

IL Y A (THERE IS / THERE ARE)

Il y a is one of the most important expressions in the French language. It means **there is** or **there are** - it is exactly the same in front of singular and plural nouns. **Il y a** is often followed by an indefinite article + noun.

Il y a un chat dans la voiture.

There's a cat in the car.

Il y a des enfants là-bas.

There are some kids over there.

Il y a quelqu'un à la porte.

There's someone at the door.

To use **il y a** in a negative construction, place **ne** in front of **y** (**ne** becomes **n'** in front of **y**) and **pas** after **a**. The indefinite article will change to **de** due to the negative construction.

Il n'y a pas de chat dans la voiture.

There is not a cat in the car.

Il n'y a pas d'enfants là-bas.

There aren't any kids over there.

To make a question, you can either use **est-ce que** or **inversion**. When using **est-ce que**, the **que** will become **qu'** in front of **il**.

Est-ce qu'il y a un chat ? Is there a cat?

Est-ce qu'il y a des enfants ? Are there any kids ?

For **inversion**, place the pronoun ‘y’ in front, then invert **il** and **a**. Because you will end up with two vowels side by side, you must add a **t** between them in order to maintain the fluidity that the French language is known for.

Y a-t-il un chat ? Is there a cat?

Y a-t-il des enfants ? Are there any kids?

Il y a can also be used with interrogatives (question words):

Pourquoi est-ce qu'il y a un chat dans mon lit ? Why is there a cat in my bed?

Combien d'étudiants y a-t-il ? How many students are there?

Qu'est-ce qu'il y a ? and **Qu'y a-t-il ?** mean **What's wrong?**

Il y a is also used to mean **ago**

J'ai vu le film il y a trois semaines. I saw the movie three weeks ago.

Il y a 2 ans que nous sommes partis. We left two years ago.

Il y a is made up of three words

1 **il** - the subject **it**

2 **y** - the pronoun **there**

3 **a** - the third person singular present tense of avoir(to have)

In order to use **il y a** in any other tense, simply conjugate avoir into that tense:

Il y avait un chat... There was a cat...

Il y aura des chats... There will be some cats...

Il n'y a pas eu de chat... There were no cats...