

Types of Snow

Snow is a form of precipitation that forms that consists of crystals of ice. These crystals, called *snow crystals*, grow from water vapor in clouds. Water vapor is the gas form of water—the form that water assumes when it evaporates. A snowflake consists of up to 100 snow crystals clumped together. However, there are other types of snow that you might not have heard about.

Different types of snowflakes can be identified in six basic patterns. Each pattern is formed in different temperature and atmospheric conditions within the cloud. One of these patterns is called **needles**. Needles are formed when the ground temperature is at or near freezing point and usually produce stiff, dense snow. Another type of snow is called a **star**. A star is born at around negative fifteen degrees centigrade. **Columns** are also a type of snow. Columns are produced when the air is dry and when the temperature is from fifteen to negative twenty-five degrees centigrade and are a smaller type of snowflake but are denser than stars. Then there are **plates**. Plates are formed at about negative twenty degrees centigrade when there is not enough atmospheric water vapor available to form the delicate arms of a classic star. Another type of snow is a mix between plates and columns. These are called **columns capped with plates**, or **capped columns**. Capped columns are composite flakes formed when the particle of snow passes through different temperature and moisture zones on its journey to the ground. **Dendrites** are also a type of snow. These snowflakes with attitude are three-dimensional star crystals with branches growing on more than a single plane. Branches (or arms) connect randomly to a central structure. These snowflakes form in very cold temperatures, around negative twenty to negative twenty-five degrees centigrade.

These six types of snow are all different and unique in their own way. Some types, you may never see in your life. Other types may be in your backyard during the cold winter seasons. Snow is always fascinating to learn about. You can find more information on the Internet and in books at your local library. Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!