

# A Hot Topic: How to Talk About the Heat [B1]

Notti insonni, afa e insolazioni, stanze senza correnti d'aria e la ricerca continua dell'ombra e di un soffio di brezza... Come esprimere la sensazione appiccicosa e soffocante provocata dalle temperature estive?



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Britain has acquired a global reputation for having cold [wet](#) weather all year round. Every summer, vast numbers of Britons [flock](#) to warmer, drier places for their holidays. But in fact, the British Isles can get very hot, and this has become increasingly noticeable in recent years with the climate crisis.

[Soaring](#) temperatures have brought unexpected problems, as few British buildings are adapted for hot weather. So what do you say if you are in the UK and affected by the heat? Here are some colloquial phrases to help you [suitably](#) express your discomfort.

## NICE AND [COSY](#), OR [STIFLING](#)?

Most British homes are built to keep you warm, so when it's raining outside and you're sitting in a comfortable [armchair](#) near a [blazing](#) or even [roaring fire](#), you can describe yourself as 'nice and [cosy](#)'. But when that fire starts to get a bit hot, you can say you're '[toasty](#)', and if you have to take off

your jumper and the air becomes really suffocating, it is time for you to declare “It’s stifling in here, I can hardly breathe. Let’s open a window and get a breath of fresh air!”

## **NO AIR-CON**

British rooms are often designed to save on heating, so they can be fairly small with low ceilings and fitted carpets. This is perfect for cold, wet winters, but the last thing you want during a hot summer. Air-conditioning still isn’t common and houses hardly ever have shutters, so a few hot days in a row can quickly transform your beautiful thatched cottage into a greenhouse.

## **LIKE AN OVEN**

If you hear a weather forecast on the radio or TV cheerfully predicting hot summer nights, then be prepared for torment. The long summer day will have turned your bedroom into a sauna, so you better pray that your sheets are made of cool cotton and not the very popular poly-cotton. Many hotels and Bed&Breakfasts choose the latter because they don’t need ironing, but they do feel slightly warm to the touch. As you toss and turn in the airless night, trying unsuccessfully to find a cool patch of mattress or pillow, you can complain by saying: “It’s like an oven in here, I’m roasting”.

## **NIGHT AND MORNING**

As there is usually a lot of water or at least moisture around in the UK, summer nights can have a surprisingly tropical feel. You can describe that heavy, moist air as ‘humid’, ‘muggy’, ‘sultry’ or even ‘sticky’, but never ‘damp’, as damp is reserved for weather which is cold and wet. When at last morning comes and you are woken by the light beginning to penetrate the thin curtains and the birds singing their dawn chorus (something that can happen at around 4.30am in the summer) you can have a much-needed shower, drag yourself to breakfast and grumble that you

**'didn't sleep a wink'** and that you **sweated** so much your **bedsheets** are **'soaked through'**.

## **SOARING TEMPERATURES**

Classic **headlines** in the morning newspapers might read: "Temperatures **set to soar**" when the thermometer is about to increase dramatically; or "What a **scorcher!**", when the day will be so hot that people of Anglo-Saxon complexion will certainly suffer **sunburn**. Many British people are **sun-worshippers** and will head straight for the beach where they will rapidly turn bright red, and you can describe them as **'lobsters'**.

## **SUNSTROKE AND AVOIDING IT**

If some unfortunate people display other symptoms, such as fever, confusion, **slurred speech** and even loss of consciousness, don't **dismiss** them as drunk – although it is common to drink beer or lager as refreshment in the sun, rather than water — they could also be suffering from **sunstroke**. The sun is never guaranteed in the UK, so when it shines, some Brits can lose their heads. Wiser individuals will **'stick to the shade'** (not 'the shadow') and as you run to join them you can declare "My goodness, it's **baking!**", "It's **boiling!**" or "It's **sizzling!**" These culinary terms are all used to describe the effect of very hot weather on your body. You can use the last one in particular if your feet make the sound of frying bacon as you **skip over** the **blisteringly** hot sand! When at last you reach the shade of an umbrella on a cafe terrace and order a refreshing drink, you can complain to your neighbour that today is **'unbearably** hot', or **'sweltering'**. If your neighbour replies "We're in for a **heatwave**", then **beware!**: the spell of hot weather is going to last for several days.

## **MURPHY'S LAW**

One more thing. Really warm weather in the UK somehow always manages **to avoid** the school holidays, which are mostly during August. If you choose to visit in September, or even October, you might not get the cooler,

autumnal weather you were expecting. As the kids get back to class, the sun will often come out again for what is known as a late summer or an 'indian summer'.

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# Glossary

- **weather forecast** = previsioni del tempo
- **suitably** = adeguatamente
- **low ceilings** = soffitti bassi
- **pray** = pregare
- **headlines** = titoli
- **slurred speech** = farfugliamento
- **sunstroke** = insolazione
- **Soaring** = in aumento
- **shutters** = persiane
- **unbearably** = insopportabilmente
- **wet** = umido
- **soaked through** = infradiciare
- **skip over** = saltare oltre
- **sultry** = afoso
- **beware** = attenzione!
- **oven** = forno
- **moisture** = umidità
- **damp** = umido
- **scorcher** = giornata torrida
- **lobsters** = aragoste
- **baking** = cuocere
- **sheets** = lenzuola
- **airless** = senza ventilazione
- **toasty** = caldo (lett. tostato)
- **dawn** = alba
- **drag yourself** = trascinarsi
- **grumble** = brontolare
- **dismiss** = liquidare
- **heatwave** = ondata di calore
- **roaring fire** = fuoco scoppiettante
- **cosy** = accogliente
- **to avoid** = evitare
- **sunburn** = scottatura solare

- **mattress** = materasso
- **didn't sleep a wink** = non chiudere occhio
- **in a row** = consecutivi
- **roasting** = arrostito
- **stick to the shade** = stare all'ombra
- **hardly** = a mala pena
- **fairly** = piuttosto
- **latter** = quest'ultimo
- **cool patch** = un pezzetto fresco
- **sweated** = sudare
- **blisteringly** = ustionante
- **armchair** = poltrona
- **toss and turn** = rigirarsi nel letto
- **muggy** = umido, afoso
- **sweltering** = soffocante, torrido
- **fitted carpets** = moquette
- **bed sheets** = lenzuola
- **set to soar** = sul punto di
- **sizzling** = sfrigolare
- **blazing** = ardente
- **heating** = riscaldamento
- **jumper** = maglione, felpa
- **thatched cottage** = casetta con tetto in paglia
- **greenhouse** = serra
- **cheerfully** = allegramente
- **ironing** = planchar
- **sticky** = appiccicoso
- **worshippers** = adoratori
- **boiling** = bollire
- **flock** = riversarsi, affluire
- **stifling** = soffocante