How Far Away is the Storm?

**What to do:** When you see a flash of lightning, start counting seconds like this: "and one and, and two and, and three and"—and continue until you hear a roar of thunder. Divide the number you get by 5 (for miles) or by 3 (for kilometers).

**What happens:** That will give you a rough estimate of how far away the center of the storm is.

**Why:** Lightning and thunder take place at the same time, but light and sound travel to us at different speeds, and so reach us at different times. Light travels at 186,000 miles (300,000 km) per second and takes only a fraction of a second to reach us. We see lightning the moment it flashes.

It takes about 5 seconds for sound to travel a mile (3 seconds for a kilometer).

When a thunderstorm is near, the thunderclap sound is loud and sharp. When it is far away, it is a low rumble. Ordinarily, you can't hear thunder more than 10 or 15 miles (16 or 24 km) away. If you see lightning and hear thunder at just about the same moment, the storm is right above you.