

In this edition:
more on
questions and
avoir and *être*

Lesson 46

Notes

Nous avons trois frères

Looking again at constructing questions and the irregular verbs, *avoir* and *être*

Programme Notes

Welcome to Coffee Break French, the podcast aimed at independent learners of French. Our regular podcasts will introduce you to the French language in easy steps. In this week's notes we'll take a further look at constructing questions and answers and we'll also look at two irregular verbs, *avoir* and *être*.

Last week we looked at the following four types of question.

qu'est-ce que tu fais?
what are you doing?

où est-ce que tu vas?
where are you going?

à quelle heure est-ce que tu arrives?
at what time do you arrive?

pourquoi est-ce que tu vas au cinéma?
why are you going to the cinema?

Last week, Mark set Anna some homework. She had to come up with two conversations, each with three questions and answers similar to the ones we have been looking at. The conversations are shown below. In Conversation 1, Mark gives Anna another possible answer (A2) for her third question. *Je m'entends bien avec mes collègues* means "I get on well with my colleagues." You can change this phrase to say you get on well with different people, eg. *je m'entends bien avec mon frère* ("I get on well with my brother") or *je m'entends bien avec ma sœur* ("I get on well with my sister").

Notice that the word for "my" changes depending on whether we are talking about a masculine or feminine person or indeed more than one person:

- *Mon* is used when the object is masculine and singular, eg. *mon chapeau* ("my hat.")
- *Ma* is used when the object is feminine and singular, eg. *ma mère* ("my mother.")
- *Mes* is used when the object is masculine **or** feminine and plural, eg. *mes chaussures* ("my shoes.")

Conversation 1

Q	Qu'est-ce que tu fais?	What are you doing?
A	Je mange avec mes collègues.	I am eating with my colleagues.
Q	À quelle heure est-ce que tu manges avec tes collègues?	At what time do you eat with your colleagues?
A	Je mange avec mes collègues à une heure.	I eat with my colleagues at one o'clock.
Q	Pourquoi est-ce que tu manges avec tes collègues?	Why do you eat with your colleagues? / Why are you eating with your colleagues?
A1	Parce que j'aime manger.	Because I like to eat. / Because I like eating.
A2	Parce que j'aime mes collègues. Je m'entends bien avec mes collègues.	Because I like my colleagues. I get on well with my colleagues.

Conversation 2

Q	Où est-ce que tu vas?	Where are you going?
A	Je vais au cinéma.	I'm going to the cinema.
Q	À quelle heure est-ce que tu arrives au cinéma?	At what time are you arriving at the cinema?
A	J'arrive au cinéma à huit heures.	I'm arriving at the cinema at eight o'clock.
Q	Pourquoi est-ce que tu vas au cinéma?	Why are you going to the cinema?
A	Je vais au cinéma parce que j'adore les films.	I'm going to the cinema because I love films.

We are now going to look at two irregular verbs. It is very often the verbs that are used most commonly in a language that are in fact irregular, eg. *aller* which we have already looked at. We are now going to look at *avoir*, meaning "to have" and *être*, meaning "to be."

The table below shows the conjugation of *avoir* in the present tense. Note that to say "I have" you say *j'ai*. The *je* is shortened to *j'* as this part of the verb starts with a vowel. In the *ils/elles ont* part, you pronounce the *-s* at the end of *ils* or *elles* since *ont* starts with a vowel.

avoir (to have) - present tense	
j'ai	nous avons
tu as	vous avez
il / elle a	ils / elles ont

Below are some examples of the verb *avoir* in context.

il a une sœur
he has a sister

nous avons trois frères
we have three brothers

elles ont une voiture
they have a car (female version)

j'ai faim
I am hungry

nous avons faim
we are hungry

les enfants ont faim
the children are hungry

Let's now look at another irregular verb, *être*. It is really quite irregular but the good news is that we have already come across some phrases using *être*. Let's look at the six parts of *être* in the present tense.

être (to be) - present tense	
je suis	nous sommes
tu es	vous êtes
il / elle est	ils / elles sont

Although *ils sont* ("they are") sounds quite similar to *ils ont* ("they have"), it is important to recognise the difference when you hear them spoken. In *ils ont*, the -s at the end of *ils* is pronounced but it sounds more like a z than an s. Whereas in *ils sont*, you do not pronounce the -s at the end of *ils* but there is a stronger s- sound at the start of *sont*.

Below are some phrases using *être* in the present tense.

je suis écossais(e)

I am Scottish

il est américain

he is American

nous sommes professeurs

we are teachers

Note that the information listed below is part of the test in the bonus podcast. We would advise you to listen to the podcast before you read the content below.

Bonus episode test		
1	Je mange avec mes collègues à la cantine parce que nous aimons parler ensemble.	I eat with my colleagues in the canteen / restaurant because we like to talk together.
2	Il mange au restaurant avec sa copine parce qu'ils aiment la nourriture italienne.	He eats at the restaurant with his girlfriend because they like Italian food.
3	Nous allons au cinéma ce soir à 20h parce qu'il y a un bon film français et nous adorons le cinéma français.	We're going to the cinema this evening at 8pm because there is a good French film and we love French cinema.
4	Vous allez au supermarché ce soir parce que vous n'avez pas de pain?	Are you going to the supermarket this evening because you don't have any bread?
5	Elle va à la plage aujourd'hui à 15h parce qu'il fait beau et elle aime nager dans la mer.	She's going to the beach today at 3pm because the weather is nice and she likes swimming in the sea.
6	Je parle avec Mélanie ce matin parce que nous préparons une présentation ensemble en français.	I'm speaking to Mélanie this morning because we are preparing a presentation together in French.
7	Luc écoute de la musique tous les jours avant de manger parce qu'il étudie la musique classique à l'université cette année.	Luc listens to music every day before eating because he is studying classical music at university this year.
8	À quelle heure est-ce que tu vas à Bordeaux et pourquoi est-ce que tu vas avec Cécile?	At what time are you going to Bordeaux and why are you going with Cécile?
9	Nous allons au cinéma ce soir mais tu as beaucoup de devoirs donc tu restes à la maison.	We are going to the cinema this evening but you have lots of homework so you're staying at home.
10	Martine et Stéphanie aiment bien apprendre l'anglais et elles parlent anglais avec Bob tous les jours à midi.	Martine and Stéphanie really like learning English and they speak English with Bob every day at noon.