

5 Different Ways French Translates TO HAVE (Explained Simply)

IMPORTANT!

If you translate TO HAVE as AVOIR every time... you're speaking French wrong — and you don't even know it.

👉 English uses “to have” for several different meanings.

👉 French changes the verb depending on the meaning.

1. TO HAVE = possession / feelings / states

👉 Use AVOIR

J'ai une voiture confortable.

I have a comfortable car.

J'ai toujours froid.

I am always cold.

J'ai vingt-cinq ans.

I am twenty-five years old.

2. TO HAVE = eat or drink

👉 Use PRENDRE

Je vais prendre un café.

I'll have a coffee.

On a pris le déjeuner à midi / on a déjeuné à midi.

We had lunch at noon.

Qu'est-ce que tu prends ? / Tu prends quoi ?

What are you having?

3. TO HAVE = do an activity

👉 Use FAIRE

Je fais une pause.

I'm having a break.

Il nous a fait un massage.

He gave us a massage.

On fait la fête samedi ?

Shall we have a party on Saturday?

4. TO HAVE = experience something

👉 Use AVOIR / SE FAIRE / SE PRENDRE

Il a eu un accident la semaine dernière.

He had an accident last week.

Ils se sont pris une amende (informal).

They had a fine / they got fined.

Je me suis fait engueuler (informal).

I had someone yell at me / I got yelled at.

5. TO HAVE TO = obligation

👉 Use DEVOIR / AVOIR À / IL FAUT

Je dois travailler ce week-end.

I have to work this weekend.

J'ai beaucoup de choses à faire.

I have a lot of things to do.

Il va falloir partir tôt demain.

We'll have to leave early tomorrow.

Other ways of expressing TO HAVE

On s'est bien amusés hier.

We had a lot of fun yesterday.

Je prends toujours une douche avant de sortir.

I always have a shower before I go out.

Je lui ai demandé de jeter un coup d'œil sur le rapport.

I asked him to have a look at the report.

On a bien discuté.

We had a good chat.

J'ai besoin de me reposer maintenant.

I need to have a rest now.