
Tips and notes

Grammar notes like those below can be helpful if you're having trouble with the lessons, so consider trying the lessons above before reading the notes. They'll be more helpful once you have a context for understanding them.

Bonjour!

Bonjour is a universal greeting that can be spoken to anyone at any time. In France, greeting people is very important, and some will even say *bonjour* aloud when entering a public room or bus. *Bon après-midi* is often used as a farewell in the afternoon, while *bonsoir* is an evening greeting.

- Greetings: *bonjour*, *bonsoir* (plus *bon matin* in Québec only)
- Farewells: *bonne journée*, *bon après-midi*, *bonne soirée*, *bonne nuit*

Idioms

Many words or phrases cannot be translated literally between English and French because their usages are idiomatic. For instance, consider « *Ça va ?* », which means "How are you?" The literal translation of the French is "That goes?", but this is nonsensical in English. It is very important to identify idioms in both languages and learn how to translate them properly.

Liaisons

In a **liaison**, an otherwise silent ending consonant is pushed to the next word, where it's pronounced as part of the first syllable. Like elisions, this prevents consecutive vowel sounds. Liaisons are possible whenever a silent ending consonant is followed by a word beginning in a vowel sound, but some liaisons are mandatory and others are

forbidden.

Here are some mandatory liaisons, along with approximate pronunciations:

- Articles and adjectives with nouns. For example, *un homme* ("uh-nohm"), *mon orange* ("mohn-norahnge"), or *deux hommes* ("duh-zohm").
- Pronouns and verbs. For example, *nous allons* ("noo-zalohn") or *est-il* ("ay-teel").
- Single-syllable adverbs and prepositions. For instance, *très utile* ("tray-zuteel") or *chez elle* ("shay-zell").

Liaisons are forbidden:

- Before and after *et* ("and").
- After singular nouns (including proper nouns and names).
- After inversions (which you'll learn in "Questions").
- Before an aspirated H (e.g. *héros* - "hero").
- After a nasal sound, except that *un*, *on*, and *en* do liaise.

Note that some consonants take on a different sound in liaisons, and it's important to pronounce these correctly when speaking.

Original Consonant	Resulting Liaison Sound	Example
-s, -x, -z	Z	<i>des hommes</i> ("day-zohm")
-d	T	<i>un grand arbre</i> ("uhn-grahn-tarbre")
-f	V	<i>neuf ans</i> ("nuh-vahn")

Liaison rules vary among speakers, particularly across dialects, and fewer liaisons tend to appear in casual and slow speech. Note that the slow mode in Duo listening exercises does not include liaisons.

Enchaînement

In **enchaînements**, ending consonant sounds are pushed onto the next word if it begins in a vowel. This is essentially the same as a liaison, except that the consonant sound wasn't silent beforehand. For instance:

- *elle est* is pronounced like "eh-lay".
- *mange une pomme* is pronounced like "mahn-jun-pom".

The Impersonal Expression *Il Y A*

Impersonal expressions are phrases where there isn't a real subject. For instance, in the phrase "It is snowing" (*Il neige*), "it" doesn't refer to anything. It's a dummy subject that exists just to maintain the sentence structure.

One of the most common impersonal expressions is *il y a*, which is an idiom for "there is" or "there are".

- *Il y a une fille ici.* — There is a girl here.
- *Il y a un serpent dans ma botte !* — There's a snake in my boot!

You will learn more about impersonal expressions in "V. Pres 1".

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