

Weather Small Talk

The English are known around the world for their ability to talk about the weather for hours on end. There have been many explanations as to why this is so, but the most likely one is that in the 17th century, women were considered to be very delicate creatures and were not allowed to talk about anything that might upset them: Politics, war, personal problems etc. were all taboo. The only topic that was considered safe was the weather, so the English became very good at talking about it – something they are still perfect at today.

Small talk (and talking about the weather), is an extremely important skill – it gives your partner time to relax and get to know you BEFORE you begin to talk about more serious topics. It is also a great way to start talking to strangers e.g. at the bus stop, at a conference, in a shop, at the airport etc.

People form a very concrete picture of their partner during small talk: If the person is generally negative, this comes out quite clearly during small talk. If you do not want to do business with negatively minded people, then small talk is an efficient way of saving you lots of trouble and headaches.

This attitude can also be seen with the English: Although they tend to complain about the weather, they generally try and be optimistic about it.

If someone complains about too much rain, you might hear:

"Never mind – it's good for the plants."

Whereas if someone complains that it is too hot, you could hear:

"At least my tomatoes will be happy."

The vocabulary the English use to talk about the weather is extremely large; this is why we would like to introduce you to some very useful words:

Weather whatever

freezing frigid cold chilly cool warm hot boiling scorching



breeze

wind

gust

strong wind

gale



blizzard



snow

sleet



hail

drizzle

shower

rain



downpour

thunderstorm hurricane storm

1. Fill in the gaps with one of the words from above.

A: Ahhh..., that's a nice _____ (kühle Brise).

B: Yes, indeed, much better than yesterday. It was _____ (brütend heiß)

A: It's quite funny – I have just phoned my daughter in Argentina, and they had a _____ (Schneesturm).

B: I would love to see snow! Here we just get _____ (Nieselregen) with the odd _____ (Schauer).

A: Well, she said it was _____ (eiskalt) . It's quite scary getting a _____ (Sturm) and snow!

B: The scariest I've had is a _____ (Gewitter).

A: Well, I'd better get the laundry before the _____ (Wind) picks up...

Answers: 1. cool breeze, 2. scorching hot, 3. blizzard, 4. drizzle, 5. shower, 6. freezing, 7. storm, 8. thunderstorm, 9. wind

2. Replace the underline words below with one of the vocabulary words from above.

1. It was a hot day, but there was a gentle and pleasant wind.

2. A(n) extremely strong storm caused severe damage to New Orleans in 2005.

3. At 30-35 degrees the weather is very hot for Germans, but pleasant for Spaniards.

4. Ten degrees below zero is extremely cold in Florida.

5. During the monsoon season in India, sudden rains occur daily.

Answers: 1. breeze, 2. hurricane, 3. boiling, 4. freezing, 5. downpours