
Fact Sheet – How to use Savoir and Connaître

OBJECTIFS DE LA LEÇON

1. to learn the difference between the verbs savoir and connaître

NIVEAU

A1 - niveau découverte (beginner)

INTRODUCTION

Savoir and Connaître both mean "to know" in French, but how to know when to use one rather than the other? Let's start by reviewing these two verbs in the present tense.

Savoir is conjugated as follow in the present tense:

- je sais
- tu sais
- il sait
- elle sait
- on sait
- nous savons
- vous savez
- ils savent
- elles savent

Connaître is conjugated as follow in the present tense:

- je connais
- tu connais
- il connaît
- elle connaît
- on connaît
- nous connaissons
- vous connaissez
- ils connaissent
- elles connaissent

USE CASES

Savoir is used to express something that **you know how to do**. It is usually followed by an infinitive verb.

Examples:

- ▶ Je sais tricoter.
- ▶ I know how to knit.
- ▶ Elle sait parler espagnol.
- ▶ She knows how to speak Spanish.

In English, you say "I know how to do something", however comment is often omitted in French. Although it is not wrong per say, it is just rarely used, except if you want to emphasise the fact that you indeed know how to do it.

Savoir can also be used to refer to specific knowledge, as in knowing specific facts or information.

Examples:

- ▶ Je sais que Paris est en France.
- ▶ I know that Paris is in France.
- ▶ Vous savez quelle heure il est ?
- ▶ Do you know what time it is?

It is not followed by an infinitive here, but by a word leading up to a fact.

So the verb savoir is all about knowing how to do something and knowing specific facts!

Connaître is generally followed by a direct object and not an infinitive, it refers to **something**, **somewhere** or **someone** you know.

Examples:

- ▶ Je connais bien Sam.
- ▶ I know Sam well.
- ▶ Il ne connaît pas Paris.
- ▶ He doesn't know Paris.
- ▶ Nous la connaissons.
- ▶ We know her. (Though the object is before the verb here, it is still a direct object to the verb)

EXCEPTION

Be careful when we are talking about 'knowing something by heart', as both verbs can in fact be used.

Examples:

- ▶ Je connais cette chanson par coeur.
- ▶ Je sais cette chanson par coeur.
- ▶ I know this song by heart.

EXERCICE

Now let's play a game : which verbs would you use in the following sentences?

1. Tom _____ jouer aux échecs.
2. Je _____ cette rue car j'y suis né.
3. Charlotte ne _____ pas anger
4. _____ - vous parler français ?
5. Nous _____ les paroles par coeur.

RÉPONSES :

1. Tom sait jouer aux échecs.
2. Je connais cette rue car j'y suis né.
3. Charlotte ne sait pas anger.
4. Savez-vous parler français ?
5. Nous connaissons/savons les paroles par coeur.