



United States METAR Decoding: The Basics Plus Study Hints and Tips

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Precipitation Types		
Code	Means	Hint/Extra Info
DZ	Drizzle	
RA	Rain	
SN	Snow	
SG	Snow Grains	Look at first two letters
IC	Ice Crystals	Look at first two letters
PL	Ice Pellets	PeLL ets
GR	Hail	French is <i>Graupel</i> or " G ranite r ain"
GS	Small Hail or Snow Pellets	Opposite of Snow Grains (SG vs GS) and hail size may be in remarks
UP	Unknown Precip	Look at first two letters
Qualifiers: Intensity and Location // Sky Coverage		
- (negative sign)	Light	
+ (positive sign)	Heavy	
No sign at all	Moderate	
VC	Vicinity: 5 to 10 sm away	
SKC	No sky coverage (manual, human)	
CLR	No sky coverage (C omputer = CLR)	
FEW	Few clouds, 1/8 to 2/8 = not a ceiling	
SCT	Scattered clouds, 3/8 to 4/8 = not a ceiling	
BKN	Broken clouds, 5/8 to 7/8 = ceiling!	
OVC	Overcast clouds, 8/8 = ceiling!	
VV	Vertical visibility = ceiling! 8/8 coverage	

Qualifiers, Obscurations, Weather Phenomena & Other Items		
Code	Means	Hint/Extra Info
MI	Shallow	" M inus" like not too deep
BC	Patches	"BC Headache Powder" or maybe a patch
DR	Low Drifting	Look at first two letters
BL	Blowing	Look at first two letters
SH	Showers	Look at first two letters
TS	Thunderstorm	T hunder s torm
FZ	Freezing	F reezing
PR	Partial	P artial
BR	Mist	" B aby R ain"
FG	Fog	F og
DU	Dust	Look at first two letters
SA	Sand	Look at first two letters
HZ	Haze	H aze
PY	Spray	S pray
VA	Volcanic Ash	Look at first two letters
FU	Smoke	French is <i>Fumar</i> for smoke & smoking will "FU" up
PO	Dust/Sand Whirls	French is <i>Poussière</i> for dust
SQ	Squalls	Look at first two letters
FC	Funnel Cloud	Look at first two letters
+FC	Tornado	"Heavy" funnel cloud (note +), also used for waterspout
SS	Sand Storm	Look at first two letters
DS	Dust Storm	Look at first two letters

Important: This study & decoding sheet is intended for educational purposes only. This information is not meant to explain all situations or all circumstances or all weather products and may go out of date, so always consult official FAA guidance applicable to your specific operation.

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