

43 Introductory *there* and *it*



There are reports of stormy weather up ahead, so I would appreciate it if you would keep your seat belts fastened until I switch off the seat belt signs.

1 Introductory *there* and *it*

We use *there* and *it* as 'empty' subjects. They have no real meaning but we use them as grammatical devices to introduce or identify things.

We use *there* + a form of *be* to introduce new information and/or to say that something exists or happens:

If you're looking for a café; **there's** one opposite the station. (new information)

There are fifty-one states in the USA. (= Fifty-one states exist in the USA.)

We often use this form to introduce or describe a character or place, or to 'set the scene':

At the top of the hill **there's** a small café with wonderful views over the bay.

There's an Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman who are on a boat ...

! We don't use *the* after *there* + *be* when we are introducing NEW information:

X ~~In the hotel lobby there is the cash machine.~~

✓ In the hotel lobby **there is a cash machine.**

We use *it* to introduce or identify something or someone later in the phrase:

'Who's that?' **It's** Alan.' 'Hello, **it's** Steve here. Could I speak to Jane?'

'What's worrying you?' **It's** the children.'

! We don't use introductory *it* to say that something exists or happens:

X ~~In the centre of town it's a nice restaurant where it's a great choice of dishes.~~

✓ In the centre of town **there's** a nice restaurant where **there's** a great choice of dishes.

2 Patterns after *there* + *be*

There + *be* can be followed by a noun + participle clause (► Unit 55):

There's a man sitting in the corner. **There are two scales of temperature** used in science.

FORMALITY CHECK In formal English, verbs with future meaning, e.g. *anticipate*, *expect*, *envisage*, *intend* can be followed by *there* + *to be/being* (verbs + infinitive or *-ing* ► Unit 46):

The organisers didn't **expect (there to be)** quite such an overwhelming response.

We **don't anticipate (there being)** any resistance from the anti-hunting lobby.

3 Common words and expressions after *there* (+ *be*)

quantifiers (► Unit 8.1/2)
any, some, much, many, several, etc.

Are there any more issues outstanding?
There are several ways we can tackle this.

indefinite pronouns (► Unit 5.2)
somebody, nothing, etc.

I've had a good look and there's nothing to report.
Isn't there somebody here who can help us?

As well as forms of *be*, we can use the following verbs after *there*:

there + *appear(s)*/*happen(s)*/
seem(s)/*tend(s)*/*used* + *to be*

There used to be a house at the end of the common.
Researchers noticed that there tends to be a higher number of influenza cases in warm winters.

FORMALITY CHECK In formal written English we can use *there* + *arise/arrive/come/emerge/enter/exist/follow/live/occur/remain/result/sit/stand/take place*:

Deep inside her **there arose** a desperate hope.

At the crime scene **there remained** little in the way of physical evidence.

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