

Dummy *it*

The use of *it* as a subject (or dummy subject) in sentences about times, dates, and the weather (such as, *It's raining*) and in certain idioms (*It's OK*). Also known as *ambient "it"* or *empty "it."*

Unlike the ordinary pronoun *it*, dummy *it* refers to nothing at all; it simply serves a grammatical function. In other words, dummy *it* has a grammatical meaning but no lexical meaning.

We use *it* to talk about:

- times and dates:

It's nearly one o'clock.

It's my birthday.

- weather:

It's raining.

It's a lovely day.

It was getting cold.

- to give an **opinion** about a place:

It's very cold in here.

It will be nice when we get home.

It's very comfortable in my new apartment.

- to give an **opinion** followed by **to-infinitive**:

It's nice to meet you.

It will be great to go on holiday.

It was interesting to meet your brother at last.

- to give an **opinion** followed by an **-ing verb**:

It's great living in Spain.

It's awful driving in this heavy traffic.

It can be hard work looking after young children.

Using "it" to talk about people

We use *it* to talk about **ourselves**:

- on the telephone:

Hello. It's George.

- when people cannot see us:

[Mary knocks on door] *It's me. It's Mary.*

We use *it* to talk about **other people**:

- when we point them out for the first time:

Look. It's Sir Paul McCartney.

Who's that? I think it's John's brother.

- when we cannot see them and we ask them for their name:

[telephone rings, we pick it up] *Hello. Who is it?*

[someone knocks on door. We say:] *Who is it?*