

The Beaufort Scale of Wind Force

The Beaufort Scale of Wind Force was developed in 1805 by Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort as a means for sailors to gauge wind speeds through visual observations of the sea state. The scale runs from force 0 (calm) to force 12 (Hurricane). The Met Office issue warnings for sea areas when winds of force 8 or greater are forecast and locally strong wind warnings may be issued for winds force 5 – 7.

Please help preserve our beautiful yachts by sailing to this 'traffic light' code.

The Beaufort Scale: Sea based specification				
Force	Speed (10m above ground)		Description	Visual Signs
	m.p.h.	Knots		
0	0 – 1	0 - 1	Calm	Sea like a mirror.
1	1 – 3	1 – 3	Light Air	Ripple with the appearance of scales are formed, but without foam crests.
2	4 – 7	4 – 6	Light Breeze	Small wavelets, still short, but more pronounced. Crests have a glassy appearance and do not break.
3	8 – 12	7 – 10	Gentle Breeze	Large wavelets. Crests begin to break. Foam glassy appearance. Perhaps scattered white horses.
4	13 – 18	11 – 16	Moderate Breeze	Small waves. Becoming larger; fairly frequent white horses.
5	19 – 24	17 – 21	Fresh Breeze	Moderate waves, taking a more pronounced long form; many white horses are formed. Chance of some spray.
6	25 – 31	22 – 27	Strong Breeze	Large waves begin to form; the white foam crests are more extensive everywhere. Probably some spray.
7	32 – 38	28 - 33	Near Gale	Sea heaps up and white foam from breaking waves begin to be blown in streaks along the direction of the wind.
8	39 – 46	34 – 40	Gale	Moderately high waves of greater length; edges of crests begin to break into spindrift. The foam is blown in well marked streaks along the direction of the wind.
9	47 – 54	41 – 47	Severe Gale	High waves. Dense streaks of foam along the direction of the wind. Crest of waves begin to topple, tumble and roll over. Spray may affect visibility.
10	55 – 63	48 – 55	Storm	Very high waves with long over hanging crests. The resulting foam, in great patches, is blown in dense white streaks along the direction of the wind. On the whole the surface of the sea takes on a white appearance. The 'tumbling' of the sea becomes heavy and shock-like. Visibility affected.
11	64 – 72	56 – 63	Violent Storm	Exceptionally high waves (small and medium sized ships might be for a time lost to view behind the waves). The sea is completely covered with long white patches of foam lying along the direction of the wind. Everywhere the edges of the wave crests are blown into froth. Visibility affected.
12	73 – 83	64 - 71	Hurricane	The air is filled with foam and spray. Sea completely white with driving spray; visibility very seriously affected.

The Beaufort Scale: Land Based Specification				
Force	Speed (10m above ground)		Description	Visual signs
	m.p.h.	Knots		
0	0 - 1	0 - 1	Calm	Calm; smoke rises vertically.
1	1 - 3	1 - 3	Light Air	Direction of wind shown by smoke drift, but not by wind vanes.
2	4 - 7	4 - 6	Light Breeze	Wind felt on face; leaves rustle; ordinary vanes moved by wind.
3	8 - 12	7 - 10	Gentle Breeze	Leaves and small twigs in constant motion; wind extends light flag.
4	13 - 18	11- 16	Moderate Breeze	Raises dust and loose paper; small branches are moved.
5	19 - 24	17 - 21	Fresh Breeze	Small trees in leaf begin to sway; crested wavelets form on inland waters.
6	25 - 31	22 -27	Strong Breeze	Large branches in motion; whistling heard in telegraph wires; umbrellas used with difficulty.
7	32 - 38	28 - 33	Near Gale	Whole trees in motion; inconvenience felt when walking against the wind.
8	39 - 46	34 - 40	Gale	Break twigs off trees; generally impedes progress.
9	47 - 54	41 - 47	Severe Gale	Slight structural damage occurs (chimney-pots and slates removed).
10	55 - 63	48 - 55	Storm	Seldom experienced inland; trees uprooted; considerable structural damage occurs.
11	64 - 72	56 - 63	Violent Storm	Very rarely experienced; accompanied by wide-spread damage.
12	73 - 83	64 - 71	Hurricane	