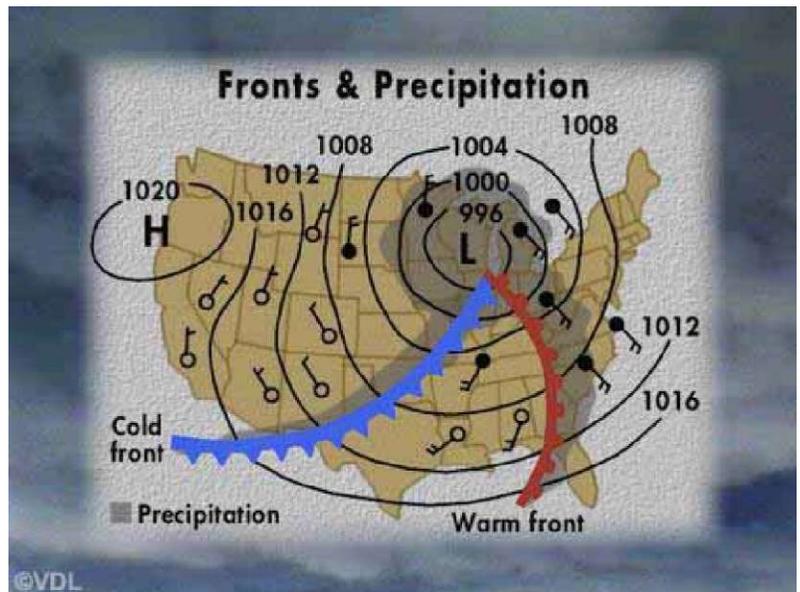




"Now here's your local **weather.**" When you hear these words on television, you can be sure that you will see a weather map. A weather map shows weather patterns. A weather map also provides information that is used to **forecast** the weather.

The National Weather Service (NWS) collects information from about 1,000 weather stations across the United States. The NWS then uses this information to make a weather map of the entire country. This map uses small, key-shaped symbols. Each symbol represents the location of a weather station. The symbols represent how cloudy it is. If the circle of the key is filled in, it means the sky is cloudy at that weather station. The symbols also show weather conditions such as rain, snow, wind speed, and wind direction.



Weather maps can give you much information about the weather.

The NWS map has many more details than a weather map you see on television. A television weather map usually shows areas of low pressure and high pressure. A capital **L** represents an area of low pressure. A capital **H** represents an area of high pressure.

A television weather map also usually shows weather fronts. For example, a weather map may show a cold front approaching your area. This means that cold air is pushing out warm air. The cold front is shown on a weather map as a blue curved line with small triangles. The

triangles point in the direction the front is heading.

The information on a weather map is useful in forecasting the weather. If a high-pressure area is approaching you, then you will likely have fair weather. If a warm front is approaching, then you might have some rain. Warmer, more **humid** weather will follow. Weather forecasting is much easier if you know how to read a weather map.