

# Tout à coup vs Tout d'un coup



Both **tout à coup** and **tout d'un coup** translate as “suddenly,” but they are not always interchangeable. Understanding the nuance will make your French sound natural.

## 1. Tout à coup - Suddenly / all of a sudden

Use **tout à coup** for events that happen **unexpectedly and often dramatically**. It's common in storytelling or when describing surprising moments.

### Examples:

- **Tout à coup**, le chat a sauté sur la table.
- **Suddenly**, the cat jumped on the table.
  
- Il faisait sombre et **tout à coup** une lumière s'est allumée.
- It was dark, and **all of a sudden** a light turned on.

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- Elle marchait tranquillement, et **tout à coup** elle a entendu un cri.
- She was walking quietly, and **suddenly** she heard a scream.

Think of **tout à coup** as highlighting **the element of surprise** in the moment.

## 2. Tout d'un coup - All at once / in one go

Use **tout d'un coup** when referring to **multiple actions or things happening at the same time**. It emphasizes **simultaneity** more than suddenness.

### Examples:

- Les enfants sont arrivés **tout d'un coup**.
- The children all arrived **at once**.
  
- Il a tout pris **tout d'un coup**.
- He took everything **all at once**.
  
- Les invités ont commencé à parler **tout d'un coup**.
- The guests all started talking **at the same time**.

Think of **tout d'un coup** as “everything happening together,” not just suddenly.

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### 3. Simple way to remember

- **Tout à coup** - Sudden event, surprising moment
- **Tout d'un coup** - Multiple things happening simultaneously

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