

FRENCH PRONUNCIATION

A visually structured guide combining rules, IPA, and Czech/German-friendly spellings.

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for French

Consonants

IPA Symbol	As in ...	Pronunciation
/b/	bébé	/bebe/
/d/	dîner	/dine/
/f/	feu	/fø/
/g/	gare	/gaʁ/
/k/	café	/kafe/
/l/	lune	/lyn/
/m/	maman	/mamɑ̃/
/n/	non	/nɔ̃/
/ɲ/	agneau	/aɲo/
IPA Symbol	As in ...	Pronunciation
/ŋ/	camping	/kɑ̃piŋ/
/p/	papa	/papa/
/ʁ/	rue	/ʁy/
/s/	soleil	/solɛj/
/ʃ/	chat	/ʃa/
/t/	tout	/tu/
/v/	voiture	/vwatyʁ/
/z/	zèbre	/zɛbʁ/
/ʒ/	jour	/ʒuʁ/

Vowels

IPA Symbol	As in ...	Pronunciation
/a/	chat	/ʃa/
/ɑ/	bas	/ba/
/e/	été	/ete/
/ɛ/	tête	/tɛt/
/ø/	feu	/fø/
/ə/	je	/ʒə/
IPA Symbol	As in ...	Pronunciation
/œ/	sœur	/sœʁ/
/o/	dos	/do/
/ɔ/	pomme	/pɔm/
/i/	si	/si/
/y/	rue	/ʁy/
/u/	loup	/lu/

Nasal Vowels

IPA Symbol	As in ...	Pronunciation
/ɑ̃/	dans	/dɑ̃/
/ɛ̃/	vin	/vɛ̃/
/ɔ̃/	pain	/pɔ̃/
/ɔ̃/	non	/nɔ̃/

1. General Rules

Rule	IPA	Approximation (Cz/De letters)	Example
S between vowels → pronounced as [z]	/z/	z	rose → [ʁoz] → „róz”
SS between vowels → pronounced as [s]	/s/	s	presse → [pʁɛs] → „pres”
Final -e pronounced if word has only 2 letters or has an accent	/ə/ or /e/	e	thé → [te]

Rule	IPA	Approximation (Cz/De letters)	Example
C before hard vowels (A, O, U) → [k]	/k/	k	<i>café</i> → [kafe]
C before soft vowels (E, I, Y) → [s]	/s/	s	<i>sauce</i> → [sos]
CC + soft vowel → [ks]	/ks/	ks	<i>accident</i> → [aksidã]
CC + hard vowel → [k]	/k/	k	<i>d'accord</i> → [dakor]
G + hard vowel → [g]	/g/	g	<i>gant</i> → [gã]
G + soft vowel → [ʒ]	/ʒ/	ž	<i>chargeur</i> → [ʃarʒœʁ]
GG + soft vowel → [gʒ]	/gʒ/	gž	<i>suggestion</i> → [sygʒestjɔ]
GG + hard vowel → [g]	/g/	g	—
H is silent	—	—	<i>homme</i> → [ɔm]
PH → [f]	/f/	f	<i>photo</i> → [foto]
CH → [ʃ]	/ʃ/	š	<i>chat</i> → [ʃa]
Final D, G, P, S, T, X, Z → silent	—	—	<i>nez</i> → [ne]

2. Nasal Sounds (N/M)

Pattern	IPA	Approximation	Example
1+ vowel + N/M at end of word	[ɛ̃]	ě	Pain → [pẽ] → „pě“
1+ vowel + N/M + silent consonant	[ɑ̃]	ã	Comment → [kɔmɑ̃] → „komã“
1+ vowel + N/M + pronounced consonant (≠ N/M)	[ɔ̃]	õ	Bonjour → [bɔ̃ʒuʁ] → „böžur“

3. "IL" and "ILL" Patterns

Pattern	IPA Result	Approximation	Example
Vowel + IL (word-final)	[ij]	j (like German „ja“)	Travail → [tʁavaj] → „travaj“
Consonant + ILL + vowel	[ij]	ij („ij“)	Fille → [fij] → „fij“
Vowel + ILL + vowel	[ij]	j	Mouiller → [muje] → „muje“

Common Words with "ILL"

Word	IPA	Approximation	Meaning
Fille	[fij]	fij	Girl
Taille	[taj]	taj	Height
Fouille	[fuj]	fuj	Search
Feuille	[foej]	föj	Leaf
Soleil	[solɛj]	solej	Sun

Exceptions

Word	IPA	Approximation	Meaning
Ville	[vil]	vil	City
Mille	[mil]	mil	One thousand
Tranquille	[tɑ̃kil]	träkil	Quiet

4. Common Vowel Combinations

Combination	Example	IPA	Approximation	Meaning
AU = [o]	Aube	[ob]	ob	dawn
EAU = [o]	Eau	[o]	o	water
OI = [wa]	Moi	[mwa]	mwa	me
OU = [u]	Lourd	[luʁ]	lur	heavy
UI = [ɥi]	Nuit	[nuɥi]	ný	night
OIN = [wɛ̃]	Loin	[lwɛ̃]	lwě	far

5. Accent Notes

Accents on **A**, **I**, and **U** do **not** affect pronunciation.

Word	IPA	Approximation	Meaning
des pattes	[de pat]	de pat	paws
des pâtes	[de pat]	de pát	pasta

Word	IPA	Approximation	Meaning
il	[il]	il	he
île	[il]	íl	island
ou	[u]	u	or
où	[u]	u	where

6. Consonant Rules

- **H** is silent → *homme* → [ɔm] → om
- **PH** is pronounced as **F** → *photo* → [foto] → foto
- **CH** is pronounced as **Š** → *chat* → [ʃa] → ša

Silent consonants at the end of a word:

D, G, P, S, T, X, Z

Examples:

- **grand** → [gʁɑ̃] → grã
- **repos** → [ʁəpo] → rəpo

6. Singular vs. Plural Pronunciation

Plural nouns ending with **-x** or **-s** are pronounced the same as their singular forms.

Word	IPA	Approximation	Meaning
un gâteau	[ɛ̃ˈga.to]	ẽ gato	a cake
des gâteaux	[de ga.to]	de gato	cakes

Note: In spoken French, only context (or determiners like *un / des*) indicates whether it is singular or plural.

7. -ENT in Third Person Plural Verbs

The ending **-ent** in third person plural verbs is always silent.

Verb Form	IPA	Approximation	Meaning
ils aiment	[il zɛm]	il zem	they like (masc.)
elles étaient	[ɛl ze tɛ]	el ze te	they were (fem.)

Important: The verb form sounds exactly the same as the singular (e.g., *il aime* and *ils aiment* are pronounced identically).

8. Consonant Links (Liaison)

The **last pronounced consonant** of a word is pronounced together with the **first pronounced vowel sound** of the following word.

Consonant links do not add any sound; they simply **rearrange** the sounds.

Example:

les amis → [lez_ami] → lezami

9. Accent and Spelling Rules

Symbol	Pronunciation	Notes
é	"ay" (closed e)	always [e]
è / ê / ë	"eh" (open e)	always [ɛ]
ç	"s" sound	used before a, o, u to keep soft sound
à / ù	no sound change	only distinguishes words (à is slightly longer)
î / ô / û	sometimes lengthened	mostly historical spelling

Additional Rule:

- **Ez, er, é** are always pronounced with an [e] sound.

Example: *parler* → [paʁle]

10. Special Letter Combinations

Ending / Combination	Pronunciation	Example
-tion	[sjɔ̃] ("syon")	nation → [nasjɔ̃]
ez / er / é	always [e]	chanter → [ʃɑ̃te]

ï is pronounced as as long í

mais majïs

but Noël is pronounced as Noel

Liaison

We never do liaison with **et** We do not use liaison with words that have or used to have aspirated h

Les héros — [le ero]

Les haricots — [le ariko]

Les hanches — [le ɑ̃]

Les Hollandais — [le ɔlədɛ]

We do not use liaison with verbs except être and avoir

Elle mange une glace — [ɛl mɑ̃ʒ yn glas]