Rampion weather watch - Rain

Rampion
Offshore Wind

Rainfall - Precipitation

Why do we sometimes get rain and sometimes get snow? These are different types of precipitation, but what does 'precipitation' mean?

Clouds are made up of very small water droplets which are suspended in the air. If the air continues to cool, the small droplets will join to form larger droplets or ice crystals. Eventually the weight of the water drops or ice crystals may be heavy enough to make them fall as precipitation (rain, drizzle, snow, sleet, hail or a mix of those).

Types of precipitation:

Rain is the type of precipitation we see most of the time in the UK and can come in lots of sizes, from big, heavy drops to light, little specs.

Drizzle - if you can feel drops, even little and light ones, this is rain, if you are getting wet, but can't feel the drops then that will be drizzle. You often get rain and drizzle mixed together.

Snow is one of the solid types of precipitation, this means that it is made of water that has been frozen.

Sleet is a mix of rain and snow.

Hail is another type of frozen precipitation, but unlike snow, which is quite soft, hail is hard and icy.

Rain gauges are used to collect the rain so that we know how much has fallen. It's best to check the level every day at the same time, you then empty it, after the level has been recorded in your weather diary.

How to make a rain gauge

What you will need:

A clear glass jar with a flat bottom

A ruler, a permanent marker

Instructions:

Place the ruler on the side of the jar (optional: mark in cm/mm with the permanent marker up the side), remember to line up the '0' on the ruler with the flat bottom of the jar. You can then read the level by looking at the ruler or markings. Another way of measuring the level is by inserting the ruler into the jar with rain water, once some has been collected.

You now need to find a suitable place outside to put your rain gauge, it should be away from trees and buildings. You could even dig a small hole and bury your rain gauge a bit so that the top is sticking out of the ground. This should stop the rain gauge from blowing down on very windy days.