

British English: Talking About Heatwaves

Lesson 1 — Level B2

Language Focus

Britain doesn't see much proper heat, so when a heatwave does arrive, it becomes the national conversation topic overnight. Below are ten everyday British words and phrases you'll hear the moment the temperature climbs — most of them spoken with a mix of excitement and disbelief, since nobody's ever quite prepared for it.

Word / Phrase	Meaning	Example
A right scorcher	An informal way to describe a very hot day.	<i>Forecast says it's going to be a right scorcher tomorrow, so we might as well head to the coast.</i>
Baking hot	Very hot, often used about a place or the weather.	<i>It's baking hot in this office, someone needs to sort the air con out.</i>
Boiling hot	Extremely hot, used generally for weather, rooms or objects.	<i>I couldn't sleep last night, it was boiling hot even with the window open.</i>
Sweltering	Uncomfortably hot, often making you feel weighed down.	<i>We were sweltering on the tube this morning, packed in like sardines.</i>
Muggy	Warm and humid, with sticky, heavy air.	<i>It's been really muggy the last few days, you can feel it as soon as you step outside.</i>
Sizzling	Extremely hot, especially describing a surface like pavement.	<i>The pavement outside the shop was absolutely sizzling by lunchtime.</i>
Phew, what a scorcher!	An exclamation commenting on how hot a day is.	<i>Phew, what a scorcher! I've never seen everyone in shorts this early in the year.</i>
Like an oven in here	Describes an uncomfortably hot enclosed space.	<i>Can someone open a window? It's like an oven in here.</i>
You could fry an egg on the pavement	An exaggerated way of saying the ground is extremely hot.	<i>Careful walking barefoot, you could fry an egg on the pavement today.</i>

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Word / Phrase	Meaning	Example
T-shirt weather	Weather warm enough to wear light clothing comfortably.	<i>Finally, proper t-shirt weather — I've put the jumpers away for now.</i>

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Reading

Context: Office diary/blog post

The Great British Heatwave (All Three Days of It)

Well, it's happened again — the great British heatwave has arrived, and with it, the usual chaos. It's only day two and already the office feels like an oven, ever since the air conditioning gave up completely.

Everyone's talking about the forecast. Sharon in accounts reckons it's going to be a right scorcher by Thursday, and to be honest, looking at the sky this morning, I believe her. It's already baking hot outside, and it's not even ten o'clock.

On the way in, I swear you could fry an egg on the pavement outside the station. A few people were already complaining it was sizzling just standing at the bus stop.

By lunchtime, half the office had changed into proper t-shirt weather clothes, and someone joked it was boiling hot enough to melt the photocopier. Even the usually quiet kitchen was full of people fanning themselves with paper plates, saying how sweltering it felt with the windows shut.

Naturally, the second it gets warm, everyone forgets how much they complained about the rain all year. Phew, what a scorcher indeed — ask us again in a week when we're all moaning it's too hot.

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1. Odd One Out

In each set, three sentences make sense. One doesn't fit — the heat word is used illogically. Circle the letter of the sentence that is the odd one out.

Context: School sports day

- A. It was boiling hot at sports day, so the school handed out extra water bottles.
- B. It was sweltering by lunchtime, yet all the kids kept their coats zipped up to keep warm.
- C. The pavement was sizzling by midday, so they moved the races onto the grass.
- D. Parents said it was a right scorcher, so most brought umbrellas for shade.

Context: Commuter train

- A. The carriage was like an oven, so someone tried to force a window open.
- B. It was baking hot on the platform, so everyone huddled together for warmth.
- C. Commuters said it was muggy the whole journey, with barely any air moving.
- D. One passenger joked you could fry an egg on the seats, they were that warm.

Context: Garden barbecue

- A. It was proper t-shirt weather, so everyone brought shorts and sunglasses.
- B. It was sizzling on the patio, so the host set up extra parasols.
- C. It was sweltering in the garden, so guests wrapped themselves in blankets by the fire pit.
- D. Someone said it was a right scorcher, so the barbecue was moved to the shade.

Context: Seaside day trip

- A. It was boiling hot on the beach, so everyone queued for ice cream.
- B. The sand was sizzling, so people hopped about looking for their flip-flops.
- C. It felt muggy near the shore, with barely any breeze coming off the sea.
- D. It was like an oven on the beach, so families wore thick jumpers to cool down.

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2. Multiple Choice

Context: A family WhatsApp group planning a barbecue weekend

Choose the best word or phrase to complete each message.

1. Mum: Shall we do the barbecue Saturday? Forecast says it'll be ____.
A) muggy B) a right scorcher C) like an oven
2. Dad: Bring sun cream, the pavement outside was already ____ this morning.
A) muggy B) boiling hot C) sizzling
3. Sister: It's already ____ in my room, I can't cope with this heat.
A) t-shirt weather B) like an oven C) a right scorcher
4. Brother: Can we just eat inside? It's proper ____ out there, my arms are burning already.
A) t-shirt weather B) boiling hot C) muggy
5. Mum: At least it's finally ____, we can put the jumpers away!
A) sweltering B) sizzling C) t-shirt weather
6. Dad: Let's get the fan out, it's meant to stay ____ all weekend.
A) t-shirt weather B) muggy C) boiling hot

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3. Matching

Match each word or phrase (1–10) to its meaning (A–J). Write the correct letter in the blank.

1. A right scorcher ____
 2. Baking hot ____
 3. Boiling hot ____
 4. Sweltering ____
 5. Muggy ____
 6. Sizzling ____
 7. Phew, what a scorcher! ____
 8. Like an oven in here ____
 9. You could fry an egg on the pavement ____
 10. T-shirt weather ____
-
- A. Warm and humid, with sticky, heavy air
 - B. Weather warm enough to wear light clothing comfortably
 - C. An informal way to describe a very hot day
 - D. Describes an uncomfortably hot enclosed space
 - E. Extremely hot, used generally for weather, rooms or objects
 - F. Extremely hot, especially describing a surface like pavement
 - G. Very hot, often used about a place or the weather
 - H. An exaggerated way of saying the ground is extremely hot
 - I. Uncomfortably hot, often making you feel weighed down
 - J. An exclamation commenting on how hot a day is

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4. Gap Fill

Context: A blog post about surviving a heatwave commute

Getting to work this week has been an experience. Monday started off _____, with barely a cloud around, and by the time I reached the station the platform already felt _____.

The train itself was worse. Somebody joked it was _____ inside the carriage, and honestly, they weren't wrong. By the third stop, most of us were fanning ourselves with whatever we could find.

Walking from the station to the office, I swear _____ — the pavement was practically steaming. Someone behind me muttered, “_____,” and everyone within earshot just laughed and agreed.

At least once I got inside, I could finally dress for _____ instead of melting in a jumper. Still, by Friday, half the office had given up altogether and declared it officially _____ enough to work from the garden instead.

Word bank: a right scorcher • sizzling • sweltering • you could fry an egg on the pavement • phew, what a scorcher • t-shirt weather • boiling hot • muggy • like an oven

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5. Error Correction

Context: A company-wide email about the office heatwave dress code

Each sentence below originally used the wrong heat word (shown in capitals). Write the correct word or phrase on the line.

1. The showroom was BAKING SCORCHER by midday, with several customers asking for water.

Correction: _____

2. "It's OVEN WEATHER in here," one colleague joked, fanning himself with a folder.

Correction: _____

3. By mid-afternoon, the car park tarmac was MUGGY enough to fry an egg on, according to security.

Correction: _____

4. Staff were told the office would remain on a SIZZLING WEATHER dress code for the rest of the week.

Correction: _____

5. "PHEW, WHAT A BOILING," read the subject line of Friday's all-staff email.

Correction: _____

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6. Register Rewrite

Context: A weather presenter's script, translated into everyday chat

Each formal sentence needs to be rewritten in everyday spoken English. Circle the letter of the option that captures the same meaning — the others use a heat word that doesn't quite fit.

1. Forecasters are predicting an unusually intense period of hot weather beginning this weekend.

- A) Forecasters say it's going to be muggy this weekend.
- B) Forecasters say it's going to be a right scorcher this weekend.
- C) Forecasters say it's t-shirt weather this weekend.

2. Office workers described the building's interior as unbearably and inescapably hot.

- A) Workers said the building was like an oven.
- B) Workers said the building was muggy.
- C) Workers said it was t-shirt weather inside.

3. Members of the public reported that outdoor surfaces had become dangerously hot to the touch.

- A) People said the pavements were muggy.
- B) People said it was boiling hot indoors.
- C) People said you could fry an egg on the pavement.

4. Residents noted that the air felt heavy, damp, and difficult to breathe in the evenings.

- A) Residents said the evenings felt muggy.
- B) Residents said the evenings were sizzling.
- C) Residents said the evenings were a right scorcher.

5. Many people took the opportunity to wear lighter clothing given the pleasant warm conditions.

- A) People said it was finally sweltering.
- B) People said it was finally t-shirt weather.
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6. A tabloid newspaper used an exaggerated exclamation to describe the sudden rise in temperature.

- A) The paper's headline read, "Muggy again!"
- B) The paper's headline read, "Phew, what a scorcher!"
- C) The paper's headline read, "T-shirt weather returns!"

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7. Complete the Conversation

Context: Neighbours chatting over the garden fence

Pat: Morning Dave, another one today then?

Dave: Tell me about it, it's been _____ since sunrise, not a bit of shade in the garden.

Pat: I know, I stepped out barefoot and nearly burned my feet, honestly _____ this morning.

Dave: Ha, I believe you. The shed's been _____ all week, can't even go in there to get the mower out.

Pat: Same with my greenhouse, it's an absolute state. Are you doing anything about the barbecue Saturday?

Dave: Depends on the weather, but if it stays like this it'll be proper _____ for it.

Pat: True. The missus reckons it'll stay _____ right through the weekend.

Dave: Ha, no arguments there. Did you see the forecast though? Apparently the headlines are calling it _____ again.

Pat: Of course they are. _____, they say that every single year, don't they.

Word bank: boiling hot • you could fry an egg on the pavement • like an oven • t-shirt weather • a right scorcher • sweltering • phew, what a scorcher • muggy • sizzling

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TEACHER ANSWER KEY
Do Not Distribute to Students

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Sizzling	Extremely hot, especially describing a surface like pavement.	<i>The pavement outside the shop was absolutely sizzling by lunchtime.</i>
Phew, what a scorcher!	An exclamation commenting on how hot a day is.	<i>Phew, what a scorcher! I've never seen everyone in shorts this early in the year.</i>
Like an oven in here	Describes an uncomfortably hot enclosed space.	<i>Can someone open a window? It's like an oven in here.</i>
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2. Multiple Choice

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2. Dad: Bring sun cream, the pavement outside was already ____ this morning.

A) muggy B) boiling hot C) sizzling ✓

3. Sister: It's already ____ in my room, I can't cope with this heat.

A) t-shirt weather B) like an oven ✓ C) a right scorcher

4. Brother: Can we just eat inside? It's proper ____ out there, my arms are burning already.

A) t-shirt weather B) boiling hot ✓ C) muggy

5. Mum: At least it's finally ____, we can put the jumpers away!

A) sweltering B) sizzling C) t-shirt weather ✓

6. Dad: Let's get the fan out, it's meant to stay ____ all weekend.

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3. Matching

Match each word or phrase (1–10) to its meaning (A–J). Write the correct letter in the blank.

1. A right scorcher (C)
 2. Baking hot (G)
 3. Boiling hot (E)
 4. Sweltering (I)
 5. Muggy (A)
 6. Sizzling (F)
 7. Phew, what a scorcher! (J)
 8. Like an oven in here (D)
 9. You could fry an egg on the pavement (H)
 10. T-shirt weather (B)
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- A. Warm and humid, with sticky, heavy air
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Walking from the station to the office, I swear **you could fry an egg on the pavement** — the pavement was practically steaming. Someone behind me muttered, "**phew, what a scorcher**," and everyone within earshot just laughed and agreed.

At least once I got inside, I could finally dress for **t-shirt weather** instead of melting in a jumper. Still, by Friday, half the office had given up altogether and declared it officially **boiling hot** enough to work from the garden instead.

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Correction: baking hot

2. "It's OVEN WEATHER in here," one colleague joked, fanning himself with a folder.

Correction: like an oven

3. By mid-afternoon, the car park tarmac was MUGGY enough to fry an egg on, according to security.

Correction: sizzling

4. Staff were told the office would remain on a SIZZLING WEATHER dress code for the rest of the week.

Correction: t-shirt weather

5. "PHEW, WHAT A BOILING," read the subject line of Friday's all-staff email.

Correction: Phew, what a scorcher

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2. Office workers described the building's interior as unbearably and inescapably hot.

A) Workers said the building was like an oven. ✓

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C) Workers said it was t-shirt weather inside.

3. Members of the public reported that outdoor surfaces had become dangerously hot to the touch.

A) People said the pavements were muggy.

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4. Residents noted that the air felt heavy, damp, and difficult to breathe in the evenings.

A) Residents said the evenings felt muggy. ✓

B) Residents said the evenings were sizzling.

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B) People said it was finally t-shirt weather. ✓

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7. Complete the Conversation

Context: Neighbours chatting over the garden fence

Pat: Morning Dave, another one today then?

Dave: Tell me about it, it's been **boiling hot** since sunrise, not a bit of shade in the garden.

Pat: I know, I stepped out barefoot and nearly burned my feet, honestly **you could fry an egg on the pavement** this morning.

Dave: Ha, I believe you. The shed's been **like an oven** all week, can't even go in there to get the mower out.

Pat: Same with my greenhouse, it's an absolute state. Are you doing anything about the barbecue Saturday?

Dave: Depends on the weather, but if it stays like this it'll be proper **t-shirt weather** for it.

Pat: True. The missus reckons it'll stay **a right scorcher** right through the weekend.

Dave: Ha, no arguments there. Did you see the forecast though? Apparently the headlines are calling it **sweltering** again.

Pat: Of course they are. **phew, what a scorcher**, they say that every single year, don't they.