

C'EST - CE SONT VS IL EST - ILS SONT



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C'EST VS IL EST

The first thing to know about *c'est* and *il est* is that they are not interchangeable. They are very often synonymous, but the grammatical structure is more important than the meaning.

<u>Cette</u> table te plaît?	Do you like this table?
Oui, <u>elle</u> est jolie.	Yes, it is pretty.
Oui, <u>c'est une</u> jolie table.	Yes, it is a pretty table.

RULE #1 - IS THERE A DETERMINER WORD RIGHT AFTER ÊTRE? USE C'EST (SINGULAR) OR CE SONT (PLURAL).

There are several rules to know about *c'est* vs *il est*, and one of the most important rules is “the determiner word rule”.

A determiner is a word that allows us to know more about particular nouns. Determiners vary according to the number and gender of the noun they precede.

Is it specific?	<u>la</u> pomme	definite article
Is it non-specific?	<u>une</u> pomme	indefinite article
Is it part of something?	<u>de la</u> pomme	partitive article
Is it possessive?	<u>ma</u> pomme	possessive article
Is it in front of you?	<u>cette</u> pomme	demonstrative adjective

In the following examples, we have pairs of sentences in which one requires c'est because être is followed by a determiner word.

The other one requires elle est because the verb être is followed by an adjective or a preposition.

C'est <u>la</u> banane d'Anne.	That is / It is Anne's banana.
Elle est <u>jaune</u> .	It is yellow.
C'est <u>une</u> banane jaune.	That is / It is a yellow banana.
Elle est <u>jaune</u> .	It is yellow.
C'est quoi? C'est <u>de la</u> banane.	What is that? That is (some) banana.
Elle est trop <u>mûre</u> .	It is too ripe.
C'est <u>ma</u> banane!	That's my banana!
C'est <u>la</u> mienne!	It is mine!
Elle est <u>à</u> moi!	It belongs to me!
C'est <u>cette</u> banane dont je parlais!	That's the banana I was talking about!
C'est <u>celle-là</u> !	That's the one!
Elle est <u>par</u> terre!	It is on the ground!

RULE #2 - IS THERE AN ADJECTIVE REFERRING TO A SPECIFIC NOUN RIGHT AFTER ÊTRE? USE IL EST - ELLE EST - ILS SONT - ELLES SONT.

Specific Statement	Les montagnes couvertes de neige <u>sont belles</u> .	The snow covered mountains are beautiful.
	<u>Elles sont</u> belles.	They are beautiful.

Specific Statement	Ces règles <u>sont utiles</u> .	These rules are useful.
	<u>Elles sont</u> utiles.	They are useful.
Specific Statement	Cette pizza <u>est délicieuse</u> .	This pizza is delicious..
	<u>Elle est</u> délicieuse.	It is delicious.

RULE #3 - IS THERE AN ADJECTIVE REFERRING TO A GENERAL IDEA RIGHT AFTER ÊTRE? USE C'EST - CE SONT.

“C’est” can be used before a standalone statement which includes an adjective. This will be an adjective that describes the general sense of something unspecific, like a situation, an opinion or even a feeling.

Important: In this situation, the adjective will always be in the masculine and singular form.

General Statement	Le poulet, <u>c'est bon</u> .	Chicken is good. (in general)
	<u>C'est</u> bon.	It is good.
General Statement	On a gagné! <u>C'est génial!</u>	We won! It's fantastic! (general reaction to a situation)
	<u>C'est</u> génial!.	It is fantastic!
General Statement	Tu as eu le poste? <u>C'est impressionnant!</u>	You got the job? That's impressive! (a general opinion)
	<u>C'est</u> impressionnant!	That's impressive!

RULE #4 - ARE YOU DEFINING SOMEONE BY HIS OR HER PROFESSION? USE IL EST - ELLE EST.

The indefinite articles UN / UNE are not required when defining a person by his or her profession.

<u>Il est</u> professeur.	He is a teacher.
<u>Elle est</u> médecin.	She is a doctor.

RULE #5 - ARE YOU SIMPLY STATING THAT SOMEONE IS "A" + PROFESSION? USE C'EST, BECAUSE THERE IS A DETERMINER.

In this case, we are simply stating the person's profession, not defining him or her as such.

<u>C'est</u> un professeur.	He is a teacher.
<u>C'est</u> un médecin.	She is a doctor.

It is possible to add adjectives to say how a person performs his or her profession.

<u>C'est</u> un bon professeur.	He is a good teacher.
<u>C'est</u> un mauvais médecin.	She is a bad doctor.

RULE #6 - ARE YOU TELLING TIME? USE IL EST.

Always use "il est" when telling time, never use c'est!

<u>Il est</u> une heure.	It is 1 am.
<u>Il est</u> deux heures.	It is 2 am.
<u>Il est</u> trois heures.	It is 3 am.
<u>Il est</u> quatre heures.	It is 4 am.
<u>Il est</u> cinq heures.	It is 5 am.
<u>Il est</u> six heures.	It is 6 am.
<u>Il est</u> sept heures.	It is 7 am.
<u>Il est</u> huit heures.	It is 8 am.
<u>Il est</u> neuf heures.	It is 9 am.
<u>Il est</u> dix heures.	It is 10 am.

<u>Il est</u> onze heures.	It is 11 am.
<u>Il est</u> midi.	It is noon.
<u>Il est</u> treize heures.	It is 1 pm.
<u>Il est</u> quatorze heures.	It is 2 pm.
<u>Il est</u> quinze heures.	It is 3 pm.
<u>Il est</u> seize heures.	It is 4 pm.
<u>Il est</u> dix-sept heures.	It is 5 pm.
<u>Il est</u> dix-huit heures.	It is 6 pm.
<u>Il est</u> dix-neuf heures.	It is 7 pm.
<u>Il est</u> vingt heures.	It is 8 pm.
<u>Il est</u> vingt-et-une heures.	It is 9 pm.
<u>Il est</u> vingt-deux heures.	It is 10 pm.
<u>Il est</u> vingt-trois heures.	It is 11 pm.
<u>Il est</u> minuit.	It is midnight.

RULE #7 - IS ÊTRE FOLLOWED BY A PROPER NOUN? USE C'EST.

Always use c'est with proper nouns, even if the noun is a person.

<u>C'est</u> Madame Laurent.	It is / She is Mrs. Laurent.
<u>C'est</u> la Tour Eiffel.	It is / That is the Eiffel Tower.
<u>C'est</u> un croissant.	It is / That is a croissant.

RULE #8 - USE C'EST WITH DISJUNCTIVE PRONOUNS.

Even though disjunctive pronouns refer to people, use c'est with them.

<u>C'est</u> moi.	It's me.
<u>C'est</u> toi.	It's you.
<u>C'est</u> lui.	It's him.

<u>C'est</u> elle.	It's her.
<u>C'est</u> nous.	It's us. (c'est remains singular)
<u>C'est</u> vous.	It's you. (c'est remains singular)
<u>Ce sont</u> eux.	It's them. (masculine)
<u>Ce sont</u> elles.	It's them. (feminine)

RULE #9 - ARE YOU REFERRING TO A SPECIFIC DATE? USE C'EST.

Mon anniversaire? <u>C'est</u> le 4 mars.	My birthday? It's March 4th.
Noël? <u>C'est</u> le 25 décembre.	Christmas? It's on December 25th.
La date du déménagement? <u>C'est</u> demain.	Moving day? It's tomorrow.

Attention: Don't use c'est when telling today's date.

Quelle est la date aujourd'hui?	What is today's date?
Aujourd'hui, nous sommes le 18 avril.	Today is April 18th.

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RULE #6 ARE YOU TELLING TIME? USE IL EST.

RULE #7 IS ÊTRE FOLLOWED BY A PROPER NOUN? USE C'EST.

RULE #8 USE C'EST WITH DISJUNCTIVE PRONOUNS.

RULE #9 ARE YOU REFERRING TO A DATE? USE C'EST.

A FEW LAST WORDS

When making a standalone statement that describes the general sense of something unspecific, use c'est with a **masculine, singular adjective**.

La ratatouille? C'est bon!

Ratatouille is good! (in general)

Even though the ratatouille is feminine, **never** say "C'est **bonne**".

If you want to say that the ratatouille in your plate is good, that is no longer a general statement. It is specific, and you would say "Elle est bonne". It is good!

Here's another example. Let's say you're at the beach. Someone goes in the water, and when he/she comes out, people want to know the verdict. They want to know how the water feels!

So, how's the water?

Alors, elle est bonne? (This means "So, does it feel good?")

Alors, elle est comment ? (This means, "So, how is it?")

Alors, elle est froide? (This means, "So, is it cold?")

We use "elle est" and not "c'est" in this case, because direct reference is made to the water, which is feminine and singular.

We can also imagine you're looking at a beautiful scene. You would make a general statement and say, "C'est beau!" It doesn't matter if the thing you are looking at is masculine / feminine / singular / plural. It's a general statement about the whole scene..

Finally, let's imagine that you're looking at an antique chair (une chaise) in a shop with your friend. You're both looking at the chair, observing it. In this case, one of you might say "Elle est belle." In this case, you're making a specific statement about that chair, so you'll say "elle est + feminine / singular adjective".

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