

# French Pronunciation: Overview

- **Vowels:** oral vs nasal vowels.
- **Accents:** acute, grave, circumflex can change vowel quality.
- **Consonants:** many final consonants are silent.
- **Liaison:** linking a final consonant to the next word.
- **Rhythm:** syllable-timed, smoother than English.

**i** French spelling is less phonetic than Italian. Pronunciation rules are essential.

# Vowels with IPA

- Oral vowels: **a** (*papa* [papa]), **e** close as in *café* [kafe], **i** (*ici* [isi]), **o** (*eau* [o]), **u** (*lune* [lyn]).
- Nasal vowels: **an/en** [ɑ̃] (*enfant* [ɑ̃fã]), **on** [ɔ̃] (*nom* [nɔ̃]), **in** [ɛ̃] (*vin* [vɛ̃]), **un** [ɯ̃] (*un* [ɯ̃] or [ə̃]).
- Accents matter: **é** [e] is different from **è** [ɛ].

**i** Keep vowels short and precise. Avoid English-style glides.

# Consonants with IPA

- Many final consonants are silent: *grand* [grɑ̃], *petit* [pəti].
- French *r* is uvular [ʁ] produced at the back of the throat.
- *h* is silent. Some words block liaison: *le héros* [lə ero].
- Soft vs hard before *e, i* similar to Italian: *garçon* [garsɔ̃], *gilet* [ʒilɛ].

**i Avoid pronouncing final consonants unless rules require it.**

- A normally silent final consonant is pronounced before a following vowel sound.
- **les amis** [lez ami] → final *s* sounds like [z].
- **vous avez** [vu zave] → linking *s* becomes [z].
- Not all liaisons are obligatory. Some are optional or forbidden.

**i Mastering liaison makes your French sound natural.**

# Rhythm and Stress

- French is syllable-timed. Syllables are similar in length.
- Stress falls on the last syllable of a phrase group, not each word.
- Intonation patterns carry much of the meaning.

**i French rhythm feels smoother compared to English.**

Read aloud, mark stress, and practice liaison:

- ① **les amis** [lez ami], **vous avez** [vu zave]
- ② **grand homme** [gra~ tɔm], **petit enfant** [pəti ta~fa~]
- ③ **café** [kafe], **père** [pɛr], **lune** [lyn], **vin** [vɛ~]

**i** Focus on nasal vowels and smooth linking.

- Oral vs nasal vowels: [a,e,i,o,y] vs [ɑ̃,ɔ̃,ɛ̃,ə̃].
- Accents change quality: é [e] vs è [ɛ].
- Final consonants mostly silent; French **r** is [r].
- Liaison: link final consonant to next vowel sound [lez ami].
- Rhythm: syllable-timed, phrase-final stress.

# Why it matters

- **International:** French is spoken on five continents.
- **Culture:** Films, songs, literature.
- **Careers:** Diplomacy, engineering, fashion, cuisine.
- **i Not on the exam but key for real-world communication and culture.**



# Listening Drill: Minimal Pairs

- **beau** [bo] vs **bon** [bɔ̃] (oral vs nasal)
- **père** [pɛr] vs **pair** [pɛr] (same sound, different meaning)
- **petit** [pəti] vs **petite** [pətit] (silent vs pronounced final consonant)
- **les amis** [lez ami] vs **les hommes** [lez ɔm] (liaison)
- **lune** [lyn] vs **loup** [lu] (u [y] vs ou [u])

**i** Listen, repeat, and exaggerate contrasts when practicing.