

Idiomatic Expressions with "Tener"

An idiom is an expression that cannot be immediately understood by analyzing its literal meaning. A few examples of idioms in English are:

- to be "on the go"
- to "play the field"
- to "jump the gun"

Spanish also has many idiomatic expressions. Although their literal translations sound odd to English speakers, they sound perfectly natural to native speakers. Here is one example:

- Idiom Hace mucho frío
- Literally It makes much cold
- True Meaning It is very cold

There are many idiomatic expressions that use the verb tener. This one expresses age:

- Idiom tener ____ años
- Literally to have ____ years
- True Meaning to be ____ years old

Many other expressions using tener express physical sensations:

- tener frío to be cold
- tener calor to be hot
- tener hambre to be hungry
- tener sed to be thirsty
- tener sueño to be sleepy
- tener dolor de to hurt or be sore, etc.

There are also many idiomatic expressions with tener that express sensations more psychological in nature:

- tener prisa to be in a hurry
- tener miedo a/de + noun to be afraid of something
- tener miedo a/de + infinitive to be afraid to do something
- tener celos to be jealous
- tener confianza to be confident
- tener cuidado to be careful
- tener vergüenza to be ashamed

There are other idiomatic expressions with tener as well:

- tener razón to be right
- tener éxito to be successful
- tener la culpa to be guilty
- tener suerte to be lucky
- tener lugar to take place
- tener ganas de to feel like
- tener en cuenta to take into account

When using these idiomatic expressions, conjugate the verb (tener) according to the subject of the sentence.

Yo **tengo** cinco años.

Tú **tienes** ocho años.

Pablo **tiene** dos años.

Notice that the expressions combine the verb tener with a noun:

el año	los celos
el frío	la confianza
el calor	el cuidado
la hambre	la vergüenza
la sed	la razón
el sueño	el éxito
el dolor	la culpa
la prisa	la suerte
el miedo	el lugar

Because the expressions with tener use nouns, they are modified with adjectives, not adverbs.

Tengo frío.

Tengo **mucho** frío. (**not** muy)

The first practice exercise and test will cover ten of the most common and useful of these expressions:

tener _____ años

tener calor

tener frío

tener hambre

tener sed

tener prisa

tener miedo a/de _____

tener razón

tener suerte

Practice exercises 2–4 and test 2 will cover all of the expressions in this lesson.