

FRENCH VERB «TENIR»



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Ways to use the French verb «tenir»

There are so many ways to use the French verb *tenir*. It's a very commonly used verb, and it's conjugated just like "venir". When you look it up in the dictionary, it says it means "to hold", but hold on . . . There's a lot more to this verb than that!

"Tiens" and "Tenez" can be used in a variety of ways depending on the context of the sentence.

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| je tiens | nous tenons |
| tu tiens | vous tenez |
| il - elle - on tient | ils - elles tiennent |

Here are some of the most common uses:

As an interjection to express surprise or interest:

Tiens, voilà ton livre!
Hey, here's your book!

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Tenez, c'est pour vous.
Here you go, it's for you.

To hold or give something to someone:

Tiens, prends cette pomme.
Here, take this apple.

Tenez-moi ça s'il vous plaît.
Hold this for me, please.

To indicate a change of topic or direction in conversation:

Tiens, à propos de ça...
Speaking of that...

Tenez, en parlant de vacances...
Speaking of holidays...

To express an idea or opinion:

Tiens, je crois que tu as raison.
Hey, I think you're right.

Tenez, je pense que c'est une mauvaise idée.
Well, I think it's a bad idea.

To express an order or command:

Tiens-toi bien!
Hold on tight!

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Tenez-vous tranquille!
Be quiet!

Expressing surprise or excitement:

Tiens, je ne savais pas que tu étais là!
Oh, I didn't know you were here!

Tenez, vous revoilà!
Oh, you're back!

Getting someone's attention:

Tiens, ton carnet!
Here's your notebook!

Tenez, madame, votre parapluie!
Here you go, madam, your umbrella!

Offering or handing something to someone:

Tiens, voilà le livre que tu m'as demandé.
Here, here's the book you asked for.

Tenez, je vous ai préparé des sandwichs.
Here, I made you some sandwiches.

Expressing agreement:

Tiens, c'est une bonne idée.

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Hey, that's a good idea!

Tenez, vous avez bien raison.
Oh, you're quite right.

Making a suggestion:

Tiens, et si nous allions au cinéma ce soir?
Hey, how about going to the movies tonight?

Tenez, et si on mangeait chez l'Indien pour le déjeuner?
Hey, how about eating at the Indian restaurant for lunch?

Sometimes «tenir» is followed by the preposition «à»

Tenir à = To care about, to attach importance to:

Je tiens beaucoup à ma famille.
I care a lot about my family.

Elle tient à sa réputation.
She attaches importance to her reputation.

Tenir à = To be determined to, to insist on:

Il tient à finir ce projet avant les vacances.
He is determined to finish this project before the holidays.

Je tiens à lui parler.
I insist on talking to him.

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Tenir à = To hold on to, to clutch tightly:

Il tient à son passeport.
He's holding on to his passport.

La petite fille tient à la main de sa mère.
The little girl is holding on to her mother's hand.

Sometimes «tenir» is followed by the preposition «de»

Tenir de = To come from, be the result of

Cette tradition tient de l'époque médiévale.
This tradition comes from (dates back to) the medieval era.

«Se tenir» has many meanings as a reflexive verb:

Se tenir = To stand

Il se tient droit.
He is standing up straight.

Je me tiens debout.
I am standing up.

Se tenir = To maintain or keep a certain attitude or behavior

Elle se tient toujours calme dans des situations difficiles.
She always remains calm in difficult situations.

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Les enfants se tiennent bien à l'école.
The children behave well at school.

Se tenir = To keep in touch or maintain contact

Ils se tiennent au courant des dernières nouvelles.
They keep each other updated with the latest news.

Se tenir = Events or meetings being held or taking place

La réunion se tiendra demain.
The meeting will take place tomorrow.

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