

Direct and Indirect Object Pronouns

Object pronouns replace nouns that receive the action of the verb. Since there are both direct and indirect object pronouns, it is important to be able to identify and distinguish between direct and indirect object nouns.

Direct objects

Direct object nouns receive the action of the verb directly; they can be things or people; they are *never* preceded by a preposition such as *à*, *pour*, *de*, *sur*, and so on.

Il appelle **Denise**. *He calls Denise.*

The noun **Denise** is the direct object because Denise received the action of the verb **appelle**. To replace the noun **Denise**, use the pronoun **la**. However, **la** must be changed to **l'** before a following vowel sound.

Il l'appelle. *He calls her.*

In the following sentence, the noun **balle** is the direct object of the verb **jette**. To replace the feminine noun **la balle** in the sentence below, use the pronoun **la**.

Je jette **la balle**. *I throw the ball.*
Je **la** jette. *I throw it.*

The direct object pronouns that replace direct object nouns are: **le**, **la**, **l'**, and **les**.
Use **le** for *him* or *it* when replacing a masculine person or object receiving the action of the verb.

Le livre de maths? Tu **le** cherches? *The math book? Are you looking for it?*

Use **la** for *her* or *it* when replacing a feminine person or object receiving the action of the verb.

La dame? Tu **la** comprends?

*The woman? Do you understand **her**?*

Don't forget to substitute **l'** for **le** or **la** before a vowel sound.

Cette glace? Tu **l'**aimes?

*This ice cream? You like **it**?*

Use **les** for *them*, to replace both masculine and feminine objects or people receiving the action of the verb.

Tes amis? Tu **les** écoutes?

*Your friends? You listen to **them**?*

Note above that the verb **écouter** takes a direct object in French (**Tu écoutes tes amis.**), even though the English equivalent is *to listen to*.

Indirect objects

Indirect object nouns receive the action of the verb indirectly; they are always persons. Indirect object nouns are normally preceded by the preposition **à**.

The indirect object pronouns that replace indirect object nouns are: **lui** and **leur**. These pronouns replace the prepositional phrase **à + person(s)**.

Je parle **à Marie**. (**à + person**)

*I speak **to Marie**.*

Je **lui** parle.

*I speak **to her**.*

Je téléphone **aux enfants**. (**à + les enfants**)

*I give **the children** a call.*

Je **leur** téléphone.

*I call **them**.*

Direct and indirect object pronouns

The pronouns used to express *me/myself*, *you/yourself*, and so on are direct or indirect depending on the verb that governs them. They are: **me**, **te**, **se**, **nous**, **vous**, and **se**.

Tu **me** regardes.

*You are watching **me**.*

(Here, **me** is the direct object: **regarder quelqu'un**)

Tu me parles.	<i>You are talking to me.</i> (Here, me is the indirect object: parler à quelqu'un)
Elle se regarde.	<i>She's looking at herself.</i> (Here, se is the direct object: regarder quelqu'un)
Ils se parlent.	<i>They are talking to each other.</i> (Here, se is the indirect object: parler à quelqu'un)

The following table summarizes object pronouns with their respective meanings:

Direct/indirect object pronouns (living beings)	Indirect object pronouns (living beings)	Direct object pronouns (living beings or things)
me (m') (to) <i>me</i>	lui to <i>him/her</i>	le <i>him/it</i>
te (t') (to) <i>you</i>	leur to <i>them</i>	la <i>her/it</i>
se (s') (to) <i>him/herself</i>		l' <i>him/her/it</i>
nous (to) <i>us/ourselves</i>		les <i>them</i>
vous (to) <i>you/yourselves</i>		
se (s') (to) <i>themselves, each other</i>		

Exercise 38

What pronoun would replace the underlined noun phrase? Use **le**, **la**, **l'**, **les**, **lui**, or **leur**.

1. J'écris la lettre. Je _____ écris.
2. Nous écrivons à nos amis. Nous _____ écrivons.
3. Je parle à ta sœur! Je _____ parle.
4. Nous écoutons le conférencier. Nous _____ écoutons.
5. Tu respectes tes parents. Tu _____ respectes.
6. Nous parlons à papa. Nous _____ parlons.
7. Tu obéis aux adultes. Tu _____ obéis.
8. Je regarde le film. Je _____ regarde.
9. Tu manges la banane. Tu _____ manges.
10. Elle écoute les informations. Elle _____ écoute.
11. Nous admirons le beau tableau. Nous _____ admirons.
12. Vous préparez les sandwichs. Vous _____ préparez.
13. Ils téléphonent à leurs amis. Ils _____ téléphonent.
14. Je demande à maman de m'aider. Je _____ demande de m'aider.

15. Tu apprécies ce vin rouge. Tu _____ apprécies.
16. Ils aiment la glace. Ils _____ aiment.
17. Je déteste l'hiver. Je _____ déteste.
18. Vous voulez ce bouquet de fleurs? Vous _____ voulez?
19. Elle achète les fruits au marché. Elle _____ achète au marché.
20. Ils descendent l'escalier. Ils _____ descendent.

Exercise 39

Supply the correct pronoun in the French sentence to match the English meaning on the right.

1. Il _____ regarde. (*He watches **us**.*)
2. Maman, nous _____ montrons nos photos. (*Mom, we are showing **you** our pictures.*)
3. Vous _____ payez bien. (*You pay **me** well.*)
4. Je _____ remercie, monsieur. (*I thank **you**, sir.*)
5. Mes amis _____ aiment bien. (*My friends like **me**.*)
6. Annie _____ regarde dans le miroir. (*Annie looks at **herself** in the mirror.*)
7. Je _____ regarde. (*I am watching **her**.*)
8. Luc _____ invite pour demain. (*Luc invites **us** for tomorrow.*)
9. Il _____ invite aussi. (*He invites **them**, too.*)
10. Tu _____ aimes bien? (*Do you like **him**?*)
11. Je veux _____ voir, John. (*I want to see **you**, John.*)
12. Ils _____ admirent de loin, mesdames. (*They admire **you** from afar, ladies.*)
13. Il _____ pose tant de questions. (*He asks **me** so many questions.*)
14. Je _____ ignore. (*I ignore **them**.*)
15. Est-ce qu'il _____ entend parler? (*Does he hear **himself** talk?*)

Position of object pronouns

Direct and indirect object pronouns are placed before the conjugated verb in the present, future, and imperfect (**imparfait**), before the auxiliary verb (**avoir** or **être**) in compound tenses such as the **passé**

composé, and before the infinitive verb in structures that include a conjugated verb followed by an infinitive. The only structure that requires the object pronoun to be placed after the verb is the affirmative command.

Object pronouns

- precede the verb in simple tenses like the present.

Je **le** vois.

*I see **him/it**.*

- precede the helping verb **avoir** or **être** in compound tenses such as the **passé composé**.

Je **l'ai** vu.

*I saw **him/it**.*

- precede the infinitive form when the structure consists of a conjugated verb followed by an infinitive.

Je vais **le** voir.

*I am going to see **him/it**.*

- follow the verb in affirmative commands.

Regarde-**le**!

*Watch **him/it**!*

The pronouns *moi* and *toi*

Use **moi** and **toi** instead of **me** and **te** in affirmative commands, where the object pronoun follows the verb.

Ne me regarde pas!	<i>Don't look at me!</i>
Regarde- moi !	<i>Look at me!</i>
Ne te dépêche pas!	<i>Don't hurry!</i>
Dépêche- toi !	<i>Hurry!</i>
Ne vous couchez pas!	<i>Don't go to bed!</i>
Couchez- vous !	<i>Go to bed!</i>
Ne nous en allons pas!	<i>Let's not go away!</i>
Allons- nous-en !	<i>Let's go away!</i>

Other Object Pronouns: *y* and *en*

The pronouns *y* and *en* replace specific prepositional phrases.

En

Use this pronoun to replace any phrase introduced by the preposition **de/d'**. Its translation into English will vary depending on what it replaces.

Elle revient **de France**.
She comes back from France.
 Je voudrais un peu **de sauce**.
I would like a little sauce.
 J'ai envie **de sortir**.
I feel like going out.

Elle **en** revient.
She comes back from there.
 J'**en** voudrais un peu.
I would like a little (of it).
 J'**en** ai envie.
I feel like it.

Y

This pronoun has two distinct uses and its translation into English will vary. Use the pronoun *y* to replace any prepositional phrase indicating a location to express *there* (except to say *from/of* a place).

Le livre est **sur le bureau**?
 —Oui, il **y** est.
 Ta copine est **à la maison**?
 —Oui, elle **y** est.

Is the book on the desk?
 —Yes, it is (*there*).
Is your friend at home?
 —Yes, she is (*there*).

The pronoun *y* is also used to replace the prepositional phrase consisting of *à* followed by a thing. Its translation into English will vary.

Tu réponds à la question?	—Oui, j’y réponds.
<i>Are you answering the question?</i>	<i>Yes, I am answering it.</i>
Tu penses à tes vacances?	—Oui, j’y pense.
<i>Are you thinking about your vacation?</i>	<i>Yes, I am thinking about it.</i>

Changes to the familiar verb ending before *y* and *en*

In familiar affirmative commands, the verb ending for all *-er* verbs and for the verb **aller** changes (adding an *-s*) before the pronoun *y* or *en*.

Va à Paris.	<i>Go to Paris!</i>	Vas-y!	<i>Go there!</i>
Demande des tickets!	<i>Ask for tickets!</i>	Demandes-en!	<i>Ask for some!</i>

Exercise 43

Select the appropriate pronoun (*y* or *en*) to complete each command in French.

- De la viande? Prends- _____! (*Meat? Have some!*)
- Aux cartes? Jouez- _____! (*Cards? Go ahead and play!*)
- Le Mexique? Vas-_____! (*Mexico? Go there!*)
- Du vin? Bois-_____! (*Wine? Drink some!*)
- La plage? Restes-_____! (*The beach? Stay there!*)
- Des boissons froides? Cherches-_____! (*Cold drinks? Get some!*)
- Du jus? Mets-_____ dans le frigo! (*Juice? Put some in the fridge!*)
- Le restaurant? Manges-_____ si tu veux! (*The restaurant? Eat there if you like!*)
- Du pudding? Gardes- _____ un peu pour moi! (*Pudding? Keep some for me!*)
- Ce repas va te coûter cher. Penses-_____! (*This meal is going to cost you a lot. Think about it!*)

Exercise 44

Select the appropriate pronoun (*y* or *en*) to complete each answer. The part of the question to be replaced is in italics.

1. Tu comptes toujours aller *en France*?
—Oui, j'_____ vais cet été.
2. Tu restes à *la maison* ce soir?
—Oui, j'_____ reste.
3. Tu manges *des chips* en ce moment?
—Oui, j'_____ mange toujours trop quand je suis nerveux.
4. Tu as besoin *de te reposer*.
—Oui, j'_____ ai besoin.
5. Tu es *devant ton bureau*?
—Oui, j'_____ suis.
6. Tu réfléchis à *tes responsabilités*?
—Oui, j'_____ réfléchis.
7. Tu as envie *de conseils*?
—Oui, j'_____ ai envie.
8. Viens me voir *au café*.
—D'accord. j'_____ viens tout de suite.
9. Tu veux que je commande *des sodas*?
—Oui, commandes-_____!
10. Bon. Je me mets en route.
—Vas-_____! J'arrive dans deux minutes.