

A **tornado** is a violent, dangerous, rotating column of air that is in contact with both the surface of the earth and a [cumulonimbus cloud](#) or, in rare cases, the base of a [cumulus cloud](#). They are often referred to as a **twister** or a [cyclone](#)<sup>[1]</sup>, although the word [cyclone](#) is used in meteorology in a narrower sense, only to name [hurricanes](#) or [typhoons](#). Tornadoes come in many shapes and sizes, but are typically in the form of a visible [condensation funnel](#), whose narrow end touches the earth and is often encircled by a cloud of [debris](#) and [dust](#). Most tornadoes have wind speeds less than 110 miles per hour (177 km/h), are approximately 250 feet (80 m) across, and travel a few miles (several kilometers) before dissipating. The most extreme can attain wind speeds of more than 300 mph (480 km/h), stretch more than two miles (3 km) across, and stay on the ground for dozens of miles (more than 100 km