

Beaufort Wind Scale

How to recognize wind strength by sea conditions.

How to understand the language of the wind.

The Beaufort Scale is one of the oldest and most trusted systems in navigation.

It translates what you see and feel on the sea into measurable wind strength — from calm waters to hurricane-force gales.

Originally developed in the early 1800s by Admiral Francis Beaufort, the scale helped sailors describe weather long before modern instruments existed.

Even today, every skipper still relies on it — not only for safety, but for intuition.

Understanding the Beaufort Scale means knowing how wind shapes the sea:

how whitecaps form, how waves rise, and when to reduce sail before the storm does it for you.

This guide will help you recognize wind force, interpret its effects on the sea surface, and make better decisions while sailing — wherever the wind may take you.



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Beaufort	Name	Wind (kn)	Wind (km/h)	Sea State	Description
0	Calm	0-1	0-1	Mirror calm	Sea like glass, smoke rises vertically.
1	Light Air	1-3	2-6	Ripples	Small cat's paws on the water surface.
2	Light Breeze	4-6	7-11	Smooth	Small wavelets, crests do not break.
3	Gentle Breeze	7-10	12-19	Slight	Large wavelets, scattered whitecaps start to form.
4	Moderate Breeze	11-16	20-28	Moderate	Small waves, numerous whitecaps, occasional spray.
5	Fresh Breeze	17-21	29-38	Moderate	Moderate waves (2 m), frequent whitecaps, some spray.
6	Strong Breeze	22-27	39-49	Rough	Large waves (3 m), foam crests more extensive, spray present.
7	High Wind	28-33	50-61	Rough	High waves (4 m), sea heaps up, streaks of foam blown by wind.
8	Gale	34-40	62-74	Very rough	Moderately high waves (5-7 m), edges begin to break, rolling heavy spray.
9	Strong Gale	41-47	75-88	Very rough	High waves (7 m), dense foam blown in streaks, visibility reduced.
10	Storm	48-55	89-102	High	Very high waves (9 m), surface white with foam, heavy tumbling sea.
11	Violent Storm	56-63	103-117	High	Exceptionally high waves (11 m), sea covered with white spray, air filled with foam.
12	Hurricane	64+	118+	Phenomenal	Huge waves (14 m+), sea completely white with driving spray, visibility near zero.

How to Read the Scale

- **Up to Force 4-5:** Comfortable for most sailing trips — ideal for charter and leisure
- **Force 6-7:** Challenging conditions; only for experienced skippers and prepared crews
- **Force 8+:** Heavy weather. Seek shelter and avoid open sea

Note: Respect the elements, and they'll guide you safely home.



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