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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute English

### How do we adapt to the cold?



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

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**Phil**

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Phil.

**Becca**

And I'm Becca. 6-Minute-English listeners are truly global, coming from all over the world, including some of the coldest countries on Earth – places like Finland, where winter temperatures drop to  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Are you good at dealing with the cold, Phil?

**Phil**

I'm not sure, but I do know that I don't like it. What about you, Becca?

**Becca**

Well, I'd rather be too hot and cool down than too cold and try to warm up.

**Phil**

Yes, me too. Here in the UK, it never gets as cold as Finland, but it's not unusual to see some people dressed in T-shirts while others are wrapped up in warm clothes. Why do people feel the cold so differently? That's what we'll be discussing in this episode, as well as learning some useful new words and phrases.

**Becca**

And as always, you'll find all the vocabulary from this episode, plus a quiz and worksheet, on our website, [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com).

**Phil**

But now I have a question for you, Becca. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the lowest temperature ever recorded was a very cold  $-89^{\circ}\text{C}$ ... but where? Was it:

- a) the Arctic,
- b) Antarctica, or
- c) the top of Mount Everest?

**Becca**

Hmm. I'm going to guess b) Antarctica.

**Phil**

OK. Well, we'll find out the answer at the end of the programme. Our experience of cold depends on many things, including our genes, culture and place of birth, but perhaps the most obvious thing is the clothes we wear. Professor Gunhild Sætren lives on the icy island of Svalbard, 800 miles inside the Arctic Circle. Here, she advises presenter Caroline Steel on how to dress against the cold, for BBC World Service programme CrowdScience.

**Caroline Steel**

So, what should we consider when choosing our clothes?

**Gunhild Sætren**

**First and foremost**, I would say that perhaps the gender differs. So, males often are more **tolerant**, perhaps, than females. Then it's of course what you're **used to**. Are you **used to** dealing with the cold? Are you not?

**Becca**

Gunhild says that **first and foremost**, men and women feel the cold differently. She uses the phrase **first and foremost** to mean 'more than anything else'. She wants to emphasise that something – in this case, someone's gender – is the most important thing to consider.

**Phil**

There is some debate about whether men or women are more **tolerant** of the cold. Being **tolerant** of something means being able to endure it without getting hurt.

**Becca**

Another important factor is whether you are **used to** the cold – if being in cold environments is something you're familiar with.

## Phil

It might sound obvious that someone born in Arctic Svalbard would feel less cold than someone born in Brazil, but apart from environmental factors, are there actual physical differences that allow people to cope better with the cold?

## Becca

Dr Cara Ocobock studies reindeer herders in northern Finland – people who live in cold temperatures every day and have done for centuries. She measures their reaction to extreme cold and compares it to ordinary Finns from warmer parts of the country. Here, Cara shares her findings with Caroline Steel from BBC World Service's CrowdScience.

## Caroline Steel

OK. My guess is the reindeer herders deal better in the cold.

## Dr Cara Ocobock

**Yes and no.** The more data we collect within this area, the more confusing the picture gets. I can say that **subjectively**, at this point, the reindeer herders, at least kind of mentally, handle the cold far better. They are far less likely to **shiver**.

## Phil

So, do the reindeer herders deal better with the cold? The answer is **yes and no** – a phrase meaning partly and partly not, used when there's no clear answer to a question. However, Cara does say **subjectively**, the herders manage better. They don't feel so cold. **Subjectively** means based on your personal inner experience rather than objective facts.

## Becca

And physically there are differences too. Reindeer herders are less likely to **shiver** – the shaky movement that cold muscles make to try and warm them up. In fact, how we experience the cold is probably a combination of everything we've discussed, including genetic adaptations passed on from parents to children. Right, I'm off to find my gloves and woolly hat, so why don't you reveal the answer to the question, Phil?

## Phil

Yes, I asked where the lowest temperature on Earth was ever recorded. You said b) Antarctica. And that is... the right answer. The lowest temperature ever recorded on Earth was at the Vostok Research Station in Antarctica in 1983. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with the phrase **first and foremost**, meaning more than anything else.

**Becca**

A person who is **tolerant** of something is able to endure it without being hurt.

**Phil**

If you're **used to** something, you're familiar with it.

**Becca**

The idiom **yes and no** means partly and partly not, and is used when you can't give a clear answer to a question.

**Phil**

The adverb **subjectively** means in a way that's based on your personal experience rather than objective facts.

**Becca**

And finally, a **shiver** is the shaking movement made by your muscles when you feel cold or afraid. Once again, our six minutes are up, but remember you'll find a quiz and a worksheet for this episode on our website, [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). See you there soon, but for now, it's goodbye.

**Phil**

Bye!

## VOCABULARY

### **first and foremost**

more than anything else; used to emphasise the most important feature of something

### **tolerant of (something)**

able to endure difficult conditions without being damaged

### **(be) used to**

be familiar with; be accustomed to

### **yes and no**

(idiom) partly and partly not; used when there is no clear answer to a question

### **subjectively**

based on someone's personal experience rather than objective facts

### **shiver**

shaking movement your muscles make because of feeling cold or frightened