GRAMMAR · LEVEL B1

This, That, These, Those

Pointing at things in space, in time and in conversation

1 The basic rule

We use these words to point to things. Ask two questions: **Is it near or far?** and **Is it one thing or more than one?**

	Near · here / now	Far · there / then
Singular (one)	**this** **This** cup in my hand is my favourite. 	**that** Can you pass me **that** cup over there? 
Plural (more than one)	**these** **These** shoes I'm wearing are really comfortable. 	**those** Can you see **those** birds on the roof? 

Adjective or pronoun? Before a noun, they are **demonstrative adjectives** (*this cup*). Alone, they are **demonstrative pronouns** (*This is my cup. / I love those!*). The rule is the same.

2 Distance in time

The same rule works for time. **this** = connected to *now*, part of your present situation. **that** = a specific moment away from now, often in the past or in a story.

This · connected to now	That · away from now
I had coffee **this morning**. *(today)*	It was my first day at work. **That morning**, I missed the bus.
This meeting will last an hour. *(the one we're in)*	Did you go to **that meeting** with the client last month?
What are you doing **this weekend**? *(the coming one)*	Remember Bruges? It rained all **that weekend**.
These days, everybody has a smartphone. *(nowadays)*	In **those days**, people listened to the radio. *(in the past)*

Tip for French speakers: *this morning* = *ce matin*, *that morning* = *ce matin-là*. If you can add *-là* in French, you probably need **that** or **those**.

Careful with "this weekend": from Monday to Friday, it usually means the coming weekend. For the weekend that is over, say **last weekend** or **this past weekend**.

3 Distance in focus and feeling

Distance can also be in your mind. this points to what you are focused on now. that points back to something already said, or something you feel distant from.

Introducing something new → this — *Listen to **this**: I got the job!*

Replying to what someone said → that — *"Let's meet on Friday." "**That**'s a great idea!"*
*"I'm moving to Canada." "Is **that** true?"*

Feeling distant or critical → that — ***That** meeting was a waste of time.* sounds more negative than *This meeting...*

> Often both are correct, and the choice changes the meaning only a little. Native speakers choose by feeling, so don't worry if you hesitate sometimes.

4 Useful fixed expressions

Learn these as complete phrases:

Expression	When to use it
That's right. / That's it!	Agreeing with what someone said
That's a good idea.	Reacting to a suggestion
Hello, this is John.	Introducing yourself on the phone
This is my friend, Anna.	Introducing someone who is with you
Who's that?	Asking about a person over there
Is that true?	Reacting to surprising news
these days / in those days	Talking about now vs. the past

5 Quick check before the exercise

For each gap, ask yourself three questions:

1 **One or more?**
One → this / that
More → these / those

2 **Near or far?**
Here, now, in focus → this / these
There, then, already said → that / those

3 **Reply or fixed phrase?**
That's right, Is that true?, Hello, this is...