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# S'COOL

Students' Cloud Observations On-line

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

## S'COOL Cloud Identification Chart

The chart features a vertical axis on the left labeled 'Altitude of Cloud Base' with markers for 10,000, 5,000, and 0. A horizontal line is drawn at the 5,000 mark. To the right of the axis, several cloud types are shown in small image boxes with their names below them: Cirrus, Cirrostratus, Cirrocumulus, and Contrails. A large, stylized cloud with a white contrail is shown in the background. At the bottom right, the text 'CONVECTIVE CLOUDS' is visible.

Altitude of Cloud Base

10,000

5,000

0

Cirrus

Cirrostratus

Cirrocumulus

Contrails

CONVECTIVE CLOUDS

0:22 / 5:18

CC



# The GLOBE Program

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In honor of Earth Day, the GLOBE Program invites you to join in a scientific experiment on April 22, 2004, to count contrails in your piece of the sky. Teachers, students, and anyone interested in helping to develop a better understanding of the Earth are welcome to participate.



0:14/2:02



## About the Activity

Welcome to the web site for the GLOBE Program's 2004 Earth Day Contrail Count-a-Thon. GLOBE has partnered with scientists at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to design a project that will allow you to:

- Collect data about the contrails and clouds that you see in the sky following directions given in the [Contrail Count-a-Thon Student Worksheet](#) and recording your data on a printout of the [Data Sheet](#).
- Since Earth Day is over, but you would still like to send your data collected on April 22nd, please send it to the GLOBE Help Desk ([help@globe.gov](mailto:help@globe.gov)).



# CONTRAIL EDUCATION



+ Importance

+ Science

+ History of Contrails

+ Satellite Imagery

+ Reporting Instructions

+ Resources

+ Contrail Gallery

+ FAQ

+ Team Page

+ Glossary

Want to learn more about contrails?

Where can I find answers to my  
contrail questions?

Where can I find results from the



1:28 / 2:02

## MY NASA DATA

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# Contrail Watching for Kids

**Science Project:** Contrail Watching for Kids

**Web Id:** P3

**Purpose:** Contrails are long clouds made by high-flying aircraft. Because kids are so good at watching clouds, they can be easily taught to identify contrails.

**Age Range:** 6 – 10

**Time Required:** Young children can observe and report on contrails in only a few minutes a day.

### Background:

Because kids are natural sky watchers, they are curious about both clouds and contrails. It is likely that when contrails are present that young children will notice and pay more attention to them than adults. Here are some basic facts that will interest them:

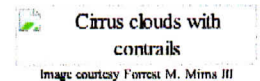
1. Contrails are long clouds of ice crystals caused by the exhaust from the engines of high-flying aircraft.
2. Contrails can spread into cirrus clouds that reduce sunlight during the day and warm the Earth at night.
3. Contrails are formed when the temperature of the air is around -40 degrees Celsius (which equals -40 degrees Fahrenheit).
4. Contrails do not form when the air is too dry. The length of contrails provides a clue about how dry the sky is where the plane that caused the contrail is flying.
5. Clouds that shade the sun during the day can cause cool weather.

### Significance:

Kids know that some clouds signal rain and other mean fair weather. They need to know that contrails are actually manmade clouds and that they can cause measurable changes in the temperature far below where they live and go to school.

### Project Links:

- [Contrail Education](#)
- [SCOO!: Observing Contrails](#)
- [GLOBE Contrail Gallery](#)



**Real Time Data Source:**

[MODIS Rapid Response System](#). Use the highest resolution images to look for contrails.

**MY NASA DATA Source:**

A related parameter of interest in the LAS is [Atmosphere, Clouds, Cloud Coverage](#), Monthly Cloud Coverage for Cirrus (ISCCP).

**Project Ideas:**

- 1. Contrail Identification.** Young students should learn the differences between natural clouds and contrails. They should learn the three most basic kinds of contrails: (1) short and transient, (2) long and persistent or (3) spreading. They can find out more about contrail identification by visiting the [S'COOL Cloud Chart: Contrails](#) and [GLOBE-Contrail Resources](#).
- 2. Contrail Calendar.** Young students can easily add contrail observations to a daily cloud calendar. They might even consider a separate Contrail Calendar. The calendar can be a pocket notebook or a calendar with plenty of white space for each day. If a notebook is used, the student should print the day, month and year at the top of each page. For more ideas, see [Science Project 1: Clouds for Kids](#).
- 3. Contests.** Kids love contests. You can motivate young students to observe contrails by organizing a contest for the highest number of contrails that are observed in a given week or month.
- 4. Science Fairs.** Young students who make a detailed Contrail Calendar for a month or more have the ingredients for a good science fair project.

**Analysis Ideas:**

Observe the temperature cooling that occurs when a contrail passes in front of the sun and shades the ground.

**Related Projects:**

[The GLOBE Program](#)

[The CERES S'COOL Project](#)

[Elementary GLOBE](#)

**Questions:**

1. What makes contrails?
2. Are contrails formed of water droplets or ice crystals?
3. Why are some contrails very short?
4. Why do you think some contrails spread across the sky?

**Going Further:**

For more information about contrail watching, see [Science Project 4, Contrail Studies](#). Advanced younger students may be able to advance to that project.

Students who have a digital camera can be encouraged to make photographs of contrails and to even make a digital scrapbook of contrail photos. Such photos are ideal for science fair projects.

*Project ideas contributed by Forrest M. Mins III, Geronimo Creek Observatory, Texas*

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