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adjectives which
come *before* the
noun

Lesson 49

Notes

Une vieille maison

Adjectives which come *before* the noun

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 continue to look at French adjectives but instead of looking at adjectives which come after the noun, we look at some adjectives which come before the noun.

Last week we looked at some adjectives that have fairly regular patterns. Since Anna was not with us last week, Mark started this week's lesson by revising some adjectives with her.

une maison noire

a black house

deux maisons noires

two black houses

deux livres noirs

two black books

Mark then asked Anna to come up with an adjective which does not change from masculine to feminine but which changes from singular to plural. Anna gave the example *rouge* meaning "red."

j'ai une voiture rouge

I have a red car

j'ai deux voitures rouges

I have two red cars

We also looked at a group of adjectives last week where the sound changes from masculine to feminine, eg. *blanc* ("white").

un livre blanc

a white book

la Maison Blanche

the White House

The masculine plural form is therefore *blancs* and the feminine plural form is *blanches*.

As you already know, all the adjectives we looked at in Lesson 48 come after the noun. However not all adjectives follow this rule. This week we take a look at a group of adjectives which follow a different rule and come before the noun. The first adjective Mark and Anna look at is *nouveau* which means “new.” This is of course the masculine singular form.

j’ai écrit un nouveau livre
I have written a new book

The feminine singular form of *nouveau* is *nouvelle*.

j’ai acheté une nouvelle maison
I have bought a new house

The plural forms of the adjective sound the same as the singular forms but as usual, there are changes in spelling. The *-x* and the *-s* are silent.

j’ai écrit deux nouveaux livres
I have written two new books

j’ai acheté deux nouvelles maisons
I have bought two new houses

Mark and Anna then looked at another adjective that comes before the noun: *beau*, which means “beautiful” or “good-looking.” This is a very common adjective in French. The equivalent word in English depends on the noun we are describing.

un beau livre
a beautiful book

The feminine singular form of *beau* is formed in a similar way to *nouvelle*. *Nouveau* becomes *nouvelle* and *beau* therefore becomes *belle*.

une belle maison
a beautiful house

une belle femme
a beautiful woman

The plural forms are formed in the same way as *nouveaux* and *nouvelles*.

deux beaux livres
two beautiful books

deux beaux garçons
two good-looking / handsome boys

deux belles filles
two beautiful girls

deux belles maisons
two beautiful houses

The next adjective Mark and Anna looked at it is *vieux*, meaning “old.” You may remember the following phrase from the lessons recorded in Pornic, where we visited in the summer.

le vieux port
the old port

The feminine singular form of *vieux* is *vieille*. Listen carefully to the pronunciation of *vieille* in the lesson as it is quite difficult.

la vieille ville
the old town

The masculine plural form of *vieux* does not change as *vieux* already ends in an *-x*.

les vieux ports
the old ports

To get the feminine plural form, we simply add an *-s* as we have done previously.

les vieilles villes
the old towns

j'ai trois vieux livres
I have three old books

j'habite dans une vieille maison
I live in an old house

The next word looked at was *grand*, which we already know means “big.”

le grand musée
the big museum

In the feminine form, *grand* becomes *grande* and the *-d-* is pronounced.

la grande piscine
the big swimming pool

The plural forms are constructed simply by adding *-s*.

les grands musées
the big museums

les grandes maisons
the big houses

One of the first words we learned when we started Coffee Break French was *bon*, which means “good.” It forms part of the word *bonjour*, which literally means “good day.” The feminine singular form is *bonne*. The sound is no longer nasal as it is in *bon*. Listen carefully to Mark’s pronunciation and the difference in sound between *bon* and *bonne*. The plural forms are *bons* and *bonnes*.

As Mark mentioned, all of the adjectives that come before the noun are somehow related to the word BAGS. BAGS is actually an acronym and each letter stands for something that is described by an adjective which comes before the noun.

B - Beauty - eg. *beau*

A - Age - eg. *nouveau, vieux, jeune* (“young”)

G - Goodness - *bon, mauvais* (“bad”)

S - Size - *grand, petit* (“small”)

Adjective	m singular	f singular	m plural	f plural
new	nouveau	nouvelle	nouveaux	nouvelles
beautiful / good-looking	beau	belle	beaux	belles
old	vieux	vieille	vieux	vieilles
young	jeune	jeune	jeunes	jeunes
big	grand	grande	grands	grandes
small	petit	petite	petits	petites
good	bon	bonne	bons	bonnes
bad	mauvais	mauvaise	mauvais	mauvaises

As is the case with any rule, there are exceptions. These exceptions will be dealt with in future episodes of *Coffee Break French*.

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	Le jeune garçon parle avec la jeune fille.	The young boy is speaking to the young girl.
2	Nous avons une vieille maison.	We have an old house.
3	La femme est très belle.	The woman is very beautiful.
4	Les petits enfants vont à l'école.	The little children are going to the school.
5	J'habite dans une grande maison.	I live in a large house.
6	Les nouveaux livres arrivent demain.	The new books arrive tomorrow.
7	Mon fils est beau et ma fille est belle.	My son is handsome and my daughter is beautiful.
8	Ils ont une petite voiture.	They have a small car.
9	Le vieux château est à côté du nouveau port	The old castle is next to the new port.
10	Je voudrais acheter une grande table.	I would like to buy a large table.



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