

How to Talk About the Wind [B2]

Chi meglio dei britannici può parlare del vento? Sono gli europei che sperimentano più spesso questo fenomeno. Ripassiamo l'estesissimo vocabolario inglese che lo descrive, insieme ad alcune metafore e modi di dire che definiscono situazioni non legate alla meteorologia.



The UK is the windiest country in Europe, so it is not surprising that the British people are fascinated by wind. British people talk about it so much, in fact, that being familiar with certain words and expressions is essential.

THE POWER OF WIND

Much of the country's renewable energy comes from [wind turbines](#): in 2020, the UK generated 75,610 gigawatt hours (GWh) of electricity from both [offshore](#) and [onshore wind farms](#); enough [to power](#) 8.4 [trillion](#) LED [light bulbs](#)! Several geographical [features](#) of the British Isles contribute to its windy weather. The [Gulf Stream](#) keeps it much warmer than other

countries at the same latitude, while dry continental air from Eurasia encounters wetter air from the Atlantic Ocean directly over the UK, making the weather notoriously unpredictable.

EMOTIONAL FORCE

It's not just about energy, however: British people see wind as somehow emotional and exciting. Trevor Harley, professor of cognitive psychology at the University of Dundee, researches the impact of the weather on our mood and behaviour. As he puts it: "There's always something happening — and if there isn't, there is the promise."

IN THE LANGUAGE

The English language is full of expressions referring to wind. A breeze is a light, gentle wind, but if someone asks you if a particular task is difficult and you reply, "No, it's a breeze", you mean the task is very easy. The wind can carry sounds from far away, so if you 'get wind of something', it means that you hear details about a secret. If an event is 'in the wind', there are unconfirmed rumours that it might happen (think of Bob Dylan's song Blowin' in the Wind), and if you 'throw caution to the wind', then you take a risk or really don't care about the outcome of your actions.

THE WIND HAS A VOICE

The wind usually blows, but it also has a voice. If it blows gently through the trees making a sound, we say it 'whispers'. The sound of a very strong wind is a 'howl', like the call of a dog or wolf. When a breeze gets stronger, keeping you cool on a summer day and making it harder to walk, British people describe it as a 'brisk' or a 'bracing' wind. A bracing wind can make you feel full of energy, but it might make it too cold to sunbathe. In that case you need a windbreak — a strong piece of canvas suspended between poles to shelter you on the beach.

STRONGER WINDS

If the wind gets stronger still, enough [to blow your hat off](#) or making it difficult for your [windbreak](#) to stay [upright](#), we say that it is '[blustery](#)'. A [blustery](#) wind is never constant; it comes and goes, frequently changing direction in that [boisterous](#), [playful](#) manner so loved by poets. If it rains when there is a [blustery](#) wind, forget your umbrella, as the rain will arrive from all directions, even from underneath.

KILLER WIND

A '[gust](#) of wind' is a sudden change in wind speed. If your aeroplane [lurches](#) to one side when you are coming in to land, a [gust](#) of wind will be responsible. If, on the other hand, there is a '[gale](#)' your flight may be cancelled [altogether](#), because it means a very strong, prolonged wind with a series of unpredictable [gusts](#). It is usually [gales](#) that [howl](#). Even stronger than a [gale](#) is a hurricane, a violent wind with a circular [motion](#). If you think you probably won't find a hurricane in the UK, [think again](#). During the great storm of 1987, hurricane force winds with [gusts](#) of up to 160kph caused massive damage especially across the south of the country, killing eighteen people and [blowing down](#) around fifteen million trees!

WINDY IDIOMS

"To take the wind out of one's [sails](#)": imagine feeling fantastic in your new party dress, when someone laughs at the way you look from behind. Your confidence [shrinks](#) like a [deflating balloon](#). Five minutes on Twitter will give you the same feeling. "A candle in the wind": this idiom made famous by the Elton John song is a metaphor for someone or something that is vulnerable, fragile, perhaps [uncared-for](#). Imagine a flame [flickering](#) in a [draughty](#) room: at any moment it could be [blown out](#). "A [straw](#) in the wind": this uncomfortable idiom means to feel abandoned in a state of suspense, uncertainty or psychological torture in a situation that it is likely to have unpleasant repercussions! "To be left [to twist](#) in the wind": this idiom refers to a sign, a [portent](#), a [hint](#) of what is to come. That could be a good thing, or

it could be a bad one. Trust your instincts and be attentive as to what's coming next... **"To break wind"**: this idiomatic verb is a polite way of saying **'to fart'** or 'to flatulate'; that is, to expel gas from the anus, whether discretely or with fanfare. It is vitally important to remember that while 'fart' can be a noun, 'break wind' can only describe the action.

Glossary

- **to blow your hat off** = far volare via
- **blustery** = burrascoso
- **blowing down** = abbattere
- **uncared-for** = negletto
- **draughty** = piena di spifferi
- **wind farms** = parchi eolici
- **whispers'** = sussurrare
- **sunbathe** = prendere il sole
- **think again** = ripensaci
- **shrinks** = diminuire
- **offshore** = al largo
- **to shelter** = proteggere
- **altogether** = del tutto
- **windbreak** = frangivento
- **canvas** = tela, telone
- **lurches** = traballare
- **motion** = movimento
- **deflating balloon** = un palloncino che si sgonfia
- **wind turbines** = impianti eolici
- **trillion** = bilione
- **howl** = ululare
- **to twist** = girare
- **boisterous** = turbolento
- **playful** = giocoso
- **notoriously** = notoriamente
- **Blowin'** = soffiare
- **poles** = pali
- **breeze** = brezza
- **bracing** = energizzante, frizzante
- **gale** = burrasca, vento forte
- **sails** = vele
- **flickering** = tremolare
- **onshore** = sulla costa

- **features** = caratteristiche
- **mood** = umore
- **hint** = accenno
- **brisk** = rapido, pungente
- **portent** = presagio
- **Gulf Stream** = corrente del Golfo
- **outcome** = risultato
- **cool** = fresco
- **light bulbs** = lampadine
- **upright** = dritto
- **to fart** = scoreggiare
- **straw** = pagliuzza
- **to power** = alimentare
- **gust** = raffica
- **blown out** = spegnere