

## WARE'S LANGUAGE NOTES

### Having what you are and taking what you have

Hungry? Thirsty? How can it be that when you are tired, hot and hungry, you say *je suis fatigué*, but *j'ai chaud* and *j'ai faim*? There are a whole group of words to describe your state of mind or how you are feeling where you use the verb "avoir" – and have the feelings, rather than "être" to be.

The obvious pairs are hot and cold – *j'ai chaud*, *j'ai froid*. If you say *je suis chaud* or *je suis chaude*, it means that you are feeling randy and can convey entirely the wrong suggested solution.

Then there are the two we started off with – *J'ai faim* (I'm hungry) and *J'ai soif* (I'm thirsty). If someone offers you an *andouille* or invites you to stay and join them in a plate of *tripes à la mode de Cannes* (tinned tripe), you can say "Merci, je n'ai pas faim", when you really mean "*Je n'ai plus faim*" – not hungry any more having just seen what you are offering. While we are on this subject, it is unwise for a lady to tell her host, when being offered more, "Merci, je suis pleine". It suggests an addition to the family is on the way. Better to say "*J'ai très bien mangé*" (I've eaten very well).

In French, you aren't right or wrong, you have right or wrong on your side – *Moi, j'ai raison* (I'm right) *Vous avez tort* (You're wrong). Luck is like that, too. You aren't lucky, it's something you possess, albeit fleetingly, perhaps – *Il a eu de la chance* – he was lucky – he might have come to a sticky end but he didn't, or the number that came up for him was his lottery ticket. A more familiar expression is "*Tu as de la veine*" – you are lucky (notice you still have it rather than be it) but you can also call someone who seems lucky "veinard" – *il est veinard, celui-là* – *he's a jammy b\*\**.

You can also have fear – *J'ai peur* (I'm afraid), and astonishingly, you can say in French that you have shame – *J'ai honte*. Though it is probably used rather more often the other way round – *Vous n'avez pas honte?* – Have you no shame? (useful when you meet a brick wall when complaining about something!).

Need is another have item, and it is complicated in French because evidently you have need *of* something. I need a new car? *J'ai besoin d'une nouvelle voiture*. And it gets worse : *J'en ai besoin* parce que ma voiture actuelle ne marche plus – I need it because my current car doesn't go any more (See my article about the donkey in the goal for more on "en").

Of course, you may say you need something when it's really only a question of fancying it.

"Avoir envie" is nothing to do with envy, just liking the idea of something. So "I feel like an ice cream" is "*J'ai envie d'une glace*", just as "*Tu as envie d'aller au cinéma*" is "Do you fancy going to the cinema" (notice that as usual the second verb "going" in French is the infinitive "aller"). And again, if you want to say do you fancy it (icecream of cinema) it will be "*Tu en as envie?*" Or perhaps you have been eating icecreams or going to the cinema all week, and are fed up with it, "*J'en ai marre*" or even "*j'en ai ras-le-bol*" (Johnnay Raalbol) - I've had it up to here.

A last "avoir" phrase is one you might use when you are describing someone – *Il a l'air fâché* – he looks angry. *Elle a l'air content* – she looks pleased. I suppose in a literary context we might say in English "She has a contented air about her". Strangely, the adjective is always masculine singular, in this instance not agreeing with her but with l'air.

So with all these expressions using *avoir*, you would think that when you have a sandwich, or even a good time, this would be *avoir* in French as well. But you would have, no, be, wrong.

You "prendre" food and drink rather than have them. *Moi, je vais prendre une bière* – I'm going to have a beer. *Jean prend le petit déjeuner à huit heures* – Jean has breakfast at 8am. *Qu'est-ce que vous prenez ?* – What will you have ?

And having a good time is completely different – *s'amuser*. *J'espère que vous vous êtes bien amusé à lire cet article!* – I hope you had a good time reading this article.