they form strong collocations? In some cases there will be more than one possibility. Use a monolingual dictionary to help you.

A	B
torrential	gales
flash	humidity
severe	spells
dense	weather conditions
sunny	rain
freak	storms
violent	floods
high	fog

## Worksheet D

### Speaking

*Discuss the following questions with a partner.*

1. In what ways can we predict the weather?
2. There are many sayings in English about the weather. For example:  
*Red sky at night, shepherd's delight; red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning.*  
What do you think this saying means?  
Are there any similar sayings in your own language? Can you translate them into English and say what they mean?
3. Do you think the weather can influence our moods? If so, in what way?
4. Do you think the weather can influence the personalities of people living in different countries or regions? If so, in what way?

## Worksheet E

Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. According to scientific studies, what effects can the weather have on people?
2. What causes changes in the weather in the British Isles?
3. According to some researchers, what effect has human activity in Europe and North America had on Africa?
4. How can pine cones and seaweed help us predict the weather?
5. How reliable is technology in predicting the weather?
6. What did a recent study by an Australian psychologist suggest?
7. What's the connection between weather and disease?
8. What are stormchasers?

### Text

#### Weather

by Mike Rayner

*It's hardly surprising that weather is a favourite topic for so many people around the world - it affects where we choose to live, what we wear, our moods, and perhaps even our national characteristics. A sunny day can relieve the deepest depression, while extreme weather can destroy homes and threaten lives.*

#### The effects of weather

Palm trees bent double in hurricane force winds, cars stranded in snow drifts, people navigating small boats down flooded city streets – images we are all familiar with from news reports of severe weather spells. But many of the effects of the weather are less newsworthy.

'I'm feeling a bit under the weather' is a common complaint in Britain, especially on Monday mornings, and it seems that weather really can be responsible for moods. Studies have shown that changeable weather can make it hard to concentrate, cloudy skies slow down reflexes, and high humidity with hot, dry winds makes many people irritable and snappy.

Some suggest that the weather also leaves its mark on character, giving people from the same region similar temperaments, although it seems that economic, political and social factors are likely to have a much stronger effect than the weather.

### **What causes changes in the weather?**

If you live in a place like Britain, where the weather seems to change daily if not hourly, you could be forgiven for thinking that the weather is random. In fact the weather is controlled by systems which move around areas of the globe. In the UK the weather depends on depressions, often called 'lows', and anticyclones, also known as 'highs'. These systems start in the Atlantic Ocean, and make their way across the British Isles from the west to the east. Highs bring sunny weather, while lows bring rain and wind.

The weather systems in tropical climates are very different from those in mid and high latitudes. Tropical storms develop from depressions, and often build into cyclones, violent storms featuring hurricanes and torrential rain.

In modern times, human activity seems to be altering weather patterns. Gases produced by heavy industry change the temperature of the Earth's surface, and affect cloud formation. Some researchers say that factories in Europe and North America may have been one of the causes of the droughts in Africa in the 1980s.

### **Can we predict the weather?**

The human race has always tried to guess the weather, especially in areas of the world where there are frequent changes. Traditional rhymes point to early attempts to identify weather patterns, popular poems include:

Red sky at night, shepherds' delight; Red sky in the morning, shepherds' warning

Ash leaf before the oak, then we will have a summer soak;  
Oak leaf before the ash, the summer comes without a splash

Flies will swarm before a storm.

Rain before 7, clear by 11.

Two other popular traditional ways of forecasting the weather used pine cones and seaweed. When the air has a high level of humidity there is a higher chance of rain, when the humidity is low, there is more chance of fine weather. Pine cones and seaweed react to changes in humidity - pines cones open, and seaweed feels dry when the humidity is low, while high humidity has the opposite effect.

While folk wisdom can still provide a guide to help forecast weather, today's methods of prediction increasingly rely on technology. Satellites, balloons, ships, aircraft and weather centres with sensitive monitoring equipment, send data to computers. The data is then processed, and the weather predicted. However, even this system cannot predict weather for longer than about week.

A recent study by an Australian psychologist suggests that certain people may have a special gift for predicting the weather. However it is possible that these people would use their talent in another way, since the same group had considerable success in forecasting changes in another chaotic system – the stock market.

It appears that a study of weather patterns may also enable scientists to predict the outbreak of disease. An Ebola epidemic in Uganda in the year 2000 came after the same rare weather conditions that had been present before an outbreak 6 years earlier. Efforts to limit the spread of airborne diseases such as foot and mouth, are also strongly dependent on favourable wind conditions.

### **Extreme weather**

Although people in Britain often moan about the weather, we should spare a thought for the inhabitants of parts of the world where extreme weather regularly wreaks havoc on the environment and population. Sandstorms, tornadoes, blizzards and flashfloods regularly kill thousands of people and leave many others homeless.

While most of us try to avoid extreme weather, some adventurous souls actively seek out places where extreme weather conditions exist. Sports such as surfing, kiteboarding, ice-climbing and white-water rafting are becoming increasingly popular with people seeking relief from the monotony of daily routine. Extreme sports are about exhilaration, skill and danger, and often harness the weather to provide adrenaline addicts with their kicks.

Even more extraordinary are storm-chasers – weather enthusiasts who risk their lives following tornadoes and thunderstorms at high speed to witness the damage they cause at close hand.