



The Beaufort Scale

The Beaufort Scale is the accepted means of relating wind strength, sea state and wave height. The descriptors provided are for open water conditions. The scale was developed by Sir Francis Beaufort and adopted by the Royal Navy in 1838.

Beaufort Number	Description	Sea Criteria	Wave Height (Metres)	Probable Max (Metres)	Limit of Velocity (Knots)	Average Velocity (Knots)
0	Calm	Sea like a mirror	0	0	Less than 1	0
1	Light air	Ripples with the appearance of scales without foam crests	0.1	0.1	1-3	2
2	Light breeze	Small wavelets of glassy appearance which do not break	0.2	0.1	4-6	5
3	Gentle breeze	Large wavelets, crests begin to break, foam of glassy appearance, perhaps scattered white horses	0.6	1	7-10	9
4	Moderate breeze	Small waves becoming longer frequent horses	1	1.5	11-16	13
5	Fresh breeze	Moderate waves taking a more pronounced long form man white horses chance of some spray	2	2.5	17-21	19
6	Strong breeze	Large waves begin to form, white foam crests are extensive, probably some spray	3	4	22-27	24

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7	Near gale	Sea heaps up and white foam crests begin to be blown in streaks in wind direction	4	5.5	28-33	30
8	Gale	Moderately high waves of greater length, edges of crests begin to break. The foam is blown in well marked streaks along direction of wind	5.5	7.5	34-40	37
9	Strong gale	High waves, dense streaks of foam along direction of wind, crests of waves begin to topple, tumble and roll over, spray may affect visibility	7	10	41-47	44
10	Storm	Very High waves	9	12.5	48-55	52
11	Violent Storm	Exceptionally high waves	11.5	16	56-63	60
12	Hurricane		14+		64+	
