



## The Weather Has Stopped Being Small Talk

*Climate change has quietly moved out of science reports and into our shopping bills, our health, and our plans for the years ahead.*

For a long time, people talked about the weather because there was nothing important to say. That has changed. In many countries, the forecast is now the first thing families check in the morning, and not because they are curious. Climate change has left the science pages and moved into kitchens, schools, and supermarkets.

The clearest effects are not far-away ice sheets. They appear on paper, in bills and receipts. Hot summers push up the price of electricity, because millions of air conditioners run for longer hours. Long dry periods take the water out of the [soil](#)<sup>1</sup>, so farmers grow less wheat, coffee, and rice, and those shortages reach the store shelf within months. In parts of Florida, Australia, and southern Europe, insurance has become so expensive that some families can no longer [afford](#)<sup>2</sup> to protect their homes against storms and floods.

Health has changed too. Doctors have noticed that very hot weeks are dangerous for older people and for anyone whose job is outdoors. Warm springs arrive earlier, so plants produce pollen for more weeks of the year, and people with allergies [suffer](#)<sup>3</sup> for longer. Pharmacies now sell allergy medicine earlier in the year than they used to. Mosquitoes that carry disease have moved north into places that were once too cold for them; [therefore](#)<sup>4</sup>, hospitals in those regions now treat illnesses their doctors rarely saw twenty years ago.

The future will probably feel ordinary rather than dramatic. Schools may close in extreme heat, in the same way they

once closed for heavy snow. Builders may start work at five in the morning and stop at noon. Some coastal towns will move their roads, and a few will move their houses. Governments have already begun this planning, quietly, in documents most people never read.

There is a second story, though, and it is a more hopeful one. Solar power costs a small fraction of what it cost fifteen years ago, and in sunny countries it is now the cheapest electricity ever built. Cities that had no electric buses in 2010 run thousands of them today. Engineers have also returned to old ideas: thick walls, light-colored roofs, and trees planted to make shade, all of which keep a building cool without machines.

Scientists warn that the size of future warming depends mostly on the choices made in this [decade](#)<sup>5</sup>. That sounds heavy, but it also means nothing is fixed yet. If countries cut pollution quickly, life will be uncomfortable but possible to manage. If they wait, the bill will be much larger, and the people who pay it are children today. Nobody can promise a [reliable](#)<sup>6</sup> climate anymore, because the seasons that farms and cities were built around have already shifted.

Perhaps that is the real change. Climate change used to be an argument about polar bears and dates far in the future. Now it is about the price of bread, whether a child can play outside safely in July, and what kind of ordinary life the next generation will inherit.

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## VOCABULARY — KEY WORDS FROM THE STORY

| # | WORD                         | DEFINITION                                                                | EXAMPLE SENTENCE                                                                |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | soil<br><i>noun</i>          | the top layer of the earth that plants grow in                            | "After weeks without rain, the soil in the garden was too dry and hard to dig." |
| 2 | afford<br><i>verb</i>        | to have enough money to pay for something                                 | "We cannot afford a new car this year, so we will repair the old one."          |
| 3 | suffer<br><i>verb</i>        | to experience pain, illness or something unpleasant over a period of time | "My brother suffers from headaches whenever the air quality gets worse."        |
| 4 | therefore<br><i>adverb</i>   | for that reason; as a result of the fact just mentioned                   | "The train was cancelled; therefore, we had to take the bus."                   |
| 5 | decade<br><i>noun</i>        | a period of ten years                                                     | "The city has doubled in size over the past decade."                            |
| 6 | reliable<br><i>adjective</i> | able to be trusted to work well or to behave in the way you expect        | "She is a reliable colleague; if she promises something, she does it."          |

## COMPREHENSION — ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

## QUESTION 1 — MULTIPLE CHOICE

What does the writer suggest by saying that the weather is now 'the first thing families check in the morning, and not because they are curious'?

- A-) People have become more interested in science than before.
- B-) People check the weather because it can now affect their plans and safety.
- C-) People no longer enjoy talking about the weather with friends.
- D-) People trust weather forecasts more than they trust scientists.

## QUESTION 2 — MULTIPLE CHOICE

According to the article, why do supermarket prices rise?

- A-) Because insurance companies charge shops more money.
- B-) Because dry weather reduces how much food farmers can grow.
- C-) Because transporting food has become slower in hot weather.
- D-) Because families buy more food during hot summers.

## QUESTION 3 — SHORT ANSWER

The writer says that 'nothing is fixed yet'. Explain what this means in the context of the article, and say why the writer places this idea near the end.

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## COMPREHENSION ANSWERS

My score today \_\_\_\_ / 3

- Q1** People check the weather because it can now affect their plans and safety. ✓ Correct (B)

The words 'not because they are curious' replace interest with need. The article later mentions heat that is 'dangerous for older people' and schools that 'may close in extreme heat', so the reason is practical.

- Q2** Because dry weather reduces how much food farmers can grow. ✓ Correct (B)

The text states that dry periods take water out of the soil, 'so farmers grow less wheat, coffee, and rice, and those shortages reach the store shelf within months'. Insurance in the same paragraph is about homes, not shop prices.

- Q3** **Answer:** It means that the future amount of warming has not been decided, so human choices can still change the result. The writer connects this directly to time: scientists 'warn that the size of future warming depends mostly on the choices made in this decade'. The two conditional sentences that follow show the two possible paths, one where countries cut pollution quickly and life stays uncomfortable but possible to manage, and one where they wait and 'the bill will be much larger'. Placing this near the end changes the effect of the whole article. The earlier paragraphs describe problems that already exist and cannot be undone, which could leave the reader feeling helpless. By finishing with a choice rather than a disaster, the writer turns the article from a report into an invitation to act, and the final mention of children makes that choice feel personal.

**Explanation:** A strong answer must (1) explain 'nothing is fixed yet' as future outcomes still being open to change, not as a claim that current damage is reversible; (2) quote or paraphrase the two conditional sentences as evidence of alternative futures; (3) comment on structure, explaining that the position near the end shifts the tone from problem to responsibility; and (4) use accurate present perfect and first conditional forms. Answers that only repeat the sentence, or that claim the writer thinks climate change is not serious, should lose marks.

## VOCABULARY — TRANSLATION &amp; NOTES

**soil**

Use 'soil' for the material that plants need, and 'ground' for the surface you stand on. Common partners: dry soil, rich soil, poor soil.

**afford**

'Afford' is almost always used with can, cannot, could or could not: 'I can't afford it.' It is followed by a noun or by 'to + verb': afford a house, afford to travel.

**suffer**

With an illness, use 'suffer from': suffer from asthma, suffer from stress. Without 'from', it means to experience something bad in general: 'Small farms suffered badly last summer.'

**therefore**

'Therefore' is more formal than 'so' and is common in written English. It usually begins a new sentence or follows a semicolon, and it is normally separated by commas.

**decade**

Frequent partners: this decade, the last decade, for decades. Remember 'a decade ago' means ten years ago, and the stress falls on the first syllable: DEC-ade.

**reliable**

Use it for people, machines, and information: a reliable friend, a reliable car, a reliable source. The opposite is 'unreliable'.

## YOUR TURN — SENTENCE BUILDING

Mastery comes from practice. Write original sentences using today's target vocabulary.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

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