



Lightning: Hotter Than the Sun

What makes lightning, how far away it is and how to stay safe

The numbers

50,000 °F

temperature of a bolt,
about

5x

hotter than the sun's
surface

25 million

U.S. cloud-to-ground
strikes a year, about

1 in 15,000

lifetime odds of being
struck, about

Count to find the distance

1

See the flash

Light arrives almost instantly

2

Count the seconds

Until you hear the thunder

3

Divide by 5

That's the distance in miles

4

Heard thunder? Go inside

You're close enough to be struck

Why it works

Sound travels about a mile every five seconds; light is nearly instant.

Myths and facts

Myth	Fact
Lightning never strikes twice	The Empire State Building is hit about 20 times a year
Rubber tires protect you in a car	The metal body carries the current around you
No rain means you're safe	Lightning can strike 10 miles from the storm
Lying flat is safe	Get inside a building or hard-topped car

When thunder roars, go indoors. Wait 30 minutes after the last thunder before going back out.

Remember

When thunder roars, go indoors.