

Uses of the impersonal pronoun it

It is the only impersonal pronoun in English. The following are some of the important uses of it.

It can be used as a subject to an impersonal verb.

It is raining.

It is snowing on the mountains.

It is Sunday today.

'What is the time now?' 'It is 5 o'clock.'

It is always cloudy on the hills.

The pronoun it is used as a provisional subject, when the real subject is an infinitive.

It is not easy to defeat him. (More natural than 'To defeat him is not easy.')

It is dangerous to play with fire. (More natural than 'To play with fire is dangerous.')

It is used to represent a noun in the neuter gender.

I am taking the meat back to the shop because it isn't good.

It can be used to represent a young baby of either sex.

The baby is crying. It must be hungry.

I did not disturb the child because it was sleeping.

It can also be used for small and domestic animals.

I love my dog. It is almost human.

I will not sell my cow because it yields 10 litres of milk every day.

It is used as an emphaziser before a noun or a pronoun.

It was Susie who painted this picture.

It was John who broke the window.

It was Nancy who made the cake.

It was the Prime Minister who made this announcement.

It can be used to refer to a preceding statement.

Jack was maltreated by his uncle; and he could not forget it all his life.