



The weather: IL FAIT, IL Y A, C'EST

Three weather constructions — and three ways to say “it's cold” that are not interchangeable.

THE 5 RULES

1

IL FAIT + adjective

The basic weather construction: Il fait chaud (it's hot), Il fait froid (it's cold), Il fait beau (the weather is fine), Il fait moche (the weather is grim), Il fait nuit (it's dark), Il fait jour (it's light).

2

IL Y A + noun

When pointing at a phenomenon: Il y a du soleil (it's sunny), Il y a du vent (it's windy), Il y a du brouillard (it's foggy), Il y a des nuages (it's cloudy).

3

C'EST + adjective for an impression

C'est nuageux (it's cloudy), C'est ensoleillé (it's sunny). Less common than Il fait, but it appears in descriptions.

4

AVOIR FROID — for a person

J'ai froid (I'm cold), Tu as chaud (you're hot). French uses AVOIR here, literally “I have cold”. Never say “je suis froid” — that would mean you are a cold person.

5

ÊTRE FROID — for an object

Le café est froid (the coffee is cold), La soupe est froide. Here ÊTRE, with gender agreement.

The three “cold”s — don't mix them up

IL FAIT froid — it's cold outside: Il fait froid en hiver.

J'AI froid — I feel cold: J'ai froid dehors.

Le café EST froid — the coffee is cold (an object).

English uses “to be” for all three — this is the trap: je suis froid means you are cold-hearted.

Useful weather vocabulary

Le soleil (sun) · La pluie (rain) · Le vent (wind) · La neige (snow) · Un nuage (cloud) · Le brouillard (fog)

Il pleut (it's raining) · Il neige (it's snowing) — impersonal verbs, third person singular only.

IL FAIT for the weather · J'AI for a person · C'EST / EST for an object.