

# 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.