

Twisting Tornadoes



photo by Niccolò Ubalducci

Mini Fact:

The U.S. has about 1,200 tornadoes each year.

You might have found yourself looking up at the sky more often lately, wondering if it will rain. Thunderstorms occur most often in the spring and summer months, and with those comes an increased chance of severe weather, including tornadoes.

May and June are the months when tornadoes occur most often. The Mini Page takes a spin through the world of tornadoes this week.

Formation

A **tornado**, or **twister**, is a rapidly spinning column of air that occurs during a thunderstorm. A tornado reaches from a storm cloud in the sky all the way to the ground.

A lot about tornadoes is still a mystery, but we know they occur when warm, humid air barrels into cold, dry air. A spinning cloud that doesn't reach the ground is called a **funnel cloud**. A thunderstorm is formed when the heavier cold air is pushed over the warm air. National Geographic explains, "The warm air rises through the colder air, causing an updraft. The updraft will begin to rotate if the winds vary sharply in speed or direction."

That's when a tornado can form.




photo by Niccolò Ubalducci

Spin

Tornadoes in the Southern Hemisphere, or the part of Earth below the equator, tend to rotate clockwise. However, tornadoes in the Northern Hemisphere, or above the equator, usually rotate counterclockwise. This isn't always the case, but it happens quite often.

Seeing double

Sometimes a single storm can produce multiple tornadoes.

Tornadoes can last on the ground for a few seconds or up to an hour. On average, though, a tornado lasts less than 10 minutes — most often around two or three minutes.




photo by Niccolò Ubalducci

Water droplets

Since a tornado is made of air, you might wonder how it's possible to see it in the first place. A few things factor into this process.

First, water droplets in the air make the rotation of a tornado visible to our eyes. Second, as the tornado gains speed and stability, it picks up objects and dirt along its path. These things help give the rotating air, or **funnel**, a form that we can see with our eyes.

Warnings

In 1925, the Tri-State Tornado struck Missouri, Illinois and Indiana, killing 695 people. That was the deadliest single tornado in U.S. history.

Meteorologists (weather experts), along with other people who research storms, have worked a lot during the years since then to find out more about tornadoes so people have a better chance of survival.

Through early warning systems and sirens, people have more time now to seek shelter than they've ever had in the past.




photo by rbeard113

What to do

If you ever need to seek shelter from a tornado, go to your basement if possible. If not, go to a room in the interior part of the lowest floor of your house that has no windows, like a bathroom or closet.

You might talk to a grown-up about any plans they have for severe weather. A trial run of acting out what you need to do during a time like this might be helpful.

Resources



On the Web:


- bit.ly/MPTornadoes

At the library:

- "The Everything KIDS' Weather Book" by Joseph Snedeker
- "Tornado!" by Judy Fradin and Dennis Fradin

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of tornadoes are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:




AIR, BASEMENT, COLD, COLUMN, DESTRUCTION, DROPLET, FUNNEL, HEMISPHERE, RISES, SHELTER, SIRENS, SPIN, STORM, TORNADO, TWISTER, WARM, WATER, WIND.

O	E	Q	T	B	P	S	I	R	E	N	S	T	O	B
P	T	O	R	N	A	D	O	L	A	J	T	S	U	B
S	P	I	N	S	E	S	I	R	A	W	J	L	V	Y
M	R	A	W	H	L	M	W	H	I	X	D	E	D	R
D	N	I	W	E	Q	J	E	S	U	Z	L	N	R	E
N	O	I	T	C	U	R	T	S	E	D	O	N	O	T
C	O	L	U	M	N	E	Y	L	A	J	C	U	P	L
S	S	Q	A	I	R	X	A	A	K	B	J	F	L	E
W	F	H	E	M	I	S	P	H	E	R	E	O	E	H
E	U	P	W	A	T	E	R	Z	C	M	R	O	T	S

Mini Spy Classics


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- exclamation mark
- man in the moon
- pig
- pencil
- kite
- feather
- ladder
- hamburger
- sailboat
- knife
- number 0
- heart
- word MINI
- needle
- fork
- number 2
- spoon
- cane
- comb
- strawberry
- arrow
- mug
- sock
- muffin
- snake
- tooth


Mini Jokes



Ada: Why did the tornado take a break?

Alan: It was out of wind!

Eco Note



Researchers say they have found that the best way to avoid being targeted by mosquitoes is to shift your wardrobe to colors the biters are not attracted to. Biologists from the University of Washington found that after the insects catch a whiff of carbon dioxide from human breath, they target anyone wearing the longer wavelength colors of red, orange, black and cyan for their next blood meals.


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For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about tornadoes.



Teachers:

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