

Factors Affecting the UK Climate – Notes

1. North Atlantic Drift

This is a warm ocean current that comes across the Atlantic from the south-west.

It makes the west and south-west of the UK milder than the rest of the country.

2. Prevailing Winds

Prevailing winds are the winds that blow most often.

The prevailing winds that affect the UK are from the west and the south-west (from the Atlantic).

These winds are moist and mild, making the south-west of the country less cold but wetter.

3. Latitude

Lines of latitude run parallel to the Equator.

Places close to the Equator are warmer than those further away. In summer the south of the UK is warmer than the north.

4. Land and Sea

Land heats up more quickly and cools down more quickly than water.

Being near to large areas of water makes places milder – the temperatures are not as extreme.

The western side of the UK which is next to the Atlantic is milder than the eastern side which is closer to the continent of Europe.

The eastern side has a much greater range of temperature than the west.

5. Air Masses

The UK is affected by different air masses.

There are two over Europe – called Tropical Continental and Polar Continental – and two over the Atlantic – called Tropical Maritime and Polar Maritime.

The line where two air masses meet is called a front.

The UK is at the same latitude as the place where the Polar Maritime and Tropical Maritime air masses meet. Our weather usually comes from the west and so the UK gets a lot of frontal rain.

6. Relief

The western side of the UK has more mountains and therefore receives more *relief rain* than the eastern side.

The climate of the UK is *temperate maritime*.

Temperate because we are in between the Equator and the North Pole and so are not too hot or too cold.

Maritime because our weather is affected by the sea: it is moist and mild.

Sometimes our climate is called *humid*. This means that we have rainfall all through the year: we do not have a wet season and a dry season like some parts of the World..