

Existential 'There' vs. Dummy 'It': Describing Existence and Context

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: there must be / there might be, there should have been, there used to be, there would be, It + adjective + to-infinitive, Distance and time expressions, It's worth / It's a shame, there is sure to be, there is bound to be, there is likely to be

This worksheet focuses on advanced uses of **There** (to say something exists or happens) and **It** (as a "dummy" subject for time, weather, distance, or opinions).

1. Existential 'There' with Modals

We use **There + Modal Verb + Be** to make deductions, express possibilities, or talk about past states regarding the existence of something.

- **Deduction (Certainty):** There must be (90-100% sure).
 - *Look at that queue. **There must be** a sale today.*
- **Possibility:** There might be / There could be (50% sure).
 - *Take an umbrella. **There might be** a storm later.*
- **Past Regret/Expectation:** There should have been.
 - *The party was boring. **There should have been** music.*
- **Hypothetical:** There would be.
 - *If we left earlier, **there would be** less traffic.*
- **Past State:** There used to be.
 - ***There used to be** a cinema here, but now it is a supermarket.*

2. Probability with 'There'

We often use specific fixed expressions with **There** to predict the future.

- **100% Certainty:** There is sure to be / There is bound to be.
 - ***There is bound to be** a lot of noise at the concert.*
- **Probability:** There is likely to be.
 - ***There is likely to be** a delay because of the snow.*

3. Dummy 'It'

We use **It** as a subject when there is no real "actor" in the sentence.

- **It + Adjective + To-infinitive:** Used to give an opinion about an action.
 - ***It is dangerous to drive** fast.*
 - ***It was nice to meet** you.*
- **Distance and Time:**
 - ***It takes** two hours to get to London.*
 - ***It is** 50 kilometers to the border.*
- **Fixed Expressions:**
 - ***It's a shame** (that)... (expressing regret/disappointment).*
 - ***It's worth** (+ -ing)... (recommending an action).*
 - *Example: **It's worth visiting** the museum.*

Practice: Fill in the Blanks

Instruction: Complete the sentences using the correct structure based on the cues provided in brackets. Pay attention to whether the sentence is Affirmative (+), Negative (-), or a Question (?).

Example:

- _____ (there / must / be) a mistake in the bill. -> *There must be*
- _____ (not / it / be / hard) to understand. -> *It isn't hard / It is not hard*

1. Look at all those police cars! _____ (there / must / be) an accident up ahead.
2. _____ (not / there / use / be) a factory on this street ten years ago?
3. Don't worry about the interview. _____ (it / be / natural) to feel nervous.
4. If we didn't have strict laws, _____ (there / would / be) chaos in the city.
5. _____ (there / be / likely / be) any tickets left for the show tonight?
6. The movie was terrible. _____ (it / be / a shame) that we spent so much money on it.
7. _____ (not / there / might / be) enough time to finish the project today.
8. _____ (how far / it / be) from your house to the nearest train station?
9. I am surprised nobody is here. _____ (there / should / have / be) a meeting at 9:00 AM.
10. Barcelona is a beautiful city. _____ (it / be / worth / visit) during the summer.
11. _____ (not / it / take) long to cook this pasta; usually just ten minutes.
12. With the new manager arriving, _____ (there / be / bound / be) some big changes in the office.
13. _____ (not / there / be / sure / be) complaints if we cancel the holiday bonus?
14. _____ (not / it / be / dangerous) to swim in the ocean at night?
15. I remember my childhood well. _____ (there / use / be) a huge oak tree in this garden.

Answer Key

1. There must be
2. Didn't there use to be / Did there not use to be
3. It is natural / It's natural
4. there would be
5. Is there likely to be / Are there likely to be
6. It is a shame / It's a shame
7. There might not be
8. How far is it
9. There should have been
10. It is worth visiting / It's worth visiting
11. It doesn't take / It does not take
12. there is bound to be
13. Aren't there sure to be / Won't there be sure to be (rare) / Are there not sure to be
14. Is it not dangerous / Isn't it dangerous
15. There used to be