

## Ça, c'est or il est?

*C'est une bonne idée et ça me plaît.*  
It's a good idea and I like it.

### LESSON

#### What is it?

*Il* can be a personal or impersonal pronoun. *Ce* and *ça* are neutral pronouns. *Ça, c'est* and *il est* are widely used in French. It is important to know when to use them as they are not interchangeable.

#### What is it like in English?

In English, there is also a difference between the personal (he) and impersonal pronoun (it).

He is clever. ≠ It's clever. → *Il est intelligent.* ≠ *C'est intelligent.*

It's clever to do that. → *Il est / C'est intelligent de faire ça.*

It gets on my nerves! → *Ça m'énervé !*

Note the different translations of "it" in French: *c'(est)*, *il (est)*, *ça* which are not possible in English as the impersonal pronoun is always "it".

#### What is it like in French?

##### 1. Ça or il? Neutral pronoun versus personal pronoun

- *Ça* is a neutral pronoun and *il* is a personal pronoun:  
*Il marche.* ≠ *Ça marche.* → He is walking. ≠ It's working.  
*Il est sympa.* ≠ *C'est sympa.* → He is nice. ≠ It's nice.  
*Ça va, ça me plaît.* → It's ok, I like it.  
*Ça a fait 30 euros.* → It costed 30 euros.

Note that *ça* remains *ça* in front of a vowel.

**Watch out!** *Ça* and *être*: *Ça* cannot be followed by *est*. You will only use *c'* in front of a vowel: *c'est* (it is) but *ç* in front of *a*: *ç'a été* (it was).

- *Ça* is the equivalent of *cela* in formal written French. *Ceci* is only used when being specific:  
*Ça m'énervé. / Ceci m'énervé.* → It gets on my nerves. / This gets on my nerves.

##### 2. C'est or il est?

###### a. C'est

- *C'est* + proper noun or article + noun = identification  
*C'est Anne-Marie, c'est ma tante.* → It's Anne-Marie, she is my aunt.  
*Voici Ludo, c'est mon chien.* → This is Ludo, it's my dog.
- *C'est* + adjective = general comment or general description  
*C'est beau !* → It's beautiful!
- *C'est* + part of a sentence + *qui/que* = emphasis  
*C'est moi qui ai fait cela.* → It's me who did it.  
*C'est aux petits enfants qu'il parle.* → He is talking to little children.

Note that in spoken French, you will often find the following sentence structure when using *c'est*, *ça* and *il/elle est*:

*Fumer, c'est interdit ici.* → Smoking is prohibited here.

*L'amitié, ça s'entretient.* → You need to nurture your friendships.

*La nouvelle chef, elle est trop sympa !* → The new boss is very nice!

#### b. Il/Elle est

- *Il/Elle est* + adjective = description

*Anne-Marie, elle est grande et belle.* → She is tall and pretty.

- *Il/Elle est* + noun (with no article) = belonging to a job, religion or social category

*Elle est professeure, catholique, végane et socialiste.*

→ She is **a** teacher, **a** Catholic, **a** vegan and **a** socialist.

**Watch out!** Note the absence of article in French but not in English. If you wish to add a personal element and be more precise, you will revert to *c'est* + article.

*C'est **une** professeure très compétente, **une** catholique fervente et **une** végane convaincue.*

→ She is a very good teacher, a fervent Catholic and a staunch vegan.

#### c. Il est / C'est: impersonal form

- *Il est / C'est* + adjective + *que* + proposition

*Il est / C'est vrai **qu'**elle arrive toujours en retard.* → It is true that she is always late.

- *Il est / C'est* + adjective + *de* + infinitive

*Il est / C'est normal **de** pleurer.* → It's ok to cry.

Note that *c'est* in this context is informal and *il est* is formal. However, *c'est* is widely used in spoken French.

## EXERCISES

### 1 Underline the correct answer in the following sentences (several answers are sometimes possible).

a. Bonjour, elle, [elle / c' / ça] est ma mère.

d. [C' / Il] est un médecin.

b. [C' / Elle / Ça] est petite et intelligente.

e. [C' / Il] est à eux que je parle.

c. Faire autrement, [ça / ç'] aurait été difficile.

f. Tu crois que [ça / ce / c'] ira ?

### 2 Complete the following paragraph with *ça*, *c'est*, *il/elle est*.

Ouzza, ..... femme de ménage. .... une réfugiée du Soudan du Sud. .... mariée et ..... musulmane. Quand on la regarde, ..... une petite femme qui semble frêle, mais ne vous y fiez pas, ..... en fait, une femme très forte et courageuse. .... évident que ..... dur pour elle, d'habiter dans ce nouveau pays. .... se voit sur les lignes de son front. Quand on l'interroge, ..... toujours très positive. « Vivre en France, ..... me plaît, même si ..... parfois difficile. » répond-elle.

**3 Translate the following sentences into French.**

a. She is a vegetarian not a vegan.

→ .....

b. It is impossible to get a job in this field.

→ .....

c. This situation, it's concerning.

→ .....

d. It's easy to do.

→ .....

e. Who is it? It's Izumi.

→ .....

f. She is my favourite doctor and she is very competent.

→ .....

g. They are students now.

→ .....

h. She is blind and can dance? This is amazing!

→ .....

i. Does that suit you?

→ .....

j. He is a Chilean artist.

→ .....

**4 Free Writing: Present a work of art (a picture, painting, sculpture, scrap book or moodboard), using *c'est*, *il/elle est* and *ça*.**

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