

# Zapped!

**G**etting struck by lightning in real life isn't as much fun as it may seem in science fiction stories. In real life, lightning-strike victims don't get any special powers and quite often they don't live through the experience.

A bolt of lightning is powerful. It can contain enough electricity to flash on all the lights in a medium-sized town. If you were hit by all that energy, bad things would happen:

- Lightning's heat would instantly turn your sweat to steam. That steam could burn your skin and blow your clothes and shoes off.
- Electricity would race through your eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. It would cloud your vision and burst your eardrums.
- The explosive force of lightning could break your bones.
- Your muscles—including your heart—could stop working.

Each year, about 100 people in America die from lightning strikes. Another 400 Americans are struck, but live. That may sound like a lot of people. But almost 261 million people live in the United States. That means only one out of every 522,000 Americans gets struck each year.

Want to be extra sure you're not one of them? Here are some ways to avoid getting zapped:

- Stay inside a solid building during severe thunderstorms. You'll also be safe in a car—as long as it isn't a convertible.
- Avoid pipes, appliances, and talking on the phone during a storm. Lightning can travel through metal pipes and wires.
- If you're forced to stay outside during a thunderstorm, keep away from high places, water, and tall objects. These attract lightning.
- If you can't find shelter, crouch down to make yourself as short as possible.

And always remember this: The best place to experience a lightning strike is in a nice, safe make-believe story.

By Emily Costello  
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# Dear Parents

Lightning is beautiful and fascinating—but also very dangerous! As your son or daughter reads this piece aloud to you, he or she will learn more about the power of lightning and how to stay safe.



## TIP OF THE WEEK

Help your child focus on the bulleted information in the text; authors often use bullets to signal important information. The first sentence in a bulleted paragraph gives the main idea, and supporting sentences may follow. Skimming for bullets and scanning the first sentence of bulleted items helps readers locate important information quickly. This is a great skill for conducting research, preparing reports, reviewing information, and answering test questions.

## The Questions

Use your own words to create four bulleted sentences explaining how to stay safe from lightning:

We have completed this assignment together.

Child's Signature

Parent's Signature