

RECOGNISING AIR MASSES

A table to show what is happening to the air from the four major air masses as they approach the UK.

	Source Air temperature	Direction of Travel	Humidity increasing or not?	Temperature increasing or decreasing?	Convection ?	Rainfall?
Polar Maritime	Cold	South or South East	Yes	Increasing	Yes	Yes – typically in showers.
Polar Continental	Cold	South or South West	No	Increasing	Yes	No – although it depends on how much of the North Sea the air has crossed.
Tropical Maritime	Warm	North or North East	Yes	Decreasing	No	Maybe light drizzle – layer cloud can form as the air travels polewards and cools.
Tropical Continental	Warm	North or North West	No	Decreasing	Not generally	Sometimes there can be thunderstorms if localised convection begins over warm land surface.