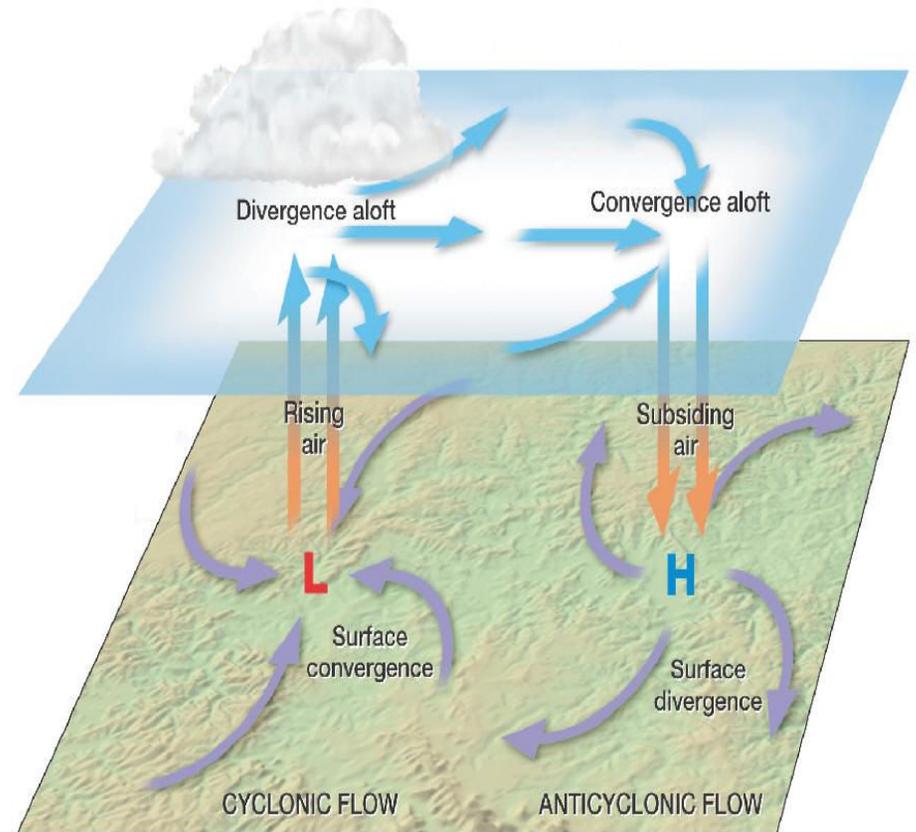


Weather Fronts

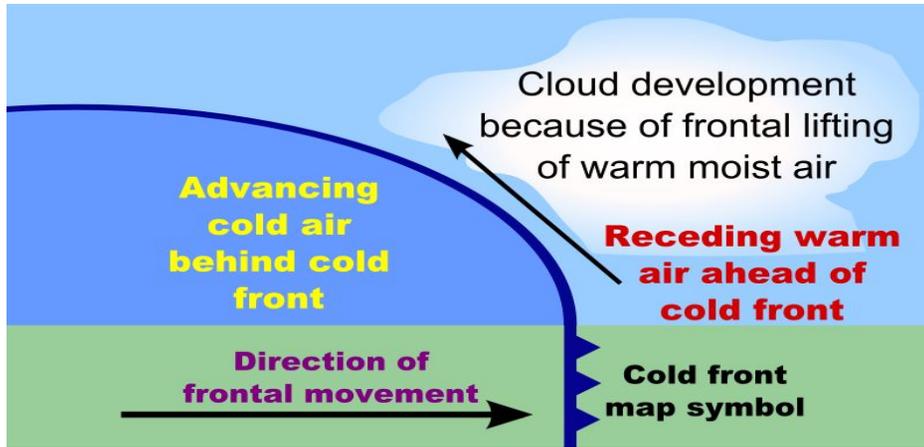
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Air masses are very large "pockets" of air. No air mass stays still for more than a few days at a time. They are always on the move. Their movements bring us changes in the weather.

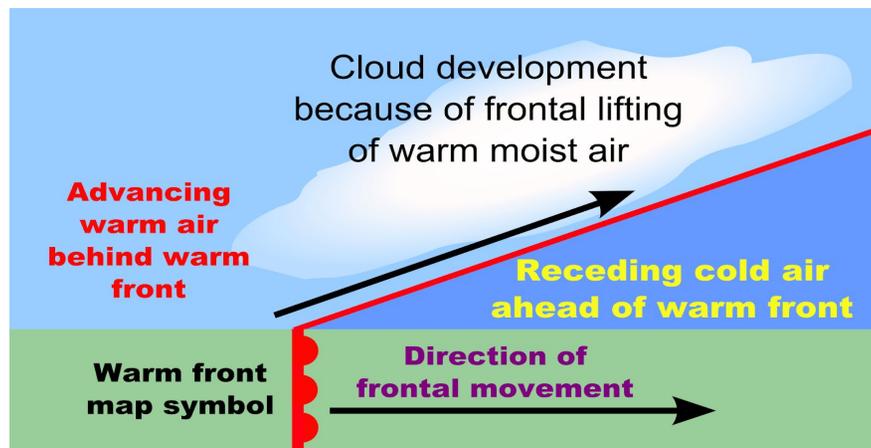


Air masses are different in many ways. They have different temperatures. They have different atmospheric pressures and different moisture contents. Their patterns of movement are different. Low pressure air masses are called cyclones. In a cyclone, the air moves in a counterclockwise way towards the center of the mass. High pressure air masses are called anticyclones. In them, the air moves in a clockwise direction out from the center.

When two air masses meet, the weather changes. The edge between the two is called a **front**. Each different kind of front causes a different kind of weather

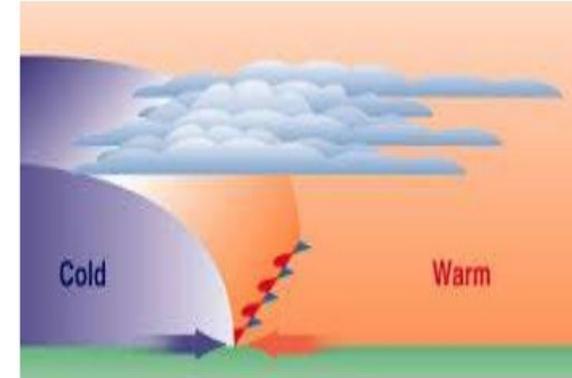


. A **cold front** is when a cold air mass pushes into a warm air mass. The heavier cold air sinks and slides in under the warm air. The cold air forces the warm air steeply upward along the front. This causes cumulus and cumulonimbus clouds to form. Rainstorms or thunderstorms usually develop. After the cold air mass passes, the rain stops. Dry, clear cool or cold weather follows.

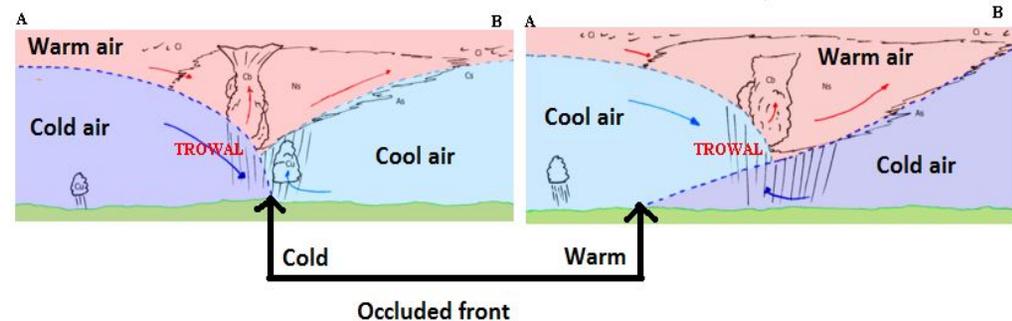


A **warm front** is when a warm air mass pushes into a cold air mass. Warm air is less dense than cold air. The lighter warm air slides up and over the cold air. High cirrus clouds form first as rising water vapor condenses. Later, nimbostratus clouds may form and cause rain or snow.

A **stationary front** happens when a cold front or a warm front stays in place for several days without invading another front. Clouds, light winds, and precipitation often form at the boundary. The precipitation may last for several days.



An **occluded front** develops when two masses of cold air meet. The cold air forces warmer air caught between the two fronts upwards. Cumulonimbus and stratocumulus clouds usually form. Strong winds and heavy rain or snow may result.



Why do you think precipitation usually happens along a front? In most fronts, warm air meets cooler air. As warmer air cools, it can hold less water. That's why some form of precipitation usually occurs.