

# Descriptive Grammar of the Standard French Language

Alphabet (*L'Alphabet*)  
French uses the [Latin alphabet](#).

<b>Letter (Lettre)</b>	A a	B b	C c	D d	E e	F f	G g
<b>Letter Name (Nom de Lettre)</b>	[a]	[be]	[se]	[de]	[ə]	[ɛf]	[ʒe]
<b>Letter (Lettre)</b>	H h	I i	J j	K k	L l	M m	N n
<b>Letter Name (Nom de Lettre)</b>	[aʃ]	[i]	[ʒi]	[ka]	[ɛl]	[ɛm]	[ɛn]
<b>Letter (Lettre)</b>	O o	P p	Q q	R r	S s	T t	U u
<b>Letter Name (Nom de Lettre)</b>	[ɔ]	[pe]	[ky]	[ɛʁ]	[ɛs]	[te]	[y]
<b>Letter (Lettre)</b>	V v	W w	X x	Y y	Z z		
<b>Letter Name (Nom de Lettre)</b>	[ve]	[dubl ve]	[iks]	[i gʁɛk]	[zɛd]		

## Sounds (*Sons*)

Vowels (see <a href="#">Vowels</a> & <a href="#">Vowel combinations</a> )	Consonants
[i] <b>il, vie, lyre</b>	[p] <b>père, soupe</b>
[e] <b>blé, jouer</b>	[t] <b>terre, vite</b>
[ɛ] <b>lait, jouet, merci</b>	[k] <b>cou, qui, sac, képi</b>
[a] <b>plat, patte</b>	[b] <b>bon, robe</b>
[ɑ̃] <b>bas, pâte</b>	[d] <b>dans, aide</b>
[ɔ̃] <b>mort, donner</b>	[g] <b>gare, bague</b>
[o] <b>mot, dôme, eau, gauche</b>	[f] <b>feu, neuf, photo</b>
[u] <b>genoue, roue</b>	[s] <b>sale, celui, ça, dessoue, tasse, nation</b>
[y] <b>rue, vêtu</b>	[ʃ] <b>chair, tache</b>
[ø] <b>peu, deux</b>	[v] <b>vous, rêve</b>
[œ] <b>peur, meuble</b>	[z] <b>zéro, maison, rose</b>
[œ̃] <b>le, premier</b>	[ʒ] <b>je, gilet, geôle</b>

### Nasalized Vowels

[ɛ̃] matin, plein  
 [ɔ̃] sans, vent  
 [ɔ̃] bon, ombre  
 [œ̃] lundi, brun

### Semi Vowels

[j] yeux, paille, pied (see "y", "l mouillé")  
 [w] oui, nouer  
 [ɥ] huile, lui

[l] lent, sol  
 [ʁ] rue, venir  
 [m] main, femme  
 [n] nous, tonne, animal  
 [ɲ] agneau, vigne  
 [h] hop! (*exclamation*)  
 [\*] haricot (*no liaison or elision*)

### **Foreign Consonants**

[ŋ] (*in English words*) camping  
 (*in Spanish and Arabic words*) jota,  
 [χ] khamsin

## Spelling

French spelling reflects, on the one hand, the pronunciation of the Middle Ages and, on the other hand, strives to imitate the Latin orthography. It is, in other words, not phonetic, but etymological (as is the spelling of English) and seems rather complicated.

## Vowels (Voyelles)

**A** has two phonetic meanings:

- [a] is an opened palatal vowel as the a in *E. father*, cf.:

balle [bal] ball,  
 armée [aRme] army;

- [ɑ̃] is a back vowel, often written â (it has disappeared from the contemporary French speech), cf.:

âge [aʒ] age  
 tâche [taʃ] task.

**E** has two phonetic values:

- [ɛ] is an opened front vowel, similar to the English ai in air, but without the following schwa sound; it is written e in monosyllabic words and in front of the double consonants ll, nn, pp, tt, rr or a consonantic cluster; it is written è (e accent grave) and ê (e accent circonflexe) in the other cases (see the Usage of the diacritical signs), cf.:

sel [sɛl] salt,  
 étrenne [etRɛn] present (gift),  
 pelle [pɛl] shovel,  
 lettre [lɛtR(ə)] letter,  
 perdre [pɛRdR(ə)] to lose,  
 herbe [ɛRb(ə)] grass,

**père** [pɛR] father,  
**bête** [bɛt] beast;

- [e] is a closed front vowel as the English e in **pet**; it is written e in front of mute final -r, -t, -z and é (e accent aigu) in the other cases (see [the Usage of the diacritical signs](#)), cf.:

**parler** [paRle] to speak,  
**muet** [mye] mute,  
**nez** [ne] nose,  
**équipage** [ekipaʒ] crew.

Note that there are a lot of exceptions from the above rules, cf.:

**étrenner** [etRene] to be the first to use, to use for the first time;

**événement** [evɛnmɑ̃] event.

It may be stated that in orthographically open syllables is written closed e (i.e. é) and in orthographically closed syllables is written open e (i.e. è). On the other hand, in phonetically open syllables is pronounced closed e (i.e. [e]) and in phonetically closed syllables is pronounced open e (i.e. [ɛ]). It occurs in the speech, under the influence of stressed [y], [i] or [e], that the open e [ɛ] becomes closed [e]; this phenomenon is referred to as **vowels' harmonization**, cf.:

**bêtise** [betiz] and more rarely [bɛtiz] nonsense,

**aimer** [eme] and more rarely [ɛme] to love (see [Vowel Combinations](#)).

In agreement with the vowels' harmonization, when the mute e in the middle of the word is not pronounced and a preceding syllable with closed e become closed, the closed e tends to become open, cf.:

**élevage** [ɛlevaʒ] instead of [eləvəʒ] breeding,

**médesin** [mɛdsɛ̃] instead of [medəsɛ̃] physician.

See also [the mute e](#).

**I** may be a vowel or semivowel:

- [i] a front vowel as the English i in **pit**, cf.:

**mine** [min] mine;

- [j] a semivowel as the English y in **yet**, that occurs in front of a vowel, cf.:

**bien** [bjɛ̃] well,

**million** [miljɔ̃] million.

See also [the Reading of the letter "y"](#).

**O** has two phonetic values:

- [ɔ] an open vowel, similar to the British English o in **hot**, cf.:

**gomme** [gɔm] rubber;

- [ø] a closed vowel, similar to the English **o** in **go** but without the second element [u]; it is written ô (o accent circonflexe -- see [the Usage of the diacritical signs](#)) or o (in this case it occurs at the end of the words), cf.:

**mot** [mo] word,  
**trop** [tRø] too much / many,  
**ôter** [ote] to lift up.

## **U** is pronounced in four manners:

- [y] is a rounded front vowel, intermediary between [u] and [i]: it is pronounced by preparing the mouth for [i] and then [u] sound is articulated (it is much like the German ü), cf.:

**user** [uze] to use,  
**usine** [uzin] factory;

- [œ] is a semivowel articulated by trying to pronounce [y] before a vowel, cf.:

**huite** [œit] eight,  
**huile** [œil] cooking oil.

- [ø] in the combination **um** in the Latin loan-words, cf.:

**triumvir** [tRiœmviR] triumvir,  
**référendum** [RefeRœndœm] referendum;

- [w] in the combinatin **qua** of some words, cf.:

**équateur** [ekwatœR] equator,  
**équation** [ekwasjœ̃] equation.

See also [the letter "q"](#).

## The mute "e" (*L' "e" muet ou caduc*)

The so called mute "e" (written always without accent mark) may occur in the middle of the word in front of a single pronounceable consonant, or at the end of the word, cf.:

**élever** [elve] to lift up, elevate;  
**petit** [pti] little, small, petty;  
**s'asseoir** [saswaR] to sit down;  
**mode** [mœd] mode.

The mute "e" occurs at the end of the words after a double consonant or a consonantic cluster; in the latter case a feable [schwa](#) sound [ə] may be heard, cf.:

**elle** [ɛl] she,  
**monde** [mœd(ə)] world,  
**prendre** [pRœdR(ə)] to take.

The schwa sound may appear in the middle of the words also, especially to separate two consonants, as in the case of:

**petit** [p(ə)ti] little, small, petty;

**survenir** [syRvəniR] to come surprisingly.

The schwa sound may be heard in versification.

The mute "e" has a special function in the French writing system. It may open the syllables and change the articulation of the preceding vowel (see especially [the Nasalized vowels](#)) or make pronounceable the final consonants (see [the Mute consonants](#)), cf.:

**moins** [mwɛ̃] (one closed syllable) less <versus> **moi|ne** [mwan] (two syllables in the writing) monk,

**dos** [do] back <versus> **dose** [doz] dose.

The mute "e" is of grammatical value; it usually denotes [feminine nouns](#) and [adjectives](#) and is used as a verbal termination for some persons and tenses.

See also [Stress and Articulation](#).

## Vowel Combinations

French uses a lot of vowel combinations; with one exception (**oi**) all of them represent a single sound, cf.:

Combination: Sound: Examples:

<b>ai</b>	[ɛ]	<b>chaise</b> [ʃɛz] chair
<b>au</b>	[o]	<b>chaud</b> [ʃo] hot
<b>eau</b>	[o]	<b>beauté</b> [bote] beauty
<b>ei</b>	[ɛ]	<b>peine</b> [pɛn] pain
<b>eu</b>	[œ]	<b>heure</b> [œR] hour
	[ø]	<b>peu</b> [pø] few, little
<b>œu</b>	[œ]	<b>cœur</b> [kœR] heart
<b>oi</b>	[wa]	<b>poire</b> [pwaR] pear
<b>ou</b>	[u]	<b>loup</b> [lu] wolf

The sounds [œ] and [ø] are intermediary between [e] and [o]: it is pronounced by preparing the mouth for [e] and then [o] sound is articulated (it is much like the German ö).

The sound [u] is the same as **u** in the English **put**.

## Reading of the letter "y"

French follows the Latin tradition of transliterating the Greek *ypsillon* by "y" in the Greek loan-words (for this reason the name of the letter in French is *i Grec Greek i*); in this usage the situation in English is quite the same, cf.:

- [i] in the Greek loan-words:

**cycle** [sikl(ə)] *cycle*,  
**mythe** [mit] *myth*.

See the [Greek alphabet](#).

The letter "y" is pronounced

- [j] in the begininnig of the words before a vowel, cf.:

**yatagan** [yatagɑ̃] *yataghan*,  
**yen** [jɛn] *yen (Japanese monetary unit)*.

This initial "y" is considered a consonant for the [liaison](#) and [elision](#) except for three words:

**yèble** [jɛbl(ə)] *danewort* => **I'yèble** [ljɛbl(ə)] *the danewort*,  
**yeuse** [jøz] *green oak* => **I'yeuse** [ljøz] *the green oak*,  
**yeux** [jø] *eyes* => **les yeux** [lezjø] *the eyes*.

In modern French orthography the "y" between vowels functions as i+i, cf.:

**essuyer** = essui-ier [ɛsɥijer] *to wipe (off)*,

**payer** = pai-ier [paje] *to pay*,

**foyer** = foi-ier [fwaje] *lounge*.

## Nasalized Vowels

In syllables closed by **m** or **n** the preceding vowels are nasalized. Note that **m** and **n** are not articulated and all the vowels with the exception of **o** change their timbre, cf.:

Letter	<i>Pronunciation before m</i>		<i>Examples</i>
	/ n /	<i>in closed syllables</i>	
a	[ɑ̃]		<b>champ</b> [ʃɑ̃p] <i>field</i> <b>change</b> [ʃɑ̃ʒ] <i>change</i>
e	[ɛ̃]		<b>temps</b> [tɛ̃p] <i>time</i> <b>centre</b> [sɛ̃tʁ(ə)] <i>center</i>
i	[ɛ̃]		<b>simple</b> [sɛ̃pl(ə)] <i>simple</i> <b>fin</b> [fɛ̃] <i>end</i>
o	[ɔ̃]		<b>ombre</b> [ɔ̃br(ə)] <i>shadow</i> <b>contrée</b> [kɔ̃trœ] <i>country</i>
u	[œ̃]		<b>humble</b> [œ̃bl(ə)] <i>humble</i> <b>commun</b> [kɔ̃mœ̃] <i>common</i>

There is a tendency the nasalized [œ̃] to be equalized with [ɛ].

In contemporary French the vowels are not nasalized in front of double -mm- / -nn-, cf.:

**femme** [fam] formerly [fœ̃m] woman,  
**pomme** [pɔm] formerly [pœ̃m] apple,  
**solemnité** [sɔlanite] formerly [sœ̃lənите] solemnity.

Some vowel combinations are also nasalized:

Vowel Combination	Pronunciation before m /n in closed syllables	Examples
ai	[ɛ̃]	pain [pɛ̃] bread
ei	[ɛ̃]	faim [fɛ̃] hunger
ie	[jɛ̃]	plein [plɛ̃] full
oi	[wɛ̃]	bien [bjɛ̃] well
		point [pwɛ̃] point

The simple vowels and vowel combinations are denasalized in open syllables, cf.:

**commun** [kɔ̃mœ̃] => **commune** [kɔ̃myne] common,

**moins** [mwɛ̃s] less <vs> **moine** [mwan] monk.

The prefix **en-** **in-** is considered a separate entity and always forms a closed syllable, cf.:

**s'enamourer** [sœ̃namuʁe] to fall in love,

**enivrer** [œ̃nivʁe] to intoxicate.

## Vowels' Lengthening

Vowels' lengthening has no distinctive function in contemporary French and at present it is considered optional. Only the stressed vowels may be lengthened:

- the simple vowels [ɔ], [o], [ø] and the nasalized vowels [œ̃], [ɔ̃], [ɛ̃], [ɑ̃] in front of a pronounceable vowel, cf.:

**chance** [ʃɑ:s] chance,  
**émeute** [emø:t] riot.

- the stressed vowels in front of the sounds [R], [z], [v], [ʒ] and the group [vR], cf.:

**bonheur** [bɔnø:R] happiness,  
**chèvre** [ʃɛ:vR] goat,  
**voyage** [vwaja:ʒ] voyage.

See [Stress and Articulation](#).

## Consonants (*Consonnes*)

The following letters have only one phonetic value:

- **B** = [b] as the **b** in *E. probably*, cf.:

**bouche** [buʃ] mouth,  
**bateau** [batø] ship.

- **D** = [d] as the **d** in *E. render*, cf.:

**douche** [duʃ] shower,  
**doux** [du] sweet.

- **F** = [f] as the **f** in *E. oriflame*, cf.:

**file** [fil] thread,  
**front** [fRɔ̃] forehead, front.

- **J** = [ʒ] as the **s** in *E. vision*, cf.:

**jambe** [ʒɑ̃b] leg,  
**joindre** [ʒwɛ̃dR(ə)] to join.

- **L** = [l] as the **ll** in *E. telling*, cf.:

**large** [laRʒ] wide,  
**long** [lɔ̃] long.

- **M** = [m] as the **m** in *E. time*, cf.:

**mère** [mɛR] mother,  
**mine** [min] mine.

- **N** = [n] as the **n** in *E. line*, cf.:

**neuf** [nœf] nine,  
**nuque** [nyk] neck.

- **P** = [p] as the **p** in *E. cope*, cf.:

**père** [pɛR] father,  
**pipe** [pip] pipe.

- **R** = [R] an uvular sound without exact equivalent neither in British nor in American pronunciation; it is obtained by making the uvula to vibrate, cf.:

**rouge** [Ruʒ] red,  
**roi** [Rwa] king.

- **V** = [v] as the **v** in *E. driver*, cf.:

**vie** [vi] life,  
**ville** [vil] city, town.

- **Z** = [z] as the **z** in *E. zoo*, cf.:

**zèle** [zɛl] zeal,  
**zone** [zon] zone.

The following letters have two phonetic values:

- **C**

- [k] before **a, o, u** or a **consonant**, cf.:

**calme** [kalm] calm,  
**crête** [kRɛt] crest.

- [s] before **e, i, y**; and before **a, o, u** if the cedilla sign (,) is used under the **c**, cf.:

**cellule** [selyl] cell,  
**cité** [site] city,  
**cygne** [siʒn] swan,  
**ça** [sa] this, that,  
**garçon** [gaRɔ̃] boy,  
**reçu** [Rəsy] received.

- **G**

- [g] before **a, o, u** or a **consonant**, and in the combinations **gue-**, **gui-** (the **u** is mute), cf.:

**garder** [gaRde] to guard,  
**grand** [gRɑ̃] big, large.  
**guerre** [gɛR] war,  
**guider** [gide] to guide.

- [ʒ] (= *E. s* in **vision**) before **e, i, y** cf.:

**manger** [mɑ̃ʒe] to eat,  
**agir** [aʒiʁ] to act.

- **S**

- [s] in the beginning of the word or before a **consonant**, cf.:

**sourire** [suʁiʁ] to smile,  
**crête** [kʁɛt] crest.

- [z] between vowels, cf.:

**cousin** [kuzɛ̃] cousin,  
**rose** [roz] rose.

- **T**

- [t] is the usual pronunciation, cf.:

**tomate** [tɔmat] tomato,  
**taille** [taj] stature.

- [s] before **i+vowel**, if the "t" itself is not preceded by **s**, cf.:

**démocratie** [demɔkʁasi] democracy,  
**nation** [nasjɔ̃] nation,  
**but**  
**question** [kɛstjɔ̃] question.

## The letter "q"

The letter q is followed always by u with two exceptions only:

**cinq** [sɛ̃k] five,  
**coq** [kɔk] cock.

Otherwise, the letter u is usually mute, cf.:

**qualité** [kalite] quality,  
**époque** [epɔk] epoch.

In few cases, in front of the vowel a, the u is pronounced [w], cf.:

**équateur** [ekwatœʁ] equator,  
**équation** [ekwasjɔ̃] equation.

In very few cases the u is pronounced [ɥ], cf.:

**quinquennal** [kɥiñkɥenɑ̃l] quinquennial.

# Consonant Combinations

French uses two consonant combinations for specific sounds:

- **Ch** [ʃ] sounds as the **sh** in *E. shop*; till the 13th century it was pronounced [tʃ] and this pronunciation is preserved in the Old French loan-words in English, *cf.*:

changer [ʃɑ̃ʒe] to change,  
charger [ʃaʁʒe] to charge.

- **Gn** [ʒn] sounds as the **ny** in *E. canyon*, *cf.*:

ligne [liʒn] line,  
signe [siʒn] sign.

In the foreign words and names are used some other consonant combinations for specific sounds:

<b>Consonant Combination</b>	<b>Pronunciation</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>ch</b>	[tʃ]	in English and Spanish words	challenge
<b>kh</b>	[x]	in Oriental words mainly	khan
<b>ng</b>	[ŋ]	in English words	camping
<b>sh</b>	[ʃ]	in English words	smash
<b>tch</b>	[tʃ]	in transcription of foreign names	Tchad
<b>zh</b>	[ʒ]	in transcription of foreign names	Brezhnev

## Reading of the letter "x"

The letter "x" is read in four manners:

- [ks] before consonant and between vowels, when the second vowel is followed by voiceless consonant, *cf.*:

extase [ekstaz] frenzy,  
taxi [taksi] taxi.

- [gz] between vowels, when the second vowel is followed by voiced consonant *cf.*:

exemple [egzɑ̃pl] example,  
exercice [egzeʁsɪs] exercice,  
exile [egzil] exile,  
exode [egzod] exodus.

- [s] in the end of the words **six** and **dix**:

**six** [sis] **six**,  
**dix** [dis] **ten**.

- [z] in the words **sixième** and **dixième**:

**sixième** [sizjɛm] **sixth**,  
**dixième** [dizjɛm] **tenth**.

## The Greek Consonants

French has inherited from Latin the [specific transliteration of some Greek letters](#) (this is exactly the case in English),, cf.:

<i>Greek Letter</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Examples</i>
thêta	th	[t]	mathématique [matematik] mathematical
rhô (initial)	rh (r)	[R]	rhumatisme [Rymatism] rheumatism
phi	ph	[f]	rythme [Ritm(ə)] rhythm
chi	ch (c)	[k], [ʃ]	philosophie [filɔzfifi] philosophy
			christianisme [kristjanism] christianity
			chirurgie [ʃiRyRʒi] surgery
			caractère [kaRaktɛR] character

The letter **z**, except in the ending **-ez**, occurs almost in Greek words only.

See also [the letter "y"](#).

See the [Greek alphabet](#).

## Mute consonants

The final **-b** (preceded by **-m-**), **d**, **p**, **s**, **t**, **x**, **z** are mute, cf.:

**plomb** [plɔ̃] lead (*metal*),  
**chaud** [ʃo] warm, hot,  
**trop** [tRo] very much,  
**très** [tRɛ] very much,  
**part** [paR] part,  
**prix** [pRi] price,  
**assez** [ase] enough.

Note that **e** before final **-s** is pronounced only if accentuated; otherwise it is mute, cf.:

**composés** [kɔ̃poze] compound (*pl.*),

**congrès** [kɔ̃gRɛ] congress,

**but**

**grandes** [gRɑ̃d] big, large (*fpl.*).

The final **-r** after **e** is always mute, otherwise it is pronounced, cf.:

**aimer** [ɛme] to love,

**arriver** [aRive] to arrive,

**but**

**partir** [paRtiR] to depart,

**punir** [pyniR] to punish.

The letter **p** is mute before **t**, cf.:

**compter** [kɔ̃te] to count,

**sculpture** [skyltyR] sculpture.

The final **-ps** is always mute, cf.:

**temps** [tɔ̃] time, tense,

**corps** [kɔ̃R] body, corpse.

The **m** and **n** that close a syllable are not pronounced, but nasalize the preceding vowel (see [Nasalized Vowels](#)).

See also [the "l" mouillé](#).

## The letter "h"

The letter **h** is never pronounced except in the interjection **hop** [hop] (where it sounds exactly as the English **h** in **home**). It is used mainly etymologically or, in the middle of the words, as a divider to avoid hyatus, as in:

**envahir** [ɛnvaiR] to invade,

**trahir** [tRaiR] to betray.

When occurring in the beginning of the words, the **h** is considered either vowel or consonant (**h aspiré**). In the latter case, concerning mainly words of Germanic origin, it hinders the [liaison](#) and [elision](#); the dictionaries mark the consonantic **h** by asterisk (\*), cf.:

\***hair** [aiR] to hate,

\***haller** [ale] to haul,

\***halter** [alte] to halt,

\***hâter** [ate] to hasten,

\***haut** [o] high,

\***hibou** [ibu] owl etc.

The letter **h** is used in a lot of consonant combinations (see [Consonant Combinations](#) and [Greek Consonants](#)).

## The "L" mouillé

The older French pronunciation had a soft l-sound [λ], similar to the English *li* in the word *Italian*, and exactly as the sound transcribed in modern Italian by -gl-, in modern Portuguese and Occitan by -lh- and in some Latin American Spanish dialects represented by -ll-. Yet in the 19th century this so called /mouillé became a purely glide sound [j] (as *y* in the English *yet*) in the common people's speech and by the beginning of the 20th century this pronunciation was recognized as official. By the way, this is the same process that is under way in the contemporary Spanish language, where in the main Castilian dialect the -ll- has already become [j], while some other dialects, as those in the Spanish-speaking America, still retain the older pronunciation [λ].

The /mouillé, now pronounced [j] is presented in modern French spelling in two manners:

- -il after a vowel and in the end of the word, cf.

**chandail** [ʃɑ̃daj] pullover  
**soleil** [sɔlej] sun

- -ill- between vowels, cf.:

**faillir** [fajɪR] to fail  
**surveiller** [syRveje] to surveil

- ill- after a consonant and in front of a vowel, cf.:

**billard** [bijɑR] billiards  
**fille** [fiR] daughter, girl.

Note that if **-il** is followed by a vowel, the [l] is retained in pronunciation, cf.:

**voile** [vwal] veil

**voilier** [vwalje] sail (ship).

There are some exceptions, where the [l] is preserved in pronunciation, cf.:

**mille** [mil] thousand,

**ville** [vil] town.

## Stress and Articulation

The French words are stressed always on the ultimate syllable; the stressed vowel may be lengthened (see [Vowels' Lengthening](#)).

The words are pronounced not separately (i.e. in isolation), but in phrasal blocs (*spoken chains*) and only the ultimate syllable of the bloc is stressed. This manner of articulation has its impact on the vowels' lengthening, cf. the pronunciation of **fort** strong / very in the examples below:

**Il est grand et fort** [ilɛgRɑ̃ efɔ:R] He is tall and strong.

**Il est fort beau** [ilɛ fɔRbo] He is very beautiful.

The mute e has a particular conduct in the phrasal blocs, cf.:

**à table** [atabl] **on the table**,  
**table à repasser** [tablaRpase] **ironing table**,  
**table ronde** [tabləRÖd] **round table**,  
**la fenêtre** [lafnEtR] **the window**,  
**une fenêtre** [ynfənEtR] **a (one) window**.

## Liaison

The words of the phrasal blocs interact between themselves. If the latter word of the phrasal bloc begins with a vowel or non-consonantic h the final mute consonant of the preceding word may be pronounced. This phenomenon is referred to as liaison. Note that the final **s** and **x** are pronounced [z] and the final **d** sounds as [t], cf.:

**les hommes** [lezɔm] **the men**,  
**prix unique** [pRizynik] **exclusive price**,  
**le grand empire** [ləgRÖtɔpiR] **the great empire**.  
Note that the final **t** of the conjunction **et** **and** is always mute.

## Elision (*Élision*)

The mute final **e** of the pronouns **je I**, **me me**, **te you**, **se himself / herself / themselves**, **que what, which, that** (the latter may be also a conjunction) is dropped and replaced by an apostrophe in front of a word beginning with a vowel, cf.:

**j'aime** [ʒɛm] **I love**,  
**je t'aime** [ʒatɛm] **I love you**,  
**ils s'appellent** [ilsapɛl] **they call themselves**,  
**je veux qu'il vienne** [ʒavø kilvjɛn] **I want that he come**.

The conjunction **si if** drops the **i** before the personal pronouns **il he** and **ils they**, cf.:  
**s'il veux** [silvø] **if he wants**,  
**s'ils veulent** [silvøl] **if they want**.

The demonstrative **ce this** drops the **e** in front of the verbal form **est is**, cf.:  
**c'est** [sɛ] **this is...**

## Noun (*Nom*)

### Gender of the Nouns (*Genre des Noms*)

The nouns in French are either of masculine or of feminine gender.

Nouns that refer to males are masculine and those that refer to females are feminine.

<b>Masculine</b>	<b>Fe in</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>homme</b> man</li> <li>• <b>père</b> father</li> <li>• <b>fils</b> [fis] son</li> <li>• <b>frère</b> brother</li> <li>• <b>oncle</b> uncle</li> <li>• <b>neveu</b> nephew</li> <li>• <b>cousin</b> cousin (he)</li> <li>• <b>roi</b> king</li> <li>• <b>serviteur</b> servant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>mère</b> mother</li> <li>• <b>fille</b> [fij] daughter, girl</li> <li>• <b>sœur</b> sister</li> <li>• <b>tante</b> aunt</li> <li>• <b>nièce</b> niece</li> <li>• <b>cousine</b> cousin (she)</li> <li>• <b>reine</b> queen</li> <li>• <b>servante</b> maid</li> </ul>
...	...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>bélier</b> ram</li> <li>• <b>bœuf</b> bull</li> <li>• <b>canard</b> drake</li> <li>• <b>cerf</b> buck</li> <li>• <b>cheval</b> horse</li> <li>• <b>coq</b> cock</li> <li>• <b>dindon</b> turkey-cock</li> <li>• <b>jars</b> gander</li> <li>• <b>lièvre</b> hare</li> <li>• <b>mulet</b> mule (he)</li> <li>• <b>perroquet</b> parrot (he)</li> <li>• <b>porc</b> boar</li> <li>• <b>poulain</b> foal</li> <li>• <b>sanglier</b> wild boar (he)</li> <li>• <b>singe</b> ape</li> <li>• <b>veau</b> calf (he)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>brebis</b> sheep</li> <li>• <b>vache</b> cow</li> <li>• <b>cane</b> duck</li> <li>• <b>biche</b> doe</li> <li>• <b>jument</b> mare</li> <li>• <b>poule</b> hen</li> <li>• <b>dinde</b> turkey</li> <li>• <b>oie</b> goose</li> <li>• <b>hase</b> doe</li> <li>• <b>mule</b> mule (she)</li> <li>• <b>perruche</b> parrot (she)</li> <li>• <b>truite</b> female swine</li> <li>• <b>pouliche</b> young mare</li> <li>• <b>laie</b> wild boar (she)</li> <li>• <b>guenon</b> ape (she)</li> <li>• <b>génisse</b> calf (she)</li> </ul>

For the nouns that denote inanimate objects gender seems randomly assigned and it is to be memorized.

Sometimes the gender may be recognized by the suffixes.

Nouns ending in **-age**, **-ier** **-ion**, **-ment**, **-oir** etc. are masculine:

- **voyage** voyage,
- **encrer** ink pot,
- **avion** aircraft.
- **bâtiment** building,
- **miroir** mirror.

Nouns ending in **-ade**, **-aison**, **-tion (-sion)**, **-ance (-ence)**, **-erie**, **-ise**, **-tude**, **-té**, **-t(ure)**, **-ale (-ole)**, **-aix (-oix)**, **-oire** etc. are feminine:

- **marmelade** jam,
- **maison** house,
- **nation** nation
- **vision** vision,
- **substance** substance,
- **essence** fuel,
- **boulangerie** baker,
- **bêtise** nonsense,
- **cité** city,
- **altitude** height,
- **nature** nature,
- **paix** peace,
- **voix** [vwa] voice,
- **gloire** glory.

## Suffixes (*Suffixes*)

### I. Suffixes of Nouns

#### 1. Suffixes added to verbal stems

<i>Prefix</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>English Correspondence</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<b>-ement, -issement (m)</b>	L. -ment um	-ment, -ishment	groupement, agrandissement
<b>-age, -issage (m)</b>	LL -aticum	-age	dressage, pilotage, pétrissage
<b>-tion, -ation, -ition (f)</b>	L. -(a/e/i)tion	-tion, -ation, -ition	attribution, constatation, finition
<b>-aison (f)</b>	L. -ation	-eason, -ison	salaison, déclinaison, cueillaison
<b>-ure, -ature (f)</b>	L. -(at)ura	-ure, -ature	blessure, dorure, filature
<b>-ade (f)</b>	LL. -ata	-ade	glissade, baîgnade, rigolade
<b>-erie (f)</b>	L. -(a/e/i)ria	-ary, -ery	tracasserie, fâcherie, boiterie
<b>-is (f)</b>	--	--	semis, hachis, roulis
<b>-ance (f)</b>	LL. -antia	-ance, -ancy	alliance, outrance, espérance
<b>-eur (m), -euse (f)</b>	L. -or	-or	envoyeur, balayeur, coiffeuse
<b>-ateur (m), -atrice (f)</b>	L. -ator, -atric	-ator	tentateur, ventilateur, perforatrice
<b>-iste (mf)</b>	L. -ista <i>from Gk.</i>	-ist	arriviste, j'm'en foutiste
<b>-ier (m), -ière (f)</b>	L. -er	-er	piacier, roulier, févier, glissière
<b>-oir (m), -oire (f)</b>	L. -orium, -oria	-ory, -ery	laminoir, bouilloire, nageoire
<b>-ard (m), -arde (f)</b>	Gmc.	-ard	braillard, traînarde
<b>-aille (f)</b>	L. -alia	-le	tenaille, semaille, sonnaille
<b>-asse (f)</b>	--	--	lavasse, traînasse
<b>-isme (m)</b>	L. ismus <i>from Gk.</i>	-ism	arrivisme
<b>-et (m), -ette (f)</b>	L. -it, -ita	-et, -ette	jouet, sonnette, poussette
<b>-eur (m), -eresse (f)</b>	VL. -(t)or, -	-or, -ress	pêcheur, pécheresse

## 2. Suffixes added to Adjectives

<b>-té, -eté, -ité (f)</b>	<i>L.</i> -(e/i)tate(m)	-ty, -ety, -ity	beauté, propreté, solidité
<b>-ie (f)</b>	<i>L.</i> -ia	-y	folie, modestie, économie
<b>-erie (f)</b>	<i>L.</i> -eria	-ery	niaiserie, mièvrerie, fourberie
<b>-eur (f)</b>	<i>L.</i> -ore(m)	-or (-our)	pâleur, lenteur, moiteur
<b>-isme (m)</b>	<i>L.</i> -ismus <i>from Gk.</i>	-ism	américanisme, socialisme
<b>-iste (mf)</b>	<i>L.</i> -ista <i>from Gk.</i>	-ist	socialiste
<b>-ance, -ence (replacing -ant, -ent) (f)</b>	<i>L.</i> -antia, -encia	-ance (-ancy), -ence	vaiillance, apparence, insolence
<b>-ise (f)</b>	<i>L.</i> -itia	-ize / -ise	bêtise, franchise, vantardise
<b>-esse (f)</b>	<i>L.</i> -itia	--	petitesse, gentillesse, mollesse
<b>-itude (f)</b>	<i>L.</i> -itudo	-itude	platitude, plénitude
<b>-in (m)</b>	<i>L.</i> -in us	--	plaisantin
<b>-ard, -arde</b>	<i>Gmc.</i> -ard	--	richard, -arde
<b>-eron (m)</b>	--	--	laideron

## 3. Suffixes added to Nouns

<b>-ier, -ière</b>	<i>L.</i> -iarius	-ery	épicier, pommier, sucrier, salière, verrière
<b>-er, -ère (for -ier)</b>	<i>L.</i> -arius	-ary	horloger, -ère
<b>-ien, -ienne</b>	<i>L.</i> -ian us, a	-ian	mécanicien, milicien, pharmacienne
<b>-iste</b>	<i>L.</i> -ista <i>fr. Gk.</i>	-ist	dentiste, ébéniste, congressiste
<b>-aire</b>	<i>L.</i> -arius	-ary	fonctionnaire, disquaire
<b>-eron</b>	--	--	bûcheron, vigneron
<b>-ard</b>	<i>Gmc.</i> -ard	--	cuissard, brassard, poignard, soiffard
<b>-age</b>	=> <i>ML.</i> -aticum	-age	branchage, outillage, ermitage
<b>-ure</b>	<i>L.</i> -ura	-ure	1. armure, toiture, voilure 2. sulfure, bromure
<b>-ature</b>	<i>L.</i> -tura	-ture	ossature
<b>-aie</b>	--	--	cerisaie, peupleraie
<b>-ie</b>	<i>L. / Gk.</i> -ia	-y	bergerie, boulangerie, agronomie
<b>-erie</b>	<i>L.</i> -aria	-ery / -ary	machinerie, rhumerie, pitrerie
<b>-isme</b>	<i>L.</i> -ismus <i>fr. Gk.</i>	-ism	impressionnisme, progressisme
<b>-at, -iat</b>	<i>L.</i> -atum, -iatum	-ate	doctorat, notariat
<b>-ade</b>	<i>L.</i> -ata	-ade	bourgade, orillade, citronnade
<b>-aille</b>	<i>L.</i> -alia	-le	ferraille, cisaille, muraille
<b>-é</b>	<i>L.</i> -at-	-y	vicomté

<b>-ée</b>	VL. -ata	-ey	cuillerée, matinée
<b>-ain, -aine</b>	L. -ane us, a	-ane	dizain, quinzaine, centaine
<b>-et, -ette</b>	VL. -itt us, a	-et, -ette	agnelet, livret, tabîette
<b>-elle</b>	L. -illa	--	prunelle, tourelle, poutrelle
<b>-elet, -elette</b>	L. -illa + VL. -itt us, a	--	roitelet, tartelette
<b>-iole</b>	It. -ola fr. L. -ula	--	bestiole, gloriole, bronchiole
<b>-ule</b>	L. -ula	-le	plumule, veinule
<b>-(i)cule</b>	L. -cula	-(i)cle	animalcule, monticule
<b>-ille</b>	L. -illia		brindille, flottille
<b>-illon</b>			oisillon, portillon
<b>-ine</b>	L. -ina		figurine, chaumine, basquine
<b>-as</b>			plâtras
<b>-ot</b>			billot, cageot
<b>-ise</b>	L. -itia		prétrise, maîtrise
<b>-eau</b>	L. -illum		cuisseau, troupeau, éléphanteau
<b>-on</b>			chaînon, aiglon
<b>-eron</b>			puceron, saleron
<b>-ite</b>	L. -it is from Gk.		calcite, sulfite
<b>-ose</b>	L. -osis fr. Gk. -osis	-ose / -osis / -sy	cellulose, ventose

## II. Suffixes of Adjectives

### 1. Suffixes added to Nouns

<b>-ien, -ienne</b>	L. -ian us, a	-ian	italien, parisien, sartrien
<b>-éen, -éenne</b>	L. -ean us, a	-ian	herculeen, européen
<b>-in, -ine</b>	L. -in us, a	-ine	levantin, girondin
<b>-ais, -aise</b>	VL. -es u, a	-ese	français, marseillais
<b>-ois, -oise</b>	VL. -es u, a	-ese	chinois, niçois
<b>-ain, -aine</b>	L. -an us, a	-an	africain, cubain
<b>-an, -ane</b>	L. -an us, a	-an	persan, mahométan
<b>-ite</b>	L. -ita fr. Gk.	-ite	annamite, sodomite
<b>-esque</b>	It. -esc o, a fr. Gmc. -isk	-ish; -esque	1. mauresque, tudesque; 2. livresque, pédantesque
<b>-ique, -(a)ique</b>	L. -aic us, a fr. Gk. -aik os, e	-ic (-ique), -aic	jurassique, bouddhique; judaïque, ptolémaïque
<b>-al, -ale</b>	L. -al is	-al	tropical, patronal, théâtral
<b>-el, -elle</b>	L. -al is	-al	formel, émotionnel
<b>-if, -ive</b>	L. -iv us, a	-ive	offensif, combatif, fautif
<b>-aire</b>	L. -ari us, a	-ary	unitaire, bancaire, planétaire
<b>-eux, -euse</b>	L. -os us, a	-ous	paresseux; ferreux,

<b>-ueux, -ueuse</b>	<i>L.</i> -uos us, a	-uous	difficultueux, tumultueux
<b>-ique</b>	<i>L.</i> -ic us, a <i>fr. Gk.</i> -ik os, e	-ic (-ique)	1. géométrique, scénique 2. ferrique
<b>-atique</b>	<i>L.</i> -atic us, a <i>fr. Gk.</i> -atik os, e	-atic	dogmatique, prismatique, problématique
<b>-ier, -ière</b>	<i>L.</i> -iari us, a		betteravier, policier, pétrolier
<b>-é, -ée</b>	<i>L.</i> -at us, a	-y	rosé, feuillé, azuré
<b>-u, -ue</b>	<i>VL.</i> -ut u, a	--	poilu, feuillu, ventru
<b>-escent, -escente</b>	<i>L.</i> -escent	-escent	fluorescent
<b>-in, -ine</b>	<i>L.</i> -in us, a	-ine	ivoirin, vipérin, sanguin,

### 2. Suffixes added to Verbal stems

<b>-ant, -ante</b>	<i>L.</i> -ant	-ant (-ent)	pétillant, apaisant
<b>-able</b>	<i>L.</i> -abilis	-able	habitabile, blâmable
<b>-ible</b>	<i>L.</i> -ibilis	-ible	corrigible
<b>-eur, -eresse</b>	<i>L.</i> -or, <i>VL.</i> -orissa	-er (-or), -eress	veugeur, -eresse, enchanteresse
<b>-eur, -euse</b>	<i>L.</i> -os us, a	-er (-or), -eress	encreur, -euse, étireur, -euse
<b>-if, -ive</b>	<i>L.</i> -iv us, a	-ive	explosif, poussif
<b>-eux, -euse</b>	<i>L.</i> -os us, a	-ous	boiteux, -euse
<b>-ard, -arde</b>	<i>Gmc.</i>		vantard

### 3. Suffixes added to Adjectives

<b>-et, -ette</b>	<i>VL.</i> -itt us, a	-et / -ette	pauvret, propret, clairet
<b>-elet, -elette</b>	<i>L.</i> -illa + <i>VL.</i> -itt us, a		mairelet, aigrelet, roncfelet
<b>-aud, -aude</b>			courtaud, finaud, rougeaud
<b>-ot, -ote / -otte</b>			vieillot, petiot
<b>-ard, -arde</b>	<i>Gmc.</i>		faiblard, vachard, mignard
<b>-asse</b>			molasse, fadasse
<b>-âtre</b>			rougeâtre, blanchâtre
<b>-ichon, -ichonne</b>			folichon, maigrichon

## III. Suffixes of Verbs

### 1. Suffixes added to Nouns

<b>-er</b>	<i>L.</i> -are		clouer, ripoliner, goudronner
<b>-ifier</b>	<i>L.</i> -ificare		momifier, vitrifier, russifier
<b>-eler</b>	<i>VL.</i> -il are		bosseler
<b>-iser</b>	<i>L.</i> -iz are from <i>Gk.</i>		bémoliser, alcooliser, coloniser
<b>-oyer</b>			coudoyer

## 2. Suffixes added to Adjectives

<b>-er</b>	<i>L.</i> -are	bavarder, griser
<b>-ir</b>	<i>L.</i> -ire	faiblir, verdir
<b>-ifier</b>	<i>L.</i> -ificare	simplifier, solidifier
<b>-iser</b>	<i>L.</i> -izare from Gk.	fertiliser, diviniser, légaliser
<b>-oyer</b>		rudoyer

## 3. Suffixes added to Verbal stems

<b>-ailler</b>		criailler, traînailler, tirailler
<b>-iller</b>		mordiller, fendiller, pendiller
<b>-asser</b>		révasser, traînasser
<b>-eter</b>	<i>VL.</i> -ittare	voleter
<b>-iner</b>		trottiner
<b>-onner</b>		mâchonner, chantonner, griffonner
<b>-oter, -otter</b>		siffloter, clignoter, frisotter

## Derivation of the Feminine (*La Dérivation du Féminin*)

Usually feminine is derived from masculine by adding a mute **-e**; note that in these cases the mute final consonants of the masculine forms become pronounceable, cf.:

<b>Masculine</b>	<b>Feminine</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ami [ami] friend</li> <li>• avocat [avɔkɑ] advocate</li> <li>• candidat [kɔdidiɑt] candidate</li> <li>• correspondant [kɔrɛspɔndɑ̃t] correspondent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• amie [amij] friend</li> <li>• avocate [avɔkat] advocate</li> <li>• candidate [kɔdidiɑt] candidate</li> <li>• correspondante [kɔrɛspɔndɑ̃t] correspondent</li> </ul>

There occur some orthographic and phonetic changes:

<b>Termination change</b>		<b>Examples</b>	
<b>masculine</b>	<b>feminine</b>	<b>masculine</b>	<b>feminine</b>
<b>-p</b>	<b>-ve</b>	<b>loup</b> wolf	<b>louve</b>
<b>-f</b>	<b>-ve</b>	<b>veuf</b> widow	<b>veuve</b>
<b>-x</b>	<b>-se</b>	<b>époux</b> spouse	<b>épouse</b>
<b>-el</b>	<b>-elle</b>	<b>colonel</b> colonel	<b>colonelle</b>
<b>-er</b>	<b>-ère</b>	<b>berger</b> shepherd	<b>bergère</b>
<b>-n</b>	<b>-nne</b>	<b>lion</b> lion	<b>lionne</b>

Feminine can be derived through suffixation:

Suffix Change		Examples	
Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
[noun]	+esse	maître master	maîtresse mistress
-eur	-eresse	pêcheur sinner	pêcheresse sinner
-eau	-elle	chameau he-camel	chamelle she-camel
-eur	-euse	serveur waiter	serveuse waitress
-teur	-trice	directeur director	directrice manageress
-deur	-drice	ambassadeur ambassador	ambassadrice ambassadress

### Gender of the nouns of Greek origin (*Genre des noms d'origine Grecque*)

The nouns of Greek origin tend to preserve the gender they have in Greek (the nouns of neuter gender being classified as masculine). Thus:

The nouns suffixed by **-me**, **-at** and **-ète** are masculine, cf.:

- **thème** theme, topic, **telegramme** depeche;
- **climat** climate;
- **poète** poet, **prophète** prophet, **comète** comet etc.

The nouns suffixed by **-se**, **-èse** are feminine:

- **crise** crisis, **hypothèse** hypothesis, **synthèse** synthesis, **thèse** thesis etc.

The separate treating of the Greek words was inherited from the Classical Latin where they had a declination pattern of their own.

### Nouns of common gender (*Noms de genre commun*)

These are nouns with one form for both genders. Here are included:

1. All the nouns suffixed by **-ista**, cf.:

- **artiste** artist
- **journaliste** journalist
- **pianiste** pianist
- **touriste** tourist etc.

## 2. Some other nouns, like:

- **camarade** comrade
- **compatriote** compatriot
- **hérétique** heretic
- **indigène** indigen
- **interprète** interpreter
- **patriote** patriot

## Nouns of epicene gender (*Noms de genre épicène*)

These are nouns having but one form to indicate either sex. The natural sex is indicated by the adjectives **mâle** male and **femelle** female:

- **la souris (mâle / femelle)** mouse
- **la cigogne (mâle / femelle)** stork
- **la grenouille (mâle / femelle)** toad
- **le serpent (mâle / femelle)** snake
- **le rossignol (mâle / femelle)** nightingale
- **le canari (mâle / femelle)** canary.

## Nouns of both genders (*Noms de genre ambigu*)

A few nouns may be either masculine or feminine:

<b>Word</b>	<b>Usage in masculine</b>	<b>Usage in feminine</b>
<b>amour</b> love, love affair	un amour passager	les amours secrètes de Jean
<b>après-midi</b> afternoon	<i>indifferently</i>	<i>indifferently</i>
<b>chose</b> thing	<i>in the expressions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• autre chose,</li> <li>• grand-chose,</li> <li>• peu de chose,</li> <li>• quelque chose</li> </ul>	<i>in all the other cases</i>
<b>gens</b> (pl.) people	<i>with adjectives that follow the noun:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• des gens inquiets</li> </ul>	<i>with adjectives that precede the noun, if they have different forms for masculine and feminine, cf.:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tous ces braves gens si hospitaliers</li> <li>• toutes ces vieilles</li> </ul>

		gens si hospitaliers
merci mercy	<i>in the expressions of politeness</i>	<i>in the expression: à la merci de...</i>
œuvre work	<i>in the expressions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• le gros œuvre</li><li>• le grand œuvre</li></ul>	<i>in all the other cases</i>
orgue organ (wind instrument)	un orgue portatif	les grandes orgues d'une cathédrale
perce-neige snowdrop	<i>indifferently</i>	<i>indifferently</i>

Some of these nouns may change their meaning:

Word	Meaning in masculine	Meaning in feminine
aide	assistant	aid
aigle	male eagle; eagle-bearing insignia	female eagle; eagle-bearing standard
couple	couple	pair
crêpe	crepe, crape	pancake
critique	critic	critique
foudre	tun	thunderbolt
garde	guardian, custodian	guard, custody
guide	chieftain; guide (manual)	rein, bridle
hymne	national anthem	religious song
livre	book	pound
manche	handle, grip, knob	sleeve
mémoire	scientific article	memory
mode	mode, manner	fashion
moule	mold	shell
office	church service	pantry
paillasse	jester	mattress of straw
page	page (young servant)	page (book leaf)
Pâque	the Jewish Passover	(pl.) Easter
poêle	oven	frying pan
pendule	pendulum	clock
personne	person	( <i> indef. pron.</i> ) nobody
poste	administrative position	mail (station)
physique	physique (bodily makeup)	physics (science)
platine	platinum	flat part
politique	politician	politics
solde	merchandise of reduced price	soldier salary
somme	sleep	sum
statuaire	sculptor	plastic art
tour	lap, tour	tower
vague	vagueness	wave
vapeur	steamer	steam, vapor
voile	veil	sail

## Plural of the Nouns (*Pluriel des Noms*)

Plural is derived by adding **-s** to the nouns, cf.:

<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
ami friend	amis friends
clou nail	cloûs nails
détail detail	détails details
mère mother	mères mothers
page page	pages pages
<b>etc...</b>	

Note that this **-s** is mute, though written, and in the speech plural is recognized by external indicators, as articles, pronouns etc, cf.:

- l'ami : les amis,
- le clou : les cloûs,
- la mère : les mères
- mon ami : mes amis,
- ce clou : ces cloûs,
- ma mère : nos mères

## Orthographic Particularities:

<b>Ending in Singular</b>	<b>Ending in Plural</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>-s, -x, -z</b>	<i>remain unchanged</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• le bras : les bras arm : arms</li> <li>• la voix : les voix voice : voices</li> <li>• le nez : les nez nose : noses</li> </ul>
<b>-au, -eau, -eu, -œu</b>	<b>+x</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• le noyau : les noyaux pit of a fruit : pits</li> <li>• le château : les châteaux castle : castles</li> <li>• le feu : les feux fire : fires</li> <li>• le vœu : les vœux wish : wishes</li> </ul>
<b>-ou</b>	<b>+x</b> (seven words only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• le bijou : les bijoux jewel : jewels</li> <li>• le caillou : les cailloux stone : stones</li> <li>• le chou : les choux cabbage : cabbages</li> <li>• le genou : les genoux knee : knees</li> <li>• le hibou : les hiboux owl : owls</li> <li>• le joujou : les joujoux toy : toys</li> <li>• le pou : les poux louse : lice</li> </ul>
<b>-ail</b>	<b>-aux</b> (eight words only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• le bail : les baux lease : leases</li> <li>• le corail : les coraux coral : corals</li> <li>• l'émail : les émaux overglaze : overglazes</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• le fermail : les fermaux <b>buckle</b> : buckles</li> <li>• le soupirail : les soupiraux <b>small window for aeration</b> : ...</li> <li>• le travail : les travaux <b>work</b> : works</li> <li>• le vantail : les vantaux <b>wing of a door</b> : wings...</li> <li>• le vitrail : les vitraux <b>large painted window</b> : ...</li> </ul>
<b>-al</b>	<b>-aux</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• le journal : les journaux <b>journal</b> : journals</li> <li>• <i>The following exceptions from this rule occur:</i></li> </ul> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">le bal : les bals <b>ball (dance)</b> : balls      le carnaval : les -als <b>carnival</b> : -als      le cérémonial : les -als <b>ceremonial</b> : -als      le chacal : les chacals <b>jackal</b> : jackals      le festival : les -als <b>festival</b> : festivals      le récital : les récitals <b>recital</b> : recitals      etc...</p>

Family names do not add **-s** to make plural, cf.: **les Dupont** the Duponts.

The plurals of the illustrious family names are, however, formed with **-s**, cf.:

- **les Bourbons** the Bourbons,
- **les Plantagenets** the Plantagenets,
- **les Scipions** the Scipions,
- **les Stuarts** the Stuarts etc.

## Irregular Plural Forms (*Formes Irrégulières de Pluriel*)

<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
un aïeul ancestor	<b>des aïeuls</b> grandparents / <b>des aieux</b> ancestors
un ciel sky	<b>des cieux</b> skies / <b>des ciels</b> skies
un erratum erratum	<b>des errata</b> errata
un gentleman gentleman	<b>des gentlemen</b> gentlemen
un impresario impresario	<b>des impresari-</b> (-ios) impresarios
un œil eye	<b>des yeux</b> eyes / <b>des œils</b> eyes (as technical term)

## Plural of the Compound Nouns (*Pluriel des Noms Composés*)

Type of Compound Noun	Rule	Examples
<u>Noun + Noun</u>	If the second noun is an apposition to the first, both make plural.	un aide-maçon : des aides-maçons une location-vente : des locations-ventes
	If the second noun is a complement to the first, only the first noun forms plural.	un timbre-poste : des timbres-poste une pause-café : des pauses-café
<u>Noun + Adj. (Adj. + Noun)</u>	In 95% of the cases both elements form plural.	une basse-cour : des basses-cours un haut-commissaire : des hauts-commissaires
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note especially:</li> </ul> <p>un bonhomme : des bonhommes un gentilhomme : des gentilshommes madame : mesdames mademoiselle : mesdemoiselles monsieur : messieurs</p>
<u>Noun + Prep. + Noun</u>	If the second noun is a complement to the first, only the first noun forms plural.	un bouton-d'or : des boutons-d'or un arc-en-ciel : des arcs-en-cieux
	If the compound noun is derived from complements attached to a verb, both elements remain invariable.	un coq-à-l'âne : des coq-à-l'ânes un pied-à-terre : des pied-à-terres un face-à-face : des face-à-faces
<u>Prep. (Prefix) + Noun</u>	Only the noun makes plural.	un demi-soupir : des demi-soupirs
<u>Verb + Noun</u>	In 70% of the cases both the verb and the noun remain invariable.	un coupe-gorge : des coupe-gorges un porte-avions : des porte-avions
	In 20% of the cases the noun makes plural, while the verb remains invariable.	un arrache-clou : des arrache-clous un passe-montagne : des passe-montagnes
	In 10% of the cases the noun can make or not plural, while the verb remains invariable.	un porte-savon : des porte-savon(s) un pèse-lettre : des pèse-lettre(s)

<b>Phrase</b>	<i>All the elements remain invariable.</i>	un cessez-le-feu : des cessez-le-feu un on-dit : des on-dit rumours
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## Nouns of different meaning in plural (Noms de significations différentes en pluriel)

Some nouns change their meaning in plural:

<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
abattis <i>m</i> cut wood	abattis <i>m</i> turnings
autorité <i>f</i> authority	autorités <i>f</i> authorities
bouche <i>f</i> mouth	bouches <i>f</i> mouth of a river
but <i>m</i> aim, goal	butts <i>m</i> goal (sport)
ciseau <i>m</i> chisel	ciseaux <i>m</i> scissors
douceur <i>f</i> sweetness	douceurs <i>f</i> cake, sweet
eau <i>f</i> water	eaux <i>f</i> fountains
fer <i>m</i> iron	fers <i>m</i> irons
humanité <i>f</i> humanity, mankind	humanités <i>f</i> humanities
lendemain <i>m</i> the next day	lendemains <i>m</i> future
lunettes <i>f</i> round window	lunettes <i>f</i> spectacles
menotte <i>f</i> little hand	menottes <i>f</i> shackles
lumière <i>f</i> light	lumières <i>f</i> enlightenment
papier <i>m</i> paper	papiers <i>m</i> documents, papers
pâte <i>f</i> dough	pâtes <i>f</i> pastry
provision <i>f</i> advance, store, supply, stock	provisions <i>f</i> viand
statut <i>m</i> statute	statuts <i>m</i> regulations
vacance <i>f</i> vacant place	vacances <i>f</i> holiday
vicissitude <i>f</i> change, transformations	vicissitudes <i>f</i> vicissitudes

## Pluralia tantum

These are nouns used in plural only. The most important between them are:

- **affres** *f* horrors
- **agissements** *m* actions
- **annales** *f* annals
- **appointements** *m* royalty
- **archives** *f* archive
- **armoiries** *f* coat of arms
- **arrhes** *f* down payment
- **besicles** *f* spectacles
- **bestiaux** *m* beasts
- **broussailles** *f* bushes
- **Calandes Grecques** *f* Greek Calends
- **ébats** *m* game
- **émoluments** *m* perquisite
- **entrailles** *f* intestines
- **fiançailles** *f* betrothment
- **funérailles** *f* funeral
- **honoraires** *m* honorarium, fee
- **mânes** *m* ghosts of dead
- **mœurs** *f* customs, behaviors
- **obsèques** *f* obsequy
- **piergeries** *f* jewels
- **pourparlers** *m* negotiations
- **prémices** *f* first-fruits

- **cisailles** *f* garden scissors
- **confins** *m* boundaries
- **dépens** *m* spendigs
- **décombres** *f* debris
- **ténèbres** *f* darkness
- **vêpres** *f* vespers
- **vivres** *m* victuals

Some geographical names are used in plural only:

- **les Andes** the Andes
- **les Alpes** the Alps
- **les Antilles** the Antilles
- **les Baléares** the Balearic Islands
- **les Carpathes** the Carpathians

## Singularia tantum

These are nouns used in singular only. The most important between them are:

1. The proper names: **Jean** John, **Marie** Mary, **Paris** Paris, **France** France etc.
2. Nouns, designating objects and phenomena unique in themselves, such as:

- **le soleil** sun
- **la lune** moon
- **le sud** south
- **le nord** north
- **l'horizon** horizon

3. Nouns, designating substances, materials, products etc.:

- **le lait** milk
- **le charbon** coal
- **le blé** wheat

If used in plural, they denote types, kinds or separate peaces.

4. Abstract nouns, denoting quality, action or state:

- **la joie** joy
- **la vaillance** valor
- **le développement** development
- **l'ingratitude** ingratitude
- **l'orgueil** proud

5. Nouns implying a total plurality, such as:

- **le pavage** pavement

- **l'argent** money

6. The nouns suffixed by **-isme** and the names of the sciences, as:

- **l'impressionisme** impressionism
- **la médecine** medicine (medical science)
- **la biologie** biology.

## **Adjective (*Adjectif*)**

As in the other Romance languages, the adjectives in French agree in gender and number with the nouns they refer to, *cf.*:

- **grand homme** great man : **grands hommes** great men;
- **grande femme** great woman : **grandes femmes** great women.

## **Gender of the Adjectives (*Genre des Adjectifs*)**

As the nouns, the adjectives in French are gendered masculine or feminine.

Adjectives undergo predictable changes between masculine and feminine forms, and between singular and plural forms. These forms are numerous, as demonstrated below.

### **Adjectives of one form**

Generally, if an adjective ends in **-e** in the masculine, the feminine forms will be identical:

- **facile** : **facile** easy
- **solide** : **solide** solid

### **Adjectives of two forms**

If an adjective in the masculine ends in any other vowel, or in **-ent**, **-ant**, a mute **-e** is added to form the feminine:

- **passé** : **passée** past
- **ravi** : **ravie** ravished
- **intéressant** : **intéressante** interesting

Adjectives ending in vowel + **l**, **n**, **s**, or **t** generally double the consonant and add a mute **-e**:

- **gentil** : **gentille** gentle

- **gros** : **grosse** fat, rude, gross
- **ancien** : **ancienne** ancient

Other common changes in endings are as follows:

<b>Masculine ending</b>	<b>Feminine ending</b>	<b>Examples</b>
-c	-che	blanc : blanche white
-er	-ère	régulier : régulière regular
-eur	-euse	menteur : menteuse lying
-eux	-euse	heureux : heureuse happy
-ic	-ique	publiic : publique public
-oux	-ouse	jaloux : jalouse jealous
-teur	-trice	dévastataleur : dévastatatrice devastating
-f	-ve	neuf : neuve new

## Adjectives of three forms

A few adjectives have two forms for masculine - one used in front of nouns beginning with consonant, and another used in front of nouns beginning with vowel or mute h-:

<b>Masculine in front of consonant</b>	<b>Masculine in front of vowel</b>	<b>Feminine</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
beau	bel	belle	beautiful
fou	fol	folle	mad, foolish
mou	mol	molle	soft
nouveau	nouvel	nouvelle	new
vieux	vieil	vieille	old

### Examples:

- **beau jour** beautiful day
  - **vieux journal** old newspaper
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>bel homme</b> beautiful men<br><b>belle femme</b> beautiful woman | <b>vieil homme</b> old man<br><b>vieille femme</b> old woman |
|--|--|

## Invariable Adjectives

Certain colors, especially compound adjectives or adjectives formed from nouns, are invariable:

- **orange** orange
- **châtain** chestnut brown
- **bleu foncé** dark blue

## Plural of the Adjectives (*Pluriel des Adjectifs*)

Generally, the plural of the adjectives follows the [pattern of the plural of the nouns](#).

The most common way to form the plural is by adding **-s** to the singular:

- grand : grands
- intéressant : intéressants

Adjectives ending in **-s**, or **-x** in the singular generally do not change in the plural:

- gros : gros;
- heureux : heureux.

Adjectives ending in **-al** generally take **-aux** in the plural:

- national : nationaux;
- radical : radicaux;

*but final : finals; festival : festivals.*

The adjectives ending in **-eau** are followed by **-x** in plural:

- beau : beaux;
- nouveau : nouveaux.

## Degree of the Adjectives (*Degré des Adjectifs*)

### Comparative degree (*Degré Comparatif*)

Comparative degree is formed analitically. Note that adjective agreement is with the principal noun:

Comparative Degree	Formation	Examples
<b>of Superiority</b>	<b>plus + ADJ. + que</b>	Jean est plus grand que Catherine. Jean is taller than Catherine.
<b>of Equality</b>	<b>aussi + ADJ. + que</b>	Marie est aussi grande que Jean. Marie is as tall as Jean.
<b>of Inferiority</b>	<b>moins + ADJ. + que</b>	Philippe est moins grand que Jean. Philippe is less tall [shorter] than Jean.

## Superlative degree (*Degré Superlatif*)

The superlative degree is formed analytically according to the following pattern:  
*DEF. ART. + ADJECTIVE ( + de + the context of comparison)*

Note that sometimes the context of comparison may be implied.

### Examples:

- **C'est le plus beau jour de ma vie!**

It's the best day of my life!

- **Il est le plus grand [de tous].**

He is the greatest [of all].

The superlative may be expressed emphatically:

- **C'est elle qui est arrivée la première [de tous les coureurs].**

She's the one who came in first [among all the runners].

In the French of 16-17 centuries there occurred also synthetical forms of the superlative degree made with **-issime**, as **sanctissime** etc.

## Irregular degrees (*Degrés irréguliers*)

A few adjectives have irregular synthetical comparative forms, inherited from [Latin](#):

<b>Adjective</b>	<b>Comparative degree</b>	<b>Superlative degree</b>
bon	meilleur	le meilleur
mauvais	pire, plus mauvais	le pire, le plus mauvais
grand	majeur, plus grand	le plus grand
petit	moindre ( <i>old mineur</i> ), plus petit	le moindre, le plus petit
bas	plus bas, inférieur	le plus bas, infime
haut	plus haut, supérieur	le plus haut, suprême
--	extérieur	extrême

## Placement of the Adjective

Generally, adjectives follow nouns:

- C'est un livre amusant.  
It's an entertaining book.
- Le bébé a besoin d'une chaise haute.  
The baby needs a high chair.

However, certain common adjectives precede the noun. They include:

- **bon** good,
- **mauvais** bad,
- **grand** big, great,
- **petit** small, little, petty,
- **jeune** young,
- **vieux** old, aged,
- **long** long,
- **beau** beautiful,
- **faux** false,
- **gros** gross, rude,
- **nouveau** new,
- **joli** nice, beautiful.

### Examples:

- Ce bourgogne est encore un bon vin.  
This burgundy is still a good wine.
- Il a joué une fausse note.  
He played the wrong note.

A few adjectives change meaning when placed before the noun. Generally, it is thought that when placed after the noun, these adjectives retain their literal meaning; placed before it, they take on a figurative sense:

- mon ancien professeur / mon professeur ancien my former professor / my aged professor
- ma propre chambre / ma chambre propre my own room / my clean room
- un grand homme / un homme grand a great man / a big man
- le seul voyageur / un voyageur seul the only traveler / a solitary traveler

See also [Adjective](#) (formation, degree of comparison etc.).

## Adverbs (Adverbes)

### List of Basic Adverbs

Time		
alors then	demain tomorrow	naguère recently

<b>après</b> after	<b>dorénavant</b> since this moment on	<b>parfois</b> sometimes
<b>aujourd'hui</b> today	<b>encore</b> still, yet	<b>puis</b> after
<b>auparavant</b> formerly, previously	<b>enfin</b> at last, finally	<b>quand</b> when
<b>aussitôt</b> at once, right now	<b>ensuite</b> afterwards	<b>soudain</b> suddenly
<b>autrefois</b> formerly, previously	<b>hier</b> yesterday	<b>souvent</b> often
<b>avant-hier</b> the day before	<b>jadis</b> formerly	<b>toujours</b> ever
yesterday	<b>jamais</b> ever	<b>tard</b> late
<b>bientôt</b> soon	<b>lendemain</b> the day after	<b>tôt</b> early
<b>d'abord</b> at first, at the outset	<b>maintenant</b> in this moment, now	...
<b>déjà</b> already, by now, yet		

<b>Place</b>		
<b>ailleurs</b> elsewhere	<b>devant</b> before	<b>loin</b> away
<b>dedans</b> inside	<b>en</b> from here / there	<b>où</b> where
<b>dehors</b> outside	<b>ici</b> here	<b>partout</b> everywhere
<b>dessous</b> below, downstairs	<b>là</b> here, there	<b>près</b> near
<b>dessus</b> above, on top, upstairs	<b>là-bas</b> there	<b>y</b> (to) there

<b>Quantity</b>		
<b>assez</b> enough, rather, sufficiently	<b>guère</b> too little	<b>si</b> so
<b>autant que</b> as far as	<b>moins</b> less	<b>suffisamment</b> sufficiently, enough
<b>beaucoup de</b> much, many	<b>peu</b> little	<b>tant</b> that much
<b>bien</b> much, many	<b>plus</b> more	<b>tellement</b> like this, so, that way, thus
<b>combien de</b> as much, as many	<b>presque</b> almost, nearly	<b>très</b> quite, very, very much
<b>davantage</b> more	<b>que = combien</b>	<b>trop</b> too, too much
<b>environ</b> about, approximately	<b>seulement</b> only	...

<b>Affirmation and Negation</b>	<b>Interrogation</b>	<b>Manner</b>
<p><b>certes</b> certainly, sure  <b>guère</b> too little  <b>jamais</b> never  <b>ne</b> not  <b>ni</b> neither  <b>non</b> no  <b>oui</b> yes  <b>pas</b> no  <b>point</b> not at all  <b>si</b> yes (<i>to negative question</i>)</p>	<p><b>combien?</b> how much (many)  <b>comment?</b> how?  <b>où?</b> where?  <b>pourquoi?</b> why?  <b>quand?</b> when?</p>	<p><b>ainsi</b> so, that way, thus  <b>aussi</b> like this  <b>bas</b> silently  <b>bien</b> well  <b>comme</b> as, like, such as  <b>haut</b> aloud  <b>mal</b> badly  <b>surtout</b> above all, especially  <b>vite</b> soon</p>

See also [Derived Adverbs](#).

## Derived Adverbs

A lot of adverbs are derived regularly from the feminine forms of the adjectives by adding the suffix **-ment** ([this pattern appeared in the Vulgar Latin](#)), cf.

- lent : lente **slow** => **lentement** **slowly**,
- simple : simple **simple** => **simplement** **simply**.

These adverbs correspond to the English adverbs formed by **-ly**.

Some adverbs are irregular:

A. Many adjectives ending in **-ant** or **-ent** take the adverb ending **-amment** or **-emment**:

- courant => **couramment** *currently*,
- intelligent => **intelligemment** *intelligently*,
- brillant => **brillamment** *briliantly*.

B. Other irregular forms are:

- précis => **précisément** *precisely*,
- bref => **brièvement** *briefly*,
- gentil => **gentiment** *gently*.

Some adverbs are formed from the adjectives by the way of conversion (in other words their forms coincide with the masculine forms of the adjectives), *cf.*:

- chanter **faux** *to sing off-key*,
- voler **haut / bas** *to fly high / low*,
- parler **fort** *to speak loudly*,
- travailler **dur** *to work hard*.

## Degree of the Adverbs (*Degrés des Adverbes*)

### Comparative Degree (*Degré Comparatif*)

Normal	Comparative		
	Superiority	Equality	Inferiority
vite	plus ADV. que plus vite que	aussi ADV. que aussi vite que	moins ADV. que moins vite que

### Superlative Degree (*Degré Superlatif*)

Normal	Superlative	
	Superiority	Inferiority

	<b>le plus ADV.</b>	<b>le moins ADV.</b>
vite	le plus vite	le moins vite

Two adverbs have irregular forms:

- bien **well** => mieux => le mieux;
- mal **badly** => pis (plus mal) => le pis (le plus mal).

## Adverbials (*Locutions adverbiales*)

<b>Time</b>		
<b>à la fin</b> at last, finally <b>à la fois</b> in the same time <b>une fois</b> once, formerly <b>à présent</b> presently <b>dans le temps</b> formerly <b>depuis longtemps</b> since longtime	<b>depuis toujours</b> since ever <b>de temps à autre</b> from time to time <b>de temps en temps</b> from time to time <b>du temps au temps</b> from time to time <b>de tout temps</b> since ever <b>tout à l'heure</b> soon	<b>tout de suite</b> right now <b>tout le temps</b> always <b>tous les jours</b> always <b>de jour en jour</b> gradually <b>de nos jours</b> nowadays
<b>Place</b>		
<b>à la droite</b> to the right <b>à la gauche</b> to the left <b>à la maison</b> home <b>à part</b> beside <b>au dehors</b> outside, outdoors <b>au-dessous</b> to downstairs / below	<b>au-dessus</b> to upstairs / up <b>de dessous</b> from downstairs / below <b>d'où</b> from where <b>en bas</b> below, downstairs <b>en dedans</b> within, inside, indoors <b>en dehors</b> outside, outdoors	<b>en dessous</b> downstairs <b>en dessus</b> upstairs <b>nulle part</b> nowhere <b>par ici</b> this way <b>quelque part</b> somewhere
<b>Manner</b>		
<b>à la dérobée</b> stealthily <b>à la française</b> in a French manner <b>à la paysanne</b> in peasants' manner	<b>de bon gré</b> by good will <b>de cette façon</b> in this way <b>en vain</b> in vain	<b>tour à tour</b> rotationally <b>à merveille</b> miraculously
<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Affirmation and Negation</b>	<b>Degree</b>
<b>au moins</b> at least <b>au plus</b> at most <b>de plus</b> of much <b>de peu</b> of some <b>de tout</b> of all	<b>bien entendu</b> of course <b>bien sur</b> of course <b>d'accord</b> in agreement <b>en effet</b> in effect <b>sans doute</b> undoubtedly	<b>a peine</b> barely, hardly, (only) just <b>à peu près</b> almost <b>pas du tout</b> definitely not <b>tout à fait</b> completely

**peu plus ou moins** approximately

See also [Placement of the Adverb](#).

## Determiners (*Déterminants*)

Determiners are words (as an article, possessive, demonstrative, or quantifier) that make specific the denotation of a noun phrase. In French they agree in gender and number with the noun.

## Articles (*Articles*)

		<b>Indefinite Article</b>	<b>Definite Article</b>			<b>Partitive Article</b>	
			<b>Basic Forms</b>	<b>Contracted Forms</b>			
Sg.	Pl.			<i>a</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>en</i>	
	<i>m</i>	un	le (l')	au	du	--	
	<i>f</i>	une	la (l')	à la	de la	--	
	<i>m</i>	des	les	aux	des	des	
	<i>f</i>				ès		

The form **l'** of the definite article is used in front of a vowel, cf.:

- **l'ami** the friend (he)
- **l'amie** the friend (she)

Note: the form **ès** is rarely used in expressions like **docteur ès mathématiques** doctor of mathematics...

See [Usage of the articles](#).

## Possessive Adjectives (*Adjectifs Possessifs*)

<b>Person</b>		<b>One owner</b>		<b>Many owners</b>	
		<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>	<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<i>m</i>	mon			
	<i>f</i>	ma (mon)	mes	notre	nos
<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<i>m</i>	ton			
	<i>f</i>	ta (ton)	tes	votre	vos
<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<i>m</i>	son			
	<i>f</i>	sa (son)	ses	leur	leurs

## Examples:

**mon ami** my friend  
**notre ami** our friend  
**ma maison** my house  
**notre maison** our house

**mes amis** my friends  
**nos amis** our friends  
**mes maisons** my houses  
**nos maisons** our houses

The forms **mon**, **ton**, **son** for feminine are used in front of vowels, cf.:

- **mon amie** my friend (she) etc.

On the usage see [Possessive Adjectives and Pronouns](#).

## **Demonstrative Adjectives (*Adjectifs Démonstratifs*)**

		<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
		<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Feminine</i>
<b>Simple</b>		ce (cet) this	cette	ces	
<b>Compound</b>	<b>Near objects</b>	ce (cet) [noun]-ci this	cette [noun]-ci	ces [noun]-ci	
	<b>Remote objects</b>	ce (cet) [noun]-là that	cette [noun]-là	ces [noun]-là	

## Examples:

- **ce livre** this book
- **ce livre-ci** this book here

**ces livres** these books  
**cette femme** this woman  
**ces femmes** these women

**ces livres-ci** these books here  
**ce livre-là** that book there  
**ces livres-là** those books there

The form **cet** is used in front of a vowel, cf.:

- **cet ami** this friend.

On the usage see [Demonstrative Adjectives and Pronouns](#).

## **Interrogative Adjectives (*Adjectifs Interrogatifs*)**

Singular		Plural	
Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
quel? what kind of?	quelle?	quels?	quelles?

## Indefinite Adjectives (*Adjectifs Indéfinis*)

Singular		Plural	
Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
aucun any, some	aucune	aucuns	aucunes
autre other		autres	
certain certain	certaine	certains	certaines
même same		mêmes	
nul none	nulle	nuls	nulles
quelque whatever		plusieurs many	quelques
tel such	telle	tels	telles
tout all, every, whatever	toute	tous	touttes

## Determiners (*Déterminants*)

Determiners are words (as an article, possessive, demonstrative, or quantifier) that makes specific the denotation of a noun phrase. In French they agree in gender and number with the noun.

## Articles (*Articles*)

		Indefinite Article	Definite Article				Partitive Article	
			Basic Forms	Contracted Forms				
				a	de	en		
Sg.	m	un	le (l')	au	du	--	du	
	f	une	la (l')	à la	de la	--	de la	
Pl.	m	des	les	aux	des	ès	des	
	f							

The form l' of the definite article is used in front of a vowel, cf.:

- l'ami the friend (he)
- l'amie the friend (she)

Note: the form **ès** is rarely used in expressions like **docteur ès mathématiques** doctor of mathematics...

See [Usage of the articles](#).

## Possessive Adjectives (*Adjectifs Possessifs*)

Person	One owner		Many owners	
		plural	singular	plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>m</b>	mon ma (mon)	mes	notre
	<b>f</b>	ton ta (ton)	tes	votre
2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>m</b>	son		vos
	<b>f</b>	sa (son)	ses	leur
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>m</b>			leurs
	<b>f</b>			

### Examples:

mon ami my friend  
notre ami our friend  
ma maison my house  
notre maison our house

mes amis my friends  
nos amis our friends  
mes maisons my houses  
nos maisons our houses

The forms **mon**, **ton**, **son** for feminine are used in front of vowels, cf.:

- **mon amie** my friend (she) etc.

On the usage see [Possessive Adjectives and Pronouns](#).

## Demonstrative Adjectives (*Adjectifs Démonstratifs*)

	Singular		Plural	
	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
<b>Simple</b>	ce (cet) this	cette	ces	
<b>Compound</b>	ce (cet) [noun]-ci this	cette [noun]-ci	ces [noun]-ci	
	ce (cet) [noun]-là that	cette [noun]-là	ces [noun]-là	

## Examples:

- **ce livre** this book

**ces livres** these books  
**cette femme** this woman  
**ces femmes** these women

- **ce livre-ci** this book here

**ces livres-ci** these books here  
**ce livre-là** that book there  
**ces livres-là** those books there

The form **cet** is used in front of a vowel, cf.:

- **cet ami** this friend.

On the usage see [Demonstrative Adjectives and Pronouns](#).

## Interrogative Adjectives (*Adjectifs Interrogatifs*)

Singular		Plural	
Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
quel? what kind of?	quelle?	quels?	quelles?

## Indefinite Adjectives (*Adjectifs Indéfinis*)

Singular		Plural	
Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
aucun any, some	aucune	aucuns	aucunes
autre other		autres	
certain certain	certaine	certains	certaines
même same		mêmes	
nul none	nulle	nuls	nulles
		plusieurs many	
quelque whatever		quelques	
tel such	telle	tels	telles
tout all, every, whatever	toute	tous	touttes

## Pronouns (*Pronoms*)

See the contrastive Table on the [Origin of the Pronouns in the modern Romance languages](#).

See the [Usage of the Pronouns and Determiners](#).

## Personal & Reflexive Pronouns (*Pronoms Personnels et Réflexifs*)

		PERSONAL PRONOUNS					REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS	
		Atonic Forms			Tonic Forms		Atonic Forms	Tonic Forms
		Subject	Dir. Object	Ind. Object				
Sg.	1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>mf</i>	je I	me me	me to me	(à) moi I (to me)	me myself	moi
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>mf</i>	tu you	te you	te to you	(à) toi (to) you	te yourself	toi
		<i>m</i>	il he	le him	lui to him / her	(à) lui he (to him)	se him-, herself	soi
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>f</i>	elle she	la her		(à) elle she (to her)	--	--
		<i>n</i>	il it	--	--	--	--	--
Pl.	1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>m</i>	nous we	nous us	nous to us	(à) nous we (to us)	nous ourselves	nous
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>m</i>	vous you	vous you	vous to you	(à) vous (to) you	vous yourselves	vous
		<i>m</i>	ils they	les them	leur to them	(à) eux they (to them)	se themselves	soi
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>f</i>	elles they			(à) elles they (to them)		

The tonic forms are referred also as disjunctive pronouns.

On the Usage of the Personal and Reflexive pronouns see:

- [Subject Pronouns](#), [Direct Object Pronouns](#), [Indirect Object Pronouns](#), [Reflexive Pronouns](#).
- [Disjunctive \(tonic\) pronouns](#).
- [Pronouns Order](#).

## Possessive Pronouns (*Pronoms Possessifs*)

Person		One owner		Many owners	
		Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>m</i>	le mien mine	les miens	le nôtre	les nôtres
	<i>f</i>	la mienne mine	les miennes	la nôtre	
2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>m</i>	le tien yours	les tiens	le vôtre	les vôtres
	<i>f</i>	la tienne yours	les tiennes	la vôtre	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>m</i>	le sien his	les siens	le leur	les leurs
	<i>f</i>	la sienne hers	les siennes	la leur	

On the usage see [Possessive Adjectives and Pronouns](#).

## Demonstrative Pronouns (*Pronoms Démonstratifs*)

Variable				Invariable (Neuter)	
Singular		Plural			
Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine		
celui this	celle	ceux	celles	ce (c', ç') this	
l'autre the other autrui		les autres		ceci this cela that	
tel such	telles	tels	telles	ça this	

On the usage see [Demonstrative Adjectives and Pronouns](#).

## Relative Pronouns (*Pronoms Rélatifs*)

Variable				Invariable	
Basic Forms		Contracted Forms with Prepositions			
		à	de		
Sg.	m f	lequel who laquelle lesquels lesquelles	auquel to whom à laquelle auxquels auxquelles	duquel of whom de laquelle desquels desquelles	
Pl.	m f			qui who que who / which quoi what dont of which où in which	

On the usage see [Relative pronouns](#).

## Interrogative Pronouns (*Pronoms Interrogatifs*)

		Variable (all are absolute)			Invariable
		Absolute Forms		Non-absolute Forms	
Non-emphatical Forms	Sg. f Pl. m	lequel? who? laquelle? lesquels?	qui? which? who? quoi? what?	que? what?	

		<i>f</i>	lesquelles?		
<i>Emphatical Forms</i> <i>(+est-ce qui / que)</i>	<i>Sg.</i>	<i>m</i>	lequel est-ce qui / que?	qui est-ce qui?	qu'est-ce qui?
		<i>f</i>	laquel est-ce qui / que?	qui est-ce que?	qu'est-ce que?
	<i>Pl.</i>	<i>m</i>	lequel est-ce qui / que?	qu'est-ce qui?	qu'est-ce que?
		<i>f</i>	lequel est-ce qui / que?	qu'est-ce qui?	qu'est-ce que?

On the usage see [Interrogative Pronouns](#).

## Indefinite Pronouns (*Pronoms Indéfinis*)

Variable				Invariable
Singular		Plural		
Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine	
le même somebody	la même	les mêmes		quiconque someone
un (some)one	une	uns	unes	
quelqu'un any(body), some(body)	quelqu'une	quelqu'uns	quelqu'unes	
--	--	certains	certaines	
--	--	(d') aucun(s)	(d') aucune(s)	
tout everybody	toutes	tous	tas	
chacun each, (every)one	chacune	chacuns	chacunes	on you, one, they

## Negative Pronouns (*Pronoms Négatifs*)

Persons	Variable				Invariable	
	Singular		Plural			
	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine		
	nul nobody	nulle	nuls	nulles	personne no one	
Objects	aucun	aucune	--	--	rien nothing	

On the usage see [Negative clauses](#).

## Pronominal Adverbs (*Adverbes Pronominaux*)

In French the adverbs **en** from there and **y** to there may be used as indirect object pronouns, replacing expressions constructed with the prepositions **de** of, **from** and **à** to.

## En

**Origin:** OF ent <= L inde from that place, from that time.

The adverbial pronoun **en** replace the object of the preposition **de**, including expressions of quantity.

- As-tu besoin d'argent? Do you need some money? => En as-tu besoin? Do you need?
- J'ai quatre livres. I have four books. => J'en ai quatre. I have four (of them).
- J'ai trois chiens. I have three dogs. => J'en ai trois. = I have three (of them).

In the above examples, **en** must be present in French, even though the usage 'of them' is not necessary in English.

- Elle parle tout le temps de son travail. => Elle en parle tout le temps. She speaks all the time of it.
- Nous avons assez de lecture pour ce soir. => Nous en avons assez pour ce soir. We have enough (of them) for this night.
- Elle vient de Barcelone. => Elle en vient. She comes from there.
- J'ai besoin de patience. => J'en ai besoin. I need (some of) that.

The usage of **en** for persons is considered old fashioned; in this case the contemporary speakers prefer the disjunctive pronoun:

- (*old*) Il aime ses enfants, et il en est aimé. He loves his children and is loved by them.
- (*mod.*) Elle parle de ses frères. She speaks of her brothers. => Elle parle d'eux. She speaks of them.

The pronominal adverb **en** is not to be confused with the preposition **en** in, at.

- Elle habite en Belgique. She lives in Belgium.

## Y

**Origin:** L hic in this place, here.

The adverbial pronoun **y** replace the object of the preposition **à** + places and things:

- On va à Paris. => On y va. We are going there.
- Je vais à la bibliothèque. => J'y vais. I am going there.
- On devrait obéir à la loi. => On devrait y obéir. One should obey it.

The pronoun **y** can also replace the object of a number of prepositions indicating placement in space or movement:

- Le livre est sur la table. => Le livre y est.
- Elle part en France. => Elle y va.

## The Pronouns **y** and **en**

The pronouns **y** and **en** have a special place in the French language and are not easily defined in all cases.

The pronoun **en** can have many meanings and is, of sorts, an indirect object pronoun. It is used in cases where the implied pronoun is one other than à. Often, it is translated as **about + person / thing**. It is usually the pronoun replacement for **de + object**. Note the following examples:

- Mon père et moi, nous parlions de mon travail. = Mon père et moi, nous en parlions.
- Je me défie de cette voiture. = Je m'en défie.
- Je ne suis pas sûr de la situation. = Je n'en suis pas sûr.

In some cases, use of **en** is optional and can be replaced by using the correct preposition with the disjunctive pronoun. Usually, the disjunctive pronouns are used when the object being replaced is a person or persons:

- Ils parlaient de leur amie. = Ils parlaient d'elle.
- Nous ne savons rien de ces garçons. = Nous ne savons rien d'eux.

Generally speaking, the pronoun **y** is a direct object pronoun most often referring back to a place. Usually, the best translation is **there**. Take the following examples:

- Nous y allons. = **We are going there.**
- Vous y êtes. = **You are there.** (*Often used in question form*)
- J'y suis arrivé. = **I have arrived.**

The pronoun **y** can be used in conjunction with other direct object pronouns and reflexive pronouns. It will follow all direct object pronouns.

*See more on the usage of the [disjunctive pronouns](#).*

## Place in the sentence

In "normal" affirmative sentences, word order when there are both direct and indirect objects in a sentence is as follows:

me	le	lui	y
te	la	leur	en

vous                      les  
nous

- Il a rendu les livres à la bibliothèque. => Il les y a rendus. **He brought them back there.**
- Il nous en donne. **He gives some to us.**
- Je l'y ai envoyée pour le leur demander. **I sent her there to ask them (it).**

See also [Pronouns order.](#)

## **Numerals (Nombres)**

[Please install Times NR Phonetic true type font on your system.](#)

See the [Latin Numerals.](#)

Numerals (Arabic)	Cardinal	Ordinal	Multiplicative	Fractions
1	un, une [?, yn]	premier, -ère	simple	--
2	deux	second, -e [s^g_, -d] (deuxième)	double	moitié
3	trois	troisième (old tiers, tierce)	triple	tiers
4	quatre	quatrième (old quart, e)	quadruple	quart
5	cinq	cinquième (old quint, e)	quintuple	cinquième
6	six [sis]	sixième [sizjEm]	sextuple	sixième
7	sept [sEt]	septième	septuple	...
8	huit [Yit]	huitième	octuple	etc.
9	neuf	neuvième	--	
10	dix [dis]	dixième	décuple	
11	onze	onzième	--	
12	douze	douzième	--	
13	treize	...	...	
14	quatorze	etc.		
15	quinze			
16	seize			
17	dix-sept [disEt]			
18	dix-huite			
19	dix-neuf [dizn#fôô]			
20	vingt [vØ(t)]	vingtième		
21	vingt et un [vØte?]	vingt et unième		
22	vingt-deux [vØtd#]	...		
23	vingt-trois [vØtetRwa]	etc.		
30	trente [tR{t}]			
31	trente et un [tR{te?}]			
32	trente-deux [tR{ted#}]			
40	quarante			
41	quarante et un			
42	quarante-deux			
50	cinquante			
51	cinquante et un			
52	cinquante-deux			
60	soixante [swas{t}]			
61	soixante et un			
62	soixante-deux			
70	soixante-dix (septante)			
71	soixante-onze (septante et un)			

72	soixante-douze (septante-deux)			
80	quatre-vingts (octante) (huitante)			
81	quatre-vingt-un (octante-un) (huitante-un)			
82	quatre-vingt-deux (octante-deux) (huitante-deux)			
90	quatre-vingt-dix (nonante)			
91	quatre-vingt-onze (nonante-un)			
92	quatre-vingt-douze nonante-deux)	--		
100	cent [s{(t)]		centuple	
101	cent un	--		
200	deux cents			
201	deux cent un			
300	trois cents			
301	trois cent un			
400	quatre cents			
500	cinq cents			
600	six cents			
700	sept cents			
800	huite cents			
900	neuf cents			
1000	mille			
1001	mille un			
1002	mille deux			
1100	mille cent (onze cents)			
1200	mille deux cents (douze cents)			
2000	deux mille			
10 000	dix mille			
100 000	cent mille			
100 001	cent mille [et] un			
1 000 000	un million			
1 000 000 000	un milliard			

## Prepositions (*Prépositions*)

à to, toward	dévers ( <i>old</i> ) = vers	par-derrière by the backside
après after	dès from, since	par-dessous by the lower part
attendu having in mind	durant for, during, while, whilst	par-dessus by the top
avant before; in the presence of	en in, inside, within	parmi among, between
avec with	en avant forehead	passé after, past
chez at, beside, with	entre between	pendant for, during, while, whilst
concernant concerning	envers ( <i>old</i> ) in front of; toward(s)	pour for; to
contre against; in exchange for	environ ( <i>old</i> ) by ( <i>time</i> )	près nearby
dans in(to), inside, within	excepté except for	proche ( <i>old</i> ) ( <i>dial.</i> ) nearby
de of; from; about; by ( <i>agent</i> )	fors ( <i>old</i> ) = hors	selon according to
dedans inside	hormis ( <i>old</i> ) except for	suivant according to
de dessous from below	hors out(side)	sans without
de dessus from the top	jouxté ( <i>old</i> ) near	sauf without, except for
dehors abroad, out, outside	jusque until	sous below, under, beneath
delà ( <i>old</i> ) longer than ( <i>space</i> )	les (lès) (lez) ( <i>old</i> ) near, close to	suivant according to
depuis from, since	moyennant by the means of	sur over, above; about
derrière behind, after	nonobstant despite, in spite of	touchant ( <i>old</i> ) concerning, about
dessous ( <i>old</i> ) below, downstairs	outre over, exceedingly	vers to, toward(s)

**dessus** on top, overhead, upstairs    **par** per, thorough, by (agent)    **vu** having in mind  
**dévant** before, in front of                              **par delà** over there

The prepositions **a** and **de** have contracted forms with the articles **le** and **les**: **au, aux** and **du, des**.

See [General Notes on the French Prepositions](#).

## General Notes on the French Prepositions

Prepositions are first and foremost words used to indicate position and placement: they describe when one thing is beneath another, or on top of it, or next to it, etc. In addition, they describe relations between things, as well as movement to and from places.

### Position and motion

The common prepositions of position and motion are as follows:

- **à** to
- **à côté de** next to
- **au-dessous** beneath, below
- **au-dessus** above
- **autour de** around
- **de** from
- **derrière** behind
- **devant** in front of
- **en face de** in front of
- **loin de** far from
- **sous** under
- **sur** on
- **vers** toward

Prepositions precede the nouns upon which they act. In French, prepositions of position and motion are used in much the same way they are used in English:

- J'ai posé les clés sur la table.  
I left the keys **on the table**.
- Sa maison se trouve derrière l'église.  
Her house is located **behind the church**.
- Nous allons à la bibliothèque.  
We're going **to the library**.
- La pharmacie est à côté du supermarché.  
The drugstore is **next to the supermarket**.

### Prepositions of relation

Many prepositions (**pour, à, avec, parmi, grâce à**, etc.) indicate relations between things or people, often indicating intent or causality:

- Elle a fini son diplôme pour faire plaisir à ses parents.  
She finished her degree **to please her parents**.
- Nous sommes sortis avec nos amis.  
We went out **with our friends**.

- Parmi les étudiants, celle-ci est la plus intelligente.  
Among all the students, this one is the sharpest.

## Prepositions of place

The use of prepositions with geographical entities is quite precise, and usually adheres to the following patterns:

A. Before names of cities, **à** or **de** is used to indicate movement toward or away. The definite article is not used, unless it is a part of the name of the city:

- **Paris:** Nous allons à Paris l'été prochain. **We're going to Paris next summer.**
- **New York:** J'ai déménagé à New York à l'âge de treize ans. **I moved to New York when I was 13.**
- **Dakar:** Ousmane vient de Dakar. **Ousmane comes from Dakar.**

but:

**Le Havre:** Demain, nous allons au Havre. **Tomorrow we're going to Le Havre.**

B. Before feminine country or state names, **en** indicates movement toward or within, **de** movement from. In both cases the definite article is omitted:

- Ils voyagent en Espagne.  
**They are traveling in Spain.**
- Elle va passer une année en Colombie.  
**She's going to spend a year in Colombia.**
- Mon frère est né en Californie.  
**My brother was born in California.**
- Mon père vient de rentrer d'Algérie.  
**My father just returned from Algeria.**

C. Before masculine country or state names, **au** (or **à l'**, or **aux**) is used to indicate movement toward or within, **du** (or **de le**, or **des**) movement from. (For masculine states, **dans le** is also used to indicate movement toward or within.)

- Il est parti au Japon.  
**He left for Japan.**
- Elle a passé dix ans au (dans le) Texas.  
**She spent ten years in Texas.**
- Ce monsieur nous vient des États-Unis -- de l'Illinois plus précisément.  
**This fellow comes to us from the United States -- from Illinois, to be precise.**

The verbs **visiter** **to visit** and **quitter** **to quit, leave** are generally not followed by prepositions:

- J'ai visité Denver.  
**I visited Denver.**
- Elle n'a jamais visité la Chine.  
**She has never visited China.**

- J'ai quitté la France à l'âge de seize ans.  
I left France at the age of sixteen.

## Prepositions with verbs

1. When one verb is followed immediately by another in the infinitive, the preposition **à** or **de** may intervene, or there may be no preposition at all:

- J'aime voyager.  
I like to travel.
- Elle a décidé de partir.  
She decided to leave.
- Hésitez-vous à vous inscrire?  
Are you hesitating to sign up?

These prepositions follow no particular logic and bear no meaning; their use must simply be memorized. Common forms are as follows:

- verbs followed by no preposition:

**aimer** to love,

**aimer mieux** to prefer,

**aller** to go,

**croire** to believe,

**désirer** to desire,

**devoir** to have to, must,

**faire** to do / make,

**espérer** to hope,

**laisser** to allow, let.

- verbs followed by **à**:

**aider à** to help,

**s'amuser à** to amuse oneself,

**apprendre à** to learn,

**arriver à** to arrive,

**continuer à** to continue,

**commencer à** to begin, commence,

**s'habituer à** to become accustomed,

**hésiter à** to hesitate,

**inviter à** to invite,

**se mettre à** to begin,

**parvenir à** to reach,

**réussir à** to succeed.

- verbs followed by **de**:

**avoir peur de** to be afraid,

**commencer de** to begin, commence,

**continuer de** to continue,

**décider de** to decide,

**se dépêcher de** to hurry up,

**essayer de** to attempt, try,

**être content de** to be content,

**être heureux de** to be happy,

**être satisfait de** to be satisfied,

**être triste de** to be sad,

**finir de** to end, finish, terminate,

**oublier de** to forget,

**refuser de** to refuse,

**regretter de** to regret.

2. Certain verbs are followed by set prepositions when introducing noun phrases:

- Je réponds au téléphone.  
I am answering the phone.

- J'ai assisté à un spectacle merveilleux.  
I attended a wonderful show.

Some common examples are:

**assister à** to attend,  
**jouer à** (un jeu) to play,  
**jouer de** (piano) to play,  
**manquer à** to miss someone,  
**manquer de** to lack something,  
**obéir à** to obey,  
**plaire à** to please,  
**parler à** to speak to,  
**parler de** to speak about,

**répondre à** to answer,  
**résister à** to resist,  
**ressembler à** to resemble,  
**s'approcher de** to approach,  
**se fier à** to rely on,  
**se marier avec** to marry,  
**se méfier de** to mistrust,  
**se moquer de** to make fun of,  
**se souvenir de** to remember.

3. Some verbs which take prepositions in English do not take them in French:

- Elle attend le bus.  
She is waiting for the bus.
- Regarde cette affiche!  
Look at that poster!

4. Some verbs take a double preposition, **à** and **de**:

demander à quelqu'un de faire quelque chose to ask someone to do something,  
 permettre à quelqu'un de faire quelque chose to allow someone to do something,  
 ordonner à quelqu'un de faire quelque chose to order someone to do something,  
 commander à quelqu'un de faire quelque chose to order someone to do something,  
 suggérer à quelqu'un de faire quelque chose to suggest to someone to do something,  
 dire à quelqu'un de faire quelque chose to tell someone to do something.

## Prepositionals (*Locutions prépositionnelles*)

### Place

**à droite de** to the right of  
**à fleur de** almost at the level of  
**à gauche de** to the left of  
**à côté de** near to, next to  
**à l'égard de** towards  
**à l'encontre de** counter, opposite to  
**au beau milieu de** just in the middle of  
**au bord de** on the board of; near to  
**au bout de** at the end of  
**au delà de** over, of, via, across, above, on  
**au-dessous de** underneath, below  
**au-dessus de** on the top of, above  
**au milieu de** in the middle of  
**auprès de** close, near, nearby  
**autour de** around

**de front** from the frontal side  
**en avant de** before  
**en bas de** below  
**en dehors de** outlying, out of, out, outside  
**en face de** in front of, opposite  
**en haut de** at the top of  
**en plein milieu de** just in the middle of  
**ensuite de** after  
**jusqu'à** until  
**le long de** along  
**loin de** away from  
**près de** near  
**proche de** near  
**vis à vis** opposite, across from

### Time

**à la fin de** at the end of  
**au bout de** at the end of

**au milieu de** in the middle of  
**avant de** before

Mode	Cause
à dessein de ( <i>old</i> ) with the intention to, in order to	à cause de because of
au lieu de instead of	en conséquence de as a result of, due to
au moyen de by means of	en raison de by the reason that, for
au nom de in the name of	en vertu de by virtue of, in virtue of
conformément à according to	grâce à thanks to
dans le dessein de with the intention to, in order to	
d'après according to, along	
en catimini secretly, discretely	
en faveur de in favor of	

## Verb (*Verbe*)

The phonetic evolution of the French language brought about considerable transformations in the [Latin verbal endings](#). In a lot of cases the endings, though written differently, are [homophonic](#) and for this reason the verbs are used always with the personal pronouns.

According to the pattern of the infinitive ending, the verbs fall in 3 groups ([conjugations](#)):

<i>I conjugation:</i>	<i>II conjugation:</i>	<i>III conjugation:</i>
-er	-ir	-ir, -re, -oir
aimer to love	finir to finish	partir to part, go
acheter to buy	punir to punish	rendre to render
parler to speak	fournir to furnish	valoir to be worth

In modern French the development of the 2nd and 3rd conjugation is practically frozen, while the 1st conjugation is permanently expanding by new derivatives. The verbs of the 3rd conjugation are described as irregular, while the first two conjugation include only 5 irregular verbs. The auxiliary an modal verbs pertain to the 3rd conjugation. Note that the verbs of the 2nd conjugation were adopted *en masse* in English (the verbs in -ish)

There are 4 simple [tenses](#) in French ([the Present](#), [the Past](#), [the Imperfect](#) and [the Future](#)). The compound tenses are constructed with the [auxiliary avoir](#) to have and the past passive participle; a few intransitive verbs (as **venir** to come, **aller** to go, **partir** to part, **mourir** to die etc.) and all the reflexive (pronominal) verbs are conjugated in the compound tenses with [être](#) to be; in this French is similar to Italian. Moreover, French uses verbal constructions to express immediate intention ([aller](#) to go + [infinitive](#)), recent accomplishment ([venir](#) to come + [infinitive](#)).

French has 5 verbal [moods](#) -- [indicative](#), [subjunctive](#), [imperative](#), [infinitive](#) and [potential](#) (or conditional) mood. As compared with Latin, French lost the Future Imperative, but developed the Past Imperative. The Latin [present](#) participles were preserved, while the [future](#) ones have only sporadically survived as verbal adjectives (*like futur future*).

The [passive voice](#) is formed analytically with the [auxiliary être](#) to be and the past passive participle.

The polite address requires the verb to be used in the *2nd p. pl.*

## Tenses (*Temps*)

### Simple tenses (*Temps simples*)

#### Non-Finite Verbal Forms

- Present Infinitive (*Infinitif Présent*)
- Present Active Participle (*Participe Présent*)
- Gerund (*Géronduf*)
- Past Passive Participle (*Participe Passé*)

#### Finite Verbal Forms

- Present Indicative (*Indicatif Présent*)
- Imperfect Indicative (*Indicatif Imparfait*)
- Past Simple Indicative (*Indicatif Passé Simple*)
- Future Indicative (*Futur de l'Indicatif*)
- Present Subjunctive (*Subjonctif Présent*)
- Imperfect Subjunctive (*Subjonctif Imparfait*)
- Imperfect Conditional (*Conditionnel Présent*)
- Present Imperative (*Impératif Présent*)

### Compound tenses (*Temps Composés*)

#### Non-Finite Verbal Forms

- Perfect Infinitive (*Infinitif Passé*)
- Perfect Gerund (*Géronduf Passé*)

#### Finite Verbal Forms

- Present Perfect Indicative (*Indicatif Passé Composé*)
- Present Superperfect Ind. (*Indicatif Passé Surcomposé*)
- Pluperfect Indicative (*Indicatif Plus-que-parfait*)
- Past Perfect Indicative (*Ind. Passé Antérieur*)
- Future Perfect Indicative (*Indicatif Futur Antérieur*)
- Present Perfect Subjunctive (*Subjonctif Passé*)
- Pluperfect Subjunctive (*Subjonctif Plus-que-parfait*)
- Perfect Conditional I (*Conditionnel Passé I*)
- Perfect Conditional II (*Conditionnel Passé II*)
- Past Imperative (*Impératif Passé*)

### **Infinitive Constructions of temporal meaning**

- Present Near Future (*Futur Proche*)
- Past Near Future (*Futur Proche Passé*)
- Recent Past Indicative (*Passé Récent*)
- Recent Pluperfect Indicative (*Plus-que-parfait Récent*)

See also:

- [Usage of the moods,](#)

## Usage of the Moods

### **Indicative (*Indicatif*)**

#### **Infinitive (*Infinitif*)**

- [Imperative \(\*Impératif\*\)](#)

## **Imperative (*Impératif*)**

Most imperatives (also called *command forms*) are based on the second person singular and the first and second persons plural of the [present indicative](#), although the subject or [subject pronoun](#) disappears:

- Finis tes devoirs! [Finish your homework!](#)
- Mangeons! [Let's eat!](#)
- Fermez la porte! [Close the door!](#)

The imperatives of [avoir](#), [être](#), [savoir](#), and [vouloir](#) are irregular:

[avoir](#): aie, ayons, ayez

[être](#): sois, soyons, soyez

[vouloir](#): veuille, veuillons, veuillez

[savoir](#): sache, sachons, sachez

Note that the second person singular of -er verbs drops the -s -- except when followed by the pronominal adverbs [y](#) or [en](#):

- Regarde les enfants! [Watch the kids!](#)
- Va au travail! [Go to work!](#)

***but:***

- Vas-y! [Go ahead!](#)
- Parles-en! [Talk about it!](#)

When imperatives of [pronominal verbs \(including reciprocals and reflexives\)](#) are formed, the object pronoun is retained. In affirmative imperatives, it follows the verb:

- Réveillez-vous! [Wake up!](#)
- Lave-toi! [Wash yourself!](#)

In negative imperatives, it precedes the verb:

- Ne vous moquez pas de moi! [Don't make fun of me!](#)

- [Subjunctive \(Subjonctif\)](#)

# Subjunctive (Subjonctif)

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by Stephen C. Ohlhaut

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The [subjunctive](#) is used normally in a subordinate clause (in other words, after the word que or some other conjunctions) where the preceding main clause requires the subjunctive. Like in English, French requires the subjunctive where the main clause expresses some doubt, wishing or emotion.

## Expressions of doubt

- **douter que** to doubt that
  - Je doute que vous fassiez vos devoirs.  
**I doubt that you are doing your homework.**  
[fassiez is the present subjunctive form of [faire](#)].
- **ne pas croire que** to not believe that
  - Nous ne croyons pas que le monde soit rond.  
**We do not believe that the world is round.**  
[soit is the present subjunctive form of [être](#)].  
**Note:** *that the expression croire que does not require the subjunctive because no doubt is implied. Thus, we would say:*
  - Nous croyons que le monde est rond. (present indicative)
- **il est douteux que** it is doubtful that
  - Il est douteux que vous arriviez à l'heure.  
**It is doubtful that you will arrive on time.**  
**Note:** *Even though we express the action in the second clause in the future tense in English, we must use the present subjunctive in French.*
- **il semble que** it seems that
- **il ne semble pas que** it doesn't seem that
  - Il semble que l'école ne produise pas d'élèves intelligents.  
**It seems that the school isn't producing intelligent students.**  
**Note:** *In English, "it seems that" doesn't seem to imply a lot of doubt. However, it implies some uncertainty and thus, in French, requires the subjunctive. The*

*expression Il me semble que... It seems to me that... does not require the subjunctive. Presumably, this is because there is less doubt. Thus:*

- Il me semble que l'école ne produit pas d'élèves intelligents.  
*This rule is still under debate. Please adhere to your instructor's direction if there is a conflict.*
- **il est (im)possible que** it is (im)possible that
  - Il est possible que nous allions en vacances.  
It is possible that we may go on vacation.
- **il se peut que** it is possible that
  - Il se peut que mes frères sachent faire la lessive.  
It is possible (that) my brothers know how to do the laundry.
- **il ne paraît pas que** it doesn't seem that
  - Il ne paraît pas que l'hiver parte bientôt.  
It doesn't seem that winter will be leaving soon.  
*Note: Because there is no future subjunctive, the present subjunctive serves to indicate the future meaning.*
- **il est faux que** it is false that
  - Il est faux que l'Indiana soit au bord de l'océan.  
It is false that Indiana is next to the ocean.
- **il est incroyable que** it is unbelievable that
  - Il est incroyable que cet animal puisse parler.  
It is unbelievable that this animal can talk.

## Impersonal expressions of necessity

*In French, impersonal expressions of necessity require the subjunctive in the subordinate clause. In English, an example of an impersonal expression of necessity would be: "It is essential that he finish the work." The subject of the main clause is "it." However, "it" doesn't refer to any person, place, thing or concept; it has no antecedent. That is why the expression "it is essential" is considered impersonal. The rule is the same for the French equivalent Il est essentiel. Some common expressions of necessity include:*

- **il faut que** (see [falloir](#)) it is necessary that
  - Il faut que ma voiture soit réparée avant de partir.  
It is necessary that my car be repaired before leaving.  
*Note: The negative il ne faut pas que... does not simply mean it is not necessary that... The statement:*
  - Il ne faut pas que ma voiture soit réparée avant de partir.  
*means*  
My car may not be repaired before leaving.  
*Therefore, if someone tells you:*

- Il ne faut pas que vous sortiez.  
*he is not saying*  
*It isn't necessary that you go out.*  
*He means*  
*It is necessary that you not go out.*  
*In other words, he is not offering a choice.*
- **il est nécessaire que** it is necessary that
  - Il est nécessaire que le défilé commence à l'heure.  
*It is necessary that the parade start on time.*  
*[commence is in the subjunctive mood, however, its form is the same as the present indicative].*
- **il est essentiel que** it is essential that
  - Il est essentiel que mon collègue et moi finissions ce projet de chimie.  
*It is essential that my colleague and I finish this chemistry project.*
- **il est important que** it is important that
  - Il est important que vous votiez pour le meilleur candidat.  
*It is important that you vote for the better candidate.*

## Expressions of desirability and insistence

Most expressions of desirability or insistence in French, whether personal or impersonal require the subjunctive. Most of these expressions require the subjunctive even if the expression is in the negative. For instance, "I desire that you come" and "I don't desire that you come" would both require the subjunctive in French. Here are some of these expressions:

- **il (n') est (pas) bon que** it is (not) good that
  - Il n'est pas bon que nous dormions pendant toute la journée.  
*It is not good that we sleep the whole day.*
- **(ne pas) vouloir que** (not) to want that  
*This structure in French often causes many problems for introductory students because it is very dissimilar to English. In English we can say, "I want you to go to the store" which means "I desire that you go to the store." In French, it is impossible to use "want" in this way. To translate a sentence like that into French, one must say, "I want that you go to the store." And, such a structure requires requires the subjunctive. Note the examples below:*
  - Ma mère veut que je fasse mes devoirs.  
*My mother wants me to do my homework.*  
*(literally) My mother wants that I do my homework.*
  - Nos amis et moi, nous ne voulons pas que le ciel tombe.  
*My friends and I, we don't want the sky to fall.*  
*(literally) My friends and I, we don't want that the sky falls.*

*Just remember that when you're talking about something you want to do, you can simply avoid the subjunctive:*

- Je veux aller à l'école *is the same as* Je veux que j'aille à l'école.

*As long as the person(s) that are wanting are the same person(s) who are doing, just use **vouloir + the infinitive**. It is only when the person(s) wanting and the person(s) doing are different that the subjunctive is required:*

- Nous voulons faire du ski. **We want to go skiing.**

*The persons wanting (we), and the persons doing the skiing (we) are the same. Thus, use **vouloir + infinitive**.*

- Nous voulons que notre ami fasse du ski. **We want our friend to go skiing.**

*Here, the persons wanting (we) and the person doing the skiing (our friend) are different. Thus, use the construction **vouloir que** followed by the subordinate clause in the subjunctive.*

- **(ne pas) aimer que** (not) to like that
  - J'aime qu'il ne pleuve pas.  
**I like that it's not raining.**
  - Vous n'aimez pas que votre ennemi vienne ce soir.  
**You don't like that your enemy is coming this evening.**
- **(ne pas) désirer que** (not) to desire that
  - Le président de la République désire que l'électorat le choisisse.  
**The President of the Republic desires that the electorate choose him.**
- **il (n')est (pas) préférable que** it is (not) preferable that
  - Il n'est pas préférable que l'étudiant rate le cours.  
**It is not preferable that the student fail the class.**
- **préférer que** to prefer that
  - Je préfère que tu n'éternues pas.  
**I prefer that you not sneeze.**
- **(ne pas) insister que** (not) to insist that
  - Le professeur n'insiste pas que nous rendions le devoir aujourd'hui.  
**The professor doesn't insist that we hand in the homework today.**
- **tenir à ce que** to insist that
  - Vous tenez à ce que le travail soit bien fait.  
**You insist that the work be done well.**

**Note:** The verb **rendre** to give back, render *is translated in this case as to hand in. In some cases, it can also mean to vomit.*

- **tenir à ce que** to insist that
  - Vous tenez à ce que le travail soit bien fait.  
**You insist that the work be done well.**

Note: tenir à ce que is an entire expression. It is not correct to say tenir que.

- **exiger que** to require that

- Mes camarades de chambre exigent que je paie le loyer.  
My roommates require that I pay the rent.

Note: exiger can also be used in the impersonal expression **il est exigé que** it is required that.

- Il est exigé que l'on stationne la voiture ailleurs.  
It is required that people park their cars elsewhere.

## Expressions of fear

In French, there are two principal expressions used for fear. Both of these expressions, when followed by que require the subjunctive and, when desired, the pleonastic 'ne'. They are **avoir peur, de peur que and craindre**.

- **avoir peur que** to be afraid that; to fear that

- Le chat a peur que le chien (ne) le morde.  
The cat is afraid that the dog will bite it.

- **de peur que** for fear that

- Elle se tenait immobile, de peur que la moindre émotion ne la fit vomir.  
(Flaubert)  
She rested immobile for fear that the least emotion would make her vomit.

- **craindre que** to fear that; to be afraid that

- Je crains que ma fiancée (n')ait une panne de voiture.  
I am afraid that my fiancee is having car problems.

## Conjunctions requiring the Subjunctive

There are many conjunctions in French that require the subjunctive following them. It is very difficult to know which conjunctions require the subjunctive and which don't. Memorization is about the only sure way to get it right. Unfortunately, it would be impossible to reproduce an exhaustive list, but here are some of the most important:

- **à condition que** provided that

- Je t'accompagnerai à condition que tu me paies le voyage.  
I'll go with you provided that you pay for my trip.

- **afin que** so that

- Téléphone à tes parents, afin qu'ils sachent où nous sommes.  
Call your parents, so they know where we are.

- **à moins que** unless
  - Il ne survivra pas à moins que les meilleurs médecins (ne) le soignent.  
He will not survive unless the best doctors treat him.

Again, we find the pleonastic ne following this conjunction. Remember that it has no negative meaning and is not obligatory.
- **avant que** before
  - Nous ne partirons pas pour la Floride avant que mon pere (ne) sache où nous allons.  
We will not leave for Florida before my father knows where we are going.

The "ne" in parentheses is referred to as the pleonastic ne. It has no negative meaning and is only used in writing following a few conjunctions and expressions of fear. Its use is no longer mandatory and it is being used less and less, even in formal writing.
- **jusqu'à ce que** until
  - Tu ne peux pas recevoir ton diplôme jusqu'à ce que tu finisses tes cours.  
You cannot receive your diploma until you finish your classes.
- **pour que** so that; in order that
  - La ville a établi des limites de vitesse pour que les conducteurs ne conduisent pas trop vite.  
The city established speed limits so that drivers would not drive too fast.
- **pourvu que** provided that
  - Maudis-moi, pourvu que j'entende ta voix! (*Flaubert*)  
Curse me, provided that I (can) hear your voice!
- **quoique** although
  - J'ai bien aimé ce film, quoiqu'il soit un peu long.  
I really liked this film, although it was a bit long.
- **sans que** without
  - Il a fini le travail sans que son voisin (ne) s'en rende compte.  
He finished the work without his neighbor realizing it.

The pleonastic ne can also be used with this conjunction.

However, if there is no change of subject between the two parts of the sentence, an infinitive construction is preferred, in which case certain conjunctions take on a prepositional form (**pour**, **afin de**, **à condition de**, **de peur de**, **sans**); a few conjunctions (**quoique**, **pourvu que**) have no prepositional form, and their form remains the same when used with a repeated subject. So,

- Je vais leur téléphoner afin de commander une pizza.  
I'm going to call them to order a pizza.
- Tu pourras venir à condition de faire tous les préparatifs nécessaires.  
You can come as long as you do all the necessary preparation.

**but:**

- Tu pourras réussir à cet examen pourvu que tu étudies!  
**You can pass this test as long as you study!**

## Indefinite antecedents

*Probably the most interesting use of the subjunctive in French is in the case of an indefinite antecedent. This is one of the few times that the subjunctive can exist in a sentence without the word que.*

*An indefinite antecedent exists when the object talked about, or referenced in the main clause is nonexistent or its existence is in doubt. This case comes about usually when talking about a search for something or someone with certain qualities. Here are a few examples:*

- Nous cherchons quelqu'un qui puisse travailler indépendamment.  
**We are looking for someone who could work independently.**

*Remember: The main point of the subjunctive here is to indicate doubt or uncertainty about the existence of the person who can work independently. That person has not yet been located.*

- Il ne connaît personne qui veuille venir à la fête.  
**He doesn't know anyone who would want to come to the party.**

*In this example, there is no one who wants to come to the party. Since such a person is nonexistent, the subjunctive is used. However, if there is someone who wants to go to the party, the subjunctive is not used:*

- Il connaît quelqu'un qui veut venir à la fête.  
**He knows someone who wants to come to the party.**

*The main point here is that the person talked about does exist and is not theoretical. In such a case, use the indicative.*

- Il n'y a rien du tout dans cette situation qui soit compréhensible.  
**There is nothing at all about this situation that is understandable.**

## Superlatives

*A superlative is an expression of totality or uniqueness that, in English, is usually expressed with the ending -est and some other words. For example, words such as "greatest", "best", "most", "only" are examples of superlatives. When these equivalents in French are followed by que, they are normally followed by a clause in the subjunctive:*

- Voilà la plus belle femme que j'aie jamais vue.  
There is the most beautiful woman that I have ever seen.
- La seule voiture bleue que nous puissions conduire se trouve là bas.  
The only blue car that we can drive is located over there.
- C'est la seule réponse qu'il sait. (I.e., a statement of fact.)  
C'est la meilleure réponse que je puisse imaginer. (i.e., a statement of opinion.)

## Concessive statements

*The phrases où que wherever, quoi que whatever, qui que whoever, quel que whichever, and si + adjective + que however, are followed by the subjunctive:*

- Où que j'aille dans la vie, je me souviendrai de votre gentillesse.  
Wherever I go in life, I will remember your kindness.
- Quoi que tu fasses, ne dis rien à mon petit ami!  
Whatever you do, don't tell my boyfriend!
- Si idiot que ce soit, rends-moi ce service.  
However idiotic it may be, do me this favor.

## Set expressions and commands

*Certain set expressions are conjugated in the subjunctive:*

- Ainsi soit-il! So be it!
- Vive le roi! Long live the king!
- Advienne que pourra! Come what may!

*A sentence beginning with Que... followed by the subjunctive denotes a command or an exhortation:*

- Qu'il parte tout de suite! Let him leave immediately!
- Qu'on me dise la vérité! Let someone tell me the truth!

## Pleonastic *ne*

*In certain subjunctive constructions, the false or pleonastic 'ne' is used. this usage has mostly disappeared from spoken French, but you will still see it in written French. Be sure to recognize it for what it is and not immediately see a negative. if pas or any other second element of negation (rien, jamais, plus, etc.) is there too, however, you are dealing with a real negative.*

- Elle est plus sportive que je ne croyais.  
She is more athletic than I thought.
- Parle-lui avant qu'elle ne parte.  
Talk to her before she leaves.

- A moins qu'il ne perde le match, on sortira au restaurant.  
Unless he loses the match, we will go out to a restaurant.

**but:**

- J'ai peur qu'il n'ait pas fini le projet.  
I am afraid that he hasn't finished the project.

## Conditional (*Conditionnel*)

### Subjunctive (*Subjonctif*)

The subjunctive is used normally in a subordinate clause (in other words, after the word que or some other conjunctions) where the preceding main clause requires the subjunctive. Like in English, French requires the subjunctive where the main clause expresses some doubt, wishing or emotion.

## Expressions of doubt

- **douter que** to doubt that
  - Je doute que vous fassiez vos devoirs.  
I doubt that you are doing your homework.  
[fassiez is the present subjunctive form of faire].
- **ne pas croire que** to not believe that
  - Nous ne croyons pas que le monde soit rond.  
We do not believe that the world is round.  
[soit is the present subjunctive form of être].  
Note that the expression **croire que** does not require the subjunctive because no doubt is implied. Thus, we would say:
    - Nous croyons que le monde est rond. (present indicative)
- **il est douteux que** it is doubtful that
  - Il est douteux que vous arriviez à l'heure.  
It is doubtful that you will arrive on time.  
Note: Even though we express the action in the second clause in the future tense in English, we must use the present subjunctive in French.
- **il semble que** it seems that
- **il ne semble pas que** it doesn't seem that
  - Il semble que l'école ne produise pas d'élèves intelligents.  
It seems that the school isn't producing intelligent students.  
Note: In English, "it seems that" doesn't seem to imply a lot of doubt. However, it implies some uncertainty and thus, in French, requires the subjunctive. The

*expression Il me semble que... It seems to me that... does not require the subjunctive. Presumably, this is because there is less doubt. Thus:*

- Il me semble que l'école ne produit pas d'élèves intelligents.  
*This rule is still under debate. Please adhere to your instructor's direction if there is a conflict.*
- **il est (im)possible que** it is (im)possible that
  - Il est possible que nous allions en vacances.  
It is possible that we may go on vacation.
- **il se peut que** it is possible that
  - Il se peut que mes frères sachent faire la lessive.  
It is possible (that) my brothers know how to do the laundry.
- **il ne paraît pas que** it doesn't seem that
  - Il ne paraît pas que l'hiver parte bientôt.  
It doesn't seem that winter will be leaving soon.  
*Note: Because there is no future subjunctive, the present subjunctive serves to indicate the future meaning.*
- **il est faux que** it is false that
  - Il est faux que l'Indiana soit au bord de l'océan.  
It is false that Indiana is next to the ocean.
- **il est incroyable que** it is unbelievable that
  - Il est incroyable que cet animal puisse parler.  
It is unbelievable that this animal can talk.

## Impersonal expressions of necessity

*In French, impersonal expressions of necessity require the subjunctive in the subordinate clause. In English, an example of an impersonal expression of necessity would be: "It is essential that he finish the work." The subject of the main clause is "it." However, "it" doesn't refer to any person, place, thing or concept; it has no antecedent. That is why the expression "it is essential" is considered impersonal. The rule is the same for the French equivalent Il est essentiel. Some common expressions of necessity include:*

- **il faut que** (see [falloir](#)) it is necessary that
  - Il faut que ma voiture soit réparée avant de partir.  
It is necessary that my car be repaired before leaving.  
*Note: The negative il ne faut pas que... does not simply mean it is not necessary that... The statement:*
  - Il ne faut pas que ma voiture soit réparée avant de partir.  
*means*  
My car may not be repaired before leaving.  
*Therefore, if someone tells you:*

- Il ne faut pas que vous sortiez.  
*he is not saying*  
*It isn't necessary that you go out.*  
*He means*  
*It is necessary that you not go out.*  
*In other words, he is not offering a choice.*
- **il est nécessaire que** it is necessary that
  - Il est nécessaire que le défilé commence à l'heure.  
*It is necessary that the parade start on time.*  
*[commence is in the subjunctive mood, however, its form is the same as the present indicative].*
- **il est essentiel que** it is essential that
  - Il est essentiel que mon collègue et moi finissions ce projet de chimie.  
*It is essential that my colleague and I finish this chemistry project.*
- **il est important que** it is important that
  - Il est important que vous votiez pour le meilleur candidat.  
*It is important that you vote for the better candidate.*

## Expressions of desirability and insistence

Most expressions of desirability or insistence in French, whether personal or impersonal require the subjunctive. Most of these expressions require the subjunctive even if the expression is in the negative. For instance, "I desire that you come" and "I don't desire that you come" would both require the subjunctive in French. Here are some of these expressions:

- **il (n') est (pas) bon que** it is (not) good that
  - Il n'est pas bon que nous dormions pendant toute la journée.  
*It is not good that we sleep the whole day.*
- **(ne pas) vouloir que** (not) to want that  
*This structure in French often causes many problems for introductory students because it is very dissimilar to English. In English we can say, "I want you to go to the store" which means "I desire that you go to the store." In French, it is impossible to use "want" in this way. To translate a sentence like that into French, one must say, "I want that you go to the store." And, such a structure requires requires the subjunctive. Note the examples below:*
  - Ma mère veut que je fasse mes devoirs.  
*My mother wants me to do my homework.*  
*(literally) My mother wants that I do my homework.*
  - Nos amis et moi, nous ne voulons pas que le ciel tombe.  
*My friends and I, we don't want the sky to fall.*  
*(literally) My friends and I, we don't want that the sky falls.*

*Just remember that when you're talking about something you want to do, you can simply avoid the subjunctive:*

- Je veux aller à l'école *is the same as* Je veux que j'aille à l'école.

*As long as the person(s) that are wanting are the same person(s) who are doing, just use **vouloir + the infinitive**. It is only when the person(s) wanting and the person(s) doing are different that the subjunctive is required:*

- Nous voulons faire du ski. **We want to go skiing.**

*The persons wanting (we), and the persons doing the skiing (we) are the same. Thus, use **vouloir + infinitive**.*

- Nous voulons que notre ami fasse du ski. **We want our friend to go skiing.**

*Here, the persons wanting (we) and the person doing the skiing (our friend) are different. Thus, use the construction **vouloir que** followed by the subordinate clause in the subjunctive.*

- **(ne pas) aimer que** (not) to like that
  - J'aime qu'il ne pleuve pas.  
**I like that it's not raining.**
  - Vous n'aimez pas que votre ennemi vienne ce soir.  
**You don't like that your enemy is coming this evening.**
- **(ne pas) désirer que** (not) to desire that
  - Le président de la République désire que l'électorat le choisisse.  
**The President of the Republic desires that the electorate choose him.**
- **il (n')est (pas) préférable que** it is (not) preferable that
  - Il n'est pas préférable que l'étudiant rate le cours.  
**It is not preferable that the student fail the class.**
- **préférer que** to prefer that
  - Je préfère que tu n'éternues pas.  
**I prefer that you not sneeze.**
- **(ne pas) insister que** (not) to insist that
  - Le professeur n'insiste pas que nous rendions le devoir aujourd'hui.  
**The professor doesn't insist that we hand in the homework today.**

**Note:** The verb **rendre** to give back, render *is translated in this case as to hand in. In some cases, it can also mean to vomit.*

- **tenir à ce que** to insist that
  - Vous tenez à ce que le travail soit bien fait.  
**You insist that the work be done well.**

Note: tenir à ce que is an entire expression. It is not correct to say tenir que.

- **exiger que** to require that

- Mes camarades de chambre exigent que je paie le loyer.  
My roommates require that I pay the rent.

Note: exiger can also be used in the impersonal expression **il est exigé que** it is required that.

- Il est exigé que l'on stationne la voiture ailleurs.  
It is required that people park their cars elsewhere.

## Expressions of fear

In French, there are two principal expressions used for fear. Both of these expressions, when followed by que require the subjunctive and, when desired, the pleonastic 'ne'. They are **avoir peur, de peur que and craindre**.

- **avoir peur que** to be afraid that; to fear that

- Le chat a peur que le chien (ne) le morde.  
The cat is afraid that the dog will bite it.

- **de peur que** for fear that

- Elle se tenait immobile, de peur que la moindre émotion ne la fit vomir.  
(Flaubert)  
She rested immobile for fear that the least emotion would make her vomit.

- **craindre que** to fear that; to be afraid that

- Je crains que ma fiancée (n')ait une panne de voiture.  
I am afraid that my fiancee is having car problems.

## Conjunctions requiring the Subjunctive

There are many conjunctions in French that require the subjunctive following them. It is very difficult to know which conjunctions require the subjunctive and which don't. Memorization is about the only sure way to get it right. Unfortunately, it would be impossible to reproduce an exhaustive list, but here are some of the most important:

- **à condition que** provided that

- Je t'accompagnerai à condition que tu me paies le voyage.  
I'll go with you provided that you pay for my trip.

- **afin que** so that

- Téléphone à tes parents, afin qu'ils sachent où nous sommes.  
Call your parents, so they know where we are.

- **à moins que** unless
  - Il ne survivra pas à moins que les meilleurs médecins (ne) le soignent.  
He will not survive unless the best doctors treat him.

Again, we find the pleonastic ne following this conjunction. Remember that it has no negative meaning and is not obligatory.
- **avant que** before
  - Nous ne partirons pas pour la Floride avant que mon pere (ne) sache où nous allons.  
We will not leave for Florida before my father knows where we are going.

The "ne" in parentheses is referred to as the pleonastic ne. It has no negative meaning and is only used in writing following a few conjunctions and expressions of fear. Its use is no longer mandatory and it is being used less and less, even in formal writing.
- **jusqu'à ce que** until
  - Tu ne peux pas recevoir ton diplôme jusqu'à ce que tu finisses tes cours.  
You cannot receive your diploma until you finish your classes.
- **pour que** so that; in order that
  - La ville a établi des limites de vitesse pour que les conducteurs ne conduisent pas trop vite.  
The city established speed limits so that drivers would not drive too fast.
- **pourvu que** provided that
  - Maudis-moi, pourvu que j'entende ta voix! (*Flaubert*)  
Curse me, provided that I (can) hear your voice!
- **quoique** although
  - J'ai bien aimé ce film, quoiqu'il soit un peu long.  
I really liked this film, although it was a bit long.
- **sans que** without
  - Il a fini le travail sans que son voisin (ne) s'en rende compte.  
He finished the work without his neighbor realizing it.

The pleonastic ne can also be used with this conjunction.

However, if there is no change of subject between the two parts of the sentence, an infinitive construction is preferred, in which case certain conjunctions take on a prepositional form (**pour**, **afin de**, **à condition de**, **de peur de**, **sans**); a few conjunctions (**quoique**, **pourvu que**) have no prepositional form, and their form remains the same when used with a repeated subject. So,

- Je vais leur téléphoner afin de commander une pizza.  
I'm going to call them to order a pizza.
- Tu pourras venir à condition de faire tous les préparatifs nécessaires.  
You can come as long as you do all the necessary preparation.

**but:**

- Tu pourras réussir à cet examen pourvu que tu étudies!  
**You can pass this test as long as you study!**

## Indefinite antecedents

*Probably the most interesting use of the subjunctive in French is in the case of an indefinite antecedent. This is one of the few times that the subjunctive can exist in a sentence without the word que.*

*An indefinite antecedent exists when the object talked about, or referenced in the main clause is nonexistent or its existence is in doubt. This case comes about usually when talking about a search for something or someone with certain qualities. Here are a few examples:*

- Nous cherchons quelqu'un qui puisse travailler indépendamment.  
**We are looking for someone who could work independently.**

*Remember: The main point of the subjunctive here is to indicate doubt or uncertainty about the existence of the person who can work independently. That person has not yet been located.*

- Il ne connaît personne qui veuille venir à la fête.  
**He doesn't know anyone who would want to come to the party.**

*In this example, there is no one who wants to come to the party. Since such a person is nonexistent, the subjunctive is used. However, if there is someone who wants to go to the party, the subjunctive is not used:*

- Il connaît quelqu'un qui veut venir à la fête.  
**He knows someone who wants to come to the party.**

*The main point here is that the person talked about does exist and is not theoretical. In such a case, use the indicative.*

- Il n'y a rien du tout dans cette situation qui soit compréhensible.  
**There is nothing at all about this situation that is understandable.**

## Superlatives

*A superlative is an expression of totality or uniqueness that, in English, is usually expressed with the ending -est and some other words. For example, words such as "greatest", "best", "most", "only" are examples of superlatives. When these equivalents in French are followed by que, they are normally followed by a clause in the subjunctive:*

- Voilà la plus belle femme que j'aie jamais vue.  
There is the most beautiful woman that I have ever seen.
- La seule voiture bleue que nous puissions conduire se trouve là bas.  
The only blue car that we can drive is located over there.
- C'est la seule réponse qu'il sait. (I.e., a statement of fact.)  
C'est la meilleure réponse que je puisse imaginer. (i.e., a statement of opinion.)

## Concessive statements

*The phrases où que wherever, quoi que whatever, qui que whoever, quel que whichever, and si + adjective + que however, are followed by the subjunctive:*

- Où que j'aille dans la vie, je me souviendrai de votre gentillesse.  
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However idiotic it may be, do me this favor.

## Set expressions and commands

*Certain set expressions are conjugated in the subjunctive:*

- Ainsi soit-il! So be it!
- Vive le roi! Long live the king!
- Advienne que pourra! Come what may!

*A sentence beginning with Que... followed by the subjunctive denotes a command or an exhortation:*

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## Pleonastic *ne*

*In certain subjunctive constructions, the false or pleonastic 'ne' is used. this usage has mostly disappeared from spoken French, but you will still see it in written French. Be sure to recognize it for what it is and not immediately see a negative. if pas or any other second element of negation (rien, jamais, plus, etc.) is there too, however, you are dealing with a real negative.*

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She is more athletic than I thought.
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Talk to her before she leaves.

- A moins qu'il ne perde le match, on sortira au restaurant.  
Unless he loses the match, we will go out to a restaurant.

**but:**

- J'ai peur qu'il n'ait pas fini le projet.  
I am afraid that he hasn't finished the project.

- [Usage of the tenses,](#)

## Usage of the Tenses

- [Present \(Présent\)](#)
- [Imperfect \(Imparfait\)](#)
- [Present Perfect \(Passé composé\)](#)

[Use of Present Perfect and Imperfect](#)

- [Pluperfect \(Plus-que-Parfait\)](#)
- [Future \(Futur Simple\)](#)
- [Future Perfect \(Futur Antérieur\)](#)
- [Past and Present Subjunctive](#)
- [Past Conditional \(Conditionnel Passé\)](#)
  
  
- [Interrogative clauses,](#)

## Interrogative Clauses

Simple interrogatives (questions which can be answered by yes or no) can be formed in a number of ways:

A. By intonation:

- Il y a quelqu'un? **Is anyone there?**
- Vous n'avez rien à déclarer? **You have nothing to declare?**

B. By adding **n'est-ce pas?** to the sentence:

- C'est l'heure de partir, n'est-ce pas? **It's time to go, isn't it?**
- Il voudrait nous accompagner, n'est-ce pas? **He'd like to come with us, wouldn't he?**

C. By using **est-ce que** at the beginning of the sentence:

- Est-ce que tu as téléphoné? **Did you call?)**
- Est-ce qu'ils ont fini de faire ce bruit? **Have they finished making that noise?**

D. By inverting the subject pronoun and verb:

- Veux-tu sortir ce soir? **Do you want to go out tonight?**
- Vous levez-vous avec le soleil? **Do you get up with the sun?**

#### Notes:

Nouns are not inverted. When a full noun is used as a subject, a subject pronoun must be added to the inversion:

- Xavier et Jacqueline ont-ils réussi à l'examen?  
**Did Xavier and Jacqueline pass the test?**
- Les professeurs ont-ils participé à la manifestation?  
**Did the professors participate in the demonstration?**

In compound tenses only the auxiliary is inverted:

- Avez-vous compris le sens de ce mot? **Did you understand the meaning of this word?**

When the verb ends in a vowel, **-t-** is added for phonetic reasons:

- Habite-t-il en ville ou à la campagne? **Does he live in town or in the country?**
- Va-t-elle l'acheter ou pas? **Is she going to buy it or not?**

In inversion other pronouns (such as reflexive or direct object pronouns) remain unchanged:

- Vous rendez-vous compte des conséquences? **Are you aware of the consequences?**
- Ne me croyez-vous pas? **Don't you believe me?**

See also: [Interrogative adverbs](#), [Interrogative pronouns](#).

[If / then clauses](#), [Negative clauses](#).

## Passive Voice (*Voix Passive*)

Events may be recounted in the [active](#) or the [passive](#) voice:

- **Active voice:**

Alain Resnais a tourné ce film.

[Alain Resnais made this film.](#)

- **Passive voice:**

Ce film a été tourné par Alain Resnais.

[This film was made by Alain Resnais.](#)

The passive voice is formed by using the verb **être** with the past participle of the principal verb. (The tense of the verb **être** determines the tense of the verb.) To indicate an agent (the person who performs the action), the preposition **par** is used:

- Cette industrie sera bientôt développée dans le tiers monde.

[This industry will soon be developed in the third world.](#)

- Désolé, mais cette voiture a été achetée par un autre client.

[Sorry, but this car has been purchased by another client.](#)

In French the passive voice is used sparingly. Occasionally, impersonal expressions with **on** are used in its stead, as are reflexive expressions:

- Ici on parle français. [French is spoken here.](#)
- Ce journal se vend partout. [This newspaper is sold everywhere.](#)

## Pronominal Verbs (*Verbes Pronominaux*)

The pronominal verbs are those conjugated with [reflexive](#) or reciprocal pronouns. In this case, the pronoun (**me, te, se, nous, or vous**) changes to reflect the subject of the verb. In the imperative forms the reflexive pronoun is used in its tonic form (**te** becomes **toi**) after the verb and a hyphen is written between them, cf.:

- **Dépêche-toi!** [Hurry up!](#)
- **Souvenons-nous.** [Let's remember.](#)
- **Amusez-vous!** [Have fun!](#)

The particularities are shown in the following table:

Simple tenses	Compound tenses	Imperative
je me lave I wash myself	je me suis lavé, -ée I have washed myself	--
tu te laves	tu t'es lavé, -ée	lave-toi! <a href="#">wash yourself!</a>
il se lave	il s'est lavé	qu'il se lave!
elle se lave	elle s'est lavée	qu'elle se lave!
nous nous lavons	nous nous sommes lavés, -ées	lavons-nous!
vous vous lavez	vous vous êtes lavés, -ées	lavez -vous!
ils se lavent	ils se sont lavés	qu'ils se lavent!
elles se lavent	elles se sont lavées	qu'elles se lavent!

## Negative forms

je ne me lave pas

je ne me suis pas lavé

ne te lave pas!

## Interrogative forms

quand te laves-tu?

quand t'es-tu lavé?

Pronominal verbs are classified into three major groups according to their meaning: reflexive, reciprocal, and idiomatic.

## Reflexive verbs

In a reflexive action the subject performs the action on itself. Note that English does not indicate reflexive meaning if it can be inferred from the context. In French, however, it must be explicitly stated by using a reflexive pronoun. Here is a list of common reflexive verbs:

- **s'asseoir** to sit (down)
  - **s'appeler** to be called
  - **s'arrêter** to stop
  - **se brosser** to brush
  - **se coucher** to go to bed
  - **s'habiller** to get dressed
  - **se laver** to wash
  - **se lever** to get up
  - **se promener** to take a walk
  - **se réveiller** to wake up

## Examples:

- Je me demande.  
*I ask myself, I wonder.*
  - Tu te dis...  
*You tell yourself...*
  - Il se regarde dans la glace.  
*He looks at himself in the mirror.*

If the subject performs the action on someone else, the verb is not reflexive. Compare the difference in meaning between **se raser** and **raser** in the following examples:

- Est-ce que Pierre se rase? Mais non, il est encore trop jeune.  
**Does Pierre shave? Why no, he is still very young.**
- Qu'est-ce qu'il fait, Pierre, avec le rasoir? Il rase son chien pour l'été.  
**What's Pierre doing with the razor? He's shaving his dog for the summer.**

When reflexive verbs are used with parts of the body, they take the definite article (le, la, les) rather than the possessive article as in English:

- Pierre se lave les mains.  
**Pierre washes his hands.**
- Nous nous lavons le visage tous les jours.  
**We do wash our faces every day.**

## Reciprocal verbs

The reciprocal action occurs between more than one subject. English often uses the phrase 'each other' to represent this kind of action. Here is a list of common reciprocal verbs:

- **s'aimer** to love each other
- **se détester** to hate each other
- **se disputer** to argue
- **s'embrasser** to kiss
- **se parler** to talk to each other
- **se quitter** to leave each other
- **se regarder** to look at each other
- **se retrouver** to meet each other
- **se téléphoner** to telephone each other

Examples:

- Nous nous parlons.  
**We are speaking to one another.**
- Nous nous aimons même si nous nous disputons un peu.  
**We love each other even if we fight a little bit.**

## Idiomatic verbs

Some pronominal verbs are idiomatic and do not represent reflexive or reciprocal actions per se. The list below includes common idiomatic pronominal verbs:

- **s'amuser** to have fun
- **se dépêcher** to hurry
- **s'endormir** to fall asleep
- **s'ennuyer** to be bored
- **s'entendre** to get along
- **se fâcher** to get angry
- **se marier** to get married
- **se passer** to happen
- **se reposer** to rest
- **se sentir** to feel
- **se souvenir de** to remember
- **se taire** to be silent
- **se tromper** to make a mistake
- **se trouver** to be (situated)

Examples:

- Vous vous ennuyez.  
*You are bored.*
- Assieds-toi et tais-toi, ma petite.  
*"Sit down and shut up, little one!"*
- Nous nous entendons très bien, sauf quand il se fâche.  
*Usually we get along very well except when he gets angry.*
- Nous allons nous marier un jour.  
*We're going to get married someday.*

## **Verbs with orthographic particularities**

Certain irregularities follow set patterns:

1. In verbs ending with "--cer" or "--ger", the ending will change to "--çons" and "--geons" in the "nous" form: **nous commençons, nous mangeons**.
2. In verbs ending with "e + consonant + er", the "e" will become "è" in the first and third persons, and in the second person singular: **lever => je lève; mener => je mène**.
3. In verbs ending with "--eler" and "--eter", the "l" or "t" will be doubled before a silent ending: **appeler => j'appelle, jeter => ils jettent**.
4. In verbs ending with é + consonant + er, the acute accent will become grave (é) before a silent ending: **répéter => elle répète, préférer => je préfère**.
5. In verbs ending with "--yer", the "y" will change to "i" before a silent ending: **payer => je paie, essuyer => ils essuient**.

# **French Irregular Verbs**

## **1st Conjugation**

- [Aller to go](#)

### **Aller [ale]**

**Meaning:** *to go.*

- **Origin:** *Suppletive forms from L. eo, ivi, itum, ire to go, vado, vasi, vasum, vadere (3) to go and ambulare to walk.* [See the conjugation of ire.](#)
- **Cognate verbs:** Cat. (*suppletive forms from L. vadere in the conjugation of*) [anar to go,](#) It. (*suppletive forms from L. vadere in the conjugation of*) [andare to go,](#) ire to go, Occ. (*suppletive forms from L. vadere in the conjugation of*) [anar to go,](#) Port. [ir to go,](#) Sp. [ir to go,](#) Ven. (*suppletive forms from L. vadere in the conjugation of*) [ndar \(nar\) to go.](#)

Present Indicative	Future Indicative	Imperfect Indicative	Past Simple Indicative
je vais tu vas il va ns allons vs allez ils vont	j' irai tu iras il ira ns irons vs irez ils iront	j' allais tu allais il allait ns allions vs alliez ils allaient	j' allai tu allas il alla ns allâmes vs allâtes ils allèrent
Present Subjunctive	Imperfect Subjunctive	Present Imperative	Present Participle
que j' aille que tu ailles qu'il aille que ns allions que vs alliez qu'ils aillent	que je allasse que tu allasses qu' il allât que ns allassions que vs allassiez qu' ils allassent	-- va! qu'il aille! allons! allez! qu'ils aillent!	allant
Past Participle			
			allé, ée

- [Envoyer](#) to send

## Envoyer [{vwaje}]

[Please install Times NR Phonetic true type font on your system.](#)

- **Meaning:** to send.
- **Origin:** L. *enviare* from L. *in-* in and *via* way.
- **Cognate verbs:** It. *inviare* to send, Port. *enviar* to send, Sp. *enviar* to send.

Present Indicative	Future Indicative	Imperfect Indicative	Past Simple Indicative
j'envvoie tu envoies il envoie ns envoyons vs envoyez ils envoient	j'enverrai tu enverras il enverra ns enverrons vs enverrez ils enverront	j'envoyais tu envoyais il envoyait ns envoyions vs envoyiez ils envoyaien	j'envoyai tu envoyas il envoya ns envoyâmes vs envoyâtes ils envoyèrent
Present Subjunctive	Imperfect Subjunctive	Present Imperative	Present Participle
que j'envvoie que tu envoies qu'il envoie que ns envoyions que vs envoyiez qu'ils envoient	que j'envoyasse que tu envoyasses qu' il envoyât que ns envoyassions que vs envoyassiez qu' ils envoyassent	-- envoie! qu'il envoie! envoyons! envoyez! qu'ils envoient!	envoyant
Past Participle			
			envoyé, -e

## 2nd Conjugation

- Bénir to bless
- Fleurir to adorn with flowers; to flourish
- Hair to hate

## 3rd Conjugation

- Absoudre to absolve
- Accroître to increase
- Acquérir to acquire
- Asseoir to sit down
- Avoir to have
- Battre to beat, hit, strike
- Boire to drink
- Bouillir to boil
- Braire to bray
- Choir to fall
- Clore to enclose
- Conclure to conclude, induce, gather
- Conduire to conduct, guide, lead
- Connaitre to know
- Coudre to sew
- Courir to run
- Craindre to fear, be afraid of
- Croire to acknowledge, recognize
- Croître to grow
- Cueillir to gather
- Déchoir to decay
- Devoir to have to, must
- Dire to say, tell
- Distraire to distract, divert, entertain
- Dormir to sleep, be asleep

# Dormir [dORmiR]

**Meaning:** to sleep, be asleep.

**Origin:** *L.* dormio, dormîvi, dormît-, dormîre (4) to sleep, rest, be idle.

**Cognate verbs:** *Sp.* dormir to sleep, *Port.* dormir to sleep, *It.* dormire to sleep, *Occ.* dormir to sleep.

Present Indicative	Future Indicative	Imperfect Indicative	Past Simple Indicative
je dors	je dormirai	je dormais	je dormis
tu dors	tu dormiras	tu dormais	tu dormis
il dort	il dormira	il dormait	il dormit

ns dormons vs dormez ils dorment	ns dormirons vs dormirez ils dormiront	ns dormions vs dormiez ils dormaient	ns dormîmes vs dormîtes ils dormirent
Present Subjunctive	Imperfect Subjunctive	Present Imperative	Present Participle
que je dorme que tu dormes qu'il dorme que ns dormions que vs dormiez qu'ils dorment	que je dormisse que tu dormisses qu'il dormît que ns dormissions que vs dormissiez qu'ils dormissent	-- dors! qu'il dorme! dormons! dormez! qu'ils dorment!	dormant
Past Participle			dormi, e

- Échoir to expire
- Écrire to write

## Écrire [ekRiR]

**Meaning:** to write.

**Origin:** *L. scribo, scripsi, scriptus, scribere (3)* to write.

**Cognate verbs:** *Sp. escribir* to write, *Port. escrever* to write, *It. scrivere* to write, *Occ. escriure* to write.

Present Indicative	Future Indicative	Imperfect Indicative	Past Simple Indicative
j'écris tu écris il écrit ns écrivons vs écrivez ils écrivent	j'écrirai tu écriras il écrira ns écrirons vs écrirez ils écriront	j'écrivais tu écrivais il écrivait ns écrivions vs écriviez ils écrivaient	j'écris tu écris il écrit ns écrîmes vs écrîtes ils écrivent
Present Subjunctive	Imperfect Subjunctive	Present Imperative	Present Participle
que j'écrive que tu écrives qu'il écrive que ns écrivions que vs écriiez qu'ils écrivent	que j'écrisse que tu écrisses qu'il écrit que ns écrissions que vs écrissiez qu'ils écrissent	-- écris! qu'il écrive! écrivons! écrivez! qu'ils écrivent!	écrivant
Past Participle			écrit, -e

- Être to be

## Être [ɛtRə]

- **Meaning:** [to be](#).
- **Origin:** VL. *essere* from L. *sum*, *fui*, *futurus*, *esse* (3) [to be](#). *See the conjugation of the verb.* The forms for imperfect ind. (*j'étais*, *tu étais* etc.) are derived from L. *sto*, *steti*, *stātus*, *stāre* (1) [to stand](#) (*preserved in Cat. estar, It. stare, Port. estar, Sp. estar*) and replaced the older forms *j'ère*, *tu ères* etc.
- **Cognate verbs:** Cat. [ésser \(ser\)](#) [to be](#), It. [essere](#) [to be](#), Occ. [èsser \(èstre\)](#) [to be](#), Port. [ser](#) [to be](#), Sp. [ser](#) [to be](#), Ven. [èser](#) [to be](#).

Present Indicative	Future Indicative	Imperfect Indicative	Past Simple Indicative
je suis	je serai	j'étais	je fus
tu es	tu seras	tu étais	tu fus
il est	il sera	il était	il fut
ns sommes	ns serons	ns étions	ns fûmes
vs êtes	vs serez	vs étiez	vs fûtes
ils sont	ils seront	ils étaient	ils furent
Present Subjunctive	Imperfect Subjunctive	Present Imperative	Present Participle
que je sois	que je fusse	--	étant
que tu sois	que tu fusses	soie!	
qu'il soit	qu'il fût	qu'il soit!	
que ns soyons	que ns fussions	soyons!	
que vs soyez	que vs fussiez	soyez!	
qu'ils soient	qu'ils fussent	qu'ils soient!	été, étée

- [Faillir to fail](#)

## Faillir [fajiR]

**Meaning:** [to fail](#).

**Origin:** VL. \*faillire <= L. *fallo*, *fēfelli*, *falsus*, *fallere* (3) [to deceive](#), [disappoint](#), [be mistaken](#), [fail](#); cf. [falloor](#).

**Cognate verbs:** Sp. [falsear](#) [to falsify](#), [faltar](#) [to be short of](#), [miss](#), [fallar](#) [to fail](#), [be short of](#), [fallecer](#) [to die](#); Port. [falecer](#) [to have not](#), [die](#), [falir](#) [to be short of](#), [bankrupt](#), [falsar](#) [to falsify](#), [faltar](#) [to be short of](#); It. [fallare](#) [to mistake](#), [fallire](#) [to fail](#), [falsare](#) [to falsify](#); E. [fail](#) (*from OF*).

Present Indicative	Future Indicative	Imperfect Indicative	Past Simple Indicative
je faux	je faillirai (faudrai)	je faillissais	je faillis
tu faux	tu failliras	tu faillissais	tu faillis
il faut	il faillira	il faillissait	il faillit
ns faillons	ns faillirons	ns faillissions	ns faillîmes
vs faillez	vs faillirez	vs faillissiez	vs faillîtes

ils faillent	ils failliront	ils faillaient	ils faillirent
Present Subjunctive	Imperfect Subjunctive	Present Imperative	Present Participle
que je faille	que je faillisse	--	faillant
que tu failles	que tu faillisses	--	
qu'il faille	qu' il faillît	--	
que ns faillions	que ns faillissions	--	
que vs failliez	que vs faillissiez	--	
qu'ils faillent	qu' ils faillissent	--	failli, e

**Note:** This verb is rarely used and sometimes is conjugated on the pattern of the 2nd conjugation (as finir).

[Faire to do, make](#)

## Faire [fER]

**Meaning:** to do, make.

- **Origin:** L. facio, fêci, factus, facere (3) to do, make.
- **Cognate verbs:** Cat. [fer](#) to do, make, It. [fare](#) to do, make, Occ. [faire \(far\)](#) to do, make, Port. [fazer](#) to do, make, Sp. [hacer](#) to do, make, Ven. [far](#) to do.

Present Indicative	Future Indicative	Imperfect Indicative	Past Simple Indicative
je fais	je ferai	je faisais	je fis
tu fais	tu feras	tu faisais	tu fis
il fait	il fera	il faisait	il fit
ns faisons	ns ferons	ns faisions	ns fîmes
vs faites	vs ferez	vs faisiez	vs fîtes
ils font	ils feront	ils faisaient	ils firent
Present Subjunctive	Imperfect Subjunctive	Present Imperative	Present Participle
que je fasse	que je fisse	--	faisant
que tu fasses	que tu fisses	fais!	
qu'il fasse	qu' il fît	qu'il fasse!	
que ns fassions	que ns fissions	faisons!	
que vs fassiez	que vs fissiez	faites!	
qu'ils fassent	qu' ils fissent	qu'ils fassent!	fait, -e

- [Causative constructions with faire](#)

When one does not perform an action oneself, but instead causes the action to be performed, the causative construction is used. It is formed with **faire + infinitive**, sometimes followed by **à** or **par** to indicate the agent. The tense of the verb **faire** sets the tense for the construction, and the past participle is invariable:

- Nous ferons ériger un monument sur ce site.  
We'll have a monument erected on this site.
- Je me suis fait couper les cheveux.  
[I got my hair cut.](#)
- Le professeur a fait écrire un essai à (par) ses étudiants.  
[The professor had his students write an essay.](#)

Note that object pronouns precede the verb **faire**. If the agent is rendered as a pronoun, the indirect object pronouns are used.

- Je le lui ai fait faire.  
I had him do it.

See [Past participle agreement](#).

### **Idiomatic expressions:**

**faire semblant de** to pretend to + *infinitive*

**faire partie de** to belong to + *something*

**faire de mal à** to harm *someone/something*

**se faire que** to happen

Comment se fait-il que tu es si riche?

How is it that you are so rich?

**faire attention à** to pay attention to

**faire l'objet de** to be the subject of something

Cet auteur fait l'objet d'une étude fascinante.

That author is the subject of a fascinating study.

**faire l'impression de** to create the impression of

**se faire** to make for oneself

**faire part à** to inform

Ils nous ont fait part du mariage de leur fille.

They announced to us the wedding of their daughter

- [\*\*Falloir\*\* it is necessary that](#)

## **Falloir [falwaR]**

**Meaning:** it is necessary that.

**Origin:** VL. \*faillire <= L. fallo, fēfelli, falsus, fallere (3) to deceive, disappoint, be mistaken, fail; cf. [faillir](#).

**Cognate verbs:** Sp. falsear to falsify, faltar to be short of, miss, fallar to fail, be short of, fallecer to die; Port. falecer to have not, die, falir to be short of, bankrupt, falsar to falsify, faltar to be short of; It. fallare to mistake, fallire to fail, falsare to falsify; E. fail (from OF).

Present Indicative	Future Indicative	Imperfect Indicative	Past Simple Indicative
--	--	--	--
il faut	il faudra	il fallait	il fallut
--	--	--	--
Present Subjunctive	Imperfect Subjunctive	Present Imperative	Present Participle
--	--	--	--
il faut	qu' il fallût	il faut	fallu, e
--	--	--	
--	--	--	

- **Frire** to fry
- **Fuir** to flee, run away
- **Gésir** to lie (down)
- **Inclure** to include
- **Joindre** to join
- **Lire** to read
  
- **Maudire** to curse
- **Mettre** to put, put in, put away, insert
- **Moudre** to grind, pulverize
- **Mourir** to die
- **Mouvoir** to move
- **Naître** to be born
- **Nuire** to injure
- **Ouïr** to listen
- **Ouvrir** to open
- **Peindre** to paint
- **Plaire** to please
- **Pleuvoir** to rain
- **Pourvoir** to provide, supply
- **Prendre** to take
- **Prévaloir** to prevail
- **Pouvoir** to be able, can, may
- **Prévoir** to foresee
- **Recevoir** to receive
- **Repâtre** to sate, satiate
- **Résoudre** to resolve
- **Rire** to laugh
- **Rompre** to break
- **Saillir** to spring / stick out; to mate
- **Savoir** to know
- **Seoir** to sit, suit, become, match
- **Sortir** to go out
- **Sourdre** to spring out (about water)

- **Suffire** to be enough, be sufficient
- **Suivre** to follow, observe
- **Surseoir** to delay
- **Tenir** to hold
- **Vaincre** to vanquish, defeat, win over
- **Valoir** to be worth
- **Vêtir** to clothe, dress
- **Venir** to come
- **Vivre** to be alive, live
- **Voir** to see
- **Vouloir** to want

- [Irregular Future Indicative and Present Conditional Verbal Forms](#)

<b>List of the Irregular Future Indicative and Imperfect Conditional Verbal forms</b>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Future Indicative</i>	<i>Imperfect Conditional</i>
	<b>aller</b> to go	j'irai	j'irais
	<b>apercevoir</b> to perceive	j'apercevrai	j'apercevais
	<b>acquérir</b> to acquire	j'acquerrai	j'acquerrai
	<b>s'asseoir</b> to sit down	je m'assiérai (assoirai)	je m'assiérais (assoirais)
	<b>avoir</b> to have	j'aurai	j'aurais
	<b>choir</b> to fall	je choirai (cherrai)	je choirais (cherrais)
	<b>courir</b> to run	je courrai	je courrais
	<b>cueillir</b> to gather	je cueillerai	je cueillerais
	<b>devoir</b> must	je devrai	je devrais
	<b>envoyer</b> to send	j'enverrai	j'enverrais
	<b>être</b> to be	je serai	je serais
	<b>faire</b> to do, make	je ferai	je ferais
	<b>falloir</b> it is necessary that	il faudra	il faudrait
	<b>mourir</b> to die	je mourrai	je mourrais
	<b>mouvoir</b> to move	je mouvrai	je mouvais
	<b>pleuvoir</b> it rains	il pleuvra	il pleuvrais
	<b>pouvoir</b> can, may	je pourrai	je pourrais
	<b>re cevoir</b> to receive	je recevrai	je recevais
	<b>savoir</b> to know	je saurai	je saurais
	<b>tenir</b> to hold	je tiendrai	je tiendrais

<b>valoir</b> to cost, be of value	je vaudrai	je vaudrais
<b>venir</b> to come	je viendrai	je viendrais
<b>voir</b> to see	je verrai	je verrais
<b>vouloir</b> to want, wish	je voudrai	je voudrais

- [Irregular Past Participles](#)

## Past Participle

### Formation

Past participles are generally related to verb infinitives.

Infinitives ending in **-er**, for example, generally drop this ending and substitute **-é**, **-ée**:

- **regarder** to look : regardé, -ée
- **voyager** to travel : voyagé, -ée
- **danser** to danse : dansé, -ée

Infinitives ending in **-ir** generally drop this ending and substitute **-i**, **-ie**:

- **choisir** to choose : choisi, -ie
- **finir** to finish : fini, -ie
- **partir** to depart : parti, -ie

Infinitives ending in **-re** generally drop this ending and substitute **-u**, **-ue**:

- **répondre** to answer : répondu, -ue
- **entendre** to listen : entendu, -ue.

## Irregular past participles

A number of common verbs have irregular past participles:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>avoir</b> to have : eu</li> <li>• <b>boire</b> to drink : bu</li> <li>• <b>connaître</b> to know : connu</li> <li>• <b>courir</b> to run : couru</li> <li>• <b>devoir</b> must : dû (due)</li> <li>• <b>être</b> to be : été</li> <li>• <b>faire</b> to do, make : fait</li> <li>• <b>falloir</b> must, have to : fallu</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>mettre</b> to put : mis</li> <li>• <b>ouvrir</b> to open : ouvert</li> <li>• <b>pouvoir</b> can, may : pu</li> <li>• <b>prendre</b> to take : pris</li> <li>• <b>recevoir</b> to receive : reçu</li> <li>• <b>rire</b> to laugh : ri</li> <li>• <b>savoir</b> to know : su</li> <li>• <b>vivre</b> to live : vécu</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

- **lire** to read : lu
- **vouloir** to want : voulu
- [Irregular Present Subjunctive Verbal Forms](#)

## List of the Irregular Present Subjunctive Verbal forms

Verb	Present Subjunctive	Present Subjunctive	Present Subjunctive
	1st p. sg.	1st p. pl.	3rd p. pl.
<b>aller</b> to go	que j'aille	que nous allions	qu'ils aillent
<b>apercevoir</b> to perceive	que j'aperçoive	que nous apercevions	qu'ils aperçoivent
<b>s'asseoir</b> to sit down	que je m'asseye	que nous nous asseyions	qu'ils s'asseyent
<b>avoir</b> to have	que je m'assoie	que nous nous assoyions	qu'ils s'assoient
<b>boire</b> to drink	que j'aie	que nous ayons	qu'ils aient
<b>devoir</b> must	que je boive	que nous buvions	qu'ils boivent
<b>écrire</b> to write	que je doive	que nous devions	qu'ils doivent
<b>être</b> to be	que j'écrive	que nous écrivions	qu'ils écrivent
<b>faire</b> to do, make	que je sois	que nous soyons	qu'ils soient
<b>faillir</b> it is necessary that	que je fasse	que nous fassions	qu'ils fassent
	qu'il faille ( <i>impersonal</i> )		
<b>mourir</b> to die	que je meure	que nous mourions	qu'ils meurent
<b>mouvoir</b> to move	que je meuve	que nous mouvions	qu'ils meuvent
<b>pleuvoir</b> it rains	que'il pleuve ( <i>impersonal</i> )		
<b>pouvoir</b> can, may	que je puisse	que nous puissions	qu'ils puissent
<b>reçevoir</b> to receive	que je reçois	que nous recevions	qu'ils reçoivent
<b>savoir</b> to know	que je sache	que nous sachions	qu'ils sache
<b>tenir</b> to hold	que je tienne	que nous tenions	qu'ils tiennent
<b>valoir</b> to cost, be of value	que je vaille	que nous valions	qu'ils vaillent
<b>venir</b> to come	que je vienne	que nous venions	qu'ils viennent
<b>voir</b> to see	que je voie	que nous voyions	qu'ils voient
<b>vouloir</b> to want, wish	que je veuille	que nous voulions	qu'ils veuillent

## Coordinating Conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction 'coordinates' two equivalent elements in a sentence, that is, words belonging to the same grammatical category (nouns + nouns, verbs + verbs, independent clause + independent clause, etc.). The most commonly used coordinating conjunctions in French are:

**mais**  
**ou**

**but**  
**or**

<b>et</b>	<b>and</b>
<b>donc</b>	<b>so, thus</b>
<b>or</b>	<b>so, now</b>
<b>ni ... ni</b>	<b>neither ... nor</b>
<b>car</b>	<b>for</b>
<b>puis</b>	<b>then</b>

With the exception of **or**, all of these conjunctions can be used to link **adjectives**, **nouns** or **verbs within a sentence**.

- Édouard n'aime **ni** le barbecue **ni** les hamburgers.

Edouard likes **neither** barbecue **nor** hamburgers.

- Philippe fume des cigarettes **et** boit du vin rouge.

Philippe smokes cigarettes **and** drinks red wine.

- Jean, **puis** son frère, ont essayé de comprendre les goûts de Marie.

Jean, then his brother, tried to understand Marie's tastes.

- Ils trouvent que le rap est une musique intéressante **mais** fatigante.

They think that rap is interesting but / yet tiring music.

- Ils préfèrent la musique française **ou** le jazz.

They prefer French music or jazz.

- Édouard est jeune **donc** curieux.

Edouard is young, thus curious.

- Édouard n'est **ni** intellectuel **ni** cultivé.

Edouard is neither intellectual nor cultivated.

- Pour Édouard, le saut à l'élastique est fascinant **car** dangereux.

For Edouard, bungee jumping is fascinating because (it's) dangerous.

In addition, **ou**, **et**, **ni**, **car**, **mais**, **donc**, and **puis** are also used to combine two **clauses** into one:

- Jean parle de poésie, de philosophie, **ou** il ne parle pas du tout.

Jean talks about poetry, philosophy, or he does not talk at all.

- Édouard fait du skate-board **et** écoute de la musique.

Edouard does skate-boarding and listens to music.

- Jean n'aime pas écouter de la musique rap **ni** faire du skate-board.

Jean does not like to listen to rap music nor does he like to skate-board.

- Jean ne veut certainement pas essayer le saut à l'élastique **car** c'est très dangereux.

Jean certainly does not want to try bungee jumping for it is very dangerous.

- Jean aime bien son frère Édouard **mais** ils n'ont rien en commun.

Jean really likes his brother Edouard but they have nothing in common.

**Ou**, **or**, **puis**, **donc**, **mais** indicate a link between two **separate sentences**. **Or**, **mais** and **puis** are usually placed at the very beginning of the second sentence. **Donc** is usually placed either at the beginning or right after the conjugated verb of the second sentence.

- En France, Édouard ignorait l'existence de son frère. **Puis**, un jour, il a rencontré Jean.

In France, Edouard did not know of the existence of his brother. Then, one day, he met Jean.

- Édouard et Jean n'ont rien en commun. Ils ont **donc** quelques problèmes de communication. **Or** cela inquiète Édouard. **Mais** que faire?

Edouard and Jean have nothing in common. So they have a few communication problems. Consequently, this worries Edouard. But what can be done?

## Subordinating Conjunctions

A subordinating conjunction links an independent clause to a dependent clause. An independent clause is any clause that can stand alone to form a grammatical sentence. A dependent clause, on the other hand, cannot stand alone and thus 'depends' on the main clause in order to form a complete thought. The most commonly used subordinate conjunctions are:

<b>que</b>	that
<b>pendant que</b>	as, while
<b>quand</b>	when
<b>lorsque</b>	when
<b>depuis que</b>	since (indicating time)
<b>tandis que</b>	while, whereas
<b>puisque</b>	since
<b>parce que</b>	because

- Il est évident qu' Édouard fume trop.

It is obvious that Edouard smokes too much.

- Il est évident **que** Jean est un curieux personnage.

It is evident that Jean is a curious character.

- Jean et Édouard sont tous les deux des artistes, mais **tandis qu'** Édouard est poète, Jean est musicien.

Jean and Edouard are both artists, but while Edouard is a poet, Jean is a musician.

- **Depuis qu'** Édouard connaît Jean, il a découvert le monde du rap.

Since Edouard has known Jean, he has discovered the world of rap.

- Jean se lève **quand** le soleil se couche. Il travaille **pendant qu'** Édouard dort.

Jean gets up when the sun goes down. He works while Edouard is asleep.

- **Puisque** Édouard et Jean sont frères et artistes, ils devraient se comprendre. Mais ce n'est pas le cas.

Since Edouard and Jean are brothers and artists, they should understand each other. But this is not case.

<http://www.orbilat.com/Languages/French/Grammar/index.html>