

Le français interactif — *Le temps qu'il fait...*

Le temps qu'il fait et le temps qui passe... (the weather we're having and the time that goes by). When discussing the weather with a French person, we sometimes need to be specific about which (weather or time) we are talking about. The fact that *temps* means both weather and time is often the source of confusion. However, when a French person talks about *le temps*, it is in most cases about the weather that he is referring to. In France, as is probably the case in many other parts of the world, *le temps qu'il fait* is usually the first thing French people talk about when they meet: with their neighbours, at the *boulangerie* or when talking with friends or family. And the *prévisions météo* on TV are certainly the most viewed in the country. Therefore, understanding what is being said, and being able to give one own's opinion about such an important topic when meeting French people is essential for foreigners living in France or visiting the country.

Below is a list of the most frequently used vocabulary about the weather, and examples of how these expressions are used in everyday life, illustrated with a scenario. In *Le Coin des branchés*, page 7, we also provide a few of the most common idioms used in colloquial language. A few tools that will help our readers to begin talking about *la météo* like a French person!

Annick Stevenson

The vocabulary of weather

1) **Le temps** = the weather.

Le climat = the climate.

La météo, les prévisions météo = the weather forecast. **La météorologie** is used mainly in scientific articles.

Un bulletin météo = a weather report.

Les conditions météo = weather conditions.

2) **La température** = temperature.

Une baisse des températures = a drop in temperature.

Le thermomètre = thermometer.

Le baromètre = barometer.

Un anticyclone = a high pressure ridge.

Une dépression, une dépression atmosphérique = an atmospheric depression, a low.

L'instabilité = changeability, volatility.

3) Les précipitations = rain/snowfall.

Un nuage = a cloud.

Un ciel nuageux, un ciel couvert = a cloudy sky.

La pluie = rain.

Une averse = a shower.

Les embruns (marins) = sprays (from the sea, close from the coast).

Une accalmie = a lull.

Un temps calme = calm weather.

Un arc-en-ciel = a rainbow.

La brume = mist.

Le brouillard = fog.

4) Le vent = wind.

La force du vent = the strength of the wind.

Une brise = a breeze.

La bise = a cold wind from the north-east / north (a typical wind in the northern Alps region and in Switzerland).

Le mistral = a cold and often very strong wind from the nord-west/north (typical wind of the southern Rhone Valley and of Provence).

La tramontane = a cold and violent wind from the north-west (observed mainly between the south of the Massif central and the Pyrenees).

Une bourrasque = a blow, gust of wind.

Une rafale de vent = a gust of wind.

5) Le soleil = the sun.

Les rayons du soleil = sunrays.

La chaleur = heat.

Une canicule, une vague de chaleur = a heat wave.

6) La neige = snow.

Une couche de neige = a blanket or layer of snow.

Un flocon de neige = a snowflake.

Le gel = freezing.

Le givre = frost (the ice on trees, cars, etc.)

Un brouillard givrant = a freezing fog.

La glace = ice.

La grêle = hail.

7) L'orage = a storm.

Le tonnerre = thunder.

La foudre = lightning.

Une tempête = a windstorm.

Un avis de tempête = a storm warning.

Une tornade = a tornado.

Un ouragan = a hurricane.

Un cyclone = a cyclone.

Un typhon = a typhon.

The most common expressions used about the weather

1) The verb *faire* is widely used:

Quel temps fait-il ? = What's the weather like?

Quel temps il fait ? Il fait quel temps ? = Idem, but more usual in the daily language.

Tu as vu le temps qu'il fait ? = Have you seen what the weather is like?

Quelle température fait-il aujourd'hui ? Il fait quelle température aujourd'hui ? = What temperature is it today?

Il fait combien ? = Idem, very much used in the daily language.

Il fait beau, il fait beau temps = It's nice.

Il fait frais = It's cool.

Il fait doux = It's warm.

Il fait chaud = It's hot.

Il fait lourd = It's sultry (one can also say : *c'est lourd*, see below).

Il fait humide = It's humid (one can also say: *c'est humide*, see below).

Il fait (du) soleil = It's sunny.

Il fait un soleil de plomb = It's heavily sunny (*plomb* = lead). Said when the sun is really beating down.

Il fait 35 degrés = It's 35 degrees.

Il fait presque zéro = It's almost zero.

Il fait froid = It's cold.

Il fait du vent = It's windy.

Il souffle, il souffle fort = It's blowing, it's blowing a lot.

Il fait mauvais, il fait mauvais temps = It's bad weather.

Il fait un temps pourri = It's awful weather (lit.: it's rotten weather)

Il fait un sale temps = It's bad weather (*sale* = dirty, is also used with the meaning of "bad" when talking about the weather).

Quel sale temps ! = What bad/rotten/awful weather!

Il fait un sacré vent !* = It's terribly windy!

Il fait sacrément mauvais aujourd'hui !* = It's especially bad today!

2) *Il pleut, il neige !...*

The verbs ***pleuvoir*** (= to rain) and ***neiger*** (= to snow) are conjugated only with *il*, in the 3rd person singular:

Il pleut = It's raining.

Il va pleuvoir demain = It's going to rain tomorrow.

Il neige = It's snowing.

Il a neigé toute la nuit = It snowed the whole night.

Geler (= to freeze) is conjugated with *il* when one talks about the weather in general, but can also be conjugated normally with other personal pronouns when referring to one's own sensations:

Il gèle aujourd'hui ! = it is freezing today!

Je gèle ! = I am freezing.

Je suis gelé(e) = I am frozen.

Ne reste pas dehors, tu vas geler ! = Don't stay outside, you're going to freeze!

Note : The verb ***venter*** (= to blow, to be windy) exists, but it is used (only with *il*, in the 3rd person singular) mainly in literature or poetry, almost never in the everyday language. Idem

with the adjective *venteux* (= windy).

When *venter* is used, it is sometimes in this type of expressions : *Qu'il pleuve, qu'il neige ou qu'il vente, je serai là* = Whether it rains, snows, or is windy, I'll be there...

3) *C'est* is also widely used, in the following weather contexts:

C'est nuageux = It's cloudy.

C'est orageux = It's stormy.

C'est humide = It's humid (one can also say: *Il fait humide*).

C'est lourd = It's sultry (one can also say: *Il fait lourd*).

C'est menaçant = It's threatening (in the sense that there is a chance of rain).

C'est quoi, ce temps ? = What's this weather? (used when someone is angry or upset about the weather).

4) *Il y a* is also used in several expressions:

Il y a du vent = There is some wind/It's windy (one can use either *faire* or *il y a*).

Il y a du brouillard = There is some fog/It's foggy (idem)

Il y a une tempête = There is a storm.

Il y a une tempête de neige = There is a snowstorm.

Il y a des nuages = It's cloudy (you can either say *il y a des nuages* or *c'est nuageux*).

□

* The adjective *sacré(e)* = sacred, or the adverb *sacrément* is often used in French to insist on something or to highlight what one is saying. Ex: *cet enfant a un sacré caractère* = this child has a special temper; *il est sacrément bon ce fromage !* = this cheese is really good!

Il pleut Il pleut

Il fait beau

Il fait du soleil

Il est tôt

Il se fait tard

Il

Il

Il

toujours Il

Toujours Il qui pleut et qui neige

Toujours Il qui fait du soleil

Toujours Il

Pourquoi pas Elle

Jamais Elle

Pourtant Elle aussi

souvent se fait belle!

Poem, by Jacques Prévert

Scénario : Vous avez vu ce temps ?

Deux voisins se rencontrent chez le marchand de journaux de leur village. Evidemment, ils parlent du temps qu'il fait...

Monsieur Blanc : Bonjour Madame Gauthier, comment ça va ?

Madame Gauthier : Oh ça va, mais alors, vous avez vu ce temps ?

Monsieur Blanc : Ah oui, pas terrible...

Madame Gauthier : Pourri, vous voulez dire ! On en a marre. Ils avaient dit qu'il ferait beau cette semaine, et vous avez vu la flotte qui est tombée !

Monsieur Blanc : C'est dingue. Moi qui voulais planter mes patates...

Madame Gauthier : Faudra attendre pour le jardin. Et la météo annonce la pluie pour tout le week-end !

Monsieur Blanc : Ah bon ?

Madame Gauthier : Oui, il pourrait tomber des trombes d'eau.

Monsieur Blanc : Dans un sens, tant mieux s'il pleut un bon coup. Les nappes phréatiques sont à sec.

Madame Gauthier : Ça c'est vrai. On n'a quasiment pas eu de neige de tout l'hiver. Et pour peu qu'on ait encore la canicule cet été...

Monsieur Blanc : C'est pas impossible. Avec le printemps qu'on a eu !

Madame Gauthier : Le temps est quand même complètement déglingué. On se demande ce que ça va donner, tout ça.

Monsieur Blanc : Eh oui. Bon, en attendant c'est pas encore demain la veille qu'on rangera les parapluies au placard... Bon week-end quand même !

Two neighbours run into each other at the newspaper shop in their village. They, of course, talk about the weather...

Monsieur Blanc: Good day, Madame Gauthier, how are you?

Madame Gauthier: Oh, I'm fine. Wow, have you seen the weather?

Monsieur Blanc: Yes, it's not great...

Madame Gauthier: You mean it's rotten! We're sick and tired of it. They said that it would be nice weather this week, and have you seen how it's raining?

Monsieur Blanc: It's crazy. And I wanted to plant my potatoes...

Madame Gauthier: You'll have to wait for the garden. And the weather forecast calls for rain the whole weekend!

Monsieur Blanc: Really?

Madame Gauthier: Yes, it could really rain cats and dogs.

Monsieur Blanc: In a way, it's all the better if we get a good rain. The water tables are dry.

Madame Gauthier: That's true. We've hardly had any snow all winter. And if there's a heat wave this summer...

Monsieur Blanc: That's not impossible. With the spring we've had!

Madame Gauthier: The weather patterns are completely out of whack. One wonders where it will all lead.

Monsieur Blanc: Oh yes. Well, in the meantime, we won't be putting our umbrellas away in the closet already tomorrow... Have a good weekend anyway!

Le coin des branchés

1) *La pluie et le beau temps, an endless subject:*

Parler de la pluie et du beau temps = to talk about everything and anything, such as the weather, when people meet, or when they have nothing much to say.

Faire la pluie et le beau temps = to decide about everything, to make all the important decisions... (in companies, for example).

Après la pluie le beau temps = every cloud has a silver lining.

2) Other expressions or proverbs about the weather, or spring:

Il pleut des cordes = it's raining cats and dogs.

Il pleut comme vache qui pisse = idem.

Marcher sous la pluie = to walk *in* the rain.

Il fait un froid de canard = it's terribly cold.

Il caille = it's freezing.

Un brouillard à couper au couteau = a fog so thick you could cut it with a knife.

Un vent à décorner les bœufs = a wind so strong it could blow the horns off of cattle.

Il fait un temps de chien = the weather is very bad.

Ce n'est pas un temps à mettre un chien dehors = it's not weather fit for beast or man.

Noël au balcon, Pâques aux tisons = a warm Christmas means a cold Easter.

Les giboulées de mars = March snow flurries.

En avril ne te découvre pas d'un fil = in the month of April don't dress too lightly.

Le soleil montre le bout de son nez = the sun is just coming out (is just poking its nose out from behind a cloud).

En mai fais ce qu'il te plaît = in May do whatever you like.

Une hirondelle ne fait pas le printemps = one swallow doesn't necessary signal the arrival of spring.

3) Other expressions or proverbs using elements of the weather to express something with a totally different meaning:

Etre dans les nuages = to be spaced out.

Etre/vivre sur son petit nuage = to live in a sort of fantasy world.

Etre dans le brouillard = to be in a fog, to have trouble seeing things clearly.

Contre vents et marées, envers et contre tout = through thick and thin/come hell or high water.

Voir d'où vient le vent, voir de quel côté vient le vent = to see which way the wind is blowing/to see which way the cat jumps.

Qui sème le vent récolte la tempête = as you sow, so shall you reap.

Ça me fait froid dans le dos = that gives me the shivers up and down my spine.

Etre au printemps de sa vie = to be in the fullness of one's youth.

Il n'y a rien de nouveau sous le soleil = there is nothing new under the sun.