

ILL VS SICK



→ Click to preview



Master B2 Grammar Fast

- Easy-to-read sheets
- Smart grammar tables
- Designed for B2 First (FCE) success!

★ Used by 1,000+ students

ILL adjective

It means unwell, often more formal or used to describe serious or chronic conditions. More common in British English.

Not usually used to describe nausea (i.e., "feeling like vomiting").

Common collocations : be, feel, look , become, be taken, fall, get, make someone ill

- She has been ill for weeks with pneumonia.
- I can't eat bananas. They make me ill.
- She was taken ill during the flight.

SICK adjective

Generally means not feeling well or having a disease. More common in American English.

Common collocations : be, feel, look, become, fall, get, be off sick, make someone sick,

- I stayed home from work because I felt sick.
- He got sick after eating that seafood.
- John's not in the office today, he's off sick.

To be sick also means 'to vomit' in British English. In American English it means more generally 'to be unwell'.

In general health contexts, they are interchangeable:

✓ "He is sick." = ✓ "He is ill."

We use both ill and sick after a verb such as be, become, feel, look or seem:

- He became ill after eating some undercooked seafood.
- She's been feeling sick all morning and can't keep anything down.
- They took the dog to the vet because it looked very ill.

We can use sick before a noun but we don't normally use ill before a noun:

- She's been looking after a sick child this week, so she's not at work.

Talking about nausea: Use sick :

✓ "I feel sick to my stomach." ✗ "I feel ill to my stomach." (not natural)

More formal or serious conditions: Use ill.

✓ "He is critically ill." ✗ "He is critically sick." (awkward in formal writing)