

Nouns

A **noun** is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea. Examples of nouns in English include ‘park’, ‘Paris’ and ‘noun’. In French, every noun is either **masculine** or **feminine**. This does not mean the nouns are actually ‘male’ or ‘female’. It is simply a way to split nouns into two groups. Here are some ways to identify whether a noun is masculine or feminine.

Masculine

Most French words that end in ‘**age**’ are **masculine**:

- Chauff**age** - Heating
- Vill**age** - Village
- From**age** - Cheese

There are also **types of words** which are usually **masculine** such as days of the week and months:

- Lundi** - Monday
- Samedi** - Saturday
- Janvier** - January
- Février** - February

Feminine

Most French words that end in ‘**e**’ are **feminine**:

- Patinoire**e** - Ice rink
- Piscine**e** - Pool
- Robe**e** - Dress

Types of words which are feminine include, most countries ending in **e** and female family members:

- France**e** - France
- Espagne**e** - Spain
- Maman** - Mum
- Soeur** - Sister

There are some exceptions to these rules. For example the noun ‘**cage**’ means ‘cage’ but it is **feminine** despite ending in **age**.

And the noun ‘**stade**’ means ‘stadium’ but it is **masculine** despite ending in an **e**.

In French, there are also nouns which can be **either gender**, these are usually words referring to **people or animals**.

Enfant - Child

If the noun is talking about **children in general**, it will be **masculine**. However, it is **feminine** if it refers to a **specific child** that is female.

Articles

In grammar, an **article** is a word like '**a**', '**an**' or '**the**' that comes before a **noun** to specify whether it is **general** or **specific**. In English, there are **definite** articles and **indefinite** articles.

Definite article - 'the' - when talking about something specific - I like the dog

Indefinite article - 'a' / 'an' / 'some' - when talking about something general - I have a dog

French also has **definite** and **indefinite** articles. But in French, they change depending on the **gender** (masculine or feminine) and **number** (singular or plural) of the noun.

Definite articles:

	masculine	feminine
singular	Le	La
plural	Les	Les
	Le chat - The cat Les chats - The cats	La main - The hand Les mains - The hands

When 'le' or 'la' come **before a vowel** or a **silent h** with a vowel after it, they get contracted to **L'**.

L'hôpital - The hospital

L'histoire - The story / history

This does **not** happen to **Les**.

Indefinite articles:

	masculine	feminine
singular	Un	Une
plural	Des	Des
	Un chat - A cat Des chats - Some cats	Une maison - A house Des maisons - Some houses

Making nouns plural in French:

A lot of words can be made plural by adding an '**s**' onto the end,
However there are **some exceptions** to this.

Words ending in **-eau** are usually made plural by adding an '**x**'.

L'oiseau - The bird

Les oiseaux - The birds

Adjectives

An adjective is a word that describes a noun. Examples in English are ‘green’, ‘slow’ and ‘English’. In French the adjective usually comes **after** the noun, and must also agree with the noun’s **gender** and **number**. This means when an adjective describes a singular, masculine noun, the adjective must also be in the singular, masculine form. Here is how to do that with different French adjectives. Most adjectives follow these rules:

Most French adjectives:

	masculine	feminine
singular	grand	grande
plural	grands	grandes

le grand chat – the big cat
les grands chats – the big cats La grande maison – The big house
Les grandes maisons – The big houses

For most adjectives, adding an **e** onto the masculine form makes them **feminine**.
Similarly an **s** can be added to make them **plural**.

Adjectives ending in e:

	masculine	feminine
singular	proche	proche
plural	proches	proches

Le proche champ – The close field
Les proches champs – The close fields La proche école – The close school
Les proches écoles – The close schools



Regular adjectives ending in **e** have the **same form** for masculine and feminine.

Other rules:

In French there are special adjectives which go **before** the noun, **grande** and **proche** are examples of this. Adjectives describing beauty, age, newness, goodness or size typically do this. An acronym for this is **BANGS**.

Some adjectives have a special 5th form for when they are **before a vowel** or **silent h followed by a vowel**.

Un beau garçon – A beautiful boy

Un bel homme - A beautiful man

This is only for **singular** nouns.

Possessive Adjectives

Possessive adjectives show **ownership** or **relationship** — they tell us whose something is.

In English, these are words like **my**, **your**, **his**, **her**, **our**, **their**.

In French, they agree with the gender and number of the noun they modify, not the owner.

Owner	Masculine singular	Feminine singular	Plural	English
je	mon	ma	mes	my
tu	ton	ta	tes	your (singular)
il / elle/ on	son	sa	ses	his / her
nous	notre	notre	nos	our
vous	votre	votre	vos	your (plural)
ils / elles	leur	leur	leurs	their

Ma sœur et **mon frère** adorent **leur** nouvelle école.

My sister and my brother love their new school.

Ton père et **ta mère** ont vendu **leur** maison.

Your father and your mother sold their house.

Nos amis et **nos cousins** viennent à **votre** fête.

Our friends and our cousins are coming to your party.

Verbs

A verb is an action word. Examples in English include ‘play’, ‘run’ and ‘include’. In English, we change the verb slightly depending on who is doing it and when they did it. For example we say ‘I play’, ‘he plays’ and ,in the past tense, ‘I played’. This is called **verb conjugation** – the process of changing a verb depending on who is doing it and when they did it.

An infinitive is the base form of a verb, before you change (or “conjugate”) it. It’s the form you’ll find in the dictionary — the “to + verb” form in English. For example, ‘to run’, ‘to speak’.

There are three types of infinitive in French: ones that end in ‘-er’ (e.g. parler – to speak), ones that end in ‘-ir’ (e.g. finir – to finish), and ones that end in ‘-re’ (e.g. vendre – to sell).

Present tense endings for French verbs:

	-er	-ir	-re
Je I	e	is	s
Tu You	es	is	s
Il / Elle / On He / She	e	it	-
Nous We	ons	issons	ons
Vous You (plural)	ez	issez	ez
Ils / Elles They	ent	issent	ent

Subject pronouns:

Subject pronouns are words that indicate **who** is doing a verb, for example in the phrase I play, ‘I’ is the subject pronoun.

When ‘Je’ comes before a verb starting with a **vowel** or **silent h followed by vowel**, it is contracted to **J’**.

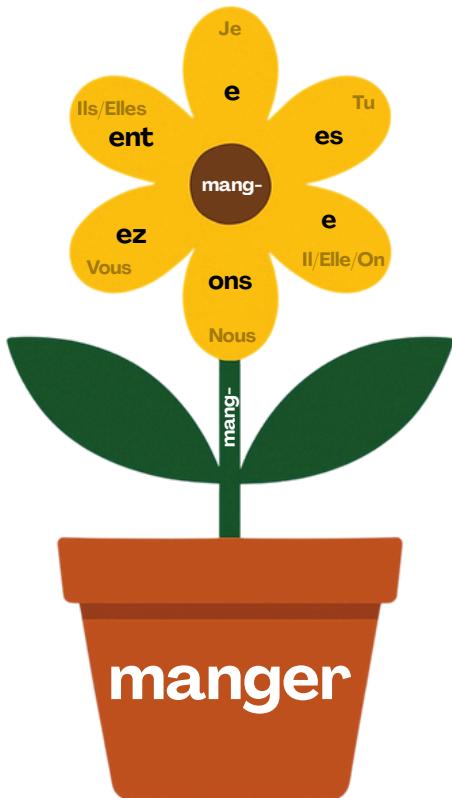
J’ai – I have

The subject pronoun ‘on’, can be used to mean ‘we’ or ‘one’ when talking generally.

On doit être sympa – **We/You** have to be kind.

It can be used to talk about **everyone in general**, like how you is sometimes used in English.

Conjugation



How to conjugate a verb:

Step 1: Remove the ending from your infinitive:

Manger becomes 'mang-'
This 'mang-' is called the **verb stem**.

Step 2: Choose subject pronoun

Think about **who** is doing the verb and find your subject pronoun. e.g. Vous - You (pl)

Step 3: Add appropriate ending to verb stem

Find which ending matches Vous, -ez, and add it onto the verb stem.

Vous mangez - You (pl) eat

Reflexive Verbs

SUBJECT PRONOUN	REFLEXIVE PRONOUN
JE	ME
TU	TE
IL/ELLE/ON	SE
NOUS	NOUS
VOUS	VOUS
ILS/ELLES	SE

Reflexive verbs:

Reflexive verbs are verbs which usually have an action done to the subject of the verb, but do not have to be. These verbs need **reflexive pronouns**, which in English are words like 'myself'. These make it clear who the action is being done to.

Je **me** lave - I wash **myself**
Il **se** couche - He goes to bed
Nous **nous** amusons - We enjoy ourselves

The reflexive pronoun goes **between** the **subject pronoun** and the **conjugated verb**.

When reflexive verbs are written in the infinitive form, (in the dictionary, equivalent to English 'to + verb') The reflexive pronoun **se** is included; this has to be changed when conjugating to **match the subject pronoun**.

se laver = to wash oneself
tu **te** laves = you wash yourself

Negatives

Negatives are used when you want to say that somebody **does not** do something,

Je **ne mange pas** de chocolat - I **don't** eat chocolate

Je **ne me leve pas** à bonne heure - I **don't** wake up early

Negatives are formed by adding a **ne** and **pas** around the **conjugated verb**, note that **reflexive pronouns** goes between the **ne** and **conjugated verb**.

Other negative structures:

Ne ... rien = Nothing

Je **n'ai rien** - I don't have **anything**

Ne ... personne = Nobody

Je **ne connais personne** - I don't know **anyone**
personne ne le sait* - **nobody knows**

Ne ... nullepart = Nowhere

Il **n'existe nullepart** - It doesn't exist anywhere

Ne ... jamais = Never

Nous **ne nous entendons jamais** - We never get along

Ne ... que = Only

Il **n'a que** sa maman - He's only got his mom

Ne ... Aucun(e)(s)

Il **n'y a aucune** chance - There is not a single chance

Je **n'ai aucun** argent - I don't have any money at all

Ne ... guère = Barely / Hardly ever

Je **ne me promène guère** - I hardly ever go on walks

*Some negative structures can be '**reversed**'

Rien n'arrive - Nothing happens

The '**Ne + verb + rien**' becomes '**Rien ne + verb**'

Irregular Verbs

There are some verbs that do not follow these ending patterns at all. These verbs are called **irregular verbs**. They change unpredictably so their conjugations must be memorised. Three very important ones are **aller** (to go), **être** (to be) and **avoir** (to have).

SUBJECT PRONOUN	ALLER	ÊTRE	AVOIR
JE	VAIS	SUIS	AI
TU	VAS	ES	AS
IL/ELLE/ON	VA	EST	A
NOUS	ALLONS	SOMMES	AVONS
VOUS	ALLEZ	ÊTES	AVEZ
ILS/ELLES	VONT	SONT	ONT

Common irregular verbs:

Faire - To do/make
 Boire - To drink
 Dire - To say
 Devoir - To have to
 Savoir - To know a fact
 Vouloir - To want
 Pouvoir - To be able to
 Venir - To come
 Partir - To leave
 Dormir - To sleep
 Vivre - To live
 Prendre - To take
 Mettre - To put

Aller and Être are especially important, not only because they're so commonly used, but also because they are used as **auxiliary verbs** in other tenses. (They are used to help form the perfect and near future tenses)

Stem - changing verbs

Not all irregular verbs have no pattern, **stem-changing verbs** are verbs where the **verb stem** changes spelling when you conjugate it, but the endings stay regular.

Je **met**s
 Tu **met**s
 Il **met**
 Nous **mett**ons
 Vous **mett**ez
 Ils **mett**ent

The stem of the verb (Mett-) is changed to (Met-) for the Je, Tu, and Il forms, Then the stem goes back to normal for the Nous, Vous, and Ils forms.

Near future tense:

Meaning:

Saying something in the **near future tense** in French is the same as saying, ‘**going to + verb**’ in English.

I am **going to eat** - Je **vais manger**
 He is **going to go to bed** - Il **va se coucher**

How to form it:

The near future tense is formed by **conjugating** the verb **aller**, and adding an **infinitive**.

The conjugation of **aller** should match the **subject** (the person/thing doing the action)

If the verb after **aller** is **reflexive**, the **reflexive pronoun must match the subject**, even though the **infinitive** stays unconjugated.

We are going to get up early - Nous **allons nous lever tôt**
 They are going to shower - Ils **vont se doucher**

Perfect tense:

Meaning:

The perfect tense is used to describe single, completed actions in the past, and can be translated to **having done something**. (e.g. I walked my dog)

Je **suis allé(e)** au marché - I went to the market / I have gone to the market
 Il a **mangé** - He ate / He has eaten

How to form it for most verbs:

The **perfect tense** is formed roughly in the same way as the near future tense, however, instead of having an infinitive after **aller**, there is a **past participle after avoir**.

The **past participle** of most verbs can be found by adding one of 3 endings to the **verb stem**:

ER	IR	RE
-é	-i	-u

Aller - **Allé**
 Choisir - **Choisi**
 Perdre - **Perdu**

However there are verbs with irregular past participles such as **boire** - **bu**

Exceptions and reflexive verbs:

There are certain verbs which in the perfect tense **do not use avoir** as the auxiliary verb. They instead use **être** as their **auxiliary verb** and the **past participles have to agree with number and gender of the subject.**

This is true for **all reflexive verbs** and certain verbs (usually to do with movement) which are listed in **DR & MRS VANDERTRAMP.**

Je me suis couché(e) - I went to bed
Il est allé au magasin - He went to the shop
Elle s'est levée tard - She got up late

In the perfect tense, the **reflexive pronoun** goes between the **subject** and the **auxiliary verb (être).**

The reason why there is an **(e)** in brackets in the first example is to show that the **past participle** will change to **agree with the gender of the subject.**

For mixed groups (e.g. saying **nous** referring to boys and girls) **the agreement is the same as a plural masculine word.**

Group with all boys:
Nous sommes allés au parc - We went to the park
Group with all girls:
Nous sommes allées au parc - We went to the park

Modal verbs

Modal verbs are verbs which can express necessity or ability and are followed by infinitives, the most common modal verbs are: **Devoir** (to have to), **Pouvoir** (to be able to), **Savoir** (to know how to) and **Falloir** (to be necessary).

These verbs are **irregular**, but do follow a pattern:

	DEVOIR	POUVOIR	SAVOIR
JE	DOIS	PEUX	SAIS
TU	DOIS	PEUX	SAIS
IL/ELLE/ON	DOIT	PEUT	SAIT
NOUS	DEVONS	POUVONS	SAVONS
VOUS	DEVEZ	POUVEZ	SAVEZ
ILS/ELLES	DOIVENT	PEUVENT	SAVENT

Falloir (It is necessary to):

Falloir is special, because it is an **impersonal verb**. This means there's only one conjugation to worry about for each tense, as it's only conjugated in the **3rd person singular** (Il/Elle/On form).

Il faut faire les devoirs - **It's necessary to** do the homework
Il fallait écouter en cours - **It was necessary to** listen in class

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
IL FALLAIT	IL FAUT	IL FAUDRA

*Il fallait is in the imperfect tense

*Il faudra is in the simple future tense

Imperfect tense

Meaning:

The **imperfect tense** is used to express **habitual actions** and **interrupted past actions**.

It can translate to: I **was doing** something or I **used to do** something.

Je **regardais** la télé quand mon père **est arrivé**

- I **was watching TV** when my dad arrived - interrupted action

Nous **allions** à l'école tous les jours - We **used to go** to school every day - habitual action

Je **me levais** à sept heures - I **used to get up** at 7 o'clock - habitual action

How to form:

To form the imperfect tense, the verb is conjugated normally, except that instead of using the **verb stem**, there's a **different stem** formed by **removing -ons** from the **present tense we form**.

Some verbs such as **être** have irregular stems (**ét--**).

	all infinitives	parler
Je I	ais	parlais
Tu You	ais	parlais
Il / Elle / On He / She	ait	parlait
Nous We	ions	parlions
Vous You (plural)	iez	parliez
Ils / Elles They	aient	parlaient

Simple future tense

Meaning:

Using the near future tense in French is the same as saying something **will** do something in English.

J'**irai** à la patinoire – I **will** go to the ice rink
 Nous **nous entendrons** bien – We **will** get along well

	all infinitives	parler
Je I	ai	parlerai
Tu You	as	parleras
Il / Elle / On He / She	a	parlera
Nous We	ons	parlerons
Vous You [plural]	ez	parlerez
Ils / Elles They	ont	parleront

Note that the endings are added to the infinitive without getting rid of the 'ar' or 'er'. For 're' verbs the 'e' is lost.

For example, 'attendre' becomes 'j'attendrai' – I will wait

Conditional

Meaning:

Using the conditional in French is the same as saying something would do something in English.

J'**irais** à la patinoire – I **would** go to the ice rink.
 Nous **nous entendrions** bien – We **would** get along well.
 Je **voudrais** ... – I **would** like ...

	all infinitives	parler
Je I	ais	parlerais
Tu You	ais	parlerais
Il / Elle / On He / She	ait	parlerait
Nous We	ions	parlerions
Vous You [plural]	iez	parleriez
Ils / Elles They	aint	parleraient

Note that the endings are added to the infinitive without getting rid of the 'ar' or 'er'. For 're' verbs the 'e' is lost.

For example, 'attendre' becomes 'j'attendrais' – I would wait

Irregular Stems

In French, most verbs form the future and conditional tenses by adding the appropriate endings to the infinitive form of the verb.

However, some verbs are irregular, meaning their stems change before you add the endings.

These irregular stems are the same for both the future simple and the conditional, so once you learn them, you can use them for both tenses.

For example,

être becomes ser-
avoir becomes aur-
aller becomes ir-
faire becomes fer-

Other common irregular stems include

pourr- (**from pouvoir, “to be able to”**),
voudr- (**from vouloir, “to want”**)
saur- (**from savoir, “to know”**)
devr- (**from devoir, “to have to”**),
viendr- (**from venir, “to come”**)
verr- (**from voir, “to see”**).

After the irregular stem, you simply add the normal future endings (-ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ont) or conditional endings (-ais, -ais, -ait, -ions, -iez, -aient).

For example, *je serai* means “I will be,” while *je serais* means “I would be.”

Adverbs

An **adverb** is a word that describes or modifies a **verb, adjective**, or another **adverb**. It tells us **how, when, where, or to what extent** something happens.

Elle parle **doucement**. → She speaks **softly**.

Il court **vite**. → He runs **fast**.

Je suis **très** fatigué. → I am **very** tired.

Most adjectives undergo the following process to be turned into adverbs:

(1)

lent

heureux

Adjective

(2)

lente

heureuse

Make adjective feminine

(3)

lentement

slowly

heureusement

fortunately

Add '-ment'

Not all adverbs are made like this:

Some French adverbs come from adjectives ending in **-ant** or **-ent**. To form them, you remove the ending and add **-amment** or **-emment**.

constant → **constamment** (**constantly**)

prudent → **prudemment** (**carefully**)

évident → **évidemment** (**obviously**)

récent → **récemment** (**recently**)

Il travaille **constamment**. → He works constantly.

Elle conduit **prudemment**. → She drives carefully.

Évidemment, il a raison. → Obviously, he's right.

J'ai **récemment** visité Paris. → I recently visited Paris.

And some adjectives deviate entirely from the regular adverb formation process:

bon → **bien**

Il chante bien. → He sings well.

meilleur → **mieux**

Elle joue mieux. → She plays better.

mauvais → **mal**

Je me sens mal. → I feel bad.

petit → **peu**

Il mange peu. → He doesn't eat much.

Prepositions

Prepositions are words that **indicate the relationship** between the words that they link,

In English examples of prepositions are words such as: '**of**', '**at**', '**to**', '**inside**', '**since**'.

Since French and English prepositions have a wide range of uses, where English uses the same preposition for two different sentences, French may use different ones.

Basically prepositions **cannot always be consistently translated and depend more on context**.

General translations of common French prepositions:

À / Au / Aux - To, At

(Anywhere where there is an À + Le, it changes to au, when it's À + Les, it becomes aux)

De / Des / D' - Of, From

(De becomes des before plural words and d' before vowels and silent H's followed by vowels)

Depuis - Since

Jusque - Until, up to

(Almost always followed by other prepositions such as à, remember to say jusqu'à/au when you mean until)

Dedans - Within / Inside

Chez - At the home of

(Followed by a disjunctive pronoun, which are words like moi, toi and lui or a noun)

Pour - For, In order to

(Followed by a disjunctive pronoun or noun)

Par - By, Through

Sans - Without

(Followed by a disjunctive pronoun or noun)

Avec - With

(Followed by a disjunctive pronoun or noun)

Examples:

Je reste **à** la maison - I stay **at** home

Matthieu est le fils **de** Marie - Matthieu is the son **of** Marie

Je joue de la guitare **depuis** cinq ans - I've played the guitar **for** 5 years

Je ne le savais pas **jusqu'à** ce moment - I didn't know it **until** now

Le cadeau est **dedans** l'emballage - The present is **within** the packaging

Je vais **chez moi** - I am going home (**my house**)

Ce cadeau est **pour** toi - This gift is **for** you

Nous sommes passés **par** le parc - We went **through** the park

Il boit son café **sans** sucre - He drinks his coffee **without** sugar

Je parle **avec** mon frère - I am talking **with** my brother