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## Tornadoes, Nature's Twisters

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Tornadoes are windstorms. At the center of the storm, the winds spin around. The winds are really fast. Some winds have been stronger than 300 miles an hour! Some people call them twisters. They are the most violent storms on earth.

Tornadoes make a funnel cloud. It looks a little like an elephant's trunk hanging down from a cloud. A tornado funnel may look white or clear. Some seem to shimmer in the light. After they touch the ground, the winds suck up dirt and debris. Then the funnel may look dark gray or black.



Some of the funnels don't touch earth. Those cause little, if any, damage. Some touch down. They race across land. They tear up everything in their paths. Some touch down, cause some damage, and then rise up into the air. They may do this several times. Tornadoes like this cause damage in spots along the line they travel.

Usually there is a thunderstorm in the area first. Sometimes a thunderstorm will cause groups of tornadoes to form. These tornadoes strike one after the other. They may last for several hours.

A tornado may be a mile wide. It may travel along a path fifteen or more miles long. Some tornadoes die out in just a few minutes. Some last an hour or more. The United States has more tornadoes than any other country. There are usually about 800 tornadoes a year in the U.S.

Every state in the U.S. has had at least one tornado. Most tornadoes strike the middle section of the country, though. This area has been called "Tornado Alley." It reaches from the states of Nebraska and Iowa south and east into Alabama and Florida. The deadliest tornado in recent years was in 1989 in the country of Bangladesh. More than 1,300 people died.

You may hear on TV or radio that there is a tornado "watch" or tornado "warning." If a watch has been issued, it means that a tornado may occur. Weather watchers have seen that the conditions exist for a tornado to form. If a warning has been issued, it means that a tornado has been seen -by a person or on radar. The warning will tell you the path the tornado may take. If you are near that path, you should seek shelter.

Go to an underground shelter if possible. A basement or cellar is a good place. If you don't have one, go to an inside closet, bathroom, or hallway that is downstairs. If you're in a mobile home, leave. Take shelter in another building or a ditch. If you are outside, lie flat in a ditch or the lowest part of the ground. If you are inside a car, leave it. Lie flat on the lowest part of the ground.

Remember that tornadoes are the hardest blowing winds on earth. They are the most violent of storms. Pay

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attention when you hear that a tornado watch or warning has been issued. Knowing the expected path of the storm and knowing what to do can save your life.

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## Questions

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1. What does a tornado funnel look like?

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\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Which country has more tornadoes than any other?

- A. Australia
- B. Bangladesh
- C. Canada
- D. the United States

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. About how many tornadoes happen in an average year in the U.S.?

- A. 500
- B. 700
- C. 800
- D. 200

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Alaska and Hawaii have never had a tornado.

- A. false
- B. true

5. Where is "Tornado Alley"?

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6. What does it mean when a tornado watch is issued?

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7. What does it mean when a tornado warning is issued?

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. If you are in a car, you will be safe from a tornado.  
A. false  
B. true
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. If you can, you should seek shelter in a basement or cellar.  
A. false  
B. true
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Which country had the deadliest tornado?  
A. Australia  
B. the United States  
C. Canada  
D. Bangladesh