

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 24, 1933

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WIND DIRECTIONS

Winds are named according to the directions from which rather than toward which they blow. A wind from the north is a north wind; one from the south is a south wind; and so on. This custom, which sometimes gives rise to confusion and misunderstanding, is evidently due to thinking of the wind as coming from a certain place rather than as merely moving in a certain direction. The real or apparent course of a wind has always been regarded as of special interest because winds bring with them, in a greater or less degree, the climatic conditions of the regions from which they blow.

Thus the rule applies generally to geographical designations of the winds, and not merely to cases in which compass-points are mentioned. Sea breezes blow from the sea to the land; land breezes from the land to the sea. It is an almost but not quite universal custom to describe an up-slope breeze among the mountains as a valley breeze, and a breeze blowing down-slope as a mountain breeze. The pampero blows out from the Argentine pampas upon the River Plate. The gregale ("Greek wind") comes to Malta from the direction of Greece. Boreas derives its name from the Greek word for "mountain" in reference to the mountainous hinterland of Hellas. The parching Santa Ana wind of southern California issues from the Santa Ana Canyon. And so forth.

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