

En fait vs Au fait



Although **en fait** and **au fait** look similar, they serve completely different purposes in French. Understanding the distinction will make your speech clearer and more precise.

1. En fait - Actually / in fact

Use **en fait** when you want to **clarify, correct, or explain** something. It's often used in conversation to adjust what you've just said or to gently correct someone else.

Examples:

- **En fait**, je ne viens pas ce soir.
- **Actually**, I'm not coming tonight.

- Il pensait que c'était facile, mais **en fait**, c'était compliqué.
- He thought it was easy, but **in fact**, it was complicated.

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- **En fait**, ce restaurant est fermé le lundi.
- **In fact**, this restaurant is closed on Mondays.

Think of **en fait** as the French equivalent of “*actually*” or “*in fact.*”

2. Au fait - By the way / incidentally

Use **au fait** to **introduce a new topic or change the subject**, a lot like “*by the way*” or “*oh, by the way*” in English. It’s very common in everyday conversation and sounds friendly and natural.

Examples:

- **Au fait**, tu as vu mon message?
- **By the way**, did you see my message?

- **Au fait**, comment va ta mère?
- **By the way**, how’s your mom doing?

- **Au fait**, tu savais que Marie a changé de travail?
- **By the way**, did you know Marie changed jobs?

Use **au fait** when something pops into your head that you want to mention while talking about something else.

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3. Simple way to remember

- **En fait** - Clarifies or corrects (*actually / in fact*)
- **Au fait** - Adds or introduces a new topic (*by the way*)

They may sound similar, but their functions are opposite. **En fait** looks backward to clarify, while **au fait** moves the conversation forward.

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