FREE RAINFALL PRINTABLE

Rain gauge setup and reading guide

1 / Give the gauge a clear view

Choose an open area, away from roof runoff, sprinklers and splash. Aim for at least twice an obstacle's height away from trees or buildings. Mount firmly with the rim level, about 2–5 ft above the ground.

2 / Make mornings consistent

Read at the same local time each morning, about 7 am. Write it under the date you read it; it covers the previous 24 hours. Note the actual reading time and units. Read the water level at eye level using your gauge's scale. Record the amount before emptying, then reset the gauge.

3 / Melt snow to measure its water

Follow your gauge's winter instructions; for a CoCoRaHS-style gauge, remove the funnel and inner tube before snow. Bring the collected snow inside, let it melt, then measure with the calibrated tube. If you add a measured amount of warm water, subtract it. Do not use direct heat. Melted water is not snowfall depth.

4 / Avoid the common mix-ups

- Keep the opening clear and the mount level; check for leaks.
- Measure overflow as your gauge instructions direct, and include it in the total.
- Read the bottom of the curved water surface, and don't confuse tenths (0.10) with hundredths (0.01).
- Keep inches and millimeters separate. Write 0 for a dry day and T for a trace (below the smallest mark). Record a missed reading as missing, never zero.
- Label a multi-day collection with its dates; do not split it into invented daily amounts.

5 / Compare the same time window

Your gauge measures one point. Radar estimates an area; beam height, wind and siting can change the comparison. Inchfall's daily record uses the date of the morning it ends: the 24 hours ending 12:00 UTC (about 7 am Eastern / 4 am Pacific in standard time, one hour later in summer). This may differ from your local reading time. Compare matching windows and longer totals.

inchfall.app/why-radar-differs-from-your-gauge/

General guidance adapted from weather.gov/media/aly/COCORAHS/SettingUpYourGauge.pdf, media.cocorahs.org/docs/Schools_Basic_Training.pdf and cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=MeasureSnow. Follow your gauge's instructions.