

French Language Studies – Grammar Reference Resource

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Nouns

page: no1

Introduction to Nouns

A **noun** is essentially a label for places, things, events, ideas, concepts and so on. Like English, nouns in French may be categorized as common or proper, count or mass, singular or plural. However, unlike English, French nouns are also categorized as either masculine or feminine.

common vs. proper

Common nouns in English and French are the generic term for something. Common nouns are never spelled with a capital letter unless they begin a sentence.

un **tatou**

an **armadillo**

Proper nouns are specific names and thus begin with capital letters.

Tex et **T**ammy

Tex and **T**ammy

count vs. mass

Another way of classifying nouns is according to whether they can be counted or not. Count nouns identify individual entities that can be counted, like armadillos.

un **tatou**, deux **tatous**

one **armadillo**, two **armadillos**

In contrast, a mass noun refers to an entity as an uncountable unit. In the following example, the bread that Tex is eating is conceived of as a mass, that is, an undefined quantity.



Tex mange du **pain**.

Tex is eating **bread**.

The difference between count and mass nouns is usually clearcut. However, something that is typically countable such as an animal (one armadillo, two armadillos, three armadillos) can nevertheless be conceived of in terms of a mass, as in the following tasteless example.

Berk! Il y a du **tatou** écrasé partout sur les autoroutes du Texas.

Yuck! There's squashed **armadillo** all over the Texas highways.

singular vs. plural

All nouns in French and English are marked for number, that is, for singular (one) or plural (more than one). French, like English, usually indicates plurality by adding an **-s** to the end of the base form, the singular noun. Count nouns have both singular and plural forms:

le **tatou**, les **tatous**

the **armadillo**, the **armadillos**

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Mass nouns typically have only a singular form. Try saying the plural forms of the following English mass nouns:

sewage, mucus, plasma.

It sounds strange doesn't it? This shows that it is difficult to pluralize a mass noun.

masculine vs. feminine

In English, grammatical gender is based on biology and is only relevant for pronouns (he, she, it) and possessive determiners (his, her, its). Gender in French, on the other hand, affects all nouns, pronouns, adjectives and articles. A noun's gender is indicated by the article that precedes it. Masculine nouns are preceded by **le** and feminine nouns by **la**. The use of articles in French is more widespread than in English.

le **garçon**

the boy

la **fil**le

the girl

Unlike English, the grammatical concept of gender in French has little to do with biological sex. Therefore, inanimate objects such as tables and desks are categorized as either masculine or feminine (there is no neuter gender in French grammar).

la **table** (feminine)

the table

le **bureau** (masculine)

the desk

Remember that gender in French, for the most part, is not about sex, but is simply an arbitrary category. The terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' really mean nothing more than 'noun class A' and 'noun class B'. Because grammatical gender is fairly arbitrary, it is essential to memorize a noun's gender along with its spelling and pronunciation.

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number: singular, plural

page: r102

In French, a noun is always either singular or plural. It is usually introduced by a **determiner**, which reflects the number of the noun.

regular plural formation

As in English, the plural is formed by adding an **-s** to the singular form of the noun. Note, however, that the **-s** is not pronounced.

In spoken language, the determiner is often the only indication that a noun is singular or plural.

Tex est un **tatou**. Tex et Tammy sont des **tatous**.

Tex is an armadillo. Tex and Tammy are armadillos.

nouns ending in -s, -x, -z in the singular

Nouns ending in **-s**, **-x**, or **-z** do not change in the plural. For example:

Tex a un long **nez**. Les tatous ont toujours de longs **nez**.

Tex has a long nose. Armadillos always have long noses.

Joe-Bob est un écureuil. Les écureuils adorent les **noix**.

Joe-Bob mange au moins une **noix** par jour.

Joe-Bob is a squirrel. Squirrels adore nuts. Joe-Bob eats at least one nut every day.

Bette est une chatte. Les chats mangent des **souris**. Est-ce que Bette a jamais mangé une **souris**?

Bette is a cat. Cats eat mice. Has Bette ever eaten a mouse?

nouns ending in -al, -ail, -au, -eu, -eau, -ou in the singular

Nouns ending in **-al**, **-ail**, or **-au** in the singular end in **-aux** in the plural. For example:

Edouard est un **animal** distingué. Corey et Fiona ne sont pas des **animaux**, ce sont des insectes peu sociables!

Edouard is a distinguished animal. Corey et Fiona are not animals. They are unsociable insects!

There are a few exceptions: un bal (ball, dance), des **bals**; un carnaval (carnival), des **carnavals**; un festival (festival), des **festivals**; un récital (recital), des **récitals**.

Nouns ending in **-eu** or **-eau** in the singular add **-x** in the plural. For example:

Edouard n'a pas un seul **cheveu**. Bien sûr, c'est un escargot! Mais Tammy a les **cheveux** longs. C'est une tatou extraordinaire!

Edouard does not have one single hair. Of course, he's a snail. But Tammy has long hair. She's an extraordinary armadillo!

Nouns ending in **-ou** end in **-oux** in the plural:

un bijou (jewel), des **bijoux**

un caillou (stone, pebble), des **cailloux** un chou

(cabbage), des **choux**

un genou (knee), des **genoux** un hibou (owl), des

hiboux un pou (louse), des **poux**



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Exceptions include: un clou (nail), des **clous**; un sou (money), des **sous**; un trou (hole), des **trous**.

irregular plurals

Some nouns have an alternate form in the plural:

un oeil (eye), des **yeux**

Madame (Madam), **Mesdames** Monsieur (Sir),

Messieurs Mademoiselle (Miss), **Mesdemoiselles**

Note that some nouns follow the regular rule of plural formation but are pronounced differently in the plural. For example, the **-f** is pronounced in the singular, but **not** in the plural.

un oeuf (egg), des oeufs un boeuf (steer),

des boeufs un os (bone), des os

Corey: Dis Bette, tu as déjà mangé unesouris?

Bette: Oh oui! J'aime les **souris**! Et aussi les **rats**, les **oiseaux**, les **lézards**. Je ne mange jamais de **végétaux**, mais quelquefois des **insectes** ...

Corey: Des **insectes**! Allez, au revoir.

Corey: Bette, have you ever eaten a mouse?

Bette: Oh yes! I love mice! And rats, birds and lizards too! I never eat plants, but sometimes insects ...

Corey: Insects! Alright, bye-bye.



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Gender: Masculine, Feminine

page: no3

In French, a noun is always feminine or masculine. It is introduced by a **determiner**, which usually indicates the gender of the noun.

people

When a noun refers to a person, the gender is determined by the person's sex (although some exceptions do exist).

In general, the feminine form of the noun is formed by adding an **-e** to the masculine noun. Note that the addition of the **-e** changes the pronunciation in some words:

Joe-Bob est **étudiant**, Tammy est aussi **étudiante**. Joe-Bob is a student, Tammy is a student.

Tex est **ami** avec Joe-Bob, Tammy est aussi **amie** avec Joe-Bob. Tex is Joe-Bob's friend, Tammy is also Joe-Bob's friend.

There are cases when the feminine form of the noun changes more drastically.

Edouard: Je suis **serveur**. Tammy: Je ne suis pas **serveuse**. Edouard: I'm a waiter. Tammy: I'm not a waiter.

Trey: Je suis **musicien**. Tammy: Je ne suis pas **musicienne**. Trey: I'm a musician. Tammy: I'm not a musician.



Tex: Je suis un **séducteur**. Bette: Je suis une **séductrice**. Tex: I'm a womanizer. Bette: I'm a seductress.

Joe-Bob: Pour le travail, je ne suis pas **champion**. Joe-Bob: I'm not a champion at working.

Fiona: C'est moi qui suis **championne**. Fiona: I'm the one who is a champion.

Tex: Je suis le **copain** de Tammy. Tammy: Je suis la **copine** de Tex. Tex: I'm Tammy's pal. Tammy: I'm Tex's pal.

In general, when the masculine noun ends in **-e**, the feminine noun remains unchanged. Only the determiner or the context indicates if it is a feminine or masculine noun.

Tex et Rita sont frère et soeur, mais ils ont des métiers tout à fait différents.

Tex est **poète**. Rita est **secrétaire**.

Tex n'est sûrement pas **secrétaire** et Rita n'est pas **poète** non plus.

Tex and Rita are brother and sister, but they have completely different jobs.

Tex is a poet. Rita is a secretary.

Tex is certainly not a secretary and Rita is not a poet either.

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animals

The gender of animals is often arbitrary. Some animals are always masculine (un escargot, a snail), others are feminine (la fourmi, ant). However, for some animals there are irregular masculine and feminine forms.

- le **chat** / la **chatte**, cat
- le **chien** / la **chienne**, dog
- le **coq** / la **poule**, chicken (rooster / hen)
- le **boeuf** , le **taureau** / la **vache**, ox / bull / cow

objects and ideas

The gender of nouns referring to things and abstractions is arbitrary. However, it can often be inferred from the ending of the word. Typically, words ending in **-age**, **-ment**, **-eau**, **-phone**, **-scope**, **-isme** are masculine and those ending in **-tion**, **-sion**, **-té**, **-ette**, **-ance** , **-ence** , **-ie**, **-ure**, **-ode/-ade/-ude** are feminine.



masculine endings

- le from**age** (cheese)
- le mon**ument** (monument)
- le sent**iment** (feeling)
- le cout**eau** (knife)
- le télé**phone** (telephone)
- le micro**scope** (microscope)
- le romant**isme** (romanticism)

feminine endings

- la sal**ade** (salad, lettuce)
- la fourch**ette** (fork)
- la télé**vision** (television)
- la cult**ure** (culture)
- la situat**ion** (situation)
- la sociét**é** (society)
- la diffé**rence** (difference)
- la philosoph**ie** (philosophy)

Tammy présente Tex pour la première fois à Bette et Fiona.

Tammy: Tex est un **ami** de Lyon. C'est un **tuteur** maintenant! Tex, la **minette** c'est mon **amie** Bette, et la **fourmi** c'est ma **copine** Fiona. Bette et Fiona sont **étudiantes**.

Bette: Enchantée, Tex! J'adore la **culture** française.

Tex: Ah, donc tu, . . . tu aimes l'**existentialisme**?

Bette: Euh, oui, bien sûr, Tex.

Tammy introduces Tex for the first time to Bette and Fiona.

Tammy: Tex is a friend from Lyon. He is a tutor now! Tex, the kitty is my friend Bette and the ant is my pal Fiona. Bette and Fiona are students.

Bette: Nice to meet you, Tex. I adore French culture.

Tex: Ah, so you, . . . you like existentialism?

Bette: Uh, yes, of course, Tex.

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Voilà vs. il y a

page: no4

Il y a and **voilà** are two ways of introducing nouns. They are translated into English as 'there is / there are' or 'here is / here are.'

il y a

Il y a + noun usually indicates the existence of a person or a thing in the context of a particular setting. It is commonly translated as 'there is' or 'there are.' For example:

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| A Austin, il y a une grande université. | In Austin, there is a big university. |
| Dans cette université, il y a plusieurs animaux qui parlent le français! | At this university, there are several animals who speak French! |
| Parmi ces animaux, il y a des tatous, un escargot, une chatte, un écureuil, et plusieurs insectes! Attention! | Among these animals, there are armadillos, a snail, a cat, a squirrel, and several insects! Careful! |

The negation of 'il y a' is **il n'y a pas**, 'there is / are not'. You will also find these forms:

il n'y a plus, 'there is / are not anymore', **il n'y a jamais**, 'there is/are never'.

| | |
|---|---|
| A Austin, il n'y a jamais de neige. | In Austin, there is never any snow. |
| Donc parmi ces animaux francophones, il n'y a pas de pingouin! | So, among these French-speaking animals, there is no penguin! |

The verb **avoir** in the expression **il y a** may be conjugated in any tense or mood, for example, in the past (**il y avait**, 'there was') or in the future (**il y aura**, 'there will be.')



voilà/voici

Voilà + noun and **voici + noun** are commonly translated as 'here is/are'. They are used to indicate the sudden appearance of something or someone, to introduce people or ideas. Alternating between **voici** and **voilà** is common when referring to more than one item.

| | |
|--|---|
| Tammy montre le campus à Tex: Voici la bibliothèque et voilà la célèbre tour! | Tammy is showing the campus to Tex: Here is the library, and there is the famous Tower. |
| Tex: Oui, oui ... | Tex: Yes, yes ... |
| Tammy présente Tex: Tex, voici Joe-Bob et Corey ... et voilà Edouard qui arrive. | Tammy introduces Tex: Tex, here is Joe- Bob and Corey ... and there comes Edouard. |
| Joe-Bob: Bonjour, Tex. | Joe-Bob: Hello, Tex. |
| Corey: Salut, Tex. | Corey: Hi, Tex. |
| Tex: Oh, la, la, de vrais Texans ... | Tex: Oh, la, la, real Texans ... |

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Temps, heure, fois

page: no5

There are three nouns in French, **temps**, **heure**, and **fois**, which are translated as 'time' in English, but each has very specific uses and nuances.

temps

Temps can mean either 'time' or 'weather' (in which case it is almost always accompanied by the verb **faire**).

Tex téléphone à Paw-Paw.

Tex telephones Paw-Paw.

Paw-Paw: Tex, tu es où? Tu es en retard!

Paw-Paw: Tex, where are you? You are late!

Tex: Mais non, **j'ai le temps!** Je suis en train de faire ma valise. Quel **temps** fait-il à Opelousas?

Tex: But no, I have time! I'm packing my suitcase. What's the weather like in Opelousas?

Temps is usually singular but may be used in the plural, especially in the following phrases:

Paw-Paw: Tex, tu es un petit-fils ingrat! Tu ne viens jamais me voir! **Les temps changent** ...

Paw-Paw: Tex, you're an ungrateful grand-son! You never come to visit me! Times change ...

Tex: Allons Paw-Paw, tu sais bien que je viens aujourd'hui. **'Laissez les bons temps rouler'**, comme on dit en Louisiane! Dis, tu sais que personne ne connaît cette expression en France?

Tex: Oh, Paw-Paw, you know I'm coming today. 'Let the good times roll', as they say in Louisiana! Do you know that nobody knows this expression in France?

Here are the most commonly used phrases with **temps**:

De temps en temps, Tex va voir Paw-Paw à Opelousas le week-end.

From time to time, Tex goes to see Paw-Paw in Opelousas on the week-end.

Paw-Paw parle **tout le temps** de ses rhumatismes. Il **prend son temps**.

Paw-Paw talks about his rheumatism all the time. He takes his time.

Paw-Paw parle souvent du **bon vieux temps**: **De mon temps**, les jeunes étaient polis ...

Paw-Paw often talks about the good old days: In my days, young people were polite ...

La plupart du temps, Tex s'ennuie. Il a l'impression de **perdre son temps**.

Most of the time Tex gets bored. He feels like he is wasting his time.

Pendant ce temps, Tammy, Edouard et Joe-Bob sont à Austin.

In the meantime, Tammy, Edouard and Joe-Bob are in Austin.

Ils **ont le temps de** faire la fête.

They have time to party.

Pauvre Tex! Il rentre à Austin le lundi matin, juste **à temps pour** faire cours.

Poor Tex! He comes back to Austin on Monday morning, just in time to teach.

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heure

Heure is feminine and can be used in the singular or in the plural. It is used to refer to clock time.



Tammy: Tex, tu **as l'heure**? Tex: Oui, j'ai

l'heure.

Tammy: Et bien?! **Quelle heure est-il**? Tex: **Il est 4**

heures.

Tammy: Chouette! **C'est l'heure d'Oprah**, mon émission préférée!

Tex: Et pour moi, **c'est l'heure de** faire la sieste!

Tammy: Tex, you got the time? Tex:

Yes, I've got the time.

Tammy: Well?! What time is it? Tex:

It is 4 o'clock.

Tammy: Great! It's time for Oprah, my favorite show!

Tex: And it's time for me to take a nap!

fois

Fois is feminine and its singular and plural forms are identical. It is used to refer to one or several instances of an event.

Tammy: Tex, réveille-toi! Paw-Paw est au téléphone, il veut te parler.

Tex: Comment? Il a appelé quatre **fois** aujourd'hui!

Tammy: Cette **fois**, il est déprimé. Sois gentil, il a trois **fois** ton âge.

Tex: Bon, bon, j'y vais, mais c'est la dernière **fois**!

Tammy: Tex, wake up! Paw-Paw is on the phone, he wants to talk to you.

Tex: What? He has called four times today!

Tammy: This time, he is depressed. Be nice, he is three times your age.

Tex: Ok, ok, I'm going, but it is the last time!

Determiners

Introduction to Determiners

page: dct1

A **determiner** is a word that determines or qualifies the meaning of a noun by expressing such concepts as quantity or definiteness. There is never more than one determiner per noun and it is always placed before the noun. Determiners always agree in gender and number with the nouns they modify.

Articles are the main group of determiners in French. There are three categories of articles: definite, indefinite, and partitive.

Definite articles (le, la, les) are used when the noun is specific. They are all translated as 'the' in English.

Le serveur donne **la** carte des vins à Tex. The waiter gives **the** wine list to Tex.

Indefinite articles (un, une, des) introduce nouns that are not specific. They are translated as 'a' or 'an' in English.

Tex choisit **un** vin. Tex chooses **a** wine.

Partitive articles (du, de la, del') are used to introduce mass nouns, that is nouns that are conceived of as a mass of indeterminate quantity. They are usually translated as 'some' in English.

Tex boit **du** vin. Tex drinks **some** wine.



Demonstrative determiners (ce, cet, cette, ces) point out something, typically something within sight. They may be translated in English as 'this', 'that', 'these', 'those' depending on the number (singular or plural) and proximity (near or far)

Tex explique: **Ce** bassin est Barton Spring. Tex explains: **This** pool is Barton Springs.
Cette piscine s'appelle Deep Eddy. **This** swimming pool is Deep Eddy.

Possessive determiners (mon, ma, mes, etc.) indicate ownership or possession like 'my', 'your', 'his', 'her', 'our', 'their'.

Tex présente **sa** famille: Voici **mon** frère Trey, **ma** soeur Rita avec **ses** enfants et **leur** chien Fido. Tex introduces **his** family: Here is **my** brother, Trey, **my** sister, Rita with **her** children and **their** dog Fido. **Our** family is great.
Notre famille est formidable.

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Determiners: Definite Articles

page: det2

forms

In French, few nouns can stand alone. Most need to be introduced or 'determined' by an article. As in English, an article is characterized as either **definite** ('the') or **indefinite** ('a', 'an'). In addition, French articles are also **masculine** or **feminine**, **singular** or **plural**, according to the gender and number of the noun they determine. Here are the **definite articles** in French:

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Masculine singular: le (l') | Tex le tatou | Tex the armadillo |
| | Joe-Bob l' écureuil | Joe-Bob the squirrel |
| Feminine singular: la (l') | Bette la chatte | Bette the cat (female) |
| | l' Université du Texas | The University of Texas |
| Masculine and feminine plural: les | les tatous | the armadillos |
| | les écureuils | the squirrels |
| | les chats | the cats |
| | les universités | the universities |

élision and liaison

In the examples above, note that **le** and **la** both become **l'** when they precede a noun beginning with a vowel or a silent **h**: **l'**escargot, **l'**université. This is called **élision**.

Unlike **le** and **la**, **les** does not have a contracted, reduced form. When **les** is followed by a word starting with a vowel, the normally silent final **s** of **les** is pronounced, making a **/z/** sound. This additional sound linking two words is called **liaison**.

| Compulsory liaison with a vowel or silent h | No liaison with a consonant |
|---|-----------------------------|
| les insectes les animaux les hommes | les tatous les fourmis |

Note that **élision** and **liaison** occur with most words starting with **h**: **l'**homme, **les** hommes, **l'**hiver, **les** hivers. Exceptions to this rule are words beginning with an aspirate 'h'.

to identify a specific noun

The definite article is used to identify a specific noun or to refer to a noun that has already been specified.



| | |
|---|--|
| Tex adore les croissants. | Tex loves croissants. |
| Joe-Bob préfère les doughnuts. | Joe-Bob prefers doughnuts. |
| Tammy n'aime pas le café. | Tammy does not like coffee. |
| Edouard apprécie la bonne cuisine française. | Edouard appreciates good French cuisine. |

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to express general truths or concepts

French uses the definite article to express general truths or concepts. English, in contrast, uses no article at all. Compare the following sentences

Tex: **L'**argent ne rend pas **l'**homme heureux!

Tammy: Tu as raison. **L'**amour et **la** santé sont plus importants!

Tex: Bien sûr, pour **les** insectes et **les** animaux, **l'**argent n'existe pas! Mais **l'**amour est aussi important pour nous que pour les humains. Ah oui ... **l'**amour **l'**amour, toujours **l'**amour!

Tex: Money does not make man happy!

Tammy: You are right. Love and health are more important!

Tex: Of course, for insects and animals, money does not exist! But love is as important for us as it is for humans. Ah, yes, love, love, love, love, always love!

to express likes and dislikes

The French also use the definite article with **verbs of preference**, such as **aimer**, **préférer**, **détester**. Once again, English omits the article in such general statements. For example:

Tex adore **les** croissants.

Joe-Bob préfère **les** doughnuts.

Tammy n'aime pas **le** café.

Edouard apprécie **la** bonne cuisine française.

Tex loves croissants.

Joe-Bob prefers doughnuts.

Tammy does not like coffee.

Edouard appreciates good French cuisine.



to indicate habitual recurrence

The definite article is used in French with moments of the **day**, **days of the week**, and **seasons to indicate habitual recurrence**. For example:

Le matin, Tammy va en cours.

L'après-midi, elle va à la bibliothèque.

Le lundi, Tex fait son jogging.

L'été, il se baigne avec Tammy à Barton

Springs. **L'**hiver, il skie à Purgatory.

Every morning, Tammy goes to class.

Every afternoon, she goes to the library.

On Mondays, Tex goes for a jog.

Every summer, he bathes with Tammy at

Barton Springs. **Every winter**, he skis in

Purgatory.

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in a series

The article is usually repeated in a **series**, in contrast to English. For example:

Tammy: Tex, aide-moi à mettre la table! Apporte **les** assiettes, **les** couteaux, **les** verres, **les** serviettes et **le** vin.

Tex, help me set the table! Bring the plates, knives, glasses, napkins, and wine.

no article

Cities usually do not require an article in French. For example:

Tex habite à **Austin**.
mais il préfère **Paris**.

Tex lives in Austin,
but he prefers Paris.

Continents, countries, states, regions, and oceans usually require an article (**l'**Afrique, **la** France, **le** Texas, **la** Bourgogne, **l'**Atlantique etc.), but there are a few exceptions, usually islands: Haïti, Israël, Madagascar. See [prepositions with place names](#) for more information.

Months never require an article: **janvier, février, mars, etc.**

Cependant Tex adore **mars** à Austin.

Nevertheless Tex adores March in Austin.

Days of the week do not require an article in instances where they do not indicate habitual recurrence. For example:

Lundi, il a rendez-vous avec Tammy.

Monday he has a date with Tammy.

Tammy: J'aime beaucoup **le** français. C'est **la** langue de Molière et de Hugo, et surtout c'est **la** langue maternelle de Tex!

Tammy: I like French a lot. It is the language of Molière and of Hugo, and above all it is the mother tongue of Tex!

Bette: Alors comme ça Tammy, tu aimes bien **les** Français?

Bette: So Tammy, you really like French men?

Tammy: Oh oui! Surtout **les** Français qui portent **le beret**!

Tammy: I sure do! Especially French men who wear a beret!

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definite articles with physical characteristics

page: det3

The definite article (**le, la, l', les**) is often used with parts of the body instead of a possessive determiner (**mon, ma, mes, etc.**). Sentences with this structure always use the verb avoir to indicate that the possessor is the subject of the sentence. The following French sentences are equivalent.

Tex rêve: Ah, Tammy! Tu as les yeux brûlants,
labouche pulpeuse, les cheveux si doux ...

Tex is dreaming: Ah Tammy! You have fiery eyes, full lips,
such soft hair ...

Tex rêve: Ah Tammy! Ton regard est brûlant,
tabouche pulpeuse, tes cheveux si doux ...

Tex is dreaming: Ah Tammy! Your eyes are fiery, your lips
full, your hair so soft ..

However, an **indefinite article** is used if an adjective comes **before** the part of the body:

Tex continue: Tammy, tu as un petit nez pointu
et de grandes oreilles décollées ...

Tex continues: Tammy, you have a little pointed nose and
big ears which stick out ...

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Determiners: Indefinite Articles

page: det4

forms

In French, few nouns can stand alone. Most need to be introduced or 'determined' by an article.

As in English, an article is characterized as either **definite** ('the') or **indefinite** ('a', 'an'). In French, articles are also **masculine** or **feminine**, and **singular** or **plural**, according to the gender and number of the noun they determine. Here are the **indefinite articles** in French:

masculine singular: **un**

Tex est **un** tatou.
Joe-Bob est **un** écureuil.

Tex is an armadillo. Joe-Bob is a squirrel.

feminine singular: **une**

Bette est **une** chatte.

Bette is a cat.(female)

UT est **une** université

UT is a university.

plural: **des**

des tatous
des écureuils
des chats
des universités

(some) armadillos
(some) squirrels
(some) cats
(some) universities

uses

As the English 'a' 'an' or 'some', the indefinite articles **un, une, des** refer to nouns which are non-specific. **Un** or **une** may also indicate quantity, 'a' or 'an' in the sense of 'one.' Contrast the use of the indefinite and definite articles in the first two sentences below. The indefinite plural **des** is always expressed in French, but its English equivalent 'some' is often omitted.



Joe-Bob et Corey ont **une** chambre dans **une** résidence universitaire à Austin.

Joe-Bob and Corey have **a (one)** room in a residence hall in Austin.

Ils ont **la** chambre numéro 1735 dans **la** résidence Jester.

The have **the** room #1735 in **the** Jester residence hall.

Joe-Bob et Corey sont **des** camarades de chambre.

Joe-Bob and Corey are roommates!

'de' after the negative

In a negative sentence, the indefinite articles **un, une, des** are replaced by **de** or **d'**:

Tex: Joe-Bob, tu as **un** chien?

Tex: Joe-Bob, do you have **a** dog?'

Joe-Bob: Mais non! Je n'ai pas **de** chien. Je suis **un** écureuil.

Joe-Bob: No, I don't have **a** dog. I'm **a** squirrel.

Tex: Corey, tu as **des** amis?

Tex: Corey, do you have **friends**?

Corey: Mais non! Je n'ai pas **d'**amis. Je suis un cafard.

Corey: No, I don't have **any** friends. I'm a cockroach.

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However, following the verb **être**, the indefinite articles **un, une, des** remain unchanged in the negative:

Edouard: Joe-Bob, c'est **un** écureuil. Ce n'est pas **un** tatou!

Edouard: Joe-Bob is a squirrel. He is not an armadillo.

Tex et Tammy, ce sont **des** tatous. Ce ne sont pas **des** escargots.

Tex and Tammy are armadillos. They are not snails.

before a plural adjective

Before a plural **adjective** which precedes a noun, **des** usually becomes **de**. If the adjective comes after the noun, **des** does not change to **de**.



Edouard: Tex et Tammy sont **de** charmants amoureux.

Edouard: Tex and Tammy are charming lovers.

Bette: Ah bon? Ce ne sont pas seulement **de** bons amis?

Bette: Really? They are not just good friends?

Edouard: Tu ne trouves pas que Tex et Tammy sont **des** tatous parfaits l'un pour l'autre?

Edouard: Don't you think that Tex and Tammy are armadillos who are perfect for each other?

Bette: Absolument pas!

Bette: Absolutely not!

with adjectives of profession, nationality, and religion

Professions, nationalities and religions are considered adjectives in French and need no article after the verbs **être** and **devenir**.

Edouard: Tex devient professeur; il est américain; il n'est pas catholique.

Edouard: Tex is becoming a professor. He is American. He is not Catholic.

Bette et Tammy parlent entre femmes.

Bette and Tammy are talking woman-to-woman.

Bette: Je n'ai pas **de** véritables amis! Tout le monde pense que je suis **une** méchante chatte.

Bette: I have no real friends! Everybody thinks that I am a wicked cat.

Tammy: Mais non Bette! Toi et moi nous sommes **de** vieilles amies!

Tammy: That's not true Bette! You and I are old friends!

Bette: Oui, mais toi tu as **un** petit ami tandis que moi je n'ai pas **de** petit ami!

Bette: Yes, but you have a boyfriend whereas I don't have any boyfriend!

Tammy: Tu sais Bette, avoir un petit ami ce n'est pas toujours une partie de plaisir, surtout quand il s'appelle Tex!

Tammy: You know Bette, having a boyfriend is not always a fun thing, especially when he's called Tex!



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determiners: partitive articles

page: det5

forms

There are three partitive articles in French.

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Masculine: du | du pain | (some) bread |
| Feminine: de la | de la viande | (some) meat |
| Masculine or feminine before a vowel: de l' | de l' ail (m.) | (some) garlic (|
| | de l' eau (f.) | (some) water |

uses

Partitive articles are used both in English and in French to express quantities that cannot be counted. While the indefinite article (**un, une, des**) is used with countable quantities (un oeuf, deux oeufs ...), the partitive article is used before mass nouns, nouns that are indivisible or uncountable. In English the article 'some' is often omitted.

Edouard: Comme dessert, nous avons **de la** mousse au chocolat, **de la** glace parfumée à la vanille et **du** sorbet à l'ananas.

Edouard: For dessert, we have (some) chocolate mousse, vanilla ice cream, and pineapple sorbet.



While the definite article designates something in its totality, or as a whole, the partitive article designates a part of the whole. Note that depending on what you want to say, the same noun may be introduced by a **definite**, **indefinite**, or a partitive article. Compare these examples:

| | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| Edouard: Vous prenez du vin, n'est-ce pas? | partitive article | Edouard: You are having (some) wine, aren't you? (a quantity that is not specified) |
| Le vin rouge est bon pour la santé! | definite article | Red wine is healthy! (‘wine’ in general) |
| En fait, nous avons un Beaujolais nouveau ou un Chambertin, un Châteauneuf-du-Pape, ou j'ai | indefinite article | In fact, we have a Beaujolais nouveau, or a Chambertin, a Châteauneuf-du-Pape, or I have an excellent Médoc for you, or a little grey wine from Savoy. (These are items on the wine list, a countable quantity) |

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after the negative

In negative sentences, **du, de la, des, de l'** change to **de**:

Joe-Bob mange **de la** viande.

Tammy **ne** mange **pas de** viande.

Joe-Bob eats meat.

Tex boit **du** café.

Tammy **ne** boit **jamais de** café.

Tammy does not eat meat.

Tex drinks coffee.

Il y a encore **du** vin.

Il n'y a **plus de** vin.

Tammy never drinks coffee.

There is some wine left

There is not any wine left..



es may be used in negative sentences, however, to emphasize the contrasting positive

Tammy, ce n'est pas **de l'**amitié, c'est **de l'**amour

Between Tex and Tammy, it is not friendship, it is love!

Edouard sert **du** poulet, pas **des** escar

Edouard serves chicken, not snails!

!

Edouard serves chicken, not snails!

Notice the use of the partitive articles in the following dialogue.

Tammy est au téléphone: Allô, Edouard? Je reçois **des** amis ce soir. Je voudrais faire **des** crêpes, mais j'ai oublié la recette. Tu peux m'aider?

Tammy is on the phone: Hello, Edouard? I'm having some friends over tonight. I would like to make some crêpes, but I've forgotten the recipe. Can you help me?

Edouard: Rien de plus facile! Tu mélanges **de la** farine et **des** oeufs. Tu ajoutes ensuite **du** lait, **du** sel et **de l'**huile. Tu verses cette pâte dans une poêle. Quand la pâte est cuite, tu garnis la crêpe avec **du** fromage râpé, **du** jambon, ou **des** cèpes. Mais n'oublie pas Tammy, avec des crêpes, on ne boit pas **de** vin. Il faut boire **du** cidre et porter une coiffe bretonne!

Edouard: No problem! Mix some flour and eggs. Add some milk, some salt and some oil. Pour this batter in a pan. When the batter is cooked, fill the crêpe with some grated cheese, some ham, or cèpes (mushrooms). But don't forget Tammy, with crêpes, you don't drink wine. You have to drink cider and wear a Breton hat!

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Possessive Determiners

page: det6

forms and uses

The possessive determiners serve to express ownership or possession (hence the name). They are also often called possessive adjectives because they agree in gender and number with the noun they introduce.

| Masculine singular | Feminine singular | Plural | Translation |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------|-------------------------|
| mon | ma | mes | my |
| ton | ta | tes | your (familiar) |
| son | sa | ses | his or her or its |
| notre | notre | nos | our |
| votre | votre | vos | your (formal or plural) |
| leur | leur | leurs | their |

Possessive articles, like all articles, must agree with the noun they modify. Thus, if the noun is feminine, the possessive article must be feminine, too. In the following example, the feminine noun **famille** requires a feminine form – **sa**. Note that **sa** has three potential translations in English: 'his,' 'her,' or 'its.' So, how do you know which meaning is intended? Context! Since the following example sentence refers to Tex, we know that **sa** means 'his.'



Tex présente **sa** famille: Voici **mon** frère, Trey, et **ma** soeur, Rita, avec **ses** enfants et **leur** chien Fido. **Notre** famille est formidable!

Tex introduces **his** family. Here is **my** brother, Trey, and **my** sister, Rita with **her** children and **their** dog Fido. **Our** family is great!

liaison

Do not forget to make the liaison between the plural forms of the possessive determiners and words that begin with a vowel sound. **Ma, ta, sa** become **mon, ton, son** in front of feminine nouns beginning with a vowel sound.

Tex continues his introductions:

Tex: Voici Tammy, **mon** amie, et **ses** amies Bette et Fiona, c'est-à-dire **nos** amies.

Tex: Here is Tammy, **my** friend, and **her** friends, Bette and Fiona, that is to say, **our** friends.

Tammy parle avec Bette: Tex n'est plus **mon** ami! Il a complètement oublié **mon** cadeau et **notre** anniversaire! Il a oublié toutes **ses** promesses! Quel nul!

Tammy is talking with Bette: Tex is not **my** friend any more! He completely forgot **my** present and **our** anniversary! He forgot all **his** promises. What a loser!



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demonstrative determiners

page: det7

forms

Demonstrative determiners ('this', 'these', 'that' or 'those') are used to point out things or people. They are also sometimes called **demonstrative adjectives** (in French 'adjectifs démonstratifs'); they agree in number and gender with the noun they introduce.

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Masculine singular: ce | ce tatou | this armadillo |
| Masculine singular before a vowel sound: cet | cet écureuil | this squirrel |
| Feminine singular: cette | cette chatte | this cat (female) |
| Plural (masculine or feminine): ces | ces tatous ces écureuils | these armadillos these squirrels |

Note that liaison is compulsory between **ces** and words starting with a vowel or a silent **h**.

uses

In general, demonstrative determiners designate something one can see or show:

Tex explique: **Ce** bassin, c'est Barton Springs. **Cette** piscine s'appelle Deep Eddy.

Tex explains: This pool is Barton Springs. This swimming pool is Deep Eddy.



-ci and -là

Demonstrative determiners can designate something close or far away: in order to distinguish between them, one can add the suffixes **-ci** or **-là** to the demonstrative determiner. The suffix **-ci** indicates that the item is relatively near to the speaker, **-là** suggests that something is farther away. In English, they are generally translated by 'this' and 'that':

Tex: Tu vois Tammy, **cette** étoile-**ci** s'appelle Vénus.
Mais **ces** étoiles-**là**, c'est la Voie lactée.

Tex: See Tammy, **this** star (**here**) is called Venus. But **those** stars (**there**), are the Milky Way.

Tammy: Venus ... la voie lactée ... oh Tex, j'aime bien quand tu me parles d'astronomie!

Tammy: Venus ... the Milky Way ... oh, Tex, I like it when you talk to me about astronomy!



ET CE BIKINI ?

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Tex et Tammy sont dans le rayon femmes de J. C. Penney.

Tex and Tammy are in the women's section of J. C. Penney.

Tammy: Qu'est-ce que tu penses de **ce** maillot-ci ?

Tammy: What do you think of this bathing suit ?

Tex: Ah non! Je n'aime pas du tout **cette** couleur.

Tex: Oh no! I don't like this color at all.

Tammy: Et **ce** bikini? Ce sera parfait pour **cet** été. Tu ne trouves pas?

Tammy: What about this bikini? It will be perfect for this summer, don't you think?

Tex: Quelle horreur! **Ce** tissu est complètement démodé!

Tex: It's horrible! This fabric is completely outdated!

Tammy: Mais Tex, tu n'as aucun goût! Tu crois que **ce** vieux béret que tu portes est à la mode?

Tammy: Tex, you have no taste whatsoever! You think that this old beret you wear is fashionable?

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determiners: expressions of quantity

page: det8

There are many ways of expressing quantity: numbers (**deux** crêpes), the **indefinite article** (**un** tatou, an armadillo), and the **partitive article** (**du** lait, some milk).

Quantities may also be expressed using adverbs and adverbial expressions, such as **assez** (enough), **beaucoup** (a lot), or **trop** (too much).

When used with nouns, expressions of quantity are always followed by **de** (**d'** if the noun begins with a vowel sound).



Tammy et Tex reçoivent des amis ce soir. Tammy est dans la cuisine. Tex regarde la télévision.

Tammy and Tex are having some friends over tonight. Tammy is in the kitchen. Tex is watching television.

Tammy: **Une douzaine de** crêpes, c'est **trop** pour quatre personnes?

Tammy: A dozen crepes, that's too much for four people?

Tex: Mais non, Tammy, ce n'est pas **assez**. Il faut préparer **beaucoup de** crêpes.

Tex: No, Tammy, it's not too much. You can never prepare too many crepes.

Here is a list of common adverbial expressions of quantity:

assez de, enough

plein de, many

beaucoup de, a lot

un tas de, a lot of

un peu de, a little

trop de, too many

Note that these expressions of quantity do not change in negative sentences:

Tex: On ne prépare jamais **trop de** crêpes.

Tex: One never prepares too many crepes!

One can express quantity by using specific nouns or adverbs of quantity, as well as measures of weight, distance, or volume, especially in reference to food. For example:

une boîte de, a can (box) of

un litre de, a liter of

un bol de, a bowl of

une livre de, a pound of

un bout de, a piece (end) of

un morceau de, a piece of

une bouteille de, a bottle of

une part de, a serving of

une cuillère de, a teaspoon of

une pincée de, a pinch of

une douzaine de, a dozen

une tasse de, a cup of

50 grammes de, 50 grams of

une tranche de, a slice of

un kilo de, a kilo of

un verre de, a glass of

The definite article (**le**, **la**, **les**) may be used with these expressions to indicate a quantity of a **specific** item. Remember that **de** + **le** and **de** + **les** form the contractions **du** and **des** respectively.

un morceau **du** gâteau qu'Edouard a préparé

a piece of **the** cake that Edouard made

un verre **du** vin rouge, pas **du** blanc

a glass of **the** red wine, not **the** white one beaucoup

des invités parlent français

many of **the** guests speak French

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Tammy lit la recette: Pour **une douzaine de** crêpes, mélanger **400 grammes de** farine et deux oeufs. Ajouter ensuite **un demi litre de** lait, **une cuillère à** sel et **une cuillère d'**huile.

Tammy: Dis, Tex! Arrête de faire le légume devant la télé! Viens m'aider!

Tex: Comment? J'ai fait mon travail, moi! Le **bouquet de** roses et **la bouteille de** cidre sont sur la table!

Tammy reads the recipe: For a dozen crêpes, mix 400 grams of flour and two eggs. Then add half a liter of milk, a spoonful of salt and a spoonful of oil.

Tammy: Hey, Tex! Stop vegging out in front of the TV! Come and help me!

Tex: What? I did my job! The bouquet of flowers and the bottle of cider are on the table!

tout

page: det9

'tout' as an adjective

Tout means 'all' or 'every' when it modifies a noun. It agrees in number and gender with the noun that follows.

| Masculine singular | Masculine plural | Feminine singular | Feminine plural |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| tout | tous | toute | toutes |

These forms of **tout** are most often used with the definite articles **le, les, la, l'**, but they may also be used with a **possessive determiner**: **tous mes** poèmes (all my poems), **toute sa** vie (all his/her life) etc.:

| | |
|---|--|
| Malgré toutes les filles que j'ai connues, | In spite of all the girls (or all of the girls) that I have known, |
| je pense à toi ... | I think of you ... |
| tout le temps, | all the time, |
| toute la journée, | all day long, |
| tous* les soirs, | every evening, |
| toutes les nuits. | every night. |

*Note that the final **s** of **tous** is not pronounced when it is used as an adjective.

Tout or **toute** may also be used without an article to mean 'every.'

Tex: **Tout** tatou est poète! Every armadillo is a poet!



'tout' as a pronoun

Tout is **invariable** when it functions as the indefinite pronoun meaning 'everything' or 'all', as in the first sentence below.

The plural pronouns **tous** and **toutes** agree with the nouns they replace. Compare the examples below.

Indefinite singular 'everything'

Tammy: Tex, tu as vu ton éditeur? **Tout** s'est bien passé?

Tammy: Tex, did you see your publisher? Did **everything** go well?

To replace a plural noun Tex: Les éditeurs sont des idiots, je les déteste **tous**!* Les maisons d'éditions ne comprennent pas mon art. **Toutes** refusent mes poèmes romantiques!

Tex: Publishers are fools, I hate them **all**! Publishing houses don't understand my art. **All** refuse my romantic poems!

*Note that the final **s** in the pronoun **tous** is pronounced, in contrast to the unpronounced **s** in **tous** as an adjective.

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'tout' as an adverb

Tout may also be an adverb meaning 'all,' 'completely,' or 'quite' when it modifies another adverb, a preposition, or an adjective. Although **tout** is invariable before an adverb, a preposition or a masculine adjective, the feminine forms **toute** and **toutes** are used before feminine adjectives beginning with a consonant

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Invariable | Tex: Les éditeurs ne comprennent rien. Mes thèmes sont tout nouveaux. | Tex: Editors don't understand anything. My themes are completely new. Tex: And my poetry is very modern. |
| Before a feminine adjective beginning with a consonant | Tex: Et ma poésie est toute moderne | Tex: And my poetry is very modern. |

tout in common idiomatic phrases

Here is a list of common idiomatic phrases with **tout**:

pas du tout, not at all

tout de suite, right away

tout le monde, everyone

tout le temps, all the time

tous les jours, every day

tous (toutes) les deux, both

tous les deux jours, every other day

tous les trois jours ... , every three days

toutes les deux semaines, every other week

en tout cas, in any case

malgré tout, in spite of everything

tout à l'heure, in a little while

tout à coup, all of a sudden

tout à fait, completely

tout droit, straight ahead

tout de même, just the same

tout en + participe présent, all the while ...



Tammy: Alors Tex, tu as bientôt fini ton recueil de poèmes?

Tex: Oh ne m'en parle pas! J'ai perdu **tout mon** enthousiasme! J'ai **toutes sortes** de problèmes avec mon éditeur. Il refuse **tous mes** poèmes récents.

Tammy: Ne t'inquiète pas! **Tous les** grands poètes sont incompris!

Tammy: So Tex, have you almost finished writing your collection of poems?

Tex: Oh don't ask! I have lost all my enthusiasm! I have all sorts of problems with my publisher. He refuses to publish all my recent poems.

Tammy: Don't worry! All great poets are misunderstood!

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indefinite determiners

page: det10

Indefinite determiners qualify nouns and express the indefinite idea of quality (certain, any) or quantity (not one, each, different, several). They agree in number and gender with the noun they modify. Some indefinite determiners may be used as *indefinite pronouns* to replace a noun.

Here is a list of common indefinite determiners:

aucun (aucune), not one, not a single

certain (certaines), certain

chaque, each, every

différents (différentes), various, some

divers (diverses), various, some

plusieurs, several **quelques**,

a few **tout**, all, every



Bette: Il n'y a **aucun** doute. Tu finiras mère au foyer!

Bette: There is no doubt. You'll end up a housewife!

Tammy: **Chaque** jour, tu trouves une méchanceté à dire. **Aucune** chatte n'est aussi désagréable que toi!

Tammy: Every day, you find something nasty to say. No cat is as unpleasant as you are!

Bette: Mais ouvre les yeux Tammy! Ton futur mari a **plusieurs** défauts. Il est snob, prétentieux et veut toujours avoir raison.

Bette: Open your eyes Tammy! Your future husband has several negative traits. He is snobbish, pretentious and always wants to be right.

Tammy: Mais il a aussi **quelques** qualités: il est beau et talentueux. **Certains** éditeurs pensent qu'il est le prochain prix Goncourt!

Tammy: But he also has a few good points: he is handsome and talented. Some publishers think that he is the next Goncourt prize winner.

Bette tout bas: Tu parles!

!Bette under her breath: Yeah, right!

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Adverbs

page: adv1

Introduction to Adverbs

An **adverb** is a word that qualifies the action of the verb, that is, it specifies how or when the action is performed. In English, many adverbs are indicated by the **-ly** ending. In French, most adverbs end in **-ment**.

lentement

slowly

attentivement

carefully

souvent

often

Adverbs answer questions about the action: how? how much? when? and where? While most adverbs in French and English modify verbs, they can also modify other adverbs as well as adjectives.

verb modified by adverb

Ecoute **attentivement**.

Listen **carefully**.

adverb modified by adverb

trop lentement

too slowly

adjective modified by adverb

extrêmement silencieux

extremely quiet

Adverb vs. Adjective

It is common in non-standard English for speakers to use adjectives in place of adverbs.

Tex writes **good**. (instead of 'well')

Aggies talk **too slow**. (instead of 'slowly')

While this alternation is common in English, it is not common in French where adjectives are rarely used in place of the adverb. Remember that adverbs modify verbs (as well as other adverbs and adjectives) and adjectives modify nouns.

Tex écrit **bien**.

Tex writes well.

La poésie de Tex est **bonne**.

Tex's poetry is good.



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adverbs: formation and placement

page: adv2

uses

In French as in English, an adverb describes the action of a verb. It answers such questions as 'where', 'when,' 'how,' 'how long,' or 'how often.' Adverbs are invariable and may be used with almost all verbs. For example:

Edouard cuisine **bien**.

Edouard cooks well.

Joe-Bob mange **beaucoup**.

Joe-Bob eats a lot.



An adverb may also qualify an adjective or another adverb. Consider the sentence: 'Edouard cuisine **très bien**' (Edouard cooks very well). **Très** qualifies **bi en** and both describe the action of the verb 'cuisiner'.

common adverbs

Following is a list of frequently used adverbs, categorized by type:

| manner | bi en , well | mal , badly | vi te , quickly |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| manner | bien , well | mal , badly | vite , quickly |
| time | souvent , often | quelquefois , sometimes | toujours , always |
| | jamais , never | tôt , early | tard , late |
| | bientôt , soon | aujourd'hui , today | hier , yesterday |
| | maintenant , now | déjà , already | demain , tomorrow |
| place | dedans , inside | dehors , outside | ici , here |
| | là , there | partout , everywhere | quelque part , somewhere |
| quantity or degree | beaucoup , a lot | très , very | trop , too much |
| | assez , enough | peu , little, not much | peut-être , maybe |
| sequence | d'abord , at first | puis , then, next | alors , then, so |
| | donc , thus | enfin , finally | |

formation of regular adverbs

A large number of French adverbs are derived from adjectives.

They are usually formed by adding **-ment** to the **feminine singular form of the adjective**. Note the exception 'gentiment', which is derived from the adjective 'gentil' (nice).

lent(e), slow

lentement, slowly

doux (douce), soft

doucement, softly

heureux (heureuse), happy

heureusement, happily, fortunately

franc (franche), frank

franchement, frankly

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However, **-ment** is added to the **masculine singular form of adjectives that end with a vowel**. Note the exception 'gaiement' which is derived from the adjective 'gai' (cheerful).

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| poli(e) polite | poli ment , politely |
| absolu(e), absolute | absolument, absolutely |
| vrai(e), true, real | vrai ment , truly, really |
| modéré(e), moderate | modérément, moderately |

Add **-emment** to the stem of adjectives that end in -ent; add **-amment** to the **stem of adjectives ending in -ant**. The stem is what remains of the adjective when -ent or -ant have been removed. Note that the one-syllable adjective 'lent' does not form its adverb, 'lentement', on this model.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| récent, recent | ré emment , recently |
| fréquent, frequent | fréqu emment , frequently |
| suffisant, sufficient | suffis amment , sufficiently |
| méchant, wicked, malicious | méch amment , wickedly, nastily |

Note the addition of an acute accent to form the following adverbs:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| précis(e), precise | précis ément , precisely |
| profond(e), deep | profond ément , deeply |
| énorme, huge, enormous | énorm ément , enormously |

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placement

Use the following guidelines for placement of adverbs.

adverbs that modify an adjective or another adverb

Adverbs are placed directly before the adjective or adverb that they modify.

Edouard: J'habite le Texas depuis **très** longtemps, mais je trouve que le barbecue est **vrai ment** dégueulasse!

Edouard: I've lived in Texas for a very long time, but I find that barbecue is truly disgusting!

adverbs that modify a verb

Adverbs are usually placed immediately after the conjugated verb. If the verb is negative, the adverb is placed after the negation.

Edouard comprend **mal** les habitudes culinaires américaines.

Edouard understands poorly American culinary habits.

Edouard ne marche pas **vite**, parce qu'il sait **déjà** ce que les clients vont commander.

Edouard is not walking fast, because he already knows what the customers are going to order.

Edouard: Ils exigent **toujours** du ketchup, mais il n'y a pas de ketchup dans mon restaurant.

Edouard: They always demand ketchup, but there is no ketchup in my restaurant.

Note that most common adverbs are placed directly after the verb before the objects.

Joe-Bob: J'aime **beaucoup** le ketchup!

Joe-Bob: I like ketchup a lot! Edouard:

J'aime **davantage** le foie gras!

Edouard: I like foie gras even more!

adverbs that modify a whole sentence

If an adverb is a comment on the entire sentence (**malheureusement, en plus**), it may be placed at the beginning or end of the sentence. Adverbs of this type include **adverbs of time and place**. In the following dialogue, contrast the adverbs that modify the whole sentence to those that modify just the verb.



Joe-Bob: Edouard, viens dîner avec nous **ce soir**!

Joe-Bob: Edouard, come out to eat with us this evening!

Edouard: Je n'aime pas dîner dans des restaurants américains parce que je trouve du ketchup **partout**.

Edouard: I don't like to eat in American restaurants because I find ketchup everywhere.

Vous allez **sûrement** au Salt Lick, et tu sais que je déteste le barbecue.

You're surely going to go to the Salt Lick and you know that I detest barbecue.

Joe-Bob: **Malheureusement**, on n'a pas assez d'argent pour aller dans un restaurant snob!

Joe-Bob: Unfortunately, we don't have enough money to go to a snobby restaurant!

Edouard refuse **obstinément** l'invitation de Joe-Bob: Tu m'invites **souvent**, maistoujours à l'américaine!

Obstinately, Edouard refuses Joe-Bob's invitation: You invite me out to eat often, but always in the American style.

placement of adverbs with passé composé

page: adv3

The adverb in French usually follows the conjugated verb. Thus, in all **compound tenses** (i.e. tenses where an auxiliary is required, such as the **passé composé**), adverbs are placed right after the auxiliary and just before the past participle. However, some longer adverbs ending in **-ment** may follow the past participle. In a sentence in the **periphrastic future** ('futur proche'), adverbs are placed right before the infinitive. If the conjugated verb is in the negative, the adverb follows the negation.



Tex: Oh, j'ai **trop** mangé. Je ne vais pas **bi en** dormir.

Tex: Oh, I ate too much. I am not going to sleep well

Edouard: Mais tu n'as pas **beaucoup** mangé! Juste de la soupe!

Edouard: But you didn't eat much! Just some soup!

Tex: Oui, mais il y avait une mouche dans la soupe!

Tex: Yes, but there was a fly in the soup!

Edouard: Quoi? Une mouche dans mon restaurant! Pas possible!

Edouard: What? A fly in my restaurant! It's not possible!

Je vais **immédiatement** te préparer une infusion. Oh, tu sais, les mouches, ça se digère **vite**.

I'm going to prepare an herb tea for you right away. Oh, you know, flies are easily digested.

comparative and superlative of adverbs

page: adv4

comparative of adverbs: indicating more, less, or equality

Plus + adverb + **que** conveys the idea of 'more ... than', **moins** + adverb + **que** the idea of 'less ... than'. **Aussi** + adverb + **que** conveys the idea of 'as ... as.'

Joe-Bob court **plus** vite
qu'Edouard.

Joe-Bob runs faster than Edouard.

Tex court **moins** vite **que** Joe- Bob.

Tex runs slower (less fast) than Joe-Bob.

Qui court **aussi** lentement **qu'**
Edouard? Personne, bien sûr!

Who runs as slowly as Edouard?
No one, of course!



Note that **mieux** (better) is the irregular comparative form of the adverb **bien** (well). The other comparative forms of **bien** are regular (**moins bien que**, **aussi bien que**).

Joe-Bob: Vous allez **bien** aujourd'hui? Vous êtes en forme pour la course?

Joe-Bob: Are you doing ok today? Are you in good shape for the race?

Tex: Ah, oui, je vais **mieux qu'** hier. Je n'ai pas fumé depuis 24 heures.

Tex: Ah yes, I am better than yesterday. I haven't smoked for 24 hours.

Edouard: Moi, je vais **moins bien qu'** hier. J'ai tellement travaillé que j'ai des courbatures.

Edouard: Oh no, I am less well than yesterday. I've worked so much that I have aches and pains.

Corey: Oh, je vais **aussi bien qu'** hier. Je suis dopé, comme d'habitude.

Corey: Oh I am doing as well as yesterday. I'm high (on insecticides), as usual.

superlative of adverbs: indicating the most, the least

In French as in English, the superlative is a way to express a maximum or minimum quality or capacity: 'the fastest', 'the least fast'. To form the superlative of an adverb, the masculine singular form of the **definite article** is always used: **le**, followed by **plus** (more) or **moins** (less) before the adverb. Note that the superlative of an adverb has only one form. **Le mieux** (the best) and **le moins bien** (the least well) are the superlative forms of the adverb **bien** (well).

Joe-Bob, Tex, Corey et Edouard se préparent à faire une course.

Joe-Bob, Tex, Corey and Edouard are about to start a race.

Corey: Qui va gagner?

Corey: Who's going to win?

Joe-Bob: Moi, bien sûr! je cours **le plus vite** et Edouard va être le dernier parce qu'il court **le moins vite**!

Joe-Bob: Me, of course! I run the fastest and Edouard is going to be last, because he runs the least fast!

Edouard (vexé): Tu dis ça parce que je suis un escargot! Mais tout le monde sait que je cours **le plus élégamment**!

Edouard (offended): You say this because I am a snail! But everyone knows that I run the most elegantly!

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-il y a, ago

page: adv5

When **il y a** is followed by a time expression (such as **longtemps**, **quel que temps**, **une semaine**, **deux jours** etc.), it generally means 'ago': **il y a une semaine** (a week ago).



Tex: La mère supérieure m'a écrit récemment. Elle veut un souvenir du Texas! **Il y a un an** j'ai promis de lui envoyer quelque chose, mais en ce moment je n'ai pas d'argent. Je viens de dépenser mes derniers sous **il y a 10 minutes**.

Tex: Mother Superior (Tex was raised by nuns in France) wrote me recently. She wants a souvenir from Texas! A year ago I promised to send her something, but now I don't have any money. I just spent my last money 10 minutes ago.

Joe-Bob: Pense à des souvenirs pas chers. Hmmmm . . . mon ancien berceau, peut-être. C'est parfait pour une mère!

Joe-Bob: Think of souvenirs that don't cost much. Hmmmm ... my old crib, maybe. It's perfect for a mother!

See also il y a and Il y a ... que.

tôt, tard, en avance, en retard, à l'heure

page: adv5

Tôt and **tard** are irregular adverbs. **Tôt** means early in a general, non-measurable sense: early in the day, or in one's life, one's career, relationship, in a film, book, etc. Likewise, **tard** means late in the sense of late in the day (or in one's life, career, etc.).

En avance (early), **en retard** (late), **à l'heure** (on time) are invariable phrases, i.e. they have only one form. They always refer to a schedule: **en avance** means early in the sense of ahead of schedule and **en retard** means late, behind schedule. They are usually used with 'être' and verbs of movement like 'arriver', 'partir', 'rentrer', 'revenir': in other words, the verbs from the *Alamo* of être. They are placed at the end of the sentence.



EDOUARD EST EN RETARD.
IL N'EST JAMAIS À L'HEURE.

Tex et Bette sont devant PCL.

PCL.

Bette: Qui est-ce que tu attends, Tex?

Tex?

Tex: Oh, comme d'habitude, j'attends Edouard. Il est **en retard**. Il n'est jamais **à l'heure**.

Bette: Moi, je suis toujours **à l'heure**. Et j'arrive même **en avance** quand j'ai rendez-vous avec quelqu'un comme toi: digne, intelligent, sophistiqué, beau ...

Tex: Bof ... Tu crois qu'il est trop **tôt** pour parler mariage avec Tammy?

Bette: Certainement! Il est beaucoup trop **tôt**. Tu dois attendre! Regarde l'heure. **Il est tard**. On y va

Tex and Bette are outside

Bette: Who are you waiting for

Tex: Oh, as usual, I'm waiting for Edouard. He is late. He is never on time.

Bette: I am always on time. And I even arrive early when I'm meeting someone like you: dignified, intelligent, sophisticated, handsome ...

Tex: Bof ... Do you think it is too early to discuss marriage with Tammy?

Bette: Certainly! It is much too early. You have to wait! Look at the time. It is late. Shall we go?

Adjectives

Introduction to Adjectives

page: a3j1

An **adjective** is a word that describes a noun or pronoun. The major differences between adjectives in French and English concern agreement and placement. In French, an adjective is usually placed after the noun it modifies and must agree in gender and number with the noun. In English, an adjective usually comes before the noun it modifies and is invariable, that is, it does not agree.

Tex est un tatou **philosophique**.

Edouard est un escargot **raffiné**.

Joe-Bob est un écureuil **aimable**.

Bette est une chatte **capricieuse**.

Corey est un cafard **ivre**.

Fiona est **travailleuse**. (f)

Mais Joe-Bob n'est pas **travailleur**. (m)

Tex is a **philosophical** armadillo.

Edouard is a **refined** snail.

Joe-Bob is a **friendly** squirrel.

Bette is a **temperamental** cat.

Corey is an **intoxicated** cockroach.

Fiona is **hard-working**.

But Joe-Bob isn't **hard-working**.



JOE-BOB EST UN
ÉCUREUIL AIMABLE

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Adjective vs. adverb

It is common in nonstandard English for speakers to use adjectives in place of adverbs.

Joe-Bob says: "Gee, Tex writes real good." (instead of: "Tex writes **well**.")

Joe-Bob says "Gosh, Edouard, you walk real slow." (instead of: "Edouard, you talk **slowly**.")

French adjectives are rarely used in place of the adverbial form. Remember that adjectives modify nouns and adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs!

Tex écrit **bien**.
(adverb modifies verb)

Tex writes **well** .

La poésie de Tex est **bonne**.
(adjective modifies noun)

Tex's poetry is **good**.

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Adjectives: Formation and Placement

page: adj2

formation

Adjectives agree in both number and gender with the noun or pronoun they modify. For regular adjectives the masculine form is the base form to which endings are added. The feminine adjective is formed by adding an **e**. The plural adjective is formed by adding **s**.

| masculine singular | feminine singular | masculine plural | feminine plural |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| petit | petite | petits | petites |

Note how the singular and plural forms of the masculine adjective sound the same, and the singular and plural forms of the feminine adjective also sound the same.



Tex est **petit**.

Tammy est **petite**.

Tex et Trey sont **petits**.

Tammy et Bette sont **petites**.

Tex is little.

Tammy is little.

Tex and Trey are little.

Tammy and Bette are little.

The adjective takes the masculine plural when the nouns it modifies are of different genders: Tammy et Tex sont **petits**. (Tammy and Tex are little.)

Irregular adjectives do not follow the rules given above.

placement

In French, most adjectives follow the noun, unlike in English, where the adjective precedes the noun. Here are some examples of adjectives following the noun:

Tex porte toujours un béret **rond**, même quand il fait du sport. Il aime les romans **existentialistes**. Dans son enfance, Tex a habité chez des nonnes **catholiques**.

Tex always wears a round beret, even when he exercises. He likes existentialist novels. As a child, Tex lived with catholic nuns.

Tammy a un nez **pointu**. C'est une tatou **mince** et **sympathique**. Elle apprend la langue **française** et fait des études **littéraires**.

Tammy has a pointed nose. She is a slim and nice armadillo. She's learning the French language and is studying literature.

Bette est de caractère **méfiant**. Elle est d'humeur **changeante**. C'est une chatte très **maline**.

Bette has a mistrustful personality. She has changing moods. She's a very cunning cat.

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Note that there is a small group of adjectives that normally precede the noun. Some adjectives can also be placed before or after the noun but changing the position of the adjectives can modify their meaning.



Tammy, Bette et Tex sont à Gregory Gym. Les deux filles parlent, puis se disputent, pendant que Tex fait son sport **annuel** .

Tammy: Regarde, Bette, comme ses ongles **jaunes** tapent sur le tapis **roulant** quand il court! Quel tatou **adorable** ! Et ce museau **fin** et **pointu**, ces écailles **étincelantes**, ce corps **souple**, ces gestes et ces mouvements **pleins de** grâce ...

Bette: Berk! Tu aimes vraiment ça!? Un corps **humide de** sueur et un poil **gris** comme une boule de papier **mâché**! Oh mon dieu! Et cette odeur **désagréable**! Comme un rat **noyé**! Tu n'es pas **sérieuse**!

Tammy: Bette, je ne suis pas idiote! Je connais tes intentions! Il est à moi!

Tammy, Bette and Tex are at Gregory Gym. The two girls talk, then argue, while Tex does his yearly workout.

Tammy: Bette, would you look at those yellow nails of his clicking on the treadmill when he runs! What an adorable armadillo! And that snout, so fine and pointy! Those shiny scales, that supple body, his every gesture and movement so full of grace ...

Bette: Yuck! You like that!? That clammy body, gray fur? Like a wad of paper maché! Oh, Lord! And that awful smell! Like a drowned rat! You're not serious!

Tammy: Bette, you don't fool me! I understand your intentions! He's mine!

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Adjectives that precede the noun

page: adj3

The placement of most adjectives in French is after the noun: un escargot **parlant**, une fourmi **travailleuse**, des tatous **intelligents**, etc. There is a small group of adjectives, however, that normally precede the noun. These adjectives may be categorized as adjectives of Beauty, Age, Numbers Goodness, and Size (**BANGS**).

autre, other
grand (grande), tall, big
joli (jolie), pretty **petit (petite)**, little

beau (bel le), beautiful
gros (grosse), big, fat
mauvais (mauvaise), bad
vieux (vieille), old

bon (bonne), good
jeune, young
nouveau (nouvelle), new

ordinal numbers:

premier (première), first

deuxième, second

troisième, third, etc.



TAMMY EST UNE
 BELLE AMÉRICAINE

Tammy est une **belle** Américaine. C'est aussi une **bonne** amie. C'est une **petite** tatou.

Tammy is a beautiful American woman. She is also a good friend. Tammy is a little armadillo.

Trey est le **jeune** frère de Tex. C'est le **troisième** enfant de la famille.

Trey is Tex's young brother. He is the third child in the family

beau, nouveau, vieux

Beau, nouveau, and vieux have irregular forms. Note the special forms in the masculine singular when they precede a word that begins with a vowel or a silent h.

| masculine singular | masculine before vowel | feminine singular | masculine plural | feminine plural |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| beau | bel | belle | beaux | belles |
| nouveau | nouvel | nouvelle | nouveaux | nouvelles |
| vieux | vieil | vieille | vieux | vieilles |

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The adjectives which precede the noun must agree in number and gender with the noun they modify (see the regular rule for [adjective formation](#)). Be aware that [changing the position](#) of some adjectives may change their meaning.

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| arnouvel arde famille de Rita. | arfamily album. |
| Tammy: Qui est cette belle femme? | Tammy: Who is that beautiful woman? |
| Rita: C'est notre mère. | Rita: That's our mother. |
| ar autres ar | ar |
| ar vieil arEt puis, à côté, c'est moi. | arAnd then, next to him, that's me. |
| ar petit arest laid! | arhe ugly! |
| ar première arde toi. | arof you. |



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Irregular adjectives

page: adj4

Regular adjectives are formed by adding an **e** to the masculine form in the singular (content / content**e**), or by adding an **s** to the masculine and feminine forms in the plural (Tex et Edouard sont content**s** / Tammy et Bette sont content**es**). This group of adjectives is by far the most common. There are, however, a number of adjectives which are called irregular, because they do not have the normal **-e**, **-s**, or **-es** endings. The endings of these irregular adjectives vary widely and often change the pronunciation.

gender

Some adjectives are completely irregular:

| masculine | feminine | translation |
|-----------|----------|-------------|
| doux | douce | soft |
| faux | fausse | false |
| favori | favorite | favorite |
| frais | fraîche | fresh |
| long | longue | long |
| public | publique | public |

Other adjectives can be grouped in categories:

| masculine ending | feminine ending | french | english |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| -el | -elle | cruel • cruelle | cruel |
| -eil | -eille | pareil • pareille | similar |
| -il | -ille | gentil • gentille | kind, nice |
| -on | -onne | mignon • mignonne | cute |
| -s | -sse | gros • grosse | big, fat |
| -en | -enne | ancien • ancienne | old |
| -et | -ète | secret • secrète | secretive |
| -er | -ère | cher • chère | dear, expensive |
| -eux | -euse | heureux • heureuse | happy |
| -eur | -euse | trompeur • trompeuse | deceptive |
| -teur | -trice | créateur • créatrice | creative |
| -f | -ve | actif • active | active |
| -c | -che | franc • franche | frank |
| -ou | -olle | fou • folle | crazy |

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Some adjectives have identical masculine and feminine forms. This is generally the case with adjectives ending in **e** in their masculine form and with foreign adjectives like 'snob', 'cool', etc. For example: Tex est un tatou **imaginaire**; Tammy aussi est **imaginaire**. Ils sont **imaginaires**. (Tex is an imaginary armadillo; Tammy too is imaginary. They are imaginary.) Here are a few of these adjectives:

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| pauvre (poor) | difficile (difficult) | sensible (sensitive) |
| riche (rich) | calme (calm) | semblable (similar) |
| mince (slim) | minuscule (tiny) | ridicule (ridiculous) |
| propre (clean) | ironique (ironic) | imaginaire (imaginary) |

number

The majority of adjectives are regular in the plural; that is, an **-s** is added to the singular masculine or feminine forms. There are two major exceptions to this rule:

Do not add an **s** to the masculine form of adjectives ending in **s** or **x**. The masculine singular and plural forms are thus identical: un animal **heureux** (a happy animal), des animaux **heureux** (happy animals). However, the feminine plural form of these adjectives is regular; it is formed by simply adding an **s** to the feminine singular form: une fille **heureuse** (a happy girl), des filles **heureuses** (happy girls).

Adjectives ending in **al** in the masculine singular form change to **aux** in the masculine plural form.

Tex est un tatou international. Edouard et Tex sont des animaux Tex is an international armadillo. Edouard and Tex
internationaux. are international animals.

The feminine plural form of these adjectives is regular; it is formed by simply adding an **s** to the feminine singular form: Tex aime lire la presse **internationale**. Tex aime aussi les revues **internationales**. (Tex likes to read international papers. Tex also likes international magazines).



Tex: Mais, qu'est-ce qui ne va pas?

Tex: But, what's wrong?

Tammy: C'est encore Bette! Elle n'est jamais **sincère**! Sois **franc** Tex. Tu ne la trouves pas **capricieuse** et **cruelle**?

Tammy: It's Bette again! She is never sincere! Be frank Tex. Don't you find her capricious and cruel?

Tex: Non! Elle est **gentille**! C'est une **bonne** amie! Qu'est-ce qu'elle a fait?

Tex: No! She is nice! She is a good friend! What did she do?

Tammy: Comme tu es **naïf**! Elle me raconte que tu me trouves **ennuyeuse**, que tu es **amoureux** d'une de tes étudiantes. C'est vrai?

Tammy: You are so naive! She tells me that you think I'm boring, that you are in love with one of your students. Is that true?

Tex: Tu es **folle**! C'est une **fausse** accusation!

Tex: You're crazy! It's a false accusation!

Tammy: Hmm ... Tu veux que je t'explique? C'est très clair. Elle est **jalouse**!

Tammy: Hmm ... Do you want me to explain? It's very clear. She is jealous!

C'est le complot **classique**. Elle essaie de nous séparer, nous des amis si **loyaux**!

This is the classic plot. She tries to separate us, so loyal friends

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Adjectives whose meaning varies with placement

page: adj5

Some adjectives can be placed either before or after the noun they are describing. Their position determines their meaning. When the adjective is placed before the noun it tends to carry a figurative, or metaphorical meaning. When it follows the noun, it carries a more literal, or actual meaning. Consider the following examples:

| adjective | literal sense following the noun | figurative sense before the noun |
|-----------------|--|--|
| ancien | Paw-Paw adore les meubles anciens . Paw-Paw adores very old furniture. | Marianne est l' ancienne copine de Tex. Marianne is Tex's former girlfriend. |
| cher | Tammy aime les parfums chers de Paris. Tammy likes expensive perfumes from Paris. | Chers amis, je suis content de vous voir! Dear friends, I am happy to see you! |
| dernier | Tex a vu Marianne la semaine dernière . Tex saw Marianne last [preceding] week. | Tex dit à Marianne: Pour la dernière fois, je ne veux plus te voir. Tex says to Marianne: For the last [final] time, I don't want to see you anymore. |
| grand | En général, les tatous ne sont pas grands . In general, armadillos are not tall . | Tex est un grand philosophe. Tex is a great philosopher. |
| même | Bette est l'hypocrisie même ! Bette is hypocrisy itself ! | Tammy et Bette adorent le même petit tatou. Tammy and Bette adore the same little armadillo. |
| pauvre | A son arrivée à Austin, Tex était un tatou pauvre . When he came to Austin, Tex was a financially poor armadillo. | Le pauvre Tex était malheureux quand il a quitté la France. The unfortunate Tex was not happy when he left France. |
| prochain | Mes chers étudiants, la semaine prochaine vous avez un examen My dear students, next [in a series] week you have an exam. | Tex dit à Marianne: Et la prochaine fois que tu me suis, j'appelle la police! Tex says to Marianne: And the next [following] time that you follow me, I will call the police. |
| propre | Mais oui, Edouard est un escargot propre ! Yes, Edouard is a clean snail. | Edouard veut son propre restaurant. Edouard wants his own restaurant. |
| seul | Corey est seul . C'est un cafard. Corey is alone . He's a cockroach. | Dans le coeur de Tex, Tammy est le seul tatou qui compte. In Tex's heart, Tammy is the only armadillo that matters. |
| simple | Bette n'est pas simple . Bette is not simple [uncomplicated] | Tex n'est pas un simple poète, c'est aussi un philosophe. Tex is not just a poet, he is also a philosopher |
| Vrai | Paw-Paw a raconté des histoires vraies sur sa vie pendant la guerre. Paw-Paw told true stories about his life during the war. | Les aventures de Tex et ses copains, c'est une vraie histoire. The adventures of Tex and his friends are a real story! |

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Tammy attend Tex à la bibliothèque depuis une heure.
Enfin il arrive.

Tammy (ironique): Ne te presse pas mon **cher** Tex!
Tu oublies tes **propres** rendez- vous maintenant?!

Tex: Ah, Tammy, ma chérie! J'étais au café avec mon **grand** ami Edouard, quand j'ai vu une femme **seule** .
Elle avait l'air **triste**. Elle était le désespoir **même**. Et la beauté **même**

...

Tammy (toujours furieuse): Et alors?

Tex: Eh bien? Tu me connais! Je suis un **brave** tatou!
Alors, je suis allé lui offrir un café pour la consoler.

Tammy: Ah oui?

Tex: Aïe!

Tammy has been waiting for Tex at the library for an hour. Finally, he arrives.

Tammy (ironic): Take your time my dear Tex!
Are you forgetting your own appointments now?!

Tex: Oh, Tammy, darling, I was at the cafe with my great friend Edouard, when I saw a lonely woman. She looked sad. She was despair itself! Beauty itself also ...

Tammy (still furious): So what?

Tex: So? You know the way I am! I am a good armadillo! So I went and bought her a coffee to console her.

Tammy: Oh really?

Tex: Ouch!



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Comparisons with adjectives

page: adj6

comparative adjectives indicating more or less

Adjectives are frequently used to compare things, people, events, ideas etc. **Plus ... que** conveys the idea of 'more ... than', **moins ... que** the idea of 'less than'.

Tex est **plus** intelligent **que** Joe-Bob.

Tex is more intelligent than Joe-Bob.

Mais Joe-Bob est **moins** prétentieux **que** Tex.

But Joe-Bob is less pretentious than Tex.

Bien sûr, il est **plus** difficile d'être poète **que** d'être écureuil!

Of course, it is more difficult to be a poet than to be a squirrel

comparative adjectives indicating similarity or equality

Aussi ... que conveys the idea of 'as ... as'.



Fiona est **aussi** belle **que** Tammy. Mais elles ne sont pas **aussi** séduisantes **que** Bette.

Fiona is as beautiful as Tammy. But they are not as seductive as Bette.

irregular adjectives

The adjectives **bon** and **mauvais** have irregular forms of comparison, **meilleur** and **pire**. However, the regular form **plus mauvais que** has become commonly accepted. Note that this irregularity is found in English too with 'better' (not *gooder) and 'worse' (not *badder).

D'après Tex, Tammy est un bon parti. Mais Bette pense qu'elle serait un **meilleur** parti **que** Tammy.

According to Tex, Tammy is a good match. But Bette thinks she would be a better match than Tammy.

Mais il est évident que le caractère de Bette est **plus mauvais que** celui de Tammy.

But it is obvious that Bette's personality is worse than Tammy's.

Bette: Tex, as-tu jamais vu une fille **aussi jolie que** moi?

Bette: Tex, have you ever seen a girl as pretty as I am?

Tex philosophe: Euh! La beauté physique est **moins importante que** la beauté de l'âme. Voyons Bette, je n'ai pas le temps de penser à des choses **aussi triviales que** celles-ci ..

Tex the philosopher: Ah! Physical beauty is less important than the beauty of the soul. Look Bette, I do not have time to think about things as trivial as that ...

Bette: D'accord, d'accord, mais je suis **moins bête** et **plus sexy que** Tammy, non?

Bette: Ok, ok, but I am less stupid and more sexy than Tammy, don't you think?

Tex: Être ou ne pas être, là est la question

Tex: To be or not to be, that is the question ...



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Superlative of adjectives

page: adj7

formation and placement

In French as in English, the superlative is a form of an adjective expressing 'the best', 'the smallest', 'the most interesting'. To form the superlative, use the **definite article (le, la, les)** and the adverb **plus** or **moins** before the adjective. Note that the superlative of an adjective agrees with the noun it modifies in gender and in number. The placement of the superlative corresponds to the **usual placement** of the adjective. In other words, if the adjective follows the noun, then the superlative will follow the noun, too. And conversely, if the adjective precedes the noun, then the superlative adjective will precede the noun, too. Note that if the adjective follows the noun, the definite article is used twice.



| superlative | le (la, les) plus (the most) | le (la, les) moins (the least) |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| adjective after noun | Bette est la chatte la plus rusée du monde. Bette is the slickest cat in the world. | Tammy est la tatou la moins rusée du monde. Tammy is the least slick armadillo in the world. |
| adjective before noun | Tammy est la plus gentille tatou du monde. Tammy is the nicest armadillo in the world. | Bette est la moins gentille chatte du monde. Bette is the least nice cat in the world. |

Note that instead of the definite article, you may use a **possessive determiner (mon, ma, mes, etc.)**, so Tex might say: 'Edouard est **mon** ami le plus distingué' (Edouard is my most distinguished friend).

irregular superlatives

The adjectives **bon** and **mauvais** have irregular patterns in the superlative. Note there are two forms for expressing 'the worst': the irregular form **le (la) pire** and the more commonly used **le (la) plus mauvais(e)**.

| superlative of bon (good) | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| the best | the least good |
| le meilleur campus | le moins bon campus |
| la meilleure université | la moins bonne université |
| les meilleurs profs | les moins bon profs |
| les meilleures notes | les moins bonnes notes |

| superlative of mauvais (bad) | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| the worst | the least bad |
| le plus mauvais campus | le moins mauvais campus |
| la pire université la plus mauvaise université | la moins mauvais se université |
| les pires profs les plus mauvais profs | les moins mauvais profs |
| les pires notes les plus mauvaises notes | les moins mauvaises notes |

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's either **le pire** or **le plus mauvais**. But while you may say 'la plus mauvaise université' or 'la s pires ploucs,' 'les pires catastrophes,' 'les pires crimes' etc. Why? Because 'plouc,' jative and it would be redundant to use 'mauvais' or its superlative, 'le plus mauvais,' in front of

Tammy: Texas ATammy: Texas A&M est **la plus mauvaise** université du monde. Elle a **la moins bonne** équipe de foot. Elle attire **les pires** ploucs! **Les meilleurs** étudiants viennent à UT parce qu'Austin est la ville **la plus cool** du Texas!

Joe-Bob: Tu parles! UT craint! C'est **la plus grande** université du Texas! En plus, les étudiants de UT sont **les plus snobs**! College Station est **la plus belle** ville du monde!

Tammy: Texas A&M is the worst university in the world! It has the worst football team. It attracts the worst rednecks! The best students come to UT because Austin is the coolest city in Texas!

Joe-Bob: Go on! UT sucks! It's the largest university in Texas! And, UT students are the most snobbish! College Station is the most beautiful city in the world!

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Bon/meilleur vs. bien mieux

page: adj8

bon/bien

Bon (good) is an adjective. Although it has an irregular feminine form, **bonne**, the plural is formed regularly by adding an **-s** to the masculine or feminine adjective. **Bien** (well, really, very) is an adverb. The adjective **bon** modifies a noun, whereas the adverb **bien** modifies verbs, adjectives or other adverbs.

adjective bon

La cuisine de Tammy est **bonne**.

Tammy's cooking is **good**.

Tammy est une **bonne** cuisinière.

Tammy is a **good** cook.



TAMMY EST UNE
BONNE CUISINIÈRE

adverb bien

Mmm ... Tammy fait **bien** la cuisine.

Mmm ... Tammy cooks **well**.

Tammy lit la recette **bien** attentivement.

Tammy reads the recipe **very** attentively.

Ooh, la soupe de Tammy est **bien** assaisonnée.

Ooh, Tammy's soup is **well**-seasoned.

meilleur/mieux

Comparisons with **bon** and **bien** are not formed regularly using 'plus ... que' (more ... than). Instead use **meilleur(e)(s) que**, and **mieux que**:

adjective bon/meilleur

Tammy est une **meilleure** cuisinière que Fiona.

Tammy is a **better** cook than Fiona.

Les gâteaux de Tammy sont **meilleurs** que les gâteaux de Fiona.

Tammy's cakes are **better** than Fiona's cakes.

adverb bien/mieux

Mais si, Tammy cuisine **mieux** que Fiona.

But yes, Tammy cooks **better** than Fiona.

Et la soupe de Tammy est **mieux** assaisonnée que la soupe de Fiona.

And Tammy's soup is **better** seasoned than Fiona's soup.

The adverb **bien** is an intensifier and can be translated as 'much' in English. Note that 'much better' is sometimes translated as **bien meilleur**, sometimes as **bien mieux**.

Tammy est **bien meilleure** cuisinière que Fiona

Tammy is a **much better** cook than Fiona.

Tammy fait **bien mieux** la cuisine que Fiona

Tammy cooks **much better** than Fiona

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aussi bon/ aussi bi en

Aussi bon que (comparisons with adjectives) conveys the idea of 'as good as'. **Aussi bien que** (comparisons with adverbs) conveys the idea of 'as well as'.

adjective bon/aussi bon que

Mais Bette est une **aussi bonne** cuisinière **que** Tammy.

But Bette is **as good** a cook **as** Tammy.

La cuisine de Bette est **aussi bonne que** la cuisine de Tammy. Bette's cooking is **as good as** Tammy's.



LA CUISINE DE BETTE EST
AUSSI BONNE QUE LA CUISINE
DE TAMMY.

adverb bien/aussi bien que

Bette cuisine **aussi bien que** Tammy.

Bette cooks **as well as** Tammy.

le meilleur/ le mi eux : superlative forms

In French as in English, the superlative is a form expressing a maximum or minimum quality or capacity. In English, 'good' and 'well' have the same maximum superlative: 'the best'. In French, however, the maximum superlatives are different; they are formed with the definite articles **le (la, les) meilleur(s)** (superlative adjectives) or **le mieux** (superlative adverbs). The minimum superlatives (**le moins bon, le moins bien**) are formed regularly.

superlative adjectives

Qui fait **la meilleure** tarte?

Who makes **the best** tart?

Qui fait **les moins bonnes** cuisses de grenouilles?

Who makes **the worst** frog legs?



QUI FAIT LES MOINS
BONNES CUISSES DE
GRENOUILLES?

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superlative adverbs

Qui cuisine **le mieux**?

Who cooks **(the) best**?

Et qui cuisine **le moins bien**?

And who cooks **(the) worst**?

Edouard arbitre un concours de cuisine. Tammy, Bette et Fiona présentent des tartes.

Edouard is judging a cooking contest. Tammy, Bette, and Fiona are presenting their tarts.

Edouard goûte d'abord la tarte de Tammy.

First, Edouard tastes Tammy's tart.

Edouard: Une tarte aux pommes ... C'est très sucré, mais délicieux. Tammy est **bonne** cuisinière. Oui, oui, elle cuisine **bien**.

Edouard: An apple tart ... It's very sweet, but delicious. Tammy is a **good** cook. Yes, yes, she cooks **well**.

Edouard goûte ensuite la tarte de Fiona.

Next, Edouard tastes Fiona's tart.

Edouard: Une tarte aux piments ... C'est épicé mais certainement original. Est-ce que cette tarte est **meilleure** que celle de Tammy? Non, à mon avis, Fiona cuisine **aussi bien que** Tammy.

Edouard: A pepper tart ... It's spicy, but certainly original. Is this tart **better** than Tammy's? No, in my opinion, Fiona cooks **as well as** Tammy.

Enfin, Edouard goûte la tarte de Bette.

Finally, Edouard tastes Bette's tart.

Edouard: Une tarte aux fruits exotiques. Hmm ... c'est magnifique. Cette tarte me séduit terriblement. Aucun doute! C'est Bette qui va recevoir le prix. C'est elle qui cuisine **le mieux**. C'est, comme c'est délicieux! Dites-moi, Bette, il y a un je ne sais quoi dans cette tarte. Quel est votre secret?

Edouard: An exotic fruit tart. Hmm ... it's magnificent. This tart really seduces me. No question about it! Bette's going to receive the prize. She's the one who cooks **the best**. How delicious it is! Tell me, Bette, there's an I don't know what in this tart. What is your secret?

Bette: Mais, c'est tout simple, Edouard. Quand je cuisine, j'ajoute toujours une pincée de Viagra!

Bette: But it's very simple, Edouard. When I cook, I always add a pinch of Viagra!



Participles as adjectives

page: adj9

The **present participles** and **past participles** of verbs are often used as adjectives. So they agree in number and gender with the noun they modify, just like regular adjectives. The distinction between adjectives derived from present and past participles is similar to that between **-ing** and **-ed** adjectives in English: **fatigant** (tiring) / **fatigué** (tired).

Oh, la, la, Tex est **fatigué** après ses cours.

Oh, la, la, Tex is tired after his classes.

Pff... quand il parle de philosophie, Tex est parfois **fatigant**.

Pff... when he talks about philosophy, Tex is sometimes tiring.

present participles used as adjectives

The present participle is formed by dropping the **-ons** ending from the **nous** form in the present tense and adding **-ant**.

Tex est un tatou **intéressant**. (intéresser)

Tex is an interesting armadillo. Tammy est une

filles **charmante**. (charmer)

Tammy is a charming girl.

Edouard et Corey sont des animaux **amusants**. (amuser)

Edouard and Corey are amusing animals.

Bette et Fiona sont des créatures **surprenantes**. (surprendre)

Bette and Fiona are surprising creatures.

past participles used as adjectives

Past participle formation depends on the verb class (**-er**, **-ir**, **-re**, or irregular).

Tex et Tammy forment un couple **uni**. (unir)

Tex and Tammy form a united couple.

Pauvre Joe-Bob! Il est **perdu**. . . comme d'habitude. (perdre)

Poor Joe-Bob! He's lost ... as usual.

Edouard et Tex sont des Français peu **américanisés**. (américaniser)

Edouard and Tex are not very Americanized French people.

Bette est trop **gâtée**. (gâter)

Bette is too spoiled.

Note that past participles used as adjectives may have a **passive** meaning, and thus be followed by an agent introduced by **par** (by) or **de** (with):

Bette est une chatte **entourée d'**admirateurs.

Bette is a cat surrounded by admirers.

Bette est très **gâtée par** ses admirateurs.

Bette is very spoiled by her admirers.

Joe-Bob: Corey, tu as vu? Il y a un article absolument **choquant** dans le Daily Texan. Il s'agit d'un prof qui a des personnalités multiples!

Joe-Bob: Corey, did you see? There's an absolutely shocking article in the Daily Texan. It's about a prof who has multiple personalities

Corey: Ah oui, je l'ai eu le semestre **passé**. Bien sûr, j'ai raté mon examen, mais au moins ses conférences étaient plus **amusantes** que celles des autres profs.

Corey: Ah, yes. I had him last semester. Of course, I failed my exam, but at least his lectures were more amusing than the other profs'.

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Verbs

page: v1

Introduction to Verbs

A **verb** may be defined as the 'action word of the sentence'. To determine whether a word is a verb or not, consider its role in the sentence. How is the word 'access' used in the following sentences?

Never give strangers **access** to your bank account.

If you can't **access** the web pages during peak hours, try again.

In the first sentence, 'access' is a thing (a noun) that you can give to somebody. In the second sentence, 'access' is something you do (a verb) with your computer. The point is that whether a word is considered a noun or a verb depends on how it is used in the sentence.

infinitives and conjugations

When you study verbs, you will need to know the difference between the infinitive form of the verb and the finite forms, or conjugated forms. English infinitives are preceded by the word 'to'.

to eat, to drink, to sleep

These verbs are called infinitives because, like the concept of infinity, they are not bound by time. From the infinitive, we derive the conjugated forms of the verb, also known as the finite forms of the verb. They are called finite because they refer to events anchored in time, that is, to events that have a particular tense: past, present, future. Note the conjugated forms of the infinitive 'to study'.

I **studied** French in high school.

past tense conjugation

I **am studying** French in college this semester.

present tense conjugation

I **will study** French next year overseas.

future tense conjugation

Verb conjugations are traditionally presented in textbooks according to **paradigms**, a grammatical term for pattern. A paradigm always includes the infinitive followed by the conjugations according to **person** which is divided into first, second and third, as well as number, which is the distinction between singular and plural.



Here is the paradigm for the present tense of the French verb **parler**, 'to speak'.

| parler | | |
|------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| | singular | plural |
| 1st person | je parle (I speak) | nous parlons (we speak) |
| 2nd person | tu parles (you speak) | vous parlez (you speak) |
| 3rd person | il/elle/on parle (he/she/it speaks) | ils/elles parlent (they speak) |

Regular French verbs fall into three classes based on the last two letters of the verb. Each class has a particular pattern of conjugation. These classes of verbs are generally referred to as first conjugation, second conjugation and third conjugation.

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| first conjugation (-er verbs) | |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| danser | to dance |
| regarder | to watch |

| second conjugation (-ir verbs) | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| finir | to finish |
| obéir | to obey |

| third conjugation (-re verbs) | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| vendre | to sell |
| entendre | to listen |

participles

A participle is a special verb form that is derived from the infinitive but is not conjugated. In other words, while conjugations come in paradigms of six forms according to six different persons, participles have only two forms, named according to their uses: the present participle and the past participle.

A present participle in French ends in -ant and is frequently used as an adjective. French present participles are usually translated by the -ing form of the English verb. Note that the adjectival form of the present participle must agree in number and gender with the noun it modifies. In the example, the participle is made to agree with the plural noun (les animaux) by adding -s.

Les tatous sont des animaux **fascinants**.

Armadillos are fascinating animals.

A past participle in French is used to form compound tenses, such as the 'passé composé'. A past participle can also be used as an adjective in certain contexts. When used as an adjective, the participle agrees in number and gender with the noun it qualifies.

Tex a **perdu** une lettre d'amour de Bette.

Tex lost a love letter from Bette.

Et Tammy a trouvé la lettre **perdue**!

And Tammy found the lost letter!

In the first example, the participle 'perdu' combines with the auxiliary verb to form the past tense of **perdre** (to lose). In the second example, the participle is used as an adjective to modify the noun 'la lettre'. Note how the final -e on the participle indicates agreement with the feminine noun.

common auxiliaries and modals

Auxiliaries, often called 'helping verbs', are verbs that combine with the main verb to form a verb phrase. There are two groups of auxiliary verbs: common auxiliaries and modals. The two common auxiliary verbs in French, **avoir** (to have) and **être** (to be) are used to form many tenses. A tense that has only a main verb and no auxiliary is called a simple tense. A verb tense that is composed of a main verb and its auxiliary is called a compound tense.

Joe-Bob **écoute** de la musique country.

Joe-Bob listens to country music.

Joe-Bob **a écouté** de la musique country

Joe-Bob has listened to country music.

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In the first example, the main verb 'écouter' is in the simple present tense. In the second example, the verb is in the compound past tense, a tense which combines the auxiliary verb 'avoir' with the past participle of 'écouter'.

Modals are special auxiliary verbs that express the attitude of the speaker. In short, modal verbs are 'moody verbs'. For example, modal verbs indicate subtle shades of meaning concerning such things as the likelihood of an event or the moral obligation of an event. The most frequent modal verbs in English are the following: should, could, may, might, ought to, must.



Note how the following modal verbs in French and English convey an attitude of increased urgency.

Tex **peut** quitter la France.

Tex can leave France.

Tex **devrait** quitter la France!

Tex should leave France!

Tex **doit** quitter la France!!

Tex must leave France!!

transitive vs. intransitive verbs

Transitive verbs require a direct object while intransitive verbs do not permit an object. A direct object is usually defined as the party which directly receives the action designated by the verb. The terms 'transitive' and 'intransitive' are derived from the grammatical term transitivity which refers to the transfer of an action from the subject (S) to the direct object (DO).

Transitive Tex (S) écrit un poème (DO).

Tex writes a poem.

Intransitive Tex (S) sort.

Tex goes out.

French vs. English verbs

There is one important difference between French and English verbs that often causes trouble for beginning language learners. There is a high frequency of English verbs which combine with a particle (typically a preposition) to express idiomatic meanings. English speakers can completely change the meaning of the verb by changing the particle. Consider the extremely versatile English verb 'to get'.

| GET + particle | meaning | french equivalent |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| to get about | to move around | se déplacer |
| to get better | to recover | se remettre |
| to get out | to leave | sortir, descendre |
| to get up | to get out of bed | se lever |

In order to convey the differences in meaning of the 'get + particle' constructions, note how French makes use of completely different verbs. As a consequence, when you translate such verbs from English into French, you must never translate word-for-word (i.e. translating the verb and particle separately). Since the verb and particle 'go together' in English, they must be translated as a unit in French.

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- er verbs (regular) present tense

page: ver1

There are three major groups of regular verbs in French: verbs with infinitives ending in **-er**, verbs with infinitives ending in **-ir**, and verbs with infinitives ending in **-re**. Since **-er** verbs are the most numerous, they are considered the first conjugation. To conjugate these verbs, drop the **-er** from the infinitive to form the stem. Next, add the **-er** endings to the stem. Different tenses have different endings.

The endings given below (**-e, -es, -e, -ons, -ez, -ent**) are for forming the present tense. The endings (**-e, -es, -e, and -ent**) are all silent. The only endings that are pronounced are the nous (**-ons**) and the vous (**-ez**) endings. The four silent endings form a boot shape in the verb conjugation.



| parler 'to speak' | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| je parle | nous parlons |
| tu parles | vous parlez |
| il/elle/on parle | ils/elles parlent |
| past participle: parlé | |

Note that the pronunciation of each of the verbs is the same even though the conjugations are spelled differently.

Tex, il **parle** français? Mais c'est un tatou.

Tex: Bien sûr je **parle** français et Tammy, elle aussi, elle **parle** français.

Eh bien dis donc, même les tatous **parlent** français au Texas?

Tex speaks French? But he's an armadillo.

Tex: Of course, I speak French and Tammy, too, she speaks French.

Well, I'll be, even the armadillos speak French in Texas?

Here is a list of common **-er** verbs:

adorer, to adore

aimer, to like

aimer mieux, to prefer

chanter, to sing

chercher, to look for

danser, to dance

demander, to ask

détester, to hate, to detest

donner, to give

écouter, to listen to

étudier, to study

habiter, to live

jouer, to play

montrer, to show

présenter, to introduce

regarder, to watch

rencontrer, to meet (by chance)

rester, to stay, remain

téléphoner, to telephone

travailler, to work

trouver, to find

Je changes to **j'** before a verb starting with a vowel or a silent **h** (ex. **j'**adore, **j'**habite). This phenomenon is known as **élision**.

Tex: **J'**adore la musique rap et **j'**écoute souvent de la musique dans les clubs.

Je chante et je danse aussi

I love rap music and I often listen to music in clubs.

I sing and I dance, too.



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Note also that the **s** in plural pronouns (**nous**, **vous**, and **ils/elles**) is usually silent except when it is followed by a verb that begins with a vowel sound. In such a case the silent **s** is pronounced as a **/z/** and links the pronoun to the verb. This phenomenon is called **liaison** ('linking') and is very characteristic of French.

Tex et Tammy, ils **écoutent** de la musique cadienne avec Paw-Paw!

Tex and Tammy, they listen to Cajun music with Paw- Paw!

Tammy: Nous **adorons** danser.

Tammy: We love to dance.

Tex: Oui, oui, c'est vrai. Nous **dansons** beaucoup.

Tex: Yes, yes, that's true. We dance a lot.



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- er verbs (stem changing) present tense

page: ver2

Spelling changes occur in the stems of several groups of **-er** verbs in the present tense. These spelling changes reflect the pronunciation of the present tense forms.

You may have already noticed the spelling change in the verb **s'appeler** (Je **m'appelle** ... , My name is ...). For verbs like **appeler** (to call), **rappeler** (to call back) and **jeter** (to throw), the consonant **-l** or **-t** in the stem doubles in all forms of the present tense, except in the first and second person plural (nous and vous). This follows the traditional boot pattern of **-er** verb conjugations in the present tense.

| appeler 'to call' | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| j' appelle | nous appelons |
| tu appelles | vous appelez |
| il/elle/on appelle | ils/elles appellent |
| past participle : appelé | |

This same "boot" pattern is repeated in spelling change verbs like **préférer** (to prefer). In these verbs the **é** in the last syllable of the stem changes to an **è**, except in the first and second person plural (nous and vous).

| préféreré 'to prefer' | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| je préfère | nous préférons |
| tu préfères | vous préférez |
| il/elle/on préfère | ils/elles préfèrent |
| past participle : préféré | |

Verbs conjugated like **préférer** include:

- considérer**, to consider
- espérer**, to hope
- régler**, to regulate, pay, settle, adjust
- répéter**, to repeat
- sécher**, to dry, skip (a class)

In verbs which are conjugated like **acheter** (to buy), the **e** in the last syllable of the stem also changes to an **è**, again with the exception of the first and second person plural forms.

| acheter 'to buy' | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| j' achète | nous achetons |
| tu achètes | vous achetez |
| il/elle/on achète | ils/elles achètent |
| past participle : acheté | |

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Verbs conjugated like **acheter** include:

- amener**, to bring somebody (along)
- emmener**, to take somebody (along)
- lever**, to lift, raise
- mener**, to take, lead
- peser**, to weigh

Another group of stem-changing verbs include those ending in **-ayer**, including **essayer** (to try) and **payer** (to pay). In these verbs the **y** changes to **i** in all persons except the first and second person plural (nous and vous).

| essayer 'to try' | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| j' essaie | nous essayons |
| tu essaies | vous essayez |
| il/elle/on essaie | ils/elles essaient |
| past participle : essayé | |

Finally, verbs ending in **-ger** like **voyager** (to travel) add an **e** after the **g** in the nous form of the present tense, so that the **g** is pronounced as a soft sound before the **-ons** ending (i.e. nous **voyageons**). Similarly, in verbs ending in **-cer**, **commencer** (to start), for example, the **c** in the nous form changes to **ç** to keep the soft c sound (**nous commençons**).

| voyager 'to travel' | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| je voyage | nous voyageons |
| tu voyages | vous voyagez |
| il/elle/on voyage | ils/elles voyagent |
| past participle: voyagé | |

Other verbs in this category include:

- corriger**, to correct
- exiger**, to demand, require
- manger**, to eat
- nager**, to swim
- partager**, to share
- ranger**, to tidy up, arrange
- rédigier**, to write, compose
- songer**, to dream, reflect

Quelle activité est-ce que vous **préférez** en été?

Rita: J'**emmène** mes enfants à la piscine.

Ses enfants: Nous nageons et nous **mangeons** de la glace.

Tammy: Moi, je **préfère** faire du shopping. J'**achète** beaucoup et papa **paie** tout.

What activity do you prefer in the summer?

Rita: I take my children to the pool.

Her children: We swim and we eat ice cream.

Tammy: Me, I prefer shopping. I buy lots and daddy pays for everything.

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-ir verbs (regular) present tense

page: vir1

Verbs with infinitives ending in **-ir** form a second group of regular verbs in French, often called 'second conjugation' verbs. To conjugate these verbs, drop the **-ir** from the infinitive and add the second conjugation present tense endings: **-is**, **-is**, **-it**, **-issons**, **-issez**, **-issent**. The singular and plural forms of the third person are clearly distinguishable (**finit** vs. **finissent**).

| finir 'to finish' | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| je finis | nous finissons |
| tu finis | vous finissez |
| il/elle/on finit | ils/elles finissent |
| past participle : fini | |

Here is a list of other common **-ir** verbs:

choisir, to choose

maigrir, to lose weight

réfléchir, to think, reflect

établir, to establish

mincir, to get slimmer

réunir, to get together, assemble

grandir, to grow (up)

obéir (à quelqu'un), to obey (someone)

réussir (à), to succeed (at)

grossir, to gain weight

réagir, to react

vieillir, to grow old



Not all verbs ending in **-ir** follow this pattern, however. Irregular **-ir** verbs include ouvrir, partir, sortir, and dormir.

Tex et Tammy **réunissent** des copains ce soir.

Tex and Tammy are getting friends together this evening.

Tammy: Quel vin tu **choisis**, Tex?

Tammy: What wine do you choose, Tex?

Tex **réfléchit** un moment, et puis il **choisit** un bon vin rouge.

Tex reflects a moment and then he chooses a good red wine.

Tex: Nous **choisissons** toujours du rouge. C'est bon pour la santé.

Tex: We always choose red (wine). It's good for (one's) health.

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-ir verbs (irregular) like ouvrir present tense

page: v:2

A very limited group of verbs with infinitives ending in **-ir** are irregular, that is, they do not follow the pattern of regular **-ir** verbs like finir. Verbs like **ouvrir** are conjugated instead like regular **-er** verbs.

| ouvrir 'to open' | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| j' ouvre | nous ouvrons |
| tu ouvres | vous ouvrez |
| il/elle/on ouvre | ils/elles ouvrent |
| past participle: ouvert | |

Verbs conjugated like **ouvrir** include:

- couvrir**, to cover
- découvrir**, to discover
- offrir**, to offer, to give (a gift)
- souffrir**, to suffer

Note, too, that there is no **s** in the imperative 'tu' form of the second sentence, since it is conjugated like a regular **-er** verb in the **imperative**.

Bette **offre** un cadeau à Tex.
C'est son anniversaire
aujourd'hui!

Bette is giving Tex a gift. It's
his birthday today!

Bette: **Ouvre** le paquet, Tex!

Bette: Open the package,
Tex!



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- ir verbs (irregular) partir, sortir, and dormir

page: vir3

The verbs **partir**, **sortir**, and **dormir** are irregular in the present tense, that is, they are not conjugated like **regular -ir verbs**.

| partir 'to leave' | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| je pars | nous partons |
| tu pars | vous partez |
| il/elle/on part | ils/elles partent |
| past participle : parti | |

| sortir 'to exit, go out' | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| je sors | nous sortons |
| tu sors | vous sortez |
| il/elle/on sort | ils/elles sortent |
| past participle : sorti | |

| dormir 'to sleep' | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| je dors | nous dormons |
| tu dors | vous dormez |
| il/elle/on dort | ils/elles dorment |
| past participle : dormi | |



"OUI, JE PARS POUR
LA LOUISIANE
AVEC TEX."

Bette: Tammy, tu **pars** ce week-end?
weeken?

Tammy: Oui, je **pars** pour la Louisiane avec Tex.
Nous allons rendre visite à Paw-Paw. Samedi soir
nous **sortons** danser et manger de la cuisine
cadienne.

Bette: Et Paw-Paw, il **sort** avec vous?

Tammy: Non, il préfère rester à la maison pour
dormir.

Bette: Tammy, are you leaving this

Tammy: Yes, I'm going to Louisiana with Tex. We're
going to visit Paw-Paw. We're going out Saturday
night to dance and eat some Cajun food.

Bette: And does Paw-Paw go out with you?

Tammy: No, he prefers to stay at home and sleep.

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-re verbs (regular)

page: vr21

Verbs with infinitives ending in **-re** form a third group of regular verbs, often called 'third conjugation' verbs. To form the present tense conjugations of these verbs, drop the **-re** from the infinitive and add the third conjugation endings (**-s**, **-s**, **-ons**, **-ez**, **-ent**) to the resulting stem.

| descendre 'to go down' | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| je descends | nous descendons |
| tu descends | vous descendez |
| il/elle/on descend | ils/elles descendent |
| past participle: descendu | |

Here is a list of common regular **-re** verbs:

attendre, to wait for

dépendre de, to depend (on)

entendre, to hear

pendre, to hang

perdre, to lose

rendre, to hand in, give back

rendre visite à quelqu'un, to visit someone

répondre, to answer, respond

vendre, to sell

Not all verbs ending in **-re** follow this pattern, however. Irregular **-re** verbs include **prendre**, **mettre**, **suivre** and **vivre**.



Un flic **descend** la rue. Tex panique et file.

Agent de police: **Attendez! Attendez ...**
Monsieur, vous **vendez** des T-shirts?

Tex **répond**: Euh, oui, monsieur l'agent.

Agent de police: Vous n'avez pas de permis. Hé, hé, vous êtes déporté.

A cop is coming down the street. Tex panics and runs off.

Policeman: Wait! Wait...Sir, are you selling t-shirts?

Tex answers, "Yes, sir."

Policeman: You do not have a permit. Hey, hey, you are deported.

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-re verbs (irregular) like prendre

page: vr32

Verbs like **prendre** are conjugated like regular **-re verbs** in the singular, but not in the plural. Note the difference in the stem in the plural forms.

| prendre 'to take' | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| je prends | nous prenons |
| tu prends | vous prenez |
| il/elle/on prend | ils/elles prennent |
| past participle: pris | |

Verbs conjugated like **prendre** include:

apprendre, to learn

comprendre, to understand

surprendre, to surprise



Edouard et Tammy **surprennent** Tex.

Tammy: Qu'est-ce que tu fais, Tex? Tu vas où? Pourquoi tu **prends** un taxi?

Tex: Uhh, je suis en retard. Uhh, je vais en classe. Aujourd'hui mes étudiants **apprennent** à chanter la Marseillaise!

Edouard and Tammy surprise Tex.

Tammy: What are you doing, Tex? Where are you going? Why are you taking a taxi?

Tex: Uhh, I'm late. Uhh, I'm going to class. Today my students are learning to sing the Marseillaise!

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-re verbs (irregular) like mettre

page: vre3

The verb **mettre** is irregular.

| mettre 'to place, put' | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| je mets | nous mettons |
| tu mets | vous mettez |
| il/elle/on met | ils/elles mettent |
| past participle : mis | |

Mettre literally means 'to place, to put.' It is also used in the following expressions:

mettre la table (le couvert), to set the table

mettre + article of clothing, to put on

mettre + electrical item (radio, light), to turn on

Other verbs like **mettre** include:

admettre, to admit

permettre, to permit

promettre, to promise

remettre, to turn in (a report), to postpone



Tammy: Tex, tu **mets** la table pour la soirée?

Tex: Non, je n'ai pas envie.

Tammy: Ça alors. C'est toujours moi qui **mets** la table.

Tammy: Tex, are you going to set the table for the party?

Tex: No. I don't feel like it.

Tammy: Come on, I'm always the one who sets the table.

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-re verbs (irregular) like suivre and vivre

page: vre4

The verbs **suivre** (to follow), and **vivre** (to live) are irregular.

| suivre 'to follow' | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| je suis | nous suivons |
| tu suis | vous suivez |
| il/elle/on suit | ils/elles suivent |
| past participle : suivi | |

Sui vre is also used in the expression **sui vre un cours** (to take a course).

| vivre 'to live, to be alive' | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| je vis | nous vivons |
| tu vis | vous vivez |
| il/elle/on vi | ils/elles vivent |
| past participle : vécu | |

You may have seen the expression **Vive ...** (as in **Vive la France** , Long live France!) and the noun **la vie** (life). **Vivre** means 'to be alive,' as well as 'to live,' in contrast to the verb **habi ter** which refers only to where one lives, one's place of residence.

Edouard accueille des clients au restaurant.

Edouard greets customers at the restaurant.

Edouard: Bonsoir. **Sui vez**-moi, s'il vous plaît.

Edouard: Good evening. Follow me, please.

Une heure plus tard, les clients attendent toujours.

One hour later the clients are still waiting.

Client: Excusez, moi, mais le service est vraiment très lent.

Client: Excuse me, but the service is really very slow.

Edouard: La qualité, ça prend du temps, monsieur. Les fastfoods, quelle horreur. **Vive** la cuisine française!

Edouard: Quality takes time, monsieur. Fast food, how dreadful! Long live French cuisine!

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être 'to be'

page: virr1

The verb **être** is an irregular verb in the present tense.

| être 'to be' | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| je sui s 'I am' | nous sommes 'we are' |
| tu es 'you are' | vous êtes 'you are' |
| il/elle/on est 'he/she/one is' | ils/elles sont 'they are' |
| past participle: été | |



Edouard: Mais non, Joe-Bob, tu n'**es** pas un tatou!

Edouard: But no, Joe-Bob, you are not an armadillo!

Tex **est** un tatou. Tex et Tammy **sont** des tatous.

Tex is an armadillo. Tex and Tammy are armadillos.

Toi et moi, nous ne **sommes** pas des tatous.

You and I, we are not armadillos.

Toi, tu **es** un écureuil et moi, je **sui s** un escargot, un escargot français.

You are a squirrel and I am a snail, a French snail.

C'est (plural **Ce sont**) is a common expression used to describe and introduce people or things. See *c'est vs. il/elle est* for more information. **Etre** is also used as an auxiliary in compound tenses (*passé composé* with **être**, *passé composé* of pronominal verbs, *plus-que-parfait*, etc.)

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avoir 'to have'

page: vir2

The verb **avoir** is irregular in the present tense. This **liaison**, or linking, is especially important in distinguishing **il sont** (they have) from the third person plural of être **ils sont** (they are).

| avoir 'to have' | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| j'ai | nous av ons |
| tu as | vous avez |
| il/elle/on a | ils/elles ont |
| past participle: eu | |

Avoir is also used as an auxiliary in compound tenses (**passé composé** with **avoir**, **plus-que-parfait**, **futur antérieur**, etc.) Besides ownership, the verb **avoir** expresses age in French, unlike the English equivalent, which uses the verb 'to be.'

Tex, tu **as** des frères et des soeurs?

Tex, do you have brothers and sisters?

Tex: Oui, j'**ai** une soeur et un frère.

Tex: Yes, I have a sister and a brother.

Quel âge **ont**-ils?

How old are they?

Tex: Ma soeur Rita **a** 30 ans et mon frère
Trey **a** 16 ans.

Tex: My sister Rita is 30 and
my brother Trey is 16.



IL A UNE SOEUR
ET UN FRÈRE

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Avoir expressions

page: vi:r3

Avoir is used in the impersonal expression **il y a**, which means either 'there is' or 'there are.' **il y a** is used to express the existence of a person or a thing, or to make a list or inventory of persons or things. The indefinite article (**un, une, des**) is usually used with **il y a**.

Tex: A Paris **il y a** une tour, la Tour Eiffel.

Tex: In Paris there is a tower, the Eiffel Tower.

En France **il y a** des cathédrales, des châteaux, des monuments anciens ...

In France there are cathedrals, castles, ancient monuments ...

The negative of **il y a** is **il n'y a pas**. The indefinite article (**un une, des**) becomes **de** or **d'** after this negative expression. This corresponds to the English word 'any.'

Tex: Au Texas **il n'y pas de** cathédrales, **il n'y pas de** châteaux, **il n'y pas de** monuments anciens,

Tex: In Texas, there aren't any cathedrals, there aren't any castles, there aren't any ancient monuments,

Tammy: Mais **il y a** une tour à l'Université du Texas à Austin.

Tammy: But there is a tower at the University of Texas at Austin!

Avoir is used in many idiomatic expressions. Note that the English translation often uses the verb 'to be' rather than 'to have.'

| | |
|--|--|
| avoir besoin de | to need |
| avoir envie de | to want (to do something), to feel like (doing something) |
| avoir l'intention de | to intend to (do something) |
| avoir faim | to be hungry |
| avoir soif | to be thirsty |
| avoir chaud | to be hot |
| avoir froid | to be cold |
| avoir honte (de) | to be ashamed (of) |
| avoir mal (à la tête, à la gorge, aux yeux) | to hurt (to have a headache, to have a sore throat, to have sore eyes) |
| avoir raison | to be right |
| avoir tort | to be wrong |
| avoir sommeil | to be sleepy |

Bette: Tex, j'**ai faim**.

Bette: Tex, I'm hungry.

Tex: **il y a** un café à côté. Allons prendre un sandwich.

Tex: There's a café next door. Let's go have a sandwich.

Tammy: Mais, Tex. Bette et moi, nous **avons** un examen demain. J'**ai envie de** vous accompagner, mais nous **avons besoin d'**étudier. En plus, j'**ai** toujours **froid** dans ce café.

Tammy: But, Tex. Bette and I have a test tomorrow. I'd like to go with you, but we need to study. AND, I'm always cold in that cafe.

Bette: Tu **as raison**, Tammy. Toi, tu **as besoin d'**étudier, mais pas moi. J'**ai l'intention de** manger. Ciao. Miaou.

Bette: You're, right, Tammy. You do need to study, but not me. I intend to eat. Ciao. Meow.

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aller "to go"

page: virr4

The verb **aller** is irregular in the present tense. This **-s** is pronounced as a /z/ to link with the vowel sound in the plural forms **allons** and **allez**.

| aller 'to go' | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| je vais | nous allons |
| tu vas | vous allez |
| il/elle/on va | ils/elles vont |
| past participle : allé | |

Aller literally means 'to go', but is used figuratively in salutations to say how one is doing.



Corey: Salut, Joe-Bob , où **vas** -tu?

Bob: Je **vais** au café.

Corey: Mais, tu as cours maintenant.

Joe-Bob: Oui, mais le prof est horrible, vraiment horrible!

Corey: Attention! Il arrive!

Joe-Bob: Ah, bonjour monsieur le professeur. Comment **allez**-vous aujourd'hui?

Corey: Hey, Joe-Bob, where are you going? Joe-

Joe-Bob: I'm going to a coffee shop.

Corey: But, you have class right now.

Joe-Bob: Yes but, the prof is horrible, really horrible.

Corey: Watch out! He's coming!

Joe-Bob: Oh, hello, professor. How are you today?

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faire "to do, to make"

page: virr5

The verb **faire** is irregular in the present tense.

| faire 'to do, to make' | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| je fai s | nous faisons |
| tu fai s | vous faite s |
| il/elle/on fait | ils/elles font |
| past participle : fait | |

Note the vous form **faite s**. It is unusual because it does not end in **-ez**. **Faire** is one of only three verbs where this is the case (The others are **être**: vous **ête s**, and **di re**: vous **dite s**). You may notice, too, the similarity in the third person plural forms of **aller**, **être**, and **faire**:

ils vont (they go),

ils sont (they are), and

ils font (they do/make).

Although **faire** is often used in a question, it does not automatically have to be used in the response.

Tex: Salut tout le monde. Qu'est-ce qu'on **fait**?

Corey: Pas grand-chose.

Fiona: Nous ne **faisons** rien, absolument rien.

Tex: Hey everyone. What's everybody doing?

Corey: Not much.

Fiona: We're not doing anything, absolutely nothing.



Faire is used in many **expressions**, including weather, sports, and household tasks.

faire expressions

page: virr6

The verb **faire** is used in many impersonal weather expressions.

Quel temps fait-il? What's the weather like?

Il fait beau. It's beautiful.

Il fait chaud. It's hot.

Il fait du brouillard. It's foggy.

Il fait du soleil. It's sunny.

Il fait du vent. It's windy.

Il fait frais. It's cool.

Il fait froid. It's cold.

Il fait mauvais. It's bad.



Other weather expressions which do not use **faire** include:

Il y a des nuages. It's cloudy.

Il y a des orages. There are storms.

Il y a de l'orage. It's stormy.

Il pleut. It's raining.

Il neige. It's snowing.



Faire is also used to talk about sports and leisure activities. Here is a list of common expressions.

faire de la bicyclette, to go bicycle riding

faire du bateau, to go boating

faire de la lecture, to read

faire de la planche à voile, to go windsurfing

faire des randonnées, to go hiking

faire du ski, to go skiing

faire du vélo, to go bicycle riding, cycling

faire de la voile, to go sailing

faire une promenade, to take a walk



Faire is also used in many expressions dealing with household chores.

faire des achats (du shopping), to go shopping

faire la cuisine, to do the cooking

faire des courses, to run errands

faire la lessive, to do the laundry

faire le lit, to make the bed

faire le marché, to do the grocery shopping

faire le ménage, to do the housework

faire la vaisselle, to do the dishes



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Quand il fait du soleil, Tex et Tammy **font** une promenade dans le parc.

Quand il **fait** mauvais, Tex **fait** le ménage et Tammy **fait** de la lecture.

When it's sunny, Tex and Tammy take a walk in the park.

When the weather's bad, Tex does the housework and Tammy reads.



Venir 'to come'

page: vii18

The verb **venir** is irregular in the present tense. The vowel is nasal in the singular, but not in the plural.

| venir 'to come' | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| je viens | nous venons |
| tu viens | vous venez |
| il/elle/on vient | ils/elles viennent |
| past participle : venu | |

Verbs conjugated like **venir** include:

devenir, to become

revenir, to come back

tenir, to hold, keep

tenir à, to value, care about, (+ infinitive, to be anxious to)

Bette: **Tiens**, Tammy, qu'est-ce que tu **deviens**?

Tammy: Oh, je prépare une grande fête pour l'anniversaire de Tex. Corey et Joe- Bob, ils **viennent**. Tout le monde **vient**, bien sûr, sauf Fiona. Elle n'est pas très sociable.

Bette: Une fête ... Eh bien moi, je suis très sociable. Miaou ...

Bette: Hey, Tammy, what have you been up to? (literally, what have you become)

Tammy: Oh, I'm preparing a big party for Tex's birthday. Corey and Joe-Bob, they're coming. Everyone's coming, of course, except Fiona She's not very sociable.

Bette: A party ... hmm. Well, I am very sociable. Miaow ...

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Boire, croire, and voir

page: vii:9

The irregular verbs **boire**, **croire**, and **voir** have similar conjugations.

| boire 'to drink' | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| je bois | nous buvons |
| tu bois | vous buvez |
| il/elle/on boit | ils/elles boivent |
| past participle : bu | |

| croire 'to believe' | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| je crois | nous croions |
| tu crois | vous croyez |
| il/elle/on croit | ils/elles croient |
| past participle : cru | |

| voir 'to see' | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| je vois | nous voyons |
| tu vois | vous voyez |
| il/elle/on voit | ils/elles voient |
| past participle : vu | |



Fiona: Corey, tu as l'air malade! Mais qu'est-ce que tu **bois**? Hé, tu m'entends? Tu me **vois**? Oh, là, là, je **crois** qu'il va crever!

Fiona: Corey, you look sick! What are you drinking? Hey, do you hear me? Do you see me? Omigod, I think he's gonna croak!

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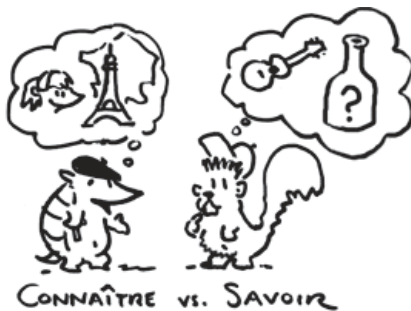
savoir vs. connaître present tense

page: virr10

The irregular verbs **savoir** and **connaître** both mean 'to know.

| savoir 'to know (a fact)' | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| je sais | nous savons |
| tu sais | vous savez |
| il/elle/on sait | ils/elles savent |
| past participle : su | |

| connaître 'to know, to be acquainted with' | |
|--|------------------------------|
| je connais | nous connaissons |
| tu connais | vous connaissez |
| il/elle/on connaît | ils/elles connaissent |
| past participle : connu | |



Joe-Bob: Tex, explique-moi la différence entre **savoir** et **connaître**. Je ne comprends pas.

Tex: C'est très simple, Joe-Bob. On **sait** des faits mais on **connaît** des gens et des endroits. Par exemple, je **connais** Tammy, la France et la Tour Eiffel.

Joe-Bob: Oh, OK, et moi, je **sais** jouer de la guitare et je **sais** où se trouve l'université du Texas.

Tex: Mais enfin, Joe-Bob, tu n'es pas aussi stupide qu'on le pense.

Savoir and **connaître** are used in different contexts or to describe different degrees of knowledge. **Savoir** is used for facts, things known by heart, or abilities. When followed by an infinitive, **savoir** indicates knowing how to do something. (**Je sais jouer de la guitare.**)

Connaître is used for people and places and represents a personal acquaintance or familiarity.

Joe-Bob: Tex, explain the difference between savoir and connaître to me. I don't understand.

Tex: It's very simple, Joe-Bob. One knows (with savoir) facts, but one knows (with connaître) people and places. For example, I know Tammy, France, the Eiffel Tower.

Joe-Bob: Oh, OK, and I know how to play the guitar and I know where the University of Texas is located.

Tex: Well, Joe-Bob. You aren't as stupid as they think.

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dire, lire, and écrire present tense

page: virr11

The irregular verbs **dire**, **lire**, and **écrire** have similar conjugations.

| dire 'to say' | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| je dis | nous disons |
| tu dis | vous dites |
| il/elle/on dit | ils/elles disent |
| past participle : dit | |

You may have already seen the verb **di re** in phrases like **Comment dit-on ... ?** (How do you say ... ?) and **Qu'est-ce que ça veutdire?** (What does that mean?) **Dire** means 'to say' (to say something or to tell someone something) while **parler** means 'to speak' (to speak to someone about something, or to speak a language). **Dire** is often used to start a phrase or to get someone's attention (**Dis, Tex, tu viens ?**, Hey, Tex, are you coming?).

Note the vous form **dites**. It is unusual because it does not end in **-ez**. **Dire** is one of only three verbs where this is the case (The others are **être**: vous **êtes**, and **faire**: vous **faites**).

The verb **conduire** (to drive) is conjugated like **di re** (je **conduis**, tu **conduis**, etc.) except that its past participle is **conduit**.

| lire 'to read' | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| je lis | nous lisons |
| tu lis | vous lisez |
| il/elle/on lit | ils/elles lisent |
| past participle : lu | |

| écrire 'to write' | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| j' écris | nous écrivons |
| tu écris | vous écrivez |
| il/elle/on écrit | ils/elles écrivent |
| past participle : écrit | |

Other verbs conjugated like **écrire** include **décrire** (to describe) and **s'inscrire** (to register).

Tammy: **Dis**, Tex, qu'est-ce que tu **lis**?

Tex: Je **lis** de la poésie. Les poètes **disent** toujours la vérité. J'**écris** aussi des poèmes. Et toi, Tammy, qu'est-ce que tu aimes **lire**?

Tammy: Chéri, tu sais bien. J'aime **lire** des romans historique

Tammy: Say, Tex, what are you reading?

Tex: Oh, I'm reading poetry. Poets always tell the truth. I also write poems. Tammy, what do you like to read?

Tammy: You know sweetheart. I like to read historical novels

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Pronominal verbs

page: vpr1

A pronominal verb is a verb that is accompanied by a reflexive pronoun. Pronominal verbs fall into three major classes based on their meaning: **reflexive**, **idiomatic**, and **reciprocal**. You have probably already seen the pronominal verb **s'appeler** (Comment **t'appelles-tu?** What is your name?). To conjugate pronominal verbs in the present tense, you need to pay attention to both the pronoun and the verb form. The verb is conjugated normally (here an **-er** verb) with addition of the reflexive pronouns **me, te, se, nous, vous, se**.

| se raser 'to shave oneself' | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| je me rase | nous nous rasons |
| tu te rases | vous vous rasez |
| il/elle/on se rase | ils/elles se rasent |

reflexive verbs

Pronominal verbs often express reflexive actions, that is, the subject performs the action on itself. If the subject performs the action on someone else, the verb is not reflexive. 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

Compare the difference in meaning between **se raser** and **raser** in the following sentences. Note that English does not usually indicate reflexive meaning explicitly since it can be inferred from the context. However, if reflexive meaning is intended in French, then it must be explicitly stated by using a reflexive pronoun.

Est-ce que Tex **se rase**? Mais non, Tex, c'est un tatou. Il n'a pas de cheveux.

Qu'est-ce qu'il fait, Tex, avec le rasoir? Il **rase** Joe-Bob pour l'été.

Does Tex shave? Why no, Tex is an armadillo. He has no hair.

What's Tex doing with the razor? He's shaving Joe-Bob for the summer.



To negate pronominal verbs, place the **ne** before the reflexive pronoun and the **pas** after the verb. When used with an auxiliary verb such as *aimer* (to like), the infinitive of a pronominal verb agrees with its subject. When pronominal verbs are used with parts of the body, they take the definite article (*le, la, les*) rather than the possessive article as in English: **Tex se lave les mains**. (Tex washes his hands.)

Joe Bob: Edouard, est-ce que tu **te rases**?

Edouard: Non, je **ne me rase pas**.

Les escargots **ne se rasent pas**. Pourtant, nous **nous lavons le** visage tous les jours.

Joe-Bob: Ah, tu as de la chance. Je déteste **me raser**.

Joe Bob: Edouard, do you shave?

Edouard: No, I don't shave.

Snails don't shave. However we do wash our faces every day.

Joe-Bob: Ah, you're lucky. I hate to shave.

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Modal verbs - vouloir, pouvoir and devoir

page: vm1

Vouloir, pouvoir and **devoir** are called modal verbs. When used with infinitives, they act as auxiliary verbs or semi-auxiliaries.

vouloir

Vouloir expresses a strong will or desire; in the present tense it has the same feeling as a command. It is an irregular verb in the present tense. Note how the present tense forms a "boot"; the stems (in this case the vowels) change only in the nous and vous forms.



| vouloir 'to wish, want, will' | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| je veux | nous voulons |
| tu veux | vous voulez |
| il/elle/on veut | ils/elles veulent |
| past participle: voulu | |

Vouloir may be followed by an infinitive or a noun (**Je veux du calme**, I want some quiet. **Je veux dormir**, I want to sleep). This verb is also often paired with the adverb **bien** to express the meaning "to be willing" (**Je veux bien**).

pouvoir

Pouvoir expresses the physical ability or permission to do something ie possibility. It is also an irregular verb with formation similar to vouloir. The "boot" formation is also evident.

| pouvoir 'to be able, be permitted to' | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| je peux | nous pouvons |
| tu peux | vous pouvez |
| il/elle/on peut | ils/elles peuvent |
| past participle: pu | |

Pouvoir may be followed by an infinitive construction or may stand alone.

As in English, pouvoir is used to give or to ask permission translated by the English "may" (**Est-ce que je peux m'asseoir?**, May I sit down?).

It is important not to confuse the roles of pouvoir and savoir in French. Savoir expresses "to know how" whereas pouvoir expresses "to be able to."

devoir

Devoir expresses obligation, probability and supposition but if followed by a noun, expresses the idea "to owe". This verb is irregular in its present form. Once again, the "boot" formation is seen with this verb; the stem changes in the 1st and 2nd person plural conjugations.

| devoir 'to have to, be supposed to/ to owe' | |
|---|-------------------------|
| je dois | Nous devons |
| dois | devez |
| il/elle/on doit | ils/ells doivent |
| past participle: dû | |

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Impersonal verbs & expressions: faut, il est important...

page: vi:m1

The impersonal pronoun **il** ('it') is used in French when an action has no agent, that is, when there is no person or animate being responsible for the action. The conjugated verb is always in the third person singular, no matter what tense the impersonal verb takes.

Tex: Tiens, **il** pleut très fort!

Tex: Wow, it is raining really hard!



The action of the verb (**pleut**, 'is raining') is an impersonal, natural force. The impersonal pronoun **il** is often referred to as a 'dummy subject' because it fills the syntactic position of subject but doesn't have any real meaning.

weather expressions

Weather expressions in both French and English require impersonal subjects. The infinitive of 'weather verbs' can only be conjugated in the third person singular form (the **il** form).

| | | |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------|
| pleuvoir, to rain | Il pleut. | It's raining. |
| neiger, to snow | Il neige. | It's snowing. |
| grêler, to sleet | Il grêle. | It's sleeting. |
| geler, to freeze | Il gèle. | It's freezing. |
| bruiner, to drizzle | Il bruine. | It's drizzling. |

Weather conditions are also expressed in French using the verb **faire** followed by an adjective or noun. Of course, when the verb **faire** is used impersonally in such weather expressions, it can only be conjugated in the third person singular form (**il fait**). See [faire expressions](#) for a more complete list of weather expressions.

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Il fait chaud. | It's hot. |
| Il fait du vent. | It's windy. |
| Il fait beau. | It's beautiful. |

falloir (il faut ...) 'to be necessary'

The verb **falloir** only exists in the impersonal form (**il faut**). It always expresses the notion of necessity or obligation which is translated into English in various ways ('must,' 'should,' 'have to'). **Falloir** may be followed by an infinitive as in (d), by a noun as in (c), or by a subordinate clause introduced by **que** as in (a); note that the verb in the subordinate clause in (a) requires the **subjunctive mood**. Finally, it may be preceded by a pronoun acting as an indirect object as in (b), a way to **avoid the subjunctive**.

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| Comme la majorité des Français, Tex ne voit pas l'intérêt du scandale Lewinsky. | | Like the majority of the French, Tex does not see the point of the Lewinsky scandal. |
| Tammy (scandalisée): | | Tammy (shocked): |
| (a) Il faut que nous sachions la vérité. | [faut que + clause] | It is necessary that we know the truth. We should/must know the truth. |
| (b) Il nous faut des preuves. | [indirect object + faut] | We need evidence. |
| (c) Il faut une enquête. | [faut + noun] | An investigation is necessary. |
| Tex: Mais tu sais bien ce qui s'est passé! | | Tex: But you know what happened! |
| (d) Il faut te calmer. | [faut + infinitive] | It is necessary that you calm down. You have to calm down. |

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impersonal expressions with 'être' + [adjective]

The impersonal subject **il** may appear with the verb **être** followed by an adjective and an infinitive. Note that the infinitive is always introduced by the preposition **de** in such impersonal expressions:

Il est + [adjective] + de + [infinitive]

Tex: **Il est amusant de** lire les journaux américains!

Tex: It's fun to read American newspapers!

Tammy: **Il est difficile de** comprendre ton humour.

Tammy: It is difficult to understand your sense of humor.



IL EST AMUSANT DE
LIRE DES JOURNAUX
AMÉRICAINS!

other common impersonal expressions

Il y a, there is, there are

il est + clock time (**Il est deux heures**, It's two o'clock.)

Il s'agit de, to be about, to be a matter of, to be a question of

Il vaut mieux, to be better, to be advisable

Tammy: **Il est** 18 h. Regardons le journal télévisé. **Il y a** un reportage sur l'infidélité.

Tammy: It's 6 o'clock. Let's watch the news. There's a report on infidelity

Tex: Ah non, ça alors. **Il s'agit** seulement **de** tourmenter les présidents et les tatous!

Il vaut mieux changer de chaîne!

Tex: Oh, no, not that. It's only about tormenting presidents and armadillos! It's better to change the channel!



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partir, sortir, quitter and laisser

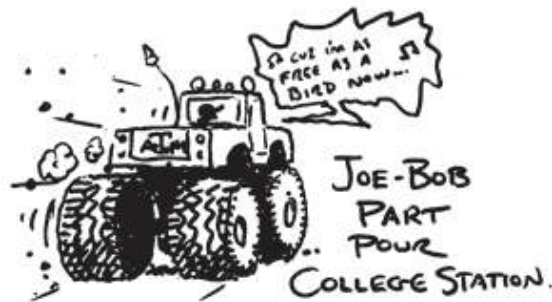
page: :11

The verbs **partir**, **sortir**, **quitter** and **laisser** all mean 'to leave' in English, but they have distinguishing nuances and uses in French. An important distinction among these verbs is the idea of **transitivity**. **Partir** and **sortir** are **intransitive** in this context; they do

not take a direct object (but may be followed by a prepositional phrase). On the other hand, **quitter** and **laisser** are **transitive**; they take a direct object in a sentence.

partir

Partir is an irregular -ir verb that conveys the particular meaning of 'leaving with the intention of going somewhere.' It is often followed by the preposition **pour**.



Joe-Bob: Je **pars** pour College Station.

Joe-Bob: I am leaving for College Station.

sortir

Sortir is an irregular -ir verb that conveys the particular meaning of 'going out or to exit from an enclosed space.' It is often followed by the preposition **de**.

Bette: Je vais **sortir** ce soir.

Bette: I'm going to go out tonight.

Corey **sort** de sa chambre sans fermer la porte.

Corey goes out of his room without locking the door.

quitter

Quitter is a regular -er verb that is used when 'leaving someone or someplace.'

Tammy **quitte** la maison à 8 heures chaque matin.

Tammy leaves the house at 8 o'clock every morning.

Rita **quitte** son mari.

Rita is leaving her husband.



Note that **quitter** is a transitive verb, that is, it always takes a direct object: **son mari** or **la maison** in the examples above.

Sortir is usually intransitive (no object), and needs the preposition **de** to express the idea of leaving from somewhere.

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laisser

Laisser is a regular -er verb that means 'to leave something or someone behind.'

Rita: Les gosses **laissent** leurs jouets partout.

Rita: The kids leave their toys everywhere.

Et toi, bon à rien, **laisse**-moi tranquille. Quelle vie de chien!

And you, good-for-nothing, leave me alone! What a dog's life!

Consider the following dialogue:

Tammy fait un cauchemar:

Tammy has a nightmare:

Tex: Tammy, je **pars** maintenant pour la France. Je rentre à Lyon.

Tex: Tammy, I'm leaving now for France. I'm going back to Lyon.

Tammy: Tu me **quittes** mon chéri?

Tammy: You're leaving me, darling?

Tex: Oui, Tammy c'est fini.

Tex: Yes, Tammy, it's over.

Tammy: Mais non!

Tammy: But, no!

Tex **sort** de l'appartement de Tammy. Mais il revient un moment plus tard.

Tex leaves Tammy's apartment, but he comes back a minute later.

Tex: J'**ai laissé** mes cigarettes dans la cuisine.

Tex: I left my cigarettes in the kitchen.

Puis il **quitte** l'appartement pour toujours.

Then he leaves the apartment forever.

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infinitive constructions

page: vi:f1

The **infinitive** expresses the idea or concept of a verb's meaning, without specifying a specific subject or point in time (tense). In most cases, use of the infinitive in French corresponds to the English. Infinitive constructions may be categorized according to the following uses:



as a noun

The infinitive may sometimes function as a noun. For example, it may be the subject of a sentence. Note that the French infinitive is often translated as a gerund (the '-ing' form of the verb) in English.

Joe-Bob: **Étudier** n'est pas facile!

Joe-Bob: Studying is not easy!

as an imperative (command)

The infinitive may be used to give a written order when there is no specific addressee. You will often see this form on signs.

Ne pas **marcher** sur l'herbe.

Do not walk on the grass.



after verbs

The infinitive is often used directly after these conjugated verbs:

Verbs of movement: (In this category, the infinitive indicates purpose.)

aller, venir, descendre, partir, rentrer, retourner, revenir, sortir, venir, etc.

Verbs of preference:

adorer, aimer, désirer, détester, préférer, vouloir

Verbs of opinion:

compter, croire, espérer, nier, penser, valoir mieux (impersonal: **il vaut mieux**)

Verbs of perception:

écouter, entendre, regarder, sentir, voir

Verbs of ability, obligation and necessity:

avoir beau (to do something in vain),
devoir, faillir (to almost do something),
 falloir (impersonal: **il faut**) **pouvoir, savoir**

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Tex et ses amis **sortent** dîner.

Tex and his friends are going out to have dinner.

Tex **compte** savourer un bon dîner français, mais Joe-Bob **veut** manger un hamburger.

Tex is counting on enjoying a good French dinner, but Joe-Bob wants to eat a hamburger.

Edouard les **écoute** discuter un moment et puis il dit: J'**ai failli** manger un hamburger une fois. Non, je ne **peux** pas faire ça, tout de même. **Il faut** trouver un vrai restaurant français.

Edouard listens to them discuss for a moment and then he says: I almost ate a hamburger once. No, I really can't do that. We have to find a real French restaurant.

after prepositions

The infinitive is the verb form generally used after a preposition in French. The infinitive expresses purpose when it is used after **pour** or **afin de**. In the case of **avant de** and **sans**, the English translation is often a conjugated verb (Before they left), or a present participle (Before leaving), rather than the English infinitive. The infinitive follows the preposition **par** after the verbs **commencer** and **finir**.

pour or **afin de**

Tammy arrive **pour** sortir avec Tex et ses amis.

Tammy arrives [in order] to go out with Tex and his friends.

avant de and **sans**

Avant de partir, ils lui demandent de choisir un restaurant. Elle commence **par** suggérer le nouveau restaurant thaï. Tex et ses copains parlent **sans** écouter Tammy.

Before leaving, they ask her to choose a restaurant. She starts by suggesting the new Thai restaurant. Tex and his friends talk without listening to Tammy.

par

Elle finit **par** comprendre que choisir un restaurant était impossible.

She finally understands that choosing a restaurant was impossible.

Note that the preposition **en** is followed by a **present participle**, not the infinitive. (**En** sortant, Joe-Bob a dit au revoir. On leaving, Joe-Bob said good-bye.)

The infinitive may be used to complete the sense of an adjective or a pronoun. Generally infinitives following a noun or adjective are preceded by the preposition **de**. (Edouard ne serait pas content **de** manger un hamburger. Edouard would not be happy to eat a hamburger.) However, adjectives and nouns are followed by the preposition **à + infinitive** to indicate a passive sense or a function: C'est bon **à** manger. (It's good to eat.), une salle **à** manger (dining room), de l'eau **à** boire (drinking water).

verbs followed by 'à' before an infinitive

When the following verbs are followed by an infinitive, the preposition **à** is required:

aider à, to help to

s'habituer à, to get used to

s'amuser à, to have fun at

hésiter à, to hesitate to

apprendre à, to learn to

inviter à, to invite to

arriver à, to succeed in, to manage to

se mettre à, to start to

s'attendre à, to expect to

se préparer à, to prepare to

chercher à, to try to, to attempt to

renoncer à, to give up

commencer à, to start to

réussir à, to succeed at

se décider à, to make up one's mind to

servir à, to be used for

encourager à, to encourage to

tenir à, to be anxious to, to be eager to

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Causative faire

page: vi:r7

The causative faire construction (**faire + infinitif**) indicates that the subject 'causes' an action to be done by someone or something else. Contrast the following sentences:

Tex **répare** sa voiture? Mais non, Tex ne sait pas réparer les voitures.

Tex is fixing his car? (himself) But no, Tex doesn't know how to fix cars.

Tex **fait réparer** sa voiture au garage.

Tex is having his car fixed at a garage. (by a mechanic)

In causative constructions the verb **faire** may be conjugated in any tense, for example the **periphrastic future** (futur proche) or the **passé composé** (Tex **va faire réparer** sa voiture. Tex **a fait réparer** sa voiture. etc.)

objects in causative faire constructions

The causative faire construction is often followed by noun or pronoun objects. If there is one object, it is a direct object (**sa voiture** in the example above, or **Tammy** in the first sentence below). In the case of two objects, as in the second sentence below, one will be direct (**la Marseillaise**) and the other indirect (**Tammy**).

Tex fait chanter **Tammy**.

Tex makes Tammy sing.

Tex fait chanter **la Marseillaise** à **Tammy**.

Tex makes Tammy sing the Marseillaise.

pronouns

Object pronouns precede **faire**, except in the affirmative **imperative**. Note the position of the pronouns in the following examples.

Tex **la** fait réparer.

Tex is having it fixed. (his car)

Tex **la** fait chanter.

Tex makes her sing. (Tammy)

Corey: Fais-**la** chanter!

Corey: Have her sing!

Tammy: Allons, enfants de la patrie ...

Tammy: Allons, enfants de la patrie ...

Joe-Bob: Ne **la** fais pas chanter!

Joe-Bob: Don't have her sing!



'se faire' + infinitive

Another causative construction involves the use of **se fai re + i nfi ni ti ve** to indicate something a person or thing has done to himself.

Rita **s'est fait faire** une robe noire pour l'enterrement de ses parents.

Rita had a black dress made (for herself) for the funeral of her parents.

However, sometimes this construction may be used to describe actions that happen inadvertently, despite the wishes of the subject. Tex explains what happened:

Tex: Mes parents **se sont fait écraser** par un camion.

Tex: My parents were killed by a truck. (They got themselves run over by a truck.)



Note that the past participle **fai t** is always invariable in the causative construction.

transitive vs. intransitive

page: v:11

definitions: transitive direct, transitive indirect, intransitive

Transitive verbs by definition have an object, either a direct object or an indirect object. Intransitive verbs never have objects.

A *transitive-direct* verb acts directly on its **object**. In the first sentence below, the telephone is the direct object. The verb 'entendre' (to hear) always takes an object; one hears **someone or something**.

A *transitive-indirect* verb acts **to** or **for** its object. Tex is the object of the preposition **à** in the second sentence since Joe- Bob is talking to him.

Intransitive verbs, on the other hand, have **no object** at all. The verb **dormir** (to sleep) in the last example, does not need any object to complete it. In fact, because the verb is intransitive, it cannot take an object. Intransitive verbs (as well as transitive ones) may be modified by adverbs or prepositional phrases: 'Joe-Bob sleeps in the car; he sleeps all the time.'

| | | |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Tex entend le téléphone . | <i>transitive-direct</i> | Tex hears the telephone. |
| Joe-Bob parle à Tex . | <i>transitive-indirect</i> | Joe-Bob is talking to Tex. |
| Joe-Bob dort souvent au volant. | <i>intransitive</i> | Joe-Bob often sleeps at the wheel. |

For more examples and discussion, review the remarks on transitive vs intransitive verbs in the [introduction](#).

transitive verbs

Because transitivity has to do with meaning, most English and French verbs usually maintain the same distinction. Thus, verbs that are transitive in English are also transitive in French, and verbs that are intransitive in French are also intransitive in English. The following examples are transitive in both French and English.

| | |
|--|--|
| Tex mange un croissant et il boit du café. | Tex is eating a croissant and drinking some coffee. |
| Il finit son petit déjeuner | He is finishing his breakfast |
| et il lit le journal. Dring, dring. C'est Joe-Bob au téléphone. | and reading the newspaper. Ring, ring. It's Joe-Bob on the telephone. |

special cases

direct object in French / preposition + object in English

There are, however, special cases where the transitivity of French and English verbs contrast. There are several very common verbs which take a direct object in French, while the English equivalent is followed by a preposition (at, to, for) and object. **REDCAP** is an acronym for the most frequent verbs in this category: **R**egarder, **E**couter, **D**emander, **C**hercher, **A**ttendre, **P**ayer.

Joe-Bob explains what happened:

| | |
|--|--|
| Joe-Bob: Je roulais en voiture. Je regardais les filles. | Joe-Bob: I was driving along. I was looking at girls. |
| J' écoutais de la musique country à la radio. | I was listening to country music on the radio. |
| Et puis, oh, là là. J'ai eu un accident de voiture. La police est arrivée et le flic m'a demandé mes papiers. | And then, oh, la, la. I had an accident. The police came and the cop asked for my papers. |
| J' ai cherché ma carte d'identité, mais je ne l'ai pas trouvée. | I looked for my ID, but I didn't find it. |
| Pas de chance! Je suis au commissariat et j' attends mon avocat. | No luck! I'm at the police station and I'm waiting for my lawyer. |
| Tex, j'espère que tu vas payer la contravention! | Tex, I hope that you will pay for the ticket. |

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preposition + object in French/direct object in English

There are also several verbs which have a preposition and object in French, whereas the English equivalent takes a direct object.

Joe-Bob **téléphone à** Tex.

Joe-Bob **tel ephones** à Tex.

Here are examples of such verbs. These are discussed more fully with indirect objects and indirect object pronouns.

obéir à, to obey

répondre à, to answer

pardonner à, to pardon, to forgive

résister à, to resist

rendre visite à, to visit (someone)

ressembl er à, to resemble

renoncer à, to give up, renounce

téléphoner à, to telephone

stated and implied objects

For many **transitive** verbs, in both French and English, the object is sometimes implied or understood. Do not be concerned about labelling these verbs, since the meaning will be clear from the context; and, like most verbs, they will form their **passé composé** with **avoir**.

transitive verb / implied object

En voiture, Joe-Bob **chante** toujours. (Joe- Bob always sings in the car.)

Il **parl e** fort. (He talks loudly.) Il

rêve. (He dreams.)

Il **grignotte** tout le temps. (He snacks all the time.)

transitive verb / stated object

En voiture, Joe-Bob **chante** toujours **Freebird**. (Joe-Bob always sings Freebird in the car.)

Il **parle anglais**. (He speaks English.)

Il **rêve de hamburgers et de filles**. (He dreams of hamburgers and girls.)

Il **grignotte des cacahouettes**. (He snacks on peanuts.)

intransitive verbs

Perhaps you have already seen verbs which use **être** to form the passé composé. These **être** verbs (aller, arriver, partir, sortir, etc.) are the most frequent intransitive verbs and they are summarized in the **Alamo d'être**. **Etre** verbs are often described as verbs of motion, but it's important to note that there are many other intransitive verbs of motion which use the auxiliary **avoir**, for example, 'marcher' (to walk) and 'courir' (to run): 'Tex a marché vite. Les enfants de Rita ont couru.'

transitive or intransitive

Some verbs may be either transitive or intransitive. Contrast the following verbs. Note that the verb **sortir** uses the auxiliary verb **être** in the passé composé as an intransitive verb, but **avoir** in the passé composé when it is used transitively.

intransitive/no object

Le week-end passé, Joe-Bob **est sorti**. (Last weekend Joe-Bob went out.)

Au commissariat, la tension de Joe-Bob **monte**. (At the police station Joe-Bob's blood pressure goes up.)

transitive/used with an object

Le week-end passé, Joe-Bob **a sorti son beau camion**. (Last weekend Joe-Bob took out his fine truck.)

Joe-Bob **monte l'escalier**. (Joe-Bob goes up the stairs.)

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There are several cases where a verb which may be transitive or intransitive in English must be translated by two different verbs in French: 'to return' (retourner, rendre), 'to leave' (partir, laisser, quitter).

verbs with direct and indirect objects

Many transitive verbs may have both a direct and an indirect object, for example:

Tex donne **des conseils à Joe-Bob.**

Tex gives advice to Joe-Bob.

Here is a list of some common bivalent verbs:

acheter, to buy

apporter, to bring

apprendre, to learn

demander, to ask

donner, to give

écrire, to write

emprunter, to borrow

envoyer, to send

expliquer, to explain

montrer, to show

offrir, to offer (give)

prêter, to lend

promettre, to promise

rendre, to give back

servir, to serve

vendre, to sell

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Present participle

page: vpp1

The present participle is formed by dropping the **-ons** ending from the nous form in the present tense and adding **-ant**. Present participles are invariable.

regular formation

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| chanter (nous chantons) | chantant |
| finir (nous finissons) | finissant |
| lire (nous lisons) | lisant |
| boire (nous buvons) | buvant |
| suivre (nous suivons) | suivant |
| commencer (nous commençons) | commençant |
| manger (nous mangeons) | mangeant |
| se laver (nous nous lavons) | se lavant |

Only three verbs, **être**, **avoir** and **savoir**, have irregular present participles.

irregular present participles

être: **étant** avoir:

ayant savoir:

sachant

The present participle can be used to modify a noun, similar in meaning to either a relative clause with **qui + conjugated verb** or a relative clause with **puisque**.

Tex: Les tatous **ayant une voiture** ont beaucoup de succès avec les filles.
(Les tatous **qui ont une voiture** ont beaucoup de succès avec les filles.)

Armadillos who have a car are very successful with girls.

Tex: **Tammy étant absente**, je peux t'emmener faire une balade en voiture, Bette.

Since Tammy is not here, I can take you on a ride in my car, Bette.

(**Puisque Tammy est absente**, je peux t'emmener faire une balade en voiture, Bette.)

En + present participle, commonly known as the gerund form, is used to indicate that two actions are simultaneously performed by the same subject. This corresponds to the English 'while', 'upon', or 'by'.

Tex drague les filles **en conduisant** sa décapotable.

Tex hits on girls by driving his convertible.

Tex conduit **en écoutant** la radio.

Tex drives while listening to the radio.



Tout en + present participle is used to stress that two actions are simultaneous (and sometimes contradictory). Remember to make the liaison between **tout** and **en**.

Tex siffle **tout en conduisant**.

Tex whistles and drives at the same time.

Tex drague Bette **tout en pensant** à Tammy.

Tex hits on Bette, all the while thinking of Tammy.

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Note that the English **-ing** forms are usually translated by an **infinitive construction** in French rather than a present participle. For example:

Before coming to Texas, Tex did not like kitties.

But Tex **is changing** his mind.

Avant de venir au Texas, Tex n'aimait pas les minettes.

Mais Tex **est entrain de changer** d'avis.

Negation

page: neg1

Introduction to Negation

Negation is a grammatical term for the contradiction of some or all of the meaning of an affirmative (positive) sentence. In English, a sentence is commonly negated by inserting a single negative word (not, don't, didn't, won't, etc.) into the appropriate place in the sentence. In French, a sentence is commonly negated by inserting two words.



basic negation

Ne ... pas is placed around the conjugated verb to negate an affirmative sentence in French. Note that the **ne** changes to **n'** before a verb beginning with a vowel.

Joe-Bob, l'écureuil, court vite.
l'escargot, **ne** court **pas** vite.

Joe-Bob, the squirrel, runs fast. Edouard,
Edouard the snail **doesn't** run fast.

Trey aime le rap.

Trey likes rap.

Joe-Bob **n'**aime **pas** le rap.

Joe-Bob **doesn't** like rap.

alternate forms of negation

There are many other French words that one can use to negate a positive statement besides the basic form **ne ... pas**. Moreover, negative words can be used to contradict the verb as well as other parts of the original affirmative sentence.

Joe-Bob écoute de la musique country.
n'écoute **jamais** de musique country.
n'écoute **que** du rap.
Fiona **n'**écoute **rien**.

Joe-Bob listens to country. Tex
Tex **never** listens to country. Trey
Trey **only** listens to rap.
Fiona listens to **nothing**.

Presque personne n'écoute de musique country en France.

Almost **nobody** listens to country music in France.

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Basic Negation: ne ... pas

page: neg2

Basic negation is formed by placing **ne ... pas** around the conjugated verb. **Ne** becomes **n'** in front of a verb starting with a vowel or a mute **h**.



TU NE VAS PAS EN
COURS AUJOURD'HUI ?

Tex: Tu **ne** vas **pas** en cours aujourd'hui, Tammy?

Tammy: Non. Je **ne** vais **pas** bien. Je **ne** peux **pas** manger et j'ai mal à la tête.

Tex: Tu **n'**as **pas** de chance! Ce soir, il y a une fête chez Edouard!

Tammy: Tu **n'**es **pas** d'un grand réconfort, tu sais!

Tex: You're not going to class today Tammy?

Tammy: No. I am not well. I cannot eat and I have a headache.

Tex: That's too bad [literally 'you are not lucky']! Tonight there is a party at Edouard's!

Tammy: You are not a lot of comfort, you know!

In compound tenses, like the passé composé, the **ne ... pas** are also placed around the conjugated verb, which is the auxiliary, **avoir** or **être**. In the periphrastic future, **ne ... pas** goes around the verb **aller**.

Tex **n'**a **pas** été très gentil.

Tammy **ne** va **pas** passer la soirée chez Edouard.

Tex was not very nice.

Tammy is not going to spend the evening at Edouard's.

Note that in spoken French, the **ne/n'** is sometimes dropped. In familiar speech, **tu** is often pronounced as **t'** before a vowel.

Tammy: Tex, t'es (tu es) **pas** très gentil.

Tammy: Tex, you are not very nice.

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alternate forms (1) ne ... jamais, rien, personne, etc.

page: neg3

Different nuances of negation are achieved by using the following negative expressions:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ne ... jamais | never, not ever |
| ne ... pas encore | not yet |
| ne ... rien | nothing, not anything |
| ne ... personne | nobody, no one, not anybody |
| ne ... plus | no more, not any longer |
| ne ... pas du tout | not at all |



Note that **ne** becomes **n'** in front of a verb starting with a vowel or a mute **h**. In spoken French, the **ne / n'** is sometimes dropped. The second element of the negation is usually placed right after the conjugated verb and before the object, as in this dialogue:

| | |
|---|--|
| C'est dimanche matin. | It is Sunday morning. |
| Tammy: Tex, tu es réveillé? | Tammy: Tex are you awake? |
| Tex: Non, je ne suis pas réveillé. | Tex: No, I am not awake. |
| Tammy: Tu dors encore? | Tammy: Are you still asleep? |
| Tex: Maintenant, je ne dors plus ! Avec toi, je ne peux jamais faire la grasse matinée! | Tex: Now I am no longer asleep! With you I can never sleep in! |
| Tammy: Mais regarde, je t'apporte une tasse de café et un croissant. | Tammy: But look, I'm bringing you a cup of coffee and a croissant. |
| Tex: Non merci, je ne veux rien . Je n'ai pas du tout faim. | Tex: No thanks, I don't want anything. I am not hungry at all. |
| Tammy: Eh bien, tu es charmant ce matin. | Tammy: Well, aren't you charming this morning. |

Personne and **rien** are negative pronouns; they may function as the subject or direct object of a sentence, or as the object of a preposition. When **personne** is an object, it is placed after the verb or the preposition it complements:

| | |
|---|--|
| Ce matin, Tex ne veut voir personne . | This morning Tex does not want to see anybody. |
| Il ne veut parler à personne . | He does not want to talk to anyone. |
| Il ne pense à rien . | He's not thinking about anything. |



Personne and **rien** may be used at the beginning of a sentence, as pronoun subjects, followed by **ne / n'**:

| | |
|---|---|
| Personne n' aime se lever tôt un dimanche. | Nobody likes to get up early on a Sunday. |
| Rien n' est pire. | Nothing is worse. |

Some of the negations listed above can be combined, as shown in these examples:

| | |
|--|---|
| Tammy: Je ne te ferai plus jamais le petit-déjeuner. | Tammy: I will never make your breakfast again. |
| Tex: Mais Tammy, tu sais que je ne prends jamais rien au petit-déjeuner. | Tex: But Tammy, you know I never have anything for breakfast. |

alternate forms (2) ne ... aucun, ni ... ni, que

page: neg4

Ne / n' ... aucun(e) + noun conveys the idea of 'absolutely no, not a single' + noun. **Aucun** agrees in gender with the word that follows.

Bette: Alors Tex, Tammy est malade?

Bette: So Tex, is Tammy ill?

Tex: **Aucune** idée. Je suis passé chez elle hier soir et il n'y avait personne. Je **n'**ai reçu **aucun** coup de téléphone et **aucune** nouvelle depuis deux jours ...

Tex: I have no idea. I went to her place last night and there was nobody there. I have received no phone call and no news for two days ...

Ne ... ni ... ni is commonly translated as 'neither ... nor'. It is used in a similar way as the English expression. Note, however, that in French the verb has to be preceded by **ne** (or **n'** in front of a vowel or a mute **h**).

Bette: Et moi, je **n'**ai vu Tammy **ni** hier **ni** aujourd'hui.

Bette: And me, I saw neither yesterday nor today.

Tex: **Ni** moi **ni** Fiona **n'**avons vu Tammy hier. Et aujourd'hui, Tammy **ne** m'a **ni** téléphoné **ni** écrit un e-mail. Je m'inquiète. Tu crois qu'elle est partie avec un autre tatou?

Tex: Neither I nor Fiona saw her yesterday. And Tammy neither called me nor wrote me an e-mail. I'm worried. Do you think she's gone with another armadillo?



Ne ... que is used to express a restriction. It is usually translated as 'only'.

Bette: Peut-être ... Après tout, cela **ne** fait **qu'**un an que vous êtes ensemble ...

Bette: Maybe ... After all it has only been a year that you've been together ...

Tex: Oh, merci Bette! Il **n'y** a **que** toi pour dire des choses pareilles!

Tex: Oh, thanks Bette! Only you can say such things!

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one-word negative sentences si, jamais, etc.

page: neg5

Oui is a 'yes' answer to an affirmative question, while **si** is a 'yes' to a negative question.

Chez Tammy:

Tex: Tammy, tu es là?

Tammy: **Oui**.

Tex: Tu ne m'aimes plus?

Tammy: **Si**, un peu.

At Tammy's house:

Tex: Tammy, are you there?

Tammy: Yes.

Tex: You don't love me anymore?

Tammy: Yes, I do, a little.

Non is a one-word negative answer to a yes / no question; **pas**, by itself, negates part of a sentence:

Tex: Tammy, tu es malade?

Tammy: **Non!**

Tex: Tu es fâchée?

Tammy: **Pas** vraiment.

Tex: Tammy, are you sick?

Tammy: No!

Tex: Are you mad?

Tammy: Not really.



Rien (nothing), **personne** (no one), and **jamais** (never) may be used in one-word answers:

Tex: Tammy, qu'est-ce que tu fais?

doing? Tammy: **Rien!**

Tex: Qui est avec toi?

Tammy: **Personne!**

Tex: Tu vas me quitter pour un autre?

Tammy: **Jamais!**

Tex: Tammy, what are you

Tammy: Nothing!

Tex: Who is with you?

Tammy: No one!

Tex: Are you going to leave me for another?

Tammy: Never!

Introduction to Prepositions

A **preposition** is a word used to establish relationships between nouns, between nouns and v sentence. Prepositions usually have spatial or temporal meanings (e.g. beneath, between, in fr Prepositions are invariable, that is, they have one form with the exception of **à** and **de** which c les).

Translating prepositions is notoriously tricky. Never assume that French will use the same pre particular meaning. In fact, there are many cases where one language requires a preposition v particularly problematic with infinitives followed by prepositions. In general, it is best to treat p requiring memorization.

In the following sentences, these problems are demonstrated by translating the French prepc the English translation is as a result.

Bette est fâchée contre Tammy.
Bette is angry at Tammy.

Bette is angry against Tammy.

Tex téléphone à Joe-Bob.
Tex telephones Joe-Bob.

Tex telephones to Joe-Bob.

Literal translations are also awkward in situations where a preposition is not used in French but is required in English.

Fiona attend le bus.
Fiona waits for the bus.

Fiona waits the bus.

Joe-Bob écoute la radio.
Joe-Bob listens to the radio.

Joe-Bob listens the radio.

page: pre1



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common prepositions

page: pre1a

Prepositions are used to establish relationships between nouns, between nouns and verbs, and between different parts of a sentence.

À (to) and **de** (from, about) are the most common prepositions in French. They form **contractions with definite articles**: Tex parle **aux** étudiants. Il parle **des** devoirs. Il regarde la question en haut **du** tableau. (Tex talks to the students. He is talking about homework. He is looking at the question at the top of the blackboard.)

When prepositions have literal, spatial meanings, using them is straightforward: **sur** (on), **sous** (under), **avec** (with), **sans** (without). There are, in addition, many idiomatic uses of prepositions, especially **à** and **de**. Dictionaries include listings of idiomatic meanings.

In addition to prepositions + noun (or pronoun) objects, discussed here, there are specific guidelines for using **prepositions with place names**. Finally, many prepositions, including some on this page, may be followed by **infinitives**.

à = to, at

See **contractions with definite articles**, the use of **à** with **place names**, and **à + infinitive**.

Tex parle **à** ses amis **au** café. Ils vont **à** Opelousas.

Tex is talking **to** his friends **at** the café.
They're going **to** Opelousas.

à cause de = because of, due to

The preposition **à cause de** is followed by a noun, whereas the conjunction **parce que** (because) is followed by a subordinate clause.

Ils vont en Louisiane **à cause de** la fête.

They're going to Louisiana **because of** the celebration.

- **au centre de = at the center of**

Opelousas se trouve **au centre de** la Louisiane.

Opelousas is **in the center of** Louisiana.



à côté de = beside

Bette veut s'asseoir **à côté de** Tex.

Bette wants to sit **beside** Tex.

à droite de = to the right of, on the right of

Tammy est **à droite de** PawPaw Louis.

Tammy is **on** PawPaw Louis' **right**.

à gauche de = to the left of, on the left of

Tex est **à gauche de** PawPaw.

Tex is **on** PawPaw's **left**.

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après = after (temporal)

See also **après** used in past infinitive constructions.

Après le dîner, ils vont danser.

After dinner, they're going dancing.

à travers = across, through

Tammy voit Bette **à travers** la foule.

Tammy sees Bette **through** the crowd.

au milieu de = in the middle of

PawPaw danse **au milieu de** la salle.

PawPaw is dancing **in the middle of** the room.

au sujet de / à propos de = on the subject of; about

Paw-Paw parle **au sujet de** la Résistance et **à propos de** sa longue vie de séducteur.

PawPaw is talking **about** the Resistance and **about** his long life as a womanizer.

autour de = surrounding, around

Les amis sont assis **autour de** la table.

The friends are seated around the table.

avant = before [temporal]

Contrast **avant** with **devant** meaning 'before' in a spatial sense. See also **avant de + infinitive**.

Ils ne vont pas se coucher **avant** cinq heures du matin.

They are not going to bed **before** five o'clock in the morning.

avec = with

Avec + noun is often translated as an '-ly' adverb: **avec** joie (joyfully).

Tex est en Louisiane **avec** ses amis. Ils dansent **avec joie** à l'anniversaire de PawPaw.

Tex is in Louisiana **with** his friends. They are dancing **joyfully** at PawPaw's birthday celebration.

chez = 'at X's (house), at the house of, at the store of; to X's (house), to the store of'

Chez may refer to individual's homes as well as to someone's shop, as in the first example below. When applied to larger groups of people, such as nationalities, it means among: **Chez** nous les Texans, on adore la sauce piquante = "We Texans love hot sauce" (literally: Among us Texans we love hot sauce).

Le lendemain matin, ils vont acheter des croissants **chez** le boulanger.

The next morning they are going to buy croissants **at** the baker's.

Tout le monde a adoré le séjour **chez** Paw-Paw.

Everyone loved their stay **at** Paw-Paw's.

Après un an à Austin, Tex se sent vraiment à l'aise **chez** les Texans.

After a year in Austin, Tex really feels at ease **with (among)** Texans

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contre = against

Contre is used in several idiomatic expressions.

Bette a dansé tout **contre** Tex.

Bette danced right **against** Tex.

Tammy est en colère **contre** Bette; elle se fâche **contre** Tex.

Tammy is mad **at** Bette; she's getting angry **with** Tex.

Tammy est **contre** la bigamie.

Tammy is **against** bigamy.



dans = in

Dans is always followed by a determiner (definite, indefinite or possessive). See also **en**.

Tammy est **dans** la cuisine. Elle prépare le dîner pour Tex qui arrive **dans** une heure.

Tammy's **in** the kitchen. She's cooking dinner for Tex who's coming **in** one hour.

d'après = according to

D'après Edouard, les Américains mangent très mal. Mais Tammy cuisine bien!

According to Edouard, Americans eat very poorly. But Tammy cooks well.

de = of, from, about

See also the use of **de** with place names and **de +** infinitive.

Au dîner, Tex et Tammy parlent **de** leur voyage en Louisiane.

At dinner, Tex and Tammy talk **about** their trip to Louisiana.

de l'autre côté de = on the other side of

Puis ils font une promenade et regardent les gratte-ciel **de l'autre côté du** fleuve.

Then they take a walk and look at the skyscrapers **on the other side of** the river.

derrière = in back of, behind (spatial)

Ils admirent le soleil se coucher **derrière** les collines.

They admire the sun setting **behind** the hills.

devant = in front of, before (spatial sense)

Contrast **devant** with **avant** (temporal sense).

Enfin, ils s'embrassent passionnément **devant** le Capitole.

Finally, they kiss passionately **in front of** the Capitol.

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en = in

En means 'in' and immediately precedes the noun (i.e., it does not require a determiner; it is followed directly by its object, for example, **en** France). It is also used in many idiomatic expressions: Tex roule **en** voiture (Tex is driving in a car); Trey vient **en** vélo (Trey comes on a bike); and in some time expressions: **en** automne (in the fall); **en** août (in August). Compare with **dans**.

See also the use of **en** with [place names](#) and **en** with a [present participle](#).

en bas de = at the bottom of, at the end of

Ils prennent un verre dans un bar **en bas de** la cinquième rue.

They have a drink in a bar **at the end of** Fifth Street.

en dehors de = outside of, excluding

En dehors de Tammy, Tex ne connaît pas beaucoup de Texans.

Outside of Tammy, Tex doesn't know many Texans.

en dépit de = in spite of

En dépit de l'alcool, Tex se conduit en gentleman.

In spite of the alcohol, Tex behaves like a gentleman.



en face de = in front of, across from

Tex est assis **en face de** Tammy.

Tex is (seated) **across from** Tammy.

en haut de = at the top of; to the top of

Tout d'un coup Bette apparaît **en haut de** l'escalier.

All of a sudden, Bette appears **at the top of** the staircase.

entre = between

Entre means 'between' and it is used when referring to two people or things (or two groups of people or things). Contrast with **parmi** ('among').

Puis elle vient s'asseoir **entre** Tammy et Tex.

Then she comes and sits down **between** Tammy and Tex.

envers = toward (figurative sense)

Envers means 'toward' in a figurative sense, indicating an attitude or gesture toward someone. Contrast with **vers**, which means toward in a spatial or temporal sense.

Tammy ressent une certaine antipathie **envers** Bette.

Tammy feels a certain animosity toward Bette.

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grace à = thanks to

monde.
Tex a découvert son grand-père **grace à**
l'album de photos de Rita.

language in the world.
Tex discovered his grandfather **thanks to**
Rita's photo album.

hors de = outside of, out of (idiomatic)

Paw-Paw habite **hors de** la ville d'Opelousas. Il
est **hors de** question que Tex vive à
Opelousas.

Paw-Paw lives **outside of** the city of
Opelousas. It is **out of** the question that Tex
live in Opelousas.

jusqu'à = until

Distinguish between the preposition **jusqu'à** and the conjunction **jusqu'à ce que**.

Tex et Tammy vont **jusqu'à** Opelousas.

Tex and Tammy are going **as far as**
Opelousas.

loin de = far from

Tex habite **loin de** son grand-père Paw-Paw
Louis.

Tex lives **far from** his grandfather Paw-Paw
Louis.

malgré = in spite of

Malgré la distance, Tex aime aller voir son
grand-père.

In spite of the distance, Tex likes to go see his
grandfather.

par = by, through, per

Par has several idiomatic meanings. It means 'by' when it is used with the **passive voice**. See also the use of **par + infinitive**.

Tex va à Opelousas une fois **par** mois.

Tex goes to Opelousas once a month (one
time **per** month).

Tex est invité à Opelousas **par** Paw-Paw.

Tex is invited to Opelousas **by** Paw-Paw.

Pour aller à Opelousas, Tex passe **par**
Houston.

Tex goes **through** Houston to get to
Opelousas.

parmi = among

Parmi means 'among' and it is used when referring to three or more people or things (or groups of people or things). Contrast with **entre** (between).

Tex compte beaucoup de Cajuns **parmi** ses
cousins.

Tex counts many Cajuns **among** his cousins.

pendant = during

Pendant son séjour chez Paw-Paw, Tex
mange des écrevisses.

During his stay with Paw-Paw, Tex eats
crawfish.

pour = for, in favor of

See also the use of **pour + infinitive**.

Paw-Paw est **pour** la défense du Cajun. **Pour**
lui, le français est la plus belle langue du
monde.

Paw-Paw is **in favor of** the defense of Cajun.
For him, French is the most beautiful language
in the world.

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près de = near to

Opelousas est **près de** Baton Rouge.

Opelousas is **near** Baton Rouge.

quant à = as for

Paw-Paw est content de voir Tex. **Quant à** Tex, il est heureux de pouvoir enfin parler français.

Paw-Paw is happy to see Tex. **As for** Tex, he is happy to finally be able to speak French.

sans = without

Sans often is translated by '-less' or a negative prefix 'in-' or 'un-': un travail **sans** effort (effortless work); un film **sans** intérêt (an uninteresting film). See also the use of **sans + infinitive**.

Sans doute, le français se parle dans sa famille depuis longtemps.

Without doubt, French has spoken in his family for a long time.



sauf = except

Toute sa famille parle français, **sauf** son oncle Elmer, qui habite en Californie.

Everyone in his family speaks, **except** Uncle Elmer, who lives in California.

sel on = according to

Sel on Paw-Paw, Tex a un drôle d'accent français.

According to Paw-Paw, Tex has a funny French accent.

sous = under, in (idiomatic)

Sous means 'under,' but it is often translated by 'in' in expressions such as **sous** la pluie (in the rain); **sous** le soleil (in the sun).

En route pour Opelousas, Tex et Tammy ont vu un alligator **sous** un pont.

On the road to Opelousas, Tex and Tammy saw an alligator **under** a bridge.



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sur = on, upon, on top of

Sur means 'on,' but it is also used in several idiomatic expressions: un **sur** deux (one **out of** two); tourner son attention **sur** quelque chose (to turn one's attention **to** something); **sur** le moment (**at** the time); **sur** invitation (**by** invitation). etc.

En Louisiane, on sert souvent des écrevisses directement **sur** la table, sans assiette.

In Louisiana, crawfish are often served directly **on** the table, with no plate.

vers = toward(s)

Vers means 'toward, around' in both a spatial and a temporal sense. Contrast with **envers**, which has a figurative sense.

Vers midi, Tex et Tammy repartent **vers** Austin.

Around noon, Tex and Tammy head back towards Austin.

Bette et Tammy entrent **dans** un restaurant ensemble. Elles ont toutes les deux pris rendez-vous **avec** Tex **sans** le savoir! Elles regardent **autour de** la salle. En même temps, elles aperçoivent Tex assis **à** une table. Elles se précipitent **vers** lui. Elles se regardent, hésitent un moment, puis s'asseyent. Tammy s'assied **à droite de** Tex et Bette s'assied **à gauche de** lui. Elles se regardent à nouveau d'un air confus. Tex s'amuse **malgré** le drame **entre** Bette et Tammy.

Bette and Tammy enter a restaurant together. Unknowingly, they both have a date **with** Tex. They look **around** the room. At the same time they see Tex seated **at** a table. They rush **towards** him. They look at each other, hesitate a moment, then sit down. Tammy sits **on** Tex' **right** and Bette sits down **to** his **left**. They look at each other again, confused. Tex is having fun **in spite of** the drama **between** Bette and Tammy.

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contractions of à and de with definite article

page: pre2

The prepositions **à** or **de** contract with the definite articles **le** and **les** to give the following forms: de + le = **du** de + les = **des**

à + le = **au** à + les = **aux**

La and **l'** on the other hand do not contract after **à** and **de**. Note that these contractions also occur with two- and three- word prepositions ending with **à** or **de** (**jusqu'à**, **près de**, **loin de**, **à côté de**, etc.).

Tammy et Bette sont dans un café **près du** campus, **à côté des** commerces, pas **loin de la** tour.

Tammy: Je vais prendre un thé **à la** vanille et un muffin **au** chocolat. Et toi?

Bette: Pour moi, un biscuit **aux** amandes et un café **au** lait.

Tammy: Bon, demain on va **au** gymnase, hein?

Tammy et Bette are in a café near campus, not far from the stores, not far from the Tower.

Tammy: I am going to have a vanilla tea and a chocolate muffin. What about you?

Fiona: For me, an almond cookie and a latte.

Tammy: And tomorrow we'll go to the gym, eh?



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depuis vs. il y a ... que, ça fait ... que, and voilà ... que

page: pred1

depuis

To indicate the starting date or duration of an action or situation which is still going on in the present, use the preposition **depuis** + a time expression. Note that **depuis** can mean two different things in English. When **depuis** is followed by a length of time, as in the first example below, it indicates duration and is translated into English by 'for'. When **depuis** is followed by a date or a point in time, as in the second example, it indicates the starting point and is translated by 'since'.

Tex sort avec Tammy **depuis** un an.

Tex has been going out with Tammy **for** one year.

Tex sort avec Tammy **depuis** septembre.

Tex has been going out with Tammy **since** September.

In a question, **depuis** is generally translated as 'how long' or 'since when'. In most cases, such questions with **depuis** can be answered with either the expression of duration or the beginning point.

| duration | (for how long ?) | starting point | (since when?) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Depuis combien de temps ... | How long ... | Depuis quand ... | Since when ... |
| ... Bette est-elle amoureuse de Tex? | ... has Bette been in love with Tex? | ... Bette est-elle amoureuse de Tex? | ... has Bette been in love with Tex? |
| Elle est amoureuse de lui ... | She has been in love with him ... | Elle est amoureuse de lui ... | She has been in love with him ... |
| ... depuis un an. | ... for one year. | ... depuis le 20 août. | ... since August 20. |
| ... depuis deux minutes. | ... for two minutes. | ... depuis lundi. | ... since Monday. |
| ... depuis une éternité. | ... for ages. | ... depuis son arrivée. | ... since his arrival. |

other uses of depuis

When used at the beginning of a sentence without any complement and followed by a comma, **depuis** is usually translated as 'since then'. For example:

Bette a vu Tex le jour de son arrivée à UT et **depuis**, elle n'arrête pas de penser à lui.

Bette saw Tex on the day of his arrival at UT and since then, she has not stopped thinking about him.

In negative sentences, depending on the meaning, **depuis** may be used with either the present (action still going on) or the passé composé to indicate how long something has **not** been going on (non-action).

Tex: **Je ne suis pas** au Texas depuis longtemps.

Tex: I haven't been in Texas for long. (Tex is still in Texas)

Tex: **Je ne suis pas allé** en France depuis l'été dernier.

Tex: I haven't been to France since last summer.



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Bette: Tex, **depuis** quand es-tu au Texas?

Tex: Je ne suis pas au Texas **depuis** longtemps. Je suis au Texas **depuis** 1998.

Bette: Tex, **depuis** quand connais-tu Tammy?

Tex: Je connais Tammy **depuis** deux ans.

Bette: **Depuis** quand veux-tu devenir poète?

Tex: Oh, **depuis** toujours!

Bette: **Depuis** quand n'es-tu pas allé en France?

Tex: Je ne suis pas allé en France **depuis** l'été dernier. Et toi, Bette, **depuis** quand as-tu ce tatouage?!

Bette: Oh, **depuis** lundi. Ça fait cool, tu ne trouves pas? **Depuis**, les mecs ne me quittent pas des yeux!

Bette: How long have you been in Texas?

Tex: I have not been in Texas for long. I have been in Texas since 1998.

Bette: Tex, how long have you known Tammy?

Tex: I have known Tammy for two years.

Bette: How long have you wanted to become a poet?

Tex: Oh, I have always wanted to!

Bette: How long have you not been in France?

Tex: I haven't been in France since last summer. And you, Bette, how long have you had this tattoo?!

Bette: Oh, since Monday. Cool, isn't it? **Since then**, guys have not been able to take their eyes off me!

il y a ... que, ça fait ... que, voilà ... que

Il y a ... que, ça fait ... que and, more emphatic, **voilà ... que** express duration only. Unlike **depuis**, they are always used at the beginning of a sentence. For example:



Bette: Tex, **ça fait** longtemps **que** tu enseignes le français?

Tex: **Voilà** un an **que** j'enseigne le français.

Bette: Tex, **il y a** combien de temps **que** tu connais Tammy?

Tex: **Ça fait** deux ans.

Bette: Tex, how long have you been teaching French?

Tex: I've been teaching French for a year.

Bette: Tex, how long have you known Tammy?

Tex: It's been two years.

Although **il y a ... que** and **ça fait ... que** may occasionally be found in the future (**il y aura ... que, ça fera ... que**), the subordinate clause introduced by **que** is never in the future. It remains in the present. For example:

Bette: Tex, **il y a** combien de temps **que** tu connais Tammy?

Il y aura deux ans demain que je connais Tammy.

Bette: Tex, how long have you known Tammy?

Tex: It will be two years tomorrow (that I have known Tammy).

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depuis with imperfect

page: pred2

The preposition **depuis** with the imperfect indicates how long something **had been** going on in relation to a past event. Basic sentence meaning and construction are similar to those of **depuis with present**. **Depuis** with imperfect may indicate either duration or a temporal starting point.

| <i>what had been going on ...</i> | <i>past event</i> | <i>translation</i> |
|---|---|---|
| Tammy attendait Tex depuis une heure ... | ... quand il est entré. | Tammy had been waiting for Tex for an hour ... when he came in. |
| Tammy souhaitait avoir une discussion sérieuse depuis lundi ... | ... quand enfin le moment s'est présenté. | Tammy had been wanting to have a serious discussion since Monday ... when at last the opportunity presented itself. |

Duration may also be indicated with **il y avait ... que, cela faisait ... que** and, more emphatic, **voilà que**. The first sentence above could also be expressed as:

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Il y avait ... | une heure que | Tammy had been |
| Cel a fai sai... | Tammy attendait | waiting for Tex for an |
| Voilà ... | Tex. | hour. |



Tammy: Salut, Tex. Ça va?

Tex: Non! Hier, j'**étais** à la bibliothèque **depuis** deux minutes quand l'alarme à incendie a sonné. Je n'ai pas pu travailler! Ensuite à la cafétéria, je **faisais** la queue **depuis** une demi- heure, lorsqu'ils ont annoncé qu'il n'y avait plus de sandwiches! Je suis allé faire cours sans avoir mangé!

Tammy: Pour moi non plus, rien ne va comme je veux! **Depuis** lundi je **voulais** te parler, mais ce matin tu as dit que tu avais trop de travail!

Tammy: Hi Tex. How are you?

Tex: Not well! Yesterday, I had been in the library for two minutes when the fire alarm went off. I was not able to work! Then at the cafeteria, I had been waiting in line for half an hour when they announced they had run out of sandwiches! I went to teach without eating!

Tammy: Nothing is going the way I want either! I had been wanting to talk to you since Monday, but this morning you said you had too much work!

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depuis, pendant, pour: 'for'

page: prep1

There are three prepositions in French, **depuis**, **pendant** and **pour**, that are translated as 'for' and are used to indicate the duration of an event.

depuis

If an event began in the past and is **continuing** into the present, use 'depuis' with the present tense. For example:

Tammy: Tex et moi sommes ensemble **depuis** un an.

Tammy: Tex and I have been together for a year.

pendant

Pendant literally means 'during', but it is usually best expressed in English as 'for' plus a certain amount of time. It can be used with all tenses.

Tex: Tous les jours, je parle avec Tammy **pendant** une heure.

Tex: Everyday, I talk with Tammy for an hour.

Tex: A Noël, Tammy et moi resterons chez ses parents **pendant** deux semaines.

Tex: For Christmas, Tammy and I will stay at her parents' for two weeks.

Pendant is used with the passé composé to indicate how long a **completed** activity lasted. Be careful not to use **depuis** with the passé composé in this context.

Tex: J'ai attendu Edouard **pendant** une heure. Finalement, il est arrivé. Il est toujours en retard.

Tex: I waited for Edouard for an hour. Finally he arrived. He is always late.

pour

The preposition **pour** is used in a variety of contexts. When translated as 'for' in English, it may designate the duration of a future event with the verbs **partir** and **aller**. Note that the verb may be conjugated in either the present or future tense.

Tammy: A Noël, Tex et moi, nous allons chez moi **pour** deux semaines.

Tammy: For Christmas, Tex and I are going to my house for two weeks.

Tex: C'est vrai, nous partirons **pour** deux longues semaines.

Tex: It's true, we will leave for two long weeks.

Tammy: Salut, Tex. Ça va?

Tammy: Hi Tex. How are you?

Tex: Non, ce n'est pas mon jour! Je pars

Tex: Not well! This is not my day! I am

pour le week-end. Je vais rendre visite à Paw-Paw. J'ai attendu le bus **pendant** une heure ce matin. Puis je l'ai raté à cause de Bette.

leaving for the weekend. I am going to visit Paw-Paw. I waited for the bus for an hour this morning. Then I missed it because of Bette.

Tammy: Qu'est-ce qu'elle a fait? Tex:

Tammy: What did she do?

Je ne vais pas te le dire.

Tex: I am not going to tell you.

Tammy: Nous sortons ensemble **depuis** un an. Tu ne peux plus garder de secrets comme ça!

Tammy: We have been going out for a year. You can't keep secrets like that anymore!

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Prepositions with Places

page: pre3

Prepositions are used in expressions which relate where you are, where you are going and where you are coming from. The preposition used in such expressions depends on the geographic location discussed.

geographic location

cities (Paris, Londres, Austin)
islands (Cuba, Tahiti)

feminine (usually ending in -e)
countries (la France)
states (la Californie)
provinces (la Bourgogne)
continents (l'Europe)

to/in

à
à Paris à Cuba

en
en France en
Californie
en Bourgogne en
Europe

from

de (d')
d'Austin de
Tahiti

de (d')
de France de
Californie
de Bourgogne
d'Europe



masculine

countries (le Canada, le Texas :-)
provinces/states (le Colorado)

au
au Canada
au Colorado

du
du Texas
du Colorado

masculine beginning with a vowel

countries (l'Iran)
provinces/states (l'Ontario)

en
en Iran
en Ontario

de (d')
d'Iran
d'Ontario

plural countries and regions
(les Etats-Unis)

aux
aux Etats-Unis

des
des Etats-Unis



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Tex est né **au** Texas, bien sûr. Mais par accident il a grandi **en** Europe. Comment expliquer cette histoire incroyable?

Eh bien, quand il était tout petit, on l'a mis dans un avion avec les bagages **à** l'aéroport Bush International **à** Houston.

Son avion est arrivé **à** Paris (**en** France) où il a rencontré des nonnes françaises qui venaient de faire un voyage **aux** États-Unis. Elles arrivaient **de** Houston, elles aussi. Quelle coïncidence!

Elles ont eu pitié de ce pauvre tatou égaré et elles l'ont emmené au couvent **à** Lyon. Tex a vécu heureux chez les nonnes pendant plusieurs années.

Malheureusement, un jour il a été expulsé **de** France, et il est retourné dans son pays natal, c'est-à-dire **au** Texas!

Tex was born in Texas, of course, but by accident he grew up in Europe. How do we explain this unbelievable story?

Well, when he was very little, he was put with the luggage in a plane at Bush International Airport in Houston.

His plane arrived in Paris (in France) where he met some French nuns who had just taken a trip to the United States. They, too, were arriving from Houston. What a coincidence!

They took pity on this poor lost armadillo and they took him to their convent in Lyon. Tex lived happily with the nuns for several years.

Unfortunately, one day he was deported from France and he returned to his native country, that is, to Texas!

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prepositions with infinitives

page: pre4

The infinitive is the verb form generally used after a preposition in French. **À** (to) and **de** (from, about) are the most common prepositions in French. In many expressions, the choice of the preposition **à** or **de** before an infinitive is purely idiomatic; that is, it is unrelated to meaning. In such cases, one must memorize which preposition is used.

à + infinitive

When the following verbs are followed by an infinitive, the preposition **à** is required.

Tex **a du mal à** trouver l'inspiration.

Tex finds it difficult to find inspiration.

ai der à, to help to

encourager à, to encourage to

s'amuser à, to have fun at

s'habituer à, to get used to

apprendre à, to learn to

hésiter à, to hesitate to

arriver à, to succeed in, to manage to

inviter à, to invite to

s'attendre à, to expect to

se mettre à, to start to

avoir du mal à, to find it difficult to

se préparer à, to prepare to

chercher à, to try to, to attempt to

renoncer à, to give up

commencer à, to start to

réussir à, to succeed at

continuer à/ de, to continue to
(either **à** or **de**)

servir à, to be used for

se décider à, to make up one's mind to

tenir à, to be anxious to, to be eager to

de + infinitive

When the following verbs are followed by an infinitive, the preposition **de** is required.

Tex **arrête d'**écrire, parce qu'il **rêve**
d'embrasser Tammy.

Tex stops writing, because he is dreaming of
kissing Tammy.

(s')arrêter de, to stop

oublier de, to forget to

choisir de, to choose to

permettre (à quelqu'un) de,
to permit someone to

conseiller de, to advise to

persuader de, to persuade to

se contenter de, to content oneself with

se presser de, to hurry to

continuer à/ de, to continue to
(either **à** or **de**)

promettre de, to promise to

décider de, to decide to

proposer de, to propose to

s'efforcer de to try hard to, to endeavor to

refuser de, to refuse to

essayer de, to try to

rêver de to dream of

s'excuser de, to apologize for

se soucier de, to care about

finir de, to finish

se souvenir de, to remember to

mériter de, to deserve, to be worth

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Most idiomatic expressions with **avoir** also require **de** + infinitive:

| | |
|--|---|
| Oh, Tex a l'air de rêver. | Oh, Tex seems to be dreaming. |
| Tex a peur de se réveiller. | Tex is afraid of waking up. |
| Tex a envie de dormir. | Tex feels like sleeping. |
| Tex a besoin de se reposer. | Tex needs to rest. |
| Tex a honte d' être américain. | Tex is ashamed of being American. |
| Tex a tort d' être susceptible. | Tex is wrong in being touchy / should not be touchy. |
| Tex a raison d' être fier. | Tex is right to be proud. |



The infinitive may be used to complete the sense of an adjective or a pronoun. Generally infinitives following a noun or adjective are preceded by the preposition **de**. (Tex est **content de** voir Tammy dans ses rêves romantiques. Tex is glad to see Tammy in his romantic dreams.)

However, adjectives and nouns are followed by the preposition **à** + infinitive to indicate a passive sense or a function: "cette eau est **bonne à** boire" (this is drinking water), "ce livre est **amusant à** lire" (this book is fun to read), "c'est **triste à** voir" (it's a sorry sight), "c'est **difficile à** dire" (this is difficult to say).

pour, afin de, avant de, sans, par + infinitive

The infinitive expresses purpose when it is used after **pour** or **afin de** (in order to).

In the case of **avant de** (before) and **sans** (without), the English translation is often a conjugated verb (before they left), or a present participle (without speaking), rather than the English infinitive.

The infinitive follows the preposition **par** (by) after the verbs **commencer** (to start) and **finir** (to finish).

| | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| pour/afin de | Tex s'allonge sur son lit pour lire. | Tex lies down on his bed to read. |
| avant de | Avant de s'endormir, Tex lit toujours un poème romantique. | Before going to sleep, Tex always reads a romantic poem. |
| sans | Il ne peut pas dormir sans rêver de Tammy. | He can not sleep without dreaming of Tammy. |
| par | Il finit par rêver de Tammy toute la nuit. | He ends up dreaming of Tammy all night long. |

après (past infinitive constructions)

The infinitive of **avoir** or **être** plus the **past participle** of a verb is used after the preposition **après** (after) to describe a preceding action in the past. Note the past participle agreement in past constructions with **être**.

| | |
|--|---|
| Après avoir rêvé de Tammy, Tex retrouve son inspiration. | After dreaming of Tammy, Tex finds his inspiration again. |
| Après être devenue la muse de Tex, Tammy est passée à la postérité! | After becoming Tex' muse, Tammy is immortalized! |

Pronouns

page: pro1

Introduction to Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word used to replace a noun. It is commonly used to avoid repeating a previously mentioned noun known as the **antecedent**. In the following example, pronouns in bold face are used to replace the underlined antecedents.

Tex a écrit un poème romantique, Tex wrote an romantic poem and
et puis **il** l'a envoyé à Tammy. **Elle** a été then **he** sent **it** to Tammy. **She**
choquée quand **elle** l'a lu. was shocked when **she** read **it**.

The different kinds of pronouns are named according to their grammatical function.

subject pronouns

je, tu, il, elle, on, nous, vous, ils, elles I, you, he, she, one, we, you, they (m), they (f)

direct object pronouns

me, te, le, la, nous, vous, les me, you, him / it, her / it us, you, them (m) / (f)

indirect object pronouns

me, te, lui to me, to you, to him / her
nous, vous, leur to us, to you, to them (m) / (f)

the pronouns y and en

y en there (replaces preposition + location) some,
any, not any (replaces 'de' + noun)

disjunctive pronouns

moi, toi, lui, elle, nous, vous, eux, elles me, you, he, she, one
we, you, them (m), them (f)

reflexive pronouns

me, te, nous, vous, se myself, yourself, himself, herself, ourselves,
yourselves, themselves

interrogative pronouns

qui who
que what

demonstrative pronouns

celui, celle, ceux this one / that one (m,f) these, those

relative pronouns

qui, que who, whom,
lequel, laquelle which, which

indefinite pronouns

quelqu'un someone
quel que chose something



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Subject Pronouns

page: pro2

A pronoun replaces a noun in order to avoid repetition. Subject pronouns are subjects of verbs. In French, a subject pronoun is immediately or almost immediately followed by its verb. The use of subject pronouns is mandatory in French; always use a subject pronoun to construct sentences in the absence of a noun subject. Here are the French subject pronouns:

| person | singular | plural |
|------------|--|---|
| 1st person | je , I | nous , we |
| 2nd person | tu , you | vous , you/y'all |
| 3rd person | il , he/it elle , she/it on , one/we (colloquial) | ils , they (masc.) elles , they (fem.) |

Subject pronouns are labelled by the term 'person', referring to the subject's role in the conversation. 1st person refers to the person(s) speaking (I, we); 2nd person to the person(s) spoken to (you); and 3rd person to the person(s) or thing(s) spoken about (he, she, it, they).

je

Unlike the English pronoun 'I', **je** is not capitalized unless it begins a sentence.

tu

The pronoun **tu** is singular and, importantly, informal. Use **tu** to address people your own age and those you know well.

on

The pronoun **on** means 'one', or 'they' in a nonspecific sense: 'comme on dit' (as they say). **On** often replaces 'nous' in spoken French: 'On y va?' (Shall we go?).

vous

The pronoun **vous** is conjugated with a plural verb so it obviously refers to more than one person. However, it is also the customary form of address when you are talking to only one person you do not know well, such as an elder, a boss, a shopkeeper, etc. Inappropriate use of the **tu** form is considered a sign of disrespect.

Tammy: Bonjour, Paw-Paw. **Vous** allez bien?

Tammy: Hello Paw-Paw. Are you doing well?

Paw-Paw: Ah, oui! Et vous, mes enfants, Tex, Tammy, **vous** allez bien?

Paw-Paw: Ah, yes! And you, kids, Tex, Tammy, are you doing OK?

il/elle

Il and **elle** besides meaning 'he' and 'she' can both express the meaning 'it' depending on the gender of the noun being replaced. For example:

Bette: **La musique** est bonne, n'est-ce pas?

Bette: The music is good, isn't it?

Tex: Non, **elle** est terrible! Je déteste la musique country.

Tex: No, it's terrible. I hate country music.

Bette: Oh, qu'est-ce que tu as fait, Tex? **Le juke-box** est cassé?

Bette: Oh, what did you do, Tex? The juke-box is broken

Tex: Oui, il est cassé!

Tex: Yes, it is broken!



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ils/elles

ils and **elles** are similar to **il** and **elle** since they agree with the gender of the noun they replace. **ils** and **elles** may refer to people or things. **Elles** is used to mean 'they' if it replaces people who are all women or objects that are all feminine in gender. On the other hand, **ils** is used to mean 'they' for objects that are masculine in gender or a group of all men or any group where there is at least one male person or masculine object in the group.

Bette et Tex sont de bons amis.

Bette and Tex are good friends.

Normalement **ils** s'entendent bien, mais pas aujourd'hui!

Normally, they get along well, but not today!



BONJOUR TEX,
TU VAS BIEN ?

Fiona: Bonjour Tex, **tu** vas bien?

Fiona: Hi Tex, are you doing well?

Tex: Pas du tout, **je** vais très mal. **Je** veux écouter de la musique française. Et puis Bette et moi, **on** s'est disputé.

Tex: Not at all. I'm doing poorly. I want to listen to some French music. And then Bette and I had a fight.

Fiona: Ah bon? **Elle** est toujours là?

Fiona: Oh really? Is she still here?

Tex: Non. **Elle** est partie avec Tammy. **Elles** sont allées au Broken Spoke.

Tex: Non, she left with Tammy. They went to the Broken Spoke.

Fiona: Tiens, **nous** y allons, toi et moi?

Fiona: Hey, why don't you and I go there?

Tex: **Tu** ne m'as pas entendu? **Je** n'aime pas la musique country!!! Beurk! Qu'est-ce qu'**on** aime la musique country au Texas!

Tex: Didn't you hear me? I don't like country music!!! Argh! People really like country music in Texas!

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c'est vs il/elle est

page: pro3

To describe and introduce things or people in French, two common phrases are used: **c'est** and **il/elle est**. The plural forms are **ce sont** and **ils/elles sont**.

The choice between **c'est** and **il/elle est** is not always easy, but there are basic principles which can guide you in the choice. A rule of thumb is that **c'est** or **ce sont** are followed by a determined noun ('le tatou', 'une Américaine', 'mes livres'). Remember that nouns in French are preceded by a **determiner**. **il/elle est** and **ils/elles sont** are followed by an adjective ('content', 'sympathique').



c'est/ce sont

C'est and **ce sont** are followed by the following:

+ *noun, including modified nouns*

Tex? **C'est** un tatou. **C'est** un Américain. **C'est** un petit tatou bilingue.

Tex? He's an armadillo. He is an American. He is a small bilingual armadillo.

Tammy et Tex? Non, **ce ne sont pas** des chats! **Ce sont** des tatous.

Tammy and Tex? No they are not cats! They are armadillos.

+ *proper noun*

C'est Tex.

It's Tex.

+ *disjunctive pronoun*

Tammy: Allô Tex? **C'est** moi.

Tammy: Hello Tex? It's me.

+ *dates*

Tex: Qui est-ce? Ah, **c'est** toi Tammy!

Tex: Who is this? Oh, it's you Tammy!

Tex: Mon anniversaire? **C'est** le quatorze juillet. **C'est** jeudi prochain!

Tex: My birthday? It's July 14th. It's next Thursday!

+ *an infinitive as subject*

Tex: Vivre, **c'est** parler français.

Tex: To live is to speak French!

+ *adjective for non-specific referents*

Tex: Ah **c'est** chouette! **C'est** incroyable!

Tex: Oh, that's neat! That's unbelievable.

il/elle est/ils/elles sont

Use **il/elle est** or **ils/elles sont** to introduce the following:

+ *adjective alone*

Tex? **Il est** arrogant! **Il n'est pas** français. **Il est** américain.

Tex? He is arrogant! He isn't French. He is American.

Tammy? **Elle est** gentille.

Tammy? She is nice.

+ *nationality, occupation, religion (used as adjectives in French)*

Tex? **Il est** poète.

Tex? He is a poet.

Trey? **Il est** musicien.

Trey? He is a musician.

Tammy? **Elle est** étudiante.

Tammy? She is a student.

Remember that **il(s)** and **elle(s)** refer to a specific person or thing. **Ce** does not refer to a specific person or thing; it is usually translated as **that**.

Il est stupide. (He's stupid.)

C'est stupide. (That's stupid.)

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disjunctive pronouns

page: pro4

forms

Disjunctive pronouns (also known as tonic or stressed pronouns) refer to people whose names have already been mentioned or whose identity is obvious from context. They are used in a variety of situations in French, most often in short answers without verbs, for emphasis, or for contrast with [subject pronouns](#). Here are all the disjunctive pronouns:

| disjunctive pronouns | |
|--|---|
| moi (I, me) | nous (we, us) |
| toi (you) | vous (you) |
| lui (he, him) elle (she, her) soi (one) | eux (they, them; masc.) elles (they, them; fem.) |

uses

after *prepositions*

C'est samedi soir:

It's Saturday night:

Tammy adore Tex. Elle ne peut pas vivre sans **lui**. Elle vit pour **lui**. Elle veut se marier avec **lui**.

Tammy loves Tex. She can't live without him. She lives for him. She wants to marry him.

in *short answers* or *exclamations* when no verb is expressed

Corey: Qui sort avec Tammy?

Corey: Who is going out with Tammy?

Tex: **Moi**!

Tex: Me!

with *ni...ni, ne...que* que **toi** ma chérie.

Tex (à Tammy): Je n'aime

Tex (to Tammy): I love only you, my dear.

in a *compound subject* or *object*

Tammy: Tex et **moi**, **nous** aimons aller en boîte.

Tammy: Tex and I like to go clubbing.

in *simple agreements* or *disagreements* when no verb is expressed

Joe-Bob: **Moi** aussi!

Joe-Bob: Me too!

Corey: Pas **moi**!

Corey: Not me! Fiona:

Fiona: **Moi** non plus!

Me neither!

for *emphasis*

Joe-Bob: **Eux**, ils s'amuse, mais **vous**, vous ne sortez jamais.

Joe-Bob: Those guys, they have fun, but you, you never go out.

Dimanche matin:

Sunday morning:

after *c'est* or *ce sont*

Corey: C'est **moi** le plus nul.

Corey: I'm the biggest loser.

with *-même*, to mean 'self' sur **toi**-même!

Tammy: Arrête de t'apitoyer

Tammy: Stop pitying yourself!

in *comparisons*

Corey: Il n'y a personne qui soit plus pitoyable que **moi**!

Corey: There is nobody who is more pitiful than me.

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Direct object pronouns

page: pro5

A direct object is a noun following the verb that answers the questions 'what?' or 'whom?' Remember a pronoun replaces a noun, and in this case the noun is a direct object. For example, Tammy might ask: 'Tex, will you kiss **me** tonight?', where the direct object pronoun 'me' stands for Tammy. Whether a verb takes a direct object or not depends on whether the specific verb is [transitive](#) or [intransitive](#).

forms and uses

| direct object pronouns | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| me , me | nous , we/us |
| te , you | vous , you |
| le , him/it la , her/it | les , them (masc./fem.) |

In front of a word starting with a vowel, **le** and **la** become **l'**; **me** becomes **m'**; **te** becomes **t'**.

Tammy: Dis, tu **m'**appelles ce soir, Tex?

Tex: Oui, ma belle, je **t'**appelle ce soir.

Corey: Edouard et moi, tu **nous** appelles ce soir, Tex?

Tex: Non, je ne **vous** appelle pas ce soir.

Joe-Bob: Moi, je peux **les** appeler ce soir!

Tammy: Say, will you call me tonight, Tex?

Tex: Yes, beautiful, I will call you tonight.

Corey: Edouard and me, will you call us tonight, Tex?

Tex: No, I will not call you guys tonight.

Joe-Bob: I can call them tonight!

Direct object pronouns in French agree in number and gender with the nouns they replace.

Tex cherche le numéro de téléphone de Tammy.
Enfin il **le** trouve et il **l'**appelle.

Joe-Bob cherche les numéros d'Edouard et de Corey.
Enfin il **les** trouve et il **les** appelle.

Tex looks for Tammy's phone number. Finally he finds **it** and he calls **her**.

Joe-Bob looks for Edouard and Corey's phone numbers. Finally he finds **them** and he calls **them**.

Note that **le/l'** can replace an adjective or a verb.

Tex et Tammy sont amoureux? Oui, ils **le** sont.

Tex est quelquefois jaloux? Oui, il **l'**est.

Joe-Bob: Tu veux que j'appelle Tammy?

Tex: Non, moi, je vais **le** faire.

Tex and Tammy are in love? Yes, they are.

Tex is sometimes jealous? Yes, he is.

Joe-Bob: Do you want me to call Tammy?

Tex: No, I'll do it.

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placement

Direct object pronouns precede the verb of which they are the object. In a composed tense (like the passé composé), the pronoun precedes the auxiliary. In infinitive constructions, the pronoun goes immediately before the infinitive. When the conjugated verb is negative, the **ne** precedes the object pronoun.

Tammy: Tex **m'**aime.

Tex **ne t'**aime **pas**.

Tammy: Tex va **m'**épouser.

Bette: Sois raisonnable, Tammy. Tex ne veut pas **t'**épouser.

Tammy: Mais si. Il l'a promis quand je **l'**ai rencontré à Lyon.

Bette: Mais il ne **m'**avait pas encore rencontrée!

Tammy: Tex loves me. Bette:

Bette: Tex does not love you.

Tammy: Tex is going to marry me.

Bette: Be reasonable, Tammy. Tex doesn't want to marry you.

Tammy: Yes he does. He promised when I met him in Lyon.

Bette: But he hadn't yet met me!



In the negative imperative, the pronoun follows the normal placement before the verb. However, in the affirmative imperative, the object pronoun goes after the verb and is attached to it by a hyphen. In addition, **me** and **te** become **moi** and **toi**.

Bette: Tex, embrasse-**moi**!

Joe-Bob: Attends, ne **l'**embrasse pas devant moi. Je m'en vais.

Bette: Eh bien, il est parti. SMACK!

Bette: Tex, kiss me!

Joe-Bob: Wait, don't kiss her in front of me. I'm leaving.

Bette: Eh bien, he's left. SMACK!

agreement of the past participle

The past participle agrees in gender and in number with a preceding direct object. In other words, if the direct object pronoun is feminine, add an **e** to the end of the past participle; if the pronoun is masculine plural, add an **s** (unless the past participle already ends in **s**); if it is feminine plural, add **es**.

Un peu plus tard ...

Bette: Tammy? Tu sais, Tex **m'a** embrassée.

Tammy: Ce n'est pas vrai!

Bette: Demande-lui. Il arrive.

l'as embrassée, Bette?

Tex: Qui? Bette? Mais non. Je ne **l'**ai pas embrassée. C'est elle qui **m'a** embrassé!
PAF! Aie!

A little later ...

Bette: Tammy? Tex kissed me.

Tammy: That's not true.

Bette: Ask him. Here he comes. Tammy: Tex, tu

Tammy: Tex, did you kiss her, Bette?

Tex: Who? Bette? Why no. I didn't kiss her. She kissed me! POW! Ow!

pronoun y

page: pro6

uses

y expressing place

Y replaces a preposition indicating location plus its object: 'à UT' (at UT), 'devant la Tour' (in front of the Tower). It is usually translated as **there**. Prepositions which indicate location include **à, en, dans, devant, derrière, sous, sur**. The noun objects of these prepositions are places and things which indicate a place. The exception is the preposition **chez** which is used with a person, as in 'chez Bette' (Bette's place). Note that **à** + person is replaced by an **indirect object pronoun** except with certain verbs.



Bette: Tammy, tu vas à Waco?

Bette: Tammy, are you going to Waco?

Tammy: Oui, j'y vais ce week-end pour un bal à Baylor.

Tammy: Yes, I'm going **there** this weekend for a dance at Baylor.

Bette: Mais on ne peut pas **y** danser.

Bette: But you can't dance **there**.

Tammy: Mais si, les étudiants à Baylor ont maintenant le droit de danser.

Tammy: But yes, Baylor students now have the right to dance.

Bette: Super, on **y** va!

Bette: Super, let's go **there**!

y with certain verbs

With certain verbs **y** replaces the preposition **à** when its object is an idea or thing, but **not** a person. Some of these verbs are **penser à, réfléchir à** (to think about), **s'intéresser à** (to be interested in), **répondre à** (to answer to), **participer à** (to participate in). In these expressions, the preposition **à** is idiomatic. It does not indicate location in or movement toward.

Tex s'intéresse à la philo. Il s'y intéresse énormément.

Tex is interested in philosophy. He's terribly interested **in it**.

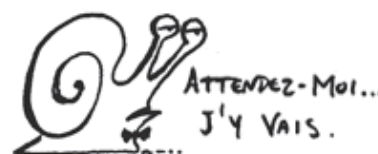
Tex pense toujours à l'existentialisme. Il **y** pense jour et nuit.

Tex always thinks about existentialism. He thinks **about it** night and day.

When these verbs are followed by a person, the **disjunctive pronoun** will be used, for example, 'Bette pense souvent à Tex. Elle pense souvent à lui.' (Bette often thinks of Tex. She often thinks of him.)

placement

Placement of **y** is the same as that of **direct** and **indirect** pronoun objects: **y** precedes the verb it refers to, except in the affirmative imperative. In compound tenses, like the passé composé, it precedes the auxiliary. Note that there is **no** agreement between **y** and the past participle, since **y** does not replace a direct object.



Edouard: Où allez-vous?

Edouard: Where are you going?

Bette: A Waco. Tu veux **y** aller avec nous? with us?

Bette: To Waco. Do you want to go **there**

Edouard: Je n'y suis jamais allé. On m'a dit que Waco était une expérience anthropologique, le musée Dr. Pepper, le musée Texas Rangers, Baylor ...

Edouard: I've never been **there**. I've been told that Waco was an anthropological experience: the Dr. Pepper museum, the Texas Rangers museum, Baylor ...

Bette: Nous **y** allons tout de suite.

Bette: We're going there right away.

Edouard: Bon, attendez-moi, j'y vais aussi. Allons-y!

Edouard: Good, wait for me I'm going **there**, too. Let's go (**there**)!

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Pronoun en

page: pro77

uses

En is a pronoun that typically replaces **de** + a noun; this includes nouns introduced by **partitive** or **indefinite** determiners (**de, du, de la, des**). **En** may be translated as 'some', 'any', or 'not any'.



EDOUARD, TU EN VEUX?

Tammy, Edouard et Tex sont à table.

Edouard, tu veux de la soupe?

Edouard: Oui, merci. Elle est délicieuse.

Tex: Il y a du vin?

Tammy: Oui il y **en** a. Tu **en** veux?

Tammy, Edouard and Tex are eating. Tammy:

Tammy: Edouard, do you want some soup?

Edouard: Yes, thank you. It is delicious.

Tex: Is there any wine?

Tammy: Yes, there is **some**. Would you like **some**?

In a similar fashion, **en** replaces a noun introduced by a number or an **expression of quantity**. Notice that the equivalent of **en** is not always expressed in English, although **en** must still be used in the French sentence:

Tammy: Edouard, tu as assez de pain?

Edouard: Oui, merci, j'**en** ai **assez**.

Tammy: Tex, tu veux un peu de pain?

Tex: Non, merci, je n'**en** veux pas. J'**en** ai encore **une tranche**.

Tammy: Edouard, do you have enough bread?

Edouard: Yes, thank you, I have **enough (of it)**.

Tammy: Tex, do you want a little bread?

Tex: No, thank you, I do not want **any**. I still have **a slice (of it)**.

En also replaces expressions introduced by the preposition **de** with the following verbs:

s'occuper de, to deal with

parler de, to speak of

remercier de, to thank for

revenir de, to return from

venir de, to come from

Tammy: Alors Edouard, comment s'est passée ton interview au restaurant?

Edouard: J'**en** reviens tout juste! C'était dégoûtant.

Tammy: So Edouard, how did your interview at the restaurant go?

Edouard: I've just returned **from it**! It was disgusting.

Tammy: Tu veux **en** parler?

Edouard: Tu sais bien que j'ai envie de gagner plus d'argent, j'**en** ai vraiment besoin, mais servir du barbecue! Jamais! Edouard ne travaillera jamais dans un restaurant qui s'appelle le Bon Barbecue!

Tammy: Do you want to talk **about it**?

Edouard: You know that I want to earn more money. I really need **some** (money), but serve barbecue! Never! Edouard will never work in a restaurant named Good Barbecue!

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Note that a **disjunctive pronoun** is used with these verbs to replace expressions when the object of the preposition **de** is a person rather than a thing.

placement

Placement of **en** is the same as **direct** and **indirect** pronoun objects. **En** precedes the verb it refers to, except in the affirmative imperative. In compound tenses (such as the *passé composé*), it precedes the auxiliary verb. Note that there is **no** agreement between **en** and the past participle, since **en** does not replace a direct object. When **en** is used with **il y a** ('there is, there are'), it comes between **y** and **a**: Du pain sur la table? **Il y en a** (Some bread on the table? There is **some there**.)



Tex: De nouveaux poèmes? Ne m'**en** parle pas!

Editeur: Mais si, parlons-**en**.

Tex: Je n'**en** ai pas écrit depuis longtemps et je ne vais plus **en** écrire. Ma muse m'a quitté et je n'ai plus d'idées.

Editeur: Mais si tu **en** as. Elles sont bizarres, tes idées, mais tu **en** as beaucoup quand même.

Tex: Some new poems? Don't talk to me about them.

Editor: But yes, let's talk **about them**.

Tex: I haven't written **any** for a long time and I'm not going to write **any** more. My muse has left me and I don't have any more ideas.

Editor: But yes, you have **some** (ideas). Your ideas are strange, but you have a lot **of them** nevertheless.

Indirect object pronouns

page: pro8

forms and uses

An indirect object is a person which receives the action of a verb indirectly. In French the indirect object is always preceded by the preposition **à** and in English by the preposition 'to': Tex offre des fleurs à Tammy. (Tex gives flowers **to** Tammy.) An indirect object pronoun indicates **à** + a person. In the sentence 'Tex offre des fleurs à Tammy', 'Tammy' is the indirect object. The indirect object **pronoun** that replaces 'à Tammy' is **lui**: Tex lui offre des fleurs. (Tex gives flowers to her.) Following are the French indirect object pronouns:



| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| me (to me) | nous (to us) |
| te (to you) | vous (to you) |
| lui (to him/to her) | leur (to them) |

In front of a word starting with a vowel, **me** and **te** become **m'** and **t'**.

Tammy: Tex, tu **m'**offres des fleurs? Et à Bette, tu **lui** offres des fleurs aussi, n'est-ce pas?

Tex: Oui, mais je **t'**offre des fleurs plus souvent.

Joe-Bob: Tu **leur** as offert des fleurs, à toutes les deux! Bravo, quel tombeur!

Tammy: Paf!

Tammy: Tex, you're giving **me** flowers? But Bette, you give **her** flowers, too, don't you?

Tex: Yes, I give **you** flowers more often.

Joe-Bob: You gave **them** both flowers! Bravo, what a womanizer!

Tammy: Pow!

placement

An indirect object pronoun is placed just before the verb of which it is the object. In a composed tense (like the passé composé), the pronoun precedes the auxiliary. In infinitive constructions, the pronoun goes immediately before the infinitive. When the conjugated verb is negative, the **ne** precedes the object pronoun. Note that, in compound tenses (such as the passé composé), there is no agreement between the past participle and the indirect object. In the affirmative imperative, the indirect object pronoun is placed after the verb it is the object of and attached to it by a hyphen. In addition, **me** and **te** become **moi** and **toi**.



Tex: Regarde, quelqu'un **m'**a envoyé un cadeau.

Tammy: Qui **t'**offre un cadeau?

Tex ouvre le cadeau.

Tammy: Oh, regarde. Il y a une petite carte ... Bon anniversaire, mon petit tatou. Je compte partager cette bouteille ... et la vie avec toi. Avec toi? Mais, il n'y a pas de signature. Eh bien, monsieur, explique-**moi**!

Tex: Euh ...

Tammy: C'est bien cette petite chatte maline, n'est-ce pas? Je vais aller **lui** parler.

Tex: Ne **lui** parle pas! C'est une bagatelle, c'est un petit rien ...

Tammy: Un petit rien? Paf!

Tex: Look, someone sent **me** a gift.

Tex: Ahh, une bouteille de champagne!
Tammy: Who is giving **you** a gift?

Tex: Ahh, a bottle of champagne!
Tex opens the gift.

Tammy: Oh, look. There is a little card ... Happy birthday, my little armadillo. I'm counting on sharing this bottle ... and life with you. With you? But, there's no signature. Well, now, sir, explain (this to) **me**.

Tex: Uh ...

Tammy: It's that cunning little cat, isn't it? I'm going to go talk to **her** about it.

Tex: Don't talk to her! It's a small thing, it's nothing ...

Tammy: Nothing? Pow!

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Order of object pronouns present tense

page: Pro9

overview

A single pronoun object is placed before the verb with which it is associated, except in the affirmative imperative when the pronoun object follows the verb. The following table outlines the order and placement of pronouns when there is more than one object pronoun in a sentence.

| | | | | | | |
|---------|-------------|------------|-------------|----------|-----------|------|
| | me | | | | | |
| | te | le | | | | |
| SUBJECT | nous | la | lui | y | en | VERB |
| | vous | les | leur | | | |
| | se | | | | | |

Joe-Bob prépare sa leçon: Mon dieu, comme c'est difficile, l'ordre des pronoms objets! Le prof me dit qu'il faut les apprendre par coeur. Voici ma chanson ...

Joe- Bob is preparing for class: My god, the order of object pronouns sure is difficult!
The teacher says I have to memorize them. Here is my song ...

However, in the affirmative imperative, the pronoun objects follow the verb.

| | | | | | |
|------|-------------|--------------|------------------|----------|-----------|
| | | | -moi (m') | | |
| | | | -toi (t') | | |
| VERB | -le | -lui | -nous | y | en |
| | -la | -leur | -vous | | |
| | -les | | -vous | | |

y and en

Y always precedes **en**, and both precede the verb except in the affirmative imperative. When used with other pronouns, **y** and **en** always follow any other pronoun object, even in the affirmative imperative.

Bette: Tu vas au gymnase?

Bette: Are you going to the gym?

Tammy: Oui, j'**y** vais. Et toi, Fiona?
about you, Fiona?

Tammy: Yes, I'm going there. And how

Fiona: Non, j'**en** viens. Vas-**y** avec Bette.

Fiona: No, I've just been there. Go with
Bette.

Tammy: il **y** a des footballeurs là-bas?

Tammy: Are there any football players
there?

Fiona: Oui, il **y en** a. Je **te** retrouve dans une heure
chez toi?

Fiona: Yes, there are some. Should I meet you at
your house in an hour?

Tammy: D'accord. Dis Fiona, je n'ai pas de rouge à
lèvres. Tu **m'en** donnes?

Tammy: OK. Say, Fiona, I don't have any lipstick.
Can you give me some?

Bette: Et n'oublie pas le parfum. C'est essentiel aussi,
hein? Allez, donne-**nous-en**.

Bette: And don't forget the perfume. It's also
essential, right? Go on, give us some.

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Direct and indirect object pronouns together

Sometimes there will be both a direct and an indirect object pronoun in the same sentence. The direct object pronoun is usually closest to the verb of which it is the object. However, the order of direct / indirect object pronouns is reversed in the third person singular and third person plural (le lui, le leur, etc.). In this case, the indirect object is closest to the verb.

son parfum?

| | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Fiona me le donne? | Fiona gives it to me? | Fiona nous le donne? | Fiona gives it to us? |
| Fiona te le donne? | Fiona gives it to you | Fiona vous le donne? | Fiona gives it to you |
| Fiona le lui donne? | Fiona gives it to him/her? | Fiona le leur donne? | Fiona gives it to them? |

Remember that in the affirmative imperative, **me** and **te** become **moi** and **toi**.

Tammy: Fiona! Fiona! Ton parfum, tu **me le** donnes!? Tu vas **me le** donner? Donne-**le-moi**!

Tammy: Fiona! Fiona! Your perfume? Are you giving it to me? Are you going to give it to me!? Give it to me!

Fiona: Pardon, je ne comprends pas. Vous voulez du parfum pour aller au gymnase?

Fiona: Sorry, I do not understand. You want perfume to go to the gym?

negation

In simple tenses, like the present, future, imperfect, and passé simple, the object pronouns are placed between the **ne** and the verb. In compound tenses, like the passé composé, the plus-que-parfait etc., the object pronouns are placed between the **ne** and the auxiliary verb.

Plus tard au gymnase.

Later in the gym.

Tammy: Personne ne fait attention à nous! Tu vois, sans parfum, aucun mec! Pourquoi est-ce que Fiona **ne nous en a pas** donné?

Tammy: No one is paying any attention to us. You see, no perfume, not a single guy! Why didn't Fiona give us any?

Bette: Et bien, c'est parce qu'elle ne comprend pas l'art de la séduction.

Bette: Well, that's because she doesn't understand the art of seduction.

Indefinite pronouns

page: pro10

A pronoun replaces a noun which has been mentioned or is obvious from context. An indefinite pronoun refers to people or things without identifying them precisely.



quelqu'un, quelque chose

Quelqu'un (somebody) is used in affirmative or interrogative sentences to refer to a person, whether male or female. **Quelque chose** (something) is the equivalent pronoun used to refer to a thing. If **quelqu'un** or **quelque chose** is followed by an adjective, the adjective needs to be preceded by **de**.

Tammy: **Quelque chose** d'extraordinaire est arrivé aujourd'hui.
J'ai rencontré **quelqu'un de** légendaire.

Tammy: Something exceptional happened today. I met somebody legendary.

The negative form of **quelqu'un** is **personne** (no one, nobody) and the negative form of **quelque chose** is **rien** (nothing). Remember that **ne** precedes the verb when **personne** and **rien** are used in **negative** sentences.

Tex: Qui as-tu rencontré?

Tex: Who did you meet?

Tammy: **Personne** que tu connais.

Tammy: No one you know.

Tex: C'est tout? Tu ne me dis **rien** d'autre?

Tex: That's all? You aren't telling me anything else?

Tammy: Ça ne vaut pas la peine. **Personne ne** veut me croire.

Tammy: It's not worth the trouble. Nobody wants to believe me.

Quelques-uns (a few, masculine) and **quelques-unes** (a few, feminine) are pronouns used in the plural to speak about people or things. Note that the **s** at the end of **quelques** is pronounced before the following **uns** or **unes**.

Tex: Quoi? Tu as rencontré Ricky Williams? **Quelques-uns** de mes amis me disent que tu es amoureuse de lui ...

Tex: What? You met Ricky Williams? Some of my friends tell me you are in love with him ...

Tammy: Un peu ... Parmi mes copines, **quelques-unes** sont complètement folles de lui.

Tammy: A little ... Among my girlfriends, some are completely crazy about him.

chacun vs. aucun

Chacun (each one) is singular and masculine, **chacune** is singular and feminine. **Chaque**, on the other hand, is an **indefinite determiner** used to modify a noun.

Tex: Tu es amoureuse de Ricky Williams?! Alors c'est **chacun** sa vie maintenant?!

Tex: You're in love with Ricky Williams?! So it's everyone for himself now?!

Tammy: Mais non, calme-toi!

Tammy: Of course not, calm down!

The negative form of **chacun** is **aucun**. **Aucun** (none, not a one, not a single) is singular and masculine, **aucune** is singular and feminine. They are used with **ne**.

Tammy: J'ai rencontré beaucoup de footballeurs, mais **aucun ne** me fait cet effet.

Tammy: I have met many football players, but none has this effect on me.

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more indefinite pronouns

Plusieurs (several), **certains** (some; masculine) / **certaines** (some; feminine), **tous** (all, everybody; masculine) / **toutes** (all, everybody; feminine) are plural indefinite pronouns. They are used in place of plural nouns. Note that the **s** is pronounced in **tous** when it is a pronoun.

| | |
|---|--|
| Les copines de Tammy? Plusieurs sont folles de Ricky Williams. | Tammy's girlfriends? Several are crazy about Ricky Williams. |
| Les copines de Fiona? Certains sont folles de Joe-Bob. | Fiona's girlfriends? Some are crazy about Joe-Bob. |
| Les copains de Tex? Certains sont amoureux de Tammy. | Tex's friends? Some are in love with Tammy. |
| Les copains de Tex? Tous sont dingues de Bette. | Tex's friends? All are crazy about Bette. |
| Les copines de Tammy? Toutes sont folles de Tex! | Tammy's girlfriends? All are crazy about Tex! |

tout

Tout (everything), on the other hand, is always singular. For example:

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Tammy: Tex, tout va bien? | Tammy: Tex, everything's ok? |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|

autre

Autre is always preceded by a determiner: **un autre** (another, masculine), **l'autre** (the other, masculine or feminine); **une autre** (another, feminine); **d'autres** (others, masculine or feminine), **les autres** (the others, masculine or feminine).

| | |
|--|--|
| Tex: Non! Il y a un autre dans ta vie!? | Tex: No! There is another in your life!? |
|--|--|

Note the following phrases with **autre**: **autre chose** (something else), **l'un et l'autre** (the one and the other, both, masc), **l'une et l'autre** (the one and the other, both, fem), **les uns et les autres** (one and every, masc), **les unes et les autres** (one and every, fem), **ni l'un ni l'autre** (neither one nor the other), **l'un à l'autre** (to one another), **l'un pour l'autre** (for one another).

n'importe qui

N'importe qui means 'anybody', 'anyone at all'; **n'importe quoi** means 'anything', 'whatever', 'nonsense'. You may also find **qui que ce soit** (anybody) and **quoi que ce soit** (anything).

| | |
|---|--|
| Tex: Tammy, je ne suis pas n'importe qui ! Tu ne peux pas me traiter comme ça! | Tex: Tammy, I am not just anybody! You cannot treat me this way! |
| Tammy: Tu racontes n'importe quoi , Tex! | Tammy: You are talking nonsense Tex! |

quiconque

Quiconque means 'whoever'.

| | |
|--|--|
| Tammy: Quiconque nous écoute en ce moment doit te trouver ridicule! | Tammy: Whoever is listening to us right now must think you are ridiculous! |
|--|--|

tel(s), telle(s)

Tel(s) (masc), telle(s) (fem) may be translated as 'such', 'such as', 'like' or 'as' according to the context. For example, 'Tel père, tel fils' would be the translation of 'Like father, like son'.

| | |
|--|--|
| Tammy: Je n'ai jamais vu une jalousie telque la tienne! | Tammy: I have never seen such jealousy as yours! |
|--|--|

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demonstrative pronouns

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celui, celle, ceux, celles

Celui, **celle**, **ceux**, **celles** ('this one' or 'that one' in the singular; 'these,' 'those' or 'the ones' in the plural) are demonstrative pronouns. They replace a specific noun, which has been mentioned or is obvious from context, in order to avoid repeating it. They agree in gender and number with the nouns they replace.

| number | masculine | feminine |
|----------|--------------|---------------|
| singular | celui | celle |
| plural | ceux | celles |

Celui de/d', **celle de/d'** etc. show possession. They are generally translated by 'that of', 'those of' or by the possessive form.

Tammy: Tu aimes l'accent d'Edouard? Bette: Je préfère **celui de** Tex.

Tammy: Do you like Edouard's accent? Bette: I prefer Tex's.

Tammy: Tu aimes la voix d'Edouard? Bette: Oh, je préfère **celle de** Tex.

Tammy: Do you like Edouard's voice? Bette: Oh, I prefer that of Tex.

Tammy: Tu aimes les yeux d'Edouard? Bette: Oui, mais je préfère **ceux de** Tex.

Tammy: Do you like Edouard's eyes? Bette: Yes, but I prefer Tex's.

Tammy: Tu aimes les oreilles d'Edouard? Bette: Oui, mais je préfère **celles de** Tex.

Tammy: Do you like Edouard's ears? Bette: Yes, but I prefer those of Tex.



-ci and **-là** are added to the demonstrative pronouns to indicate nearness or farness like the distinction between 'this one' and 'that one' in English.

Bette: Tammy, regarde mes dernières photos de Tex! Tu préfères **celle-ci** ou **celle-là**?

Bette: Tammy, look at my latest pictures of Tex! Do you prefer this one or that one?

Celui qui ..., **celle qui ...** mean 'the one that', 'the one who' and **ceux qui ...**, **celles qui ...** mean 'those that / who'. They introduce a relative clause in which they are used as subjects. In the example below, **ceux qui** is the subject of the verb 'portent'.

Bette: Moi, j'aime les tatous.

Bette: Me, I like armadillos.

Tammy: Moi aussi, surtout **ceux qui** portent le béret.

Tammy: Me too, especially those who wear berets.

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Celui que ... and **celle que ...** mean 'the one that / whom / which', **ceux que ...** and **celles que ...** mean 'the ones that / whom / which'. They introduce a relative clause in which they are used as objects. In the example below, **celui que** is the object of 'j'aime'.

Tammy: Et toi Bette, qui est-ce que tu aimes?

Tammy: What about you Bette, who do you love?

Bette: **Celui que** j'aime ne m'aime pas!

Bette: The one I love does not love me!

Celui dont ... and **celle dont ...** mean 'the one whose', 'the one of which', **ceux dont ...** and **celles dont ...** mean 'those whose', 'the ones of which'. They introduce a relative clause in which the verb takes an object introduced by **de** (**parler de**, 'to talk about')

Tammy: De qui tu parles?

Tammy: Who are you talking about?

Bette: Tu ne connais pas **celui dont** je parle.
about!

Bette: You don't know the one I am talking

ceci, cela

Ceci (this) and **cel a** (that) are invariable demonstrative pronouns. They refer to things that cannot have a specific gender assigned to them, like ideas or statements. **Ça** is used in familiar or conversational style in place of **cel a** for emphasis.

Tammy: Tu es amoureuse de Tex, **cela** me semble évident!!

Tammy: You are in love with Tex. That seems obvious to me!!

Bette: Qu'est-ce que tu racontes?! Tu crois vraiment que je ne respecte pas l'amour entre toi et Tex?! **Ça** me fait de la peine, **ça!**

Bette: What are you saying!?! Do you really believe that I don't respect the love between you and Tex? Now that really upsets me!

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possessive pronouns

page: pro12

forms and uses

A possessive pronoun replaces a noun preceded by a **possessive determiner** like **mon, ton, son**, etc.

Tammy: C'est **ton béret** Tex?

Tammy: Is this your beret Tex?

Tex: Oui, c'est **le mi en**.

Tex: Yes, it is **mine**.

In French, possessive pronouns indicate both the possessor and the number and the gender of the object possessed: **le mi en** indicates that the possessor is 'I' and that the possession is masculine singular.

In the following table, the choice between the singular or plural form and between the masculine or feminine form depends on the number and gender of the item possessed. (Note the difference in spelling and in pronunciation between the possessive determiners **notre** and **votre** and the possessive pronouns **nôtre** and **vôtre**.)

| | singular | | plural | |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| | masculine | feminine | masculine | feminine |
| <i>Mine#</i> | le mien | la mienne | les miens | les miennes |
| <i>yours</i> | le tien | la tienne | les tiens | les tiennes |
| <i>his/hers/its</i> | le sien | la sienne | les siens | les siennes |
| <i>ours</i> | le nôtre | la nôtre | les nôtres | les nôtres |
| <i>yours</i> | le vôtre | la vôtre | les vôtres | les vôtres |
| <i>theirs</i> | le leur | la leur | les leurs | les leurs |

Depending on the context, **le sien, la sienne, les siens, les siennes** may mean 'his', 'hers', or 'its'. Note that for the others, all four forms of each possessive pronoun have one English translation.

Tex: Mon frère est musicien.

Tex: My brother is a musician.

Tammy: **Le mien** est professeur.

Tammy: Mine is a professor.

Tex: Ma soeur est secrétaire.

Tex: My sister is a secretary.

Tammy: **La mienne** est PDG.

Tammy: Mine is a CEO.

Tex: Mes parents sont américains.

Tex: My parents are American

Tammy: **Les miens** aussi.

Tammy: Mine too.

Note that **à** + the **definite articles le et les** form the contractions **au** and **aux** respectively. For example:

Tammy: Je pense souvent à mes neveux.

Tammy: I often think about my nephews.

Tex: Je pense rarement **aux miens**.

Tex: I seldom think about mine.

Tammy: Oh! Tex, tu es si égoïste!

Tammy: Oh! Tex you are so selfish!

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other ways of expressing possession

Possessive pronouns are one way to express possession of things or people. However, you may also use the construction



[**être** + **à** + disjunctive pronoun], the possessive determiners or [**de** + noun]:

Fiona: A qui appartient cette photo?

Fiona: Who does photo belong to?

Tex: **Elle est à moi**.

Tex: It's mine.

Tammy: Oui c'est **la sienne**. Tu ne connais pas Rita?

Tammy: Yes it is his. Don't you know Rita?

Fiona: Qui est Rita?

Fiona: Who is Rita?

Tammy: C'est **la sœur de Tex**.

Tammy: It is Tex's sister.

Fiona: **Ta** sœur est très belle. Tu lui ressembles. Fiona: Your sister is very beautiful. You resemble her.

Tex: Non, je ne lui ressemble pas.

Tex: No, I don't look like her.

idiomatic uses

The masculine plural forms of the possessive pronouns may be used alone to refer to parents, friends, allies etc. **Etre des nôtres**, **être des vôtres** are common phrases with such a meaning of the possessive pronoun.

Tammy: Quand j'étais à Lyon, je pensais souvent **aux miens**.

Tammy: When I was in Lyon, I often thought of my folks.

Tammy: Fiona, j'invite des amis ce soir. Tu **es des nôtres**?

Tammy: Fiona, I am inviting a few friends tonight. Are you joining us?

Y mettre du sien is a common phrase that may be used with any of the possessive pronouns to mean that you are doing your share, trying your best, making a real effort to contribute.

Tammy: Tex, nous avons des invités ce soir. Il y a beaucoup de choses à préparer. J'espère que **tu vas y mettre du tien**.

Tammy: Tex, we are having guests tonight. There are a lot of things to prepare. I hope you are going to do your share.

Faire des + miennes, tiennes, siennes, nôtres, vôtres, or **leurs** are phrases suggesting misbehavior.

Tammy: Bette **a encore fait des siennes**. Hier elle a dragué Tex toute la soirée devant tout le monde.

Tammy: Bette has been up to her tricks again. She flirted with Tex all evening in front of everybody.



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relative pronouns: *qui* and *que*

page: *prc-1*

forms and uses

A relative pronoun introduces a clause that explains or describes a previously mentioned noun, which is called the antecedent. Relative pronouns are used to link two related ideas into a single sentence, thereby avoiding repetition.

Tex écrit un roman. Le roman s'appelle
Guerre et amour.

Tex is writing a novel. The novel is called
War and Love.

Tex écrit un roman **qui** s'appelle *Guerre et amour*.

Tex is writing a novel **which** is called
War and Love.

In the above example, the relative pronoun **qui** introduces the subordinate clause, that is, the clause that adds additional information about the novel. In French there are two main relative pronouns, **qui** and **que**. The choice between **qui** and **que** in French depends solely on the grammatical role, **subject or direct object**, that the relative pronoun plays in the subordinate clause.

qui

Qui functions as the **subject** of the subordinate clause.

Tex interviewe Paw-Paw **qui** a combattu pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale.

Tex interviews Paw-Paw **who** fought during World War II.

Paw-Paw: Oui, j'étais avec des Américains **qui** ont libéré Paris.

Paw-Paw: Yes, I was with Americans **who** liberated Paris.

On a célébré notre victoire dans le quartier latin **qui** débordait de jolies Parisiennes.

We celebrated our victory in the Latin Quarter **which** was overflowing with pretty Parisian girls.

que

Que functions as the **direct object** of the subordinate clause. Remember that **que** becomes **qu'** before a word beginning with a vowel.

Paw-Paw: Une jolie Parisienne **que** j'ai connue est devenue ta grand-mère, Tex!

Paw-Paw: A pretty Parisian whom I met became your grandmother, Tex!

Tex: Ma grand-mère! Une héroïne de la Résistance française? Tiens, le livre **que** j'écris c'est l'histoire de deux héros de la Résistance. Ce n'est pas une pure coïncidence!

Tex: My grandmother! A heroine of the French Resistance? Say, the book that I'm writing is the story of two heroes from the Resistance. It is not entirely a coincidence!

agreement

Although **qui** and **que** are invariable, they assume the gender and number of the antecedent. **Que** functions as a direct object preceding the verb. Therefore, when the verb of the subordinate clause is in the passé composé, or any other compound tense, the past participle agrees in number and gender with **que**. The past participle also agrees in number and gender with **qui** if the verb forms its passé composé with 'être'.

Tex: Marie-Tammy et Jean-Tex sont les deux héros **que** j'ai vus dans un rêve.

Tex: Marie-Tammy and Jean-Tex are the two heroes whom I saw in a dream.

Ce sont deux espions **qui** se sont rencontrés en mission.

They are two spies who met on a mission.

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Relative pronouns: *ce qui, ce que*

page: prgr2

Ce qui and **ce que** are relative pronouns like **qui** and **que**; that is, they introduce a subordinate clause. However, **ce qui** and **ce que** are used in sentences in which there is no expressed antecedent. They do not refer to a specific noun, but rather to an idea or an entire statement, which may or may not have been previously expressed: they refer to something unstated and unspecified.

The choice between **ce qui** and **ce que** depends solely on the grammatical role, **subject or direct object**, that the relative pronoun plays in the subordinate clause.

ce qui

Ce qui (what, that, which) functions as the **subject** of the subordinate clause.

Tammy: Edouard, tu as lu le roman de Tex sur la deuxième guerre mondiale?

Tammy: Edouard, have you read Tex's novel on WWII?

Edouard: Ah oui! **Ce qui** est fascinant, **c'est** sa description de l'époque.

Edouard: Ah, yes I have! What's fascinating is his description of the period.

J'adore **tout ce qui** se rapporte à la Résistance!

I love everything that is related to the Resistance!

Et puis, il y a une intrigue amoureuse, **ce qui** ne m'étonne pas puisque l'héroïne du livre s'appelle Marie-Tammy!

And there's also a love interest, which does not surprise me since the book's heroine is called Marie-Tammy!

Ce qui is often used for emphasis followed by **c'est**. Note how the sentence '**Ce qui** est fascinant, **c'est** sa description de l'époque.' is more emphatic than saying simply 'Sa description de l'époque est fascinante.'

ce que

Ce que (what, that, which) functions as the **direct object** of the subordinate clause. **Ce que** becomes **ce qu'** before a word beginning with a vowel.



Tammy: **Tout ce que** Tex crée est tellement original!

Tammy: Everything that Tex creates is so original!

Moi, j'aime **ce qu'** il écrit à propos de la France dans les années 1940.

Personally, I like what he writes about France in the 1940s.

Ce que je n'aime pas, **c'est** la fin du livre.

What I don't like is the end of the book.

Le héros meurt. Il n'épouse donc pas Marie-Tammy, **ce que** je trouve très dommage.

The hero dies. So he does not marry Marie-Tammy, which I think is such a pity.

Note how the sentence '**Ce que** je n'aime pas, **c'est** la fin du livre.' is more emphatic than saying simply 'Je n'aime pas la fin du livre.'

Note that **ce qui** and **ce que** are also used in indirect discourse (see [reported speech](#)).

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Relative pronouns: dont, où, etc. present tense

page: pror3

A relative pronoun introduces a clause that explains or describes a previously mentioned noun. In instances where the relative pronoun is the object of a preposition, relative pronouns other than **qui** and **que** must be used. **De** is the most common of these prepositions, and **dont** is the relative pronoun representing both the preposition **de** + its object.

dont, où, lequel: relative pronouns with antecedent

dont Use **dont** if the subordinate clause needs an object introduced by **de/d'**. Such clauses may indicate possession or they may contain verbs which are followed by the preposition **de**. Some of these verbs include 'parler de' (to talk about); 'avoir besoin de' (to need); 'avoir peur de' (to be afraid of); 'tenir de' (to take after).

Tex: Le livre **dont** je suis l'auteur est un roman historique. Tex: The book **of which** I'm the author is an historical novel.



Dont often indicates possession; 'whose' is its English equivalent.

Edouard, parlant du livre de Tex: Tex, **dont** le grand-père a combattu en France, en '40, a dédié ce livre à Paw-Paw. Edouard, speaking about Tex' book: Tex, **whose** grandfather fought in France in '40, dedicated this book to Paw-Paw.

où

The relative pronoun **où** means 'where, in which, on which.' Use **où** if the subordinate clause needs an object indicating location introduced by **dans**, **à**, **sur**, **sous**. When used after adverbs of time, **où** means 'when.'

Paris, **où** l'histoire commence, va être libéré par les Américains. Paris, **where** the story starts, is going to be liberated by the Americans.
Paw-Paw était à Paris le jour **où** les Américains sont entrés dans la ville. Paw-Paw was in Paris the day **[when]** the Americans entered the city.

preposition + lequel, laquelle, lesquels, lesquelles

The relative pronouns **lequel**, **laquelle**, **lesquels**, and **lesquelles** (which) are used when the relative clause is introduced by a preposition other than **de/d'**. These pronouns make the usual **contractions** with the prepositions **à** and **de**. Note that the preposition in French must always be placed immediately in front of the relative pronoun.



Ce roman, **dans lequel** Tex utilise les souvenirs de guerre de Paw-Paw, est très réaliste. This novel, **in which** Tex uses Paw-Paw's war memories, is very realistic.

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Ses personnages, **auxquels** Tex s'identifie, sont des héros de la Résistance.

His characters, **with whom** Tex identifies, are heroes of the Resistance.

L'homme **à côté duquel** Marie-Tammy est assise est un officier nazi.

The man **next to whom** Marie-Tammy is seated is a Nazi officer.

Les hommes **parmi lesquels** Marie-Tammy se trouve sont tous des nazis.

The men **among whom** Marie-Tammy finds herself are all Nazis.

Les deux femmes **entre lesquelles** l'officier se trouve font partie de la Résistance.

The two women **between whom** the officer is seated are part of the Resistance.

Note: The form **dont** is generally used in spoken French instead of the forms **duquel**, **de laquelle**, **desquels**, and **desquelles**; however, these latter forms may also be found, especially in written texts. **Dont** may be substituted only for the simple preposition **de** and its object, but a form of **lequel** must be used when **de** is part of a two- or three-word preposition, such as 'à propos de, près de, loin de, à côté de.'

ce dont, ce + preposition + quoi : relative pronouns with no antecedent

In all the preceding examples, the relative pronouns have an antecedent; in other words, a specific word in the sentence for which the relative pronoun stands. Just as the forms **ce qui** and **ce que** are used when there is no explicit antecedent, so the forms **ce dont** and **ce + preposition + quoi** refer to something unstated and unspecified.

Use **ce dont** if the subordinate clause needs an object introduced by **de**.

On comprend très bien **ce dont** les Parisiens avaient peur pendant l'Occupation.

One understands very well **what** the Parisians were afraid of during the Occupation.

Use **ce + preposition + quoi** when the subordinate clause needs an object introduced by a preposition other than **de**. Remember that, unlike English, the preposition in French must always be placed immediately in front of the relative pronoun.

Tout le monde va comprendre **ce à quoi** Tex fait allusion quand il décrit Jean-Tex et Marie-Tammy--il s'agit bien de Tex et Tammy, nos tatous favoris!

Everybody's going to understand **what** Tex is alluding to when he describes Jean-Tex and Marie-Tammy--it's indeed a matter of Tex and Tammy, our favorite armadillos!

Conjunctions

Introduction to conjunctions

page: *con1 ar*

A **conjunction** is a word used to link or 'conjoin' words or phrases into a coherent whole. There are two classes of conjunctions: coordinate and subordinate.

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 | but |
| ou | or |
| et | and |
| donc | so, thus |
| or | so, now |
| ni ... ni | neither ... nor |
| car | for |
| puis | then |

Edouard n'aime **ni** le barbecue **ni** les hamburgers.
Tex fume des cigarettes **et** boit du vin rouge.

Edouard likes **neither** barbecue **nor** hamburgers.
Tex smokes cigarettes **and** drinks redwine.

subordinating conjunctions

A subordinating conjunction links an independent clause to a dependent clause. In other words, a subordinating conjunction joins two unequal clauses (independent and dependent). 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:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| que | that |
| pendant que | as, while |
| quand | when |
| lorsque | when |
| depuis que | since (indicating time) |
| tandis que | while, whereas |
| puisque | since |
| parce que | because |

Il est évident **que** Tex fume trop. (dependent) . It is obvious **that** Tex smokes too much.
... (independent)



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coordinating conjunctions

page: con2

Coordinating conjunctions link words, phrases or independent sentences. The most commonly used are **mais** (but), **ou** (or), **et** (and), **donc** (so, thus), **or** (so, now, but), **ni . . . ni** (neither ... nor), **car** (for), **puis** (then). These conjunctions conjoin forms of the same grammatical category (adjective + adjective, noun + noun, clause + clause, etc.).

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



Tex, **puis** Tammy, ont essayé de comprendre les goûts de Trey.

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

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

Trey est jeune **donc** curieux.

Trey n'est **ni** intellectuel **ni** cultivé.

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

Tex, then Tammy, tried to understand Trey's tastes.

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

They prefer French music or jazz.

Trey is young, thus curious.

Trey is neither intellectual nor cultivated.

For Trey, 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:

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

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

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

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

Tex aime bien son frère Trey **mais** ils n'ont rien en commun

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

Trey does skate-boarding and listens to music.

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

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

Tex really likes his brother Trey but they have nothing in common

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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, Tex ignorait l'existence de son frère. **Puis**, un jour, il **a rencontré Trey**. **In France, Tex did not know of the existence of his brother. Then, one day, he met Trey.**

Tex et Trey n'ont rien en commun. Ils ont donc quelques problèmes de communication. Tex and Trey have nothing in common. So they have a few communication problems.

Or cela inquiète Tex. Consequently, this worries Tex.

Mais que faire? But what can be done?

subordinating conjunctions

page: con3

Subordinating conjunctions introduce subordinate, or dependent, clauses. The most commonly used are **que** (that), **pendant que** (as, while), **quand / lorsque** (when), **depuis que** (since, indicating time), **tandis que** (while, whereas) **puisque** (since), **parce que** (because).

Il est évident **que** Trey est un curieux personnage.

It is evident that Trey is a curious character.

Trey et Tex sont tous les deux des artistes, mais **tandis que** Tex est poète, Trey est musicien.

Trey and Tex are both artists, but while Tex is a poet, Trey is a musician.

Depuis que Tex connaît Trey, il a découvert le monde du rap.

Since Tex has known Trey, he has discovered the world of rap.

Trey se lève **quand** le soleil se couche. Il travaille **pendant que** Tex dort.

Trey gets up when the sun goes down. He works while Tex is asleep.

Puisque Tex et Trey sont frères et artistes, ils devraient se comprendre. Mais ce n'est pas le cas.

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



Some of these conjunctions may occur with other tenses besides the present, including the **future**, **conditional**, and **imperfect**. There are other **conjunctions which require the subjunctive**

Tense, Aspect, Mood, Voice

Intro to Tense, Aspect, Mood, Voice

Tense

Tense is the grammatical term that refers to the time when the action of the verb occurs: past, present, future. The time frame of an action is usually established by referring to the present moment; for example, the **passé composé** and the **future** are respectively past and future in relation to the present.

However, some tenses establish their time frame by referring to other actions in the past or in the future. For example, the **plus-que-parfait** tense indicates a past action that occurred prior to the completion of another past action. The **futur antérieur** tense indicates a future action that will have occurred before another future action. Actions that occur before another action are described as being **anterior**.

Tenses are also described by their number of parts. For example, a tense with only one verb form is called a **simple tense** (ie, le passé simple). In contrast, a tense comprising two forms, the auxiliary verb and the participle, is referred to as a **compound tense** (ie, le passé composé).

Aspect

Aspect, unlike tense, is not concerned with placing events on a time line. Rather, aspect is concerned with making distinctions about the kinds of actions that are described by verbs: progressive actions, punctual actions, habitual actions, etc.

The most important aspectual distinction in French concerns the difference between the two most common past tenses: the **imparfait** and the **passé composé**. While both tenses refer to actions in the past, they are used for very different types of actions. The imparfait indicates an action that is ongoing or habitual. Actions in the imparfait may be simultaneous or overlapping. The passé composé on the other hand, indicates an action that is in a strict sequence in relation to another action. In other words, an event in the passé composé must be completed before another may be used in narration.

These aspectual differences are best understood in a **narrative** context where the **imparfait** is typically used to set the scene of a story by giving **background** information.

Installé à la terrasse du Cactus Cafe, Tex **regardait** les filles qui **passaient**. Il **savourait** une tasse de café, mais quelque chose **manquait** . . . une cigarette!

Seated on the terrace of the Cactus Cafe, Tex **was watching** the girls who **walked by**. He **was enjoying** a cup of coffee, but something **was missing** . . . a cigarette!

The **passé composé** is used for the **foreground**, that is, the plot line events. Note that plot line events are sequential, that is, an event must be completed before another event begins.

Tex **a sorti** une cigarette de son paquet. Il l'**a allumée** et il **a tiré** une grande bouffée. Mmm ... extase!

Tex **took out** a cigarette from his pack. He **lit** it and **took** a long drag. Mmm ... ecstasy!

Mood

Mood is a grammatical category distinguishing verb tenses. There are four moods in French: **indicative**, **subjunctive**, **conditional**, and **imperative**. All of these moods, except the imperative, may be conjugated in different tenses. Each of these moods has a different function.

The **indicative mood** is the most common and is used to relate facts and objective statements.

Tammy **se réveille** tôt le matin.
(present tense of the indicative mood)

Tammy **gets up** early in the morning.



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The **subjunctive mood** is used more commonly in French than in English. It is used to express opinions and feelings (subjective thoughts).

Il est dommage que les parents de Tex **soient** morts.
(present tense of the subjunctive mood)

It is too bad that Tex's parents **are** dead.

The **conditional mood** is used to express hypothetical or contrary-to-fact statements.

Si Corey était beau, il **aurait** une copine. (present tense of the conditional mood)

If Corey were handsome, he **would have** a girlfriend.

The **imperative mood** is used to give direct orders or commands.

Tex, **réveille-toi** !

Tex, **get up**!

Voice

Voice is a grammatical category describing the relationship between a verb and its subject. Voice is either **active** or **passive**. Active voice refers to the situation where the subject of the sentence performs the action of the verb.

Les autorités **ont expulsé** Tex de France.

The authorities **expelled** Tex from France.

On the other hand, passive voice refers to the situation where the subject receives the action of the verb.

Tex **a été expulsé** de France (par les autorités)

Tex was expelled from France (by the authorities)

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present tense

page: tapr1

The present tense indicates an action that is either actually occurring at the time of speaking, or a general truth, a so-called 'eternal verity.' The French present may be translated in three different ways in English depending on the intended meaning.

Tex **is drinking** coffee. (right now, progressive action)

OR

Tex **boit** du café.

Tex **drinks** coffee (in general, habitual action)

OR

Tex **does drink** coffee. (emphatic or contrastive)

While a French present tense utterance may be translated by three different English sentences, the specific meaning is recoverable from context. In fact, French indicates the different nuances of the English progressive, habitual, or emphatic forms by adding elements to clarify the context.

Note the following examples:

Tex oublie **toujours** de prendre un bon petit déjeuner.

Tex always forgets to have a good breakfast.
(habit)

Tammy: Tex, il faut manger au petit déjeuner. C'est le repas le plus important de la journée.

Tammy: Tex, you have to eat breakfast. It's the most important meal of the day.

Tex: Oh, ma chérie, tu t'inquiètes trop.

Regarde, je mange un beignet.

Tex, Oh, my darling, you worry too much. Look, I'm eating a doughnut. (right now, progressive action)

Tammy: Un beignet!? Tu rigoles? Mais, ça ne compte pas!

Tammy: Un doughnut!? Are you joking? That doesn't count!

Tex: Mais **si**, ça compte. Du sucre et du beurre me font du bien le matin ... et ensuite une cigarette.

Tex: But yes, it does count. (emphatic) Sugar and butter do me good in the morning ... and then a cigarette.



In addition, the present tense is sometimes used in place of the past or future in informal narration:

La vie de Tex **est** toute une histoire ... En 1975, alors bébé, Tex **se perd** à l'aéroport Bush International à Houston. On le **met** par erreur avec les bagages dans un avion à destination de la France. A Paris, il **rencontre** des nonnes qui **viennent** de faire un voyage aux Etats-Unis. Elles **ont** pitié de ce pauvre tatou égaré et elles l'**amènent** au couvent à Lyon. Tex **passé** son enfance en France. Un jour, on **découvre** que Tex n'a pas de papiers--pas de passeport, pas de visa. Alors, il **retourne** au Texas. Malheureusement, il ne **se sent** pas chez lui au Texas. La vie américaine n'**est** pas facile pour un tatou francisé.

Tex's life is quite a story ... In 1975, just a baby, Tex gets lost at Bush International Airport in Houston. He is put by accident with the baggage in a plane headed for France. In Paris he meets some nuns who have just taken a trip to the United States. They take pity on this poor, lost armadillo and they take him to their convent in Lyon. Tex spends his childhood in France. One day, it is discovered that Tex has no papers--no passport, no visa. So he returns to Texas. Unfortunately, he doesn't feel at home in Texas. American life is not easy for a Frenchified armadillo!

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recent past (*venir de + infinitive*)

page: tap1

When **venir** is conjugated in the present and followed by **de + infinitive**, it means 'to have just done something.' This is called the recent past (le passé immédiat).

Tex et Tammy **viennent de** regarder une vidéo romantique. Et ils **viennent de** finir toute une bouteille de vin. Il n'en reste plus une goutte!

Tammy: Oh chéri, je t'aime de tout mon cœur.

Tex: Embrasse-moi, mon petit quadrupède! [SMACK!]

Tex et Tammy have just finished watching a romantic video. And they have just finished a whole bottle of wine. There isn't a drop left!

Tammy: Oh darling, I love you with all my heart.

Tex: Kiss me, my little quadruped! [SMACK!]



When **venir** is conjugated in the *imparfait* followed by **de + infinitive**, it means 'had just done something.'

Tex et Tammy **venaient de** s'embrasser quand Bette est arrivée.

Bette: Oh, excusez-moi ... Je vous interromps?

Tammy: En effet, nous passons une soirée tranquille ...

Tex: Salut Bette, oh, c'est pas grave. On **vient de** regarder une vidéo. Assieds-toi.

Tammy: Mais Tex ...

Bette ronronne.

Tex and Tammy had just kissed when Bette arrived.

Bette: Oh, excuse me ... Am I interrupting you?

Tammy: Yes, you are. We are spending a quiet evening ...

Tex: Hi Bette. Oh, it's OK. We just saw a video. Sit down.

Tammy: But Tex ...

Bette purrs.

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passé composé with avoir

page: tap2

uses

The **passé composé** is the most commonly used tense to refer to actions completed in the past translated into English in three different ways depending on the context.

Tex ate all the meat!

Tex **a mangé** toute la viande!

Tex did eat all the meat!

Tex has eaten all the meat!



formation

This tense is called the passé composé because it is composed of two elements: the present tense of an auxiliary verb (either **avoir** or **être**), followed by a past participle:

passé composé = present tense of auxiliary + past participle

Note that in most instances the auxiliary verb is **avoir**, but some verbs require **être** as the auxiliary.

For regular verbs with an infinitive ending in **-er**, the past participle is formed by replacing the final **-er** of the infinitive with **-é**. The past participle (**parlé**) is pronounced the same as the infinitive (**parler**), even though they are spelled differently.

| parler 'to talk' | |
|--|---|
| j' ai parlé , I (have) talked | nous avons parlé , we (have) talked |
| tu as parlé , you (have) talked | vous avez parlé , you (have) talked |
| il, elle / on a parlé , he, she (it) / one (has) talked | ils / elles ont parlé , they (have) talked |

The past participle of regular verbs with an infinitive ending in **-ir** is formed by dropping the final **-r** from the infinitive. For example, the past participle of **finir** is **fini**.

| finir 'to finish' | |
|---|--|
| j' ai fini , I (have) finished | nous avons fini , we (have) finished |
| tu as fini , you (have) finished | vous avez fini , you (have) finished |
| il, elle / on a fini , he, she (it) / one (has) finished | ils / elles ont fini , they (have) finished |

The past participle of regular verbs with an infinitive ending in **-re** is formed by replacing the final **-re** of the infinitive with **-u**. For example, the past participle of **perdre** is **perdu**.

| perdre 'to lose' | |
|--|---|
| j' ai perdu , I (have) lost | nous avons perdu , we (have) lost |
| tu as perdu , you (have) lost | vous avez perdu , you (have) lost |
| il, elle / on a perdu , he, she (it) / one (has) lost | ils / elles ont perdu , they (have) lost |

Note that many verbs, however, have irregular past participles. The past participles of many common irregular verbs which have **avoir** as an auxiliary are listed below.

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| infinitive | translation | past participle |
|------------|---------------|-----------------|
| avoir | to have | eu |
| être | to be | été |
| faire | to do | fait |
| ouvrir | to open | ouvert |
| prendre | to take | pris |
| mettre | to put | mis |
| suivre | to follow | suivi |
| boire | to drink | bu |
| croire | to believe | cru |
| voir | to see | vu |
| savoir | to know | su |
| connaître | to know | connu |
| dire | to say | dit |
| lire | to read | lu |
| écrire | to write | écrit |
| pouvoir | to be able to | pu |
| vouloir | to want | voulu |
| devoir | to have to | dû |
| tenir | to hold | tenu |
| recevoir | to receive | reçu |

negation

Negation of the passé composé is formed by placing **ne ... pas** around the conjugated verb, which, in this case, is the auxiliary **avoir**.

Oh, regardez! Tex a mangé toute la viande! Tammy, au contraire, **n'a pas** mangé de viande! Elle est végétarienne, comme la plupart des tatous.

Oh, look! Tex ate all the meat! Tammy, on the other hand, did not eat any meat! She is a vegetarian, like most armadillos.

Joe-Bob arrive chez Tammy. Il meurt de faim. Mais il est trop tard.

Joe-Bob arrives at Tammy's house. He is dying of hunger. But it is too late.

Joe-Bob: Tammy, j'**ai perdu** ma collection

Joe-Bob: Tammy, I lost my nut collection.

de noix. Est-ce que je peux dîner avec vous?

Can I have dinner with y'all?

Tammy: Je suis désolée, Joe-Bob. Tex **a fini** toute la viande. A mon avis, il **a** trop **mangé**.

Tammy: I am sorry Joe-Bob. Tex finished all the meat. In my opinion, he ate too much.

Joe-Bob: Ce n'est pas grave Tammy. Je peux trouver quelque chose dans la cuisine ... Mon dieu, Tammy! Est-ce que tu **as vu**? Tex **a dégobillé** partout. C'est dégueulasse!

Joe-Bob: It's okay Tammy. I can find something in the kitchen ... My god, Tammy! Have you seen? Tex threw up everywhere. It's disgusting!

Tammy: Ça ne m'étonne pas. Ce petit tatou carnivore, il n'est pas aussi évolué que moi!

Tammy: That doesn't surprise me. That little carnivorous armadillo. He is not as enlightened as I am!

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passé composé with être

page: tap3

uses

There are several past tenses in French, and each is used in very specific situations. The **passé composé** is the most common past tense; it is used to relate actions or events completed in the past. The passé composé may be translated into English in three different ways depending on the context.

Tex went to the Alamo.

Tex **est allé** à l'Alamo.

Tex has gone to the Alamo.

Tex did go to the Alamo.



formation

The passé composé consists of two parts, the present tense of an auxiliary, or helping verb (either **avoir** or **être**), and a past participle. In most instances the auxiliary verb used is **avoir**.

passé composé = present tense of auxiliary + past participle

However, several **intransitive** verbs, like **aller** (to go), require the auxiliary **être** instead. Note that the past participle agrees with the subject in number and in gender.

| aller 'to go' | |
|--|---|
| je suis allé(e) , I went (have gone) | nous sommes allé(e)s , we went (have gone) |
| tu es allé(e) , you went (have gone) | vous êtes allé(e)s , you went (have gone) |
| il / on est allé , he / one went (has gone) | ils sont allés , they went, (have gone) |
| elle est allée , she went (has gone) | elles sont allées , they went, (have gone) |

The negation is formed by placing **ne ... pas** around the conjugated verb, which in this case, is the auxiliary **être**: Je **ne suis pas** allé(e), Tu **n'es pas** allé(e), etc.

the Alamo of être

Many intransitive verbs, that is, verbs not followed by a direct object, take **être** in the passé composé. Many of these verbs also indicate motion. They are verbs of coming and going. Even **naître** (to be born) and **mourir** (to die) can be thought of as coming and going in metaphorical terms. The **Alamo d'Être** illustrates this group of verbs.



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A few of these verbs of movement (**monter**, **descendre**, **sortir**, **passer**, **retourner**) may sometimes take a direct object, thus becoming **transitive**. When they do, the auxiliary used is **avoir**, instead of **être**. Example:

Tex **est** sorti.

Tex went out.

Tex n'**a** pas sorti la poubelle.

Tex did not take out the garbage.

It is important to note that many **intransitive verbs** of movement, like **courir** and **marcher**, do not use **être** but **avoir**. The **pronominal verbs** form another important group of verbs which use **être** as the auxiliary in the passé composé.

irregular past participles

The past participles of the verbs that use **être** as an auxiliary are regular except for the following:

| infinitive | translation | past participle |
|------------|--------------|-----------------|
| venir | to come | venu |
| devenir | to become | devenu |
| revenir | to come back | revenu |
| naître | to be born | né |
| mourir | to die | mort |

agreement of the past participle

The past participle of a verb which takes **être** agrees in gender and number with the subject; that means an **-e** is added to the past participle to agree with a feminine subject and an **-s** is added for a plural subject. If the subject is feminine plural, **-es** is added.

Joe-Bob: Tex, Corey et toi, vous **êtes rentrés** de l'Alamo?

Joe-Bob: Tex, did you and Corey come back from the Alamo?

Tex: Oui. Mais Tammy et Bette **sont restées** à San Antonio pour faire des achats.

Tex: Yes. But Tammy and Bette stayed in San Antonio to go shopping.

Corey: Tu n'as pas entendu? Tout d'un coup Tammy **est devenue** toute pâle et elle **est tombée** dans la rivière!

Corey: Didn't you hear? All of a sudden Tammy turned very pale and she fell in the river!

Joe-Bob: Mais, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé?

Joe-Bob: But, what happened?

Corey: Calme-toi. Elle n'**est** pas **morte**! Tex et moi **sommes arri vés** pour la sauver!

Corey: Calm down. She didn't die! Tex and I arrived to save her!

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future: usage

page: tap4

A **pronominal verb** is a verb which has a reflexive pronoun, that is, a pronoun referring back to its subject. These verbs are easily recognized by the pronoun **se** before the infinitive: **se lever**, **se laver**, **se promener**, etc.

formation

In the **passé composé**, pronominal verbs are conjugated with **être** as their auxiliary. **Past participles** of pronominal verbs are formed like nonpronominal past participles. Note that the reflexive pronoun (**me, te, se, nous, vous, se**) precedes the auxiliary.

| s'amuser 'to have fun' | |
|---|--|
| je me suis amusé(e) , I had fun | nous nous sommes amusé(e)s , we had fun |
| tu t'es amusé(e) , you had fun | vous vous êtes amusé(e)s , you had fun |
| il / on s'est amusé , he / one had fun | ils se sont amusés , they had fun |
| elle s'est amusée , she had fun | elles se sont amusées , they had fun |

past participle agreement

It is important to note that, in most cases, the past participle of pronominal verbs agrees in gender and number with the gender and number of the reflexive pronoun, that is, an **e** is added to the past participle to agree with a feminine subject and an **s** is added for a plural subject.

Tammy: Je **me suis réveillée** très tôt ce matin.

Tammy: I got up really early this morning.

Tex: Moi, je **me suis réveillé** très tard!

Tex: I got up really late!

past participle agreement: exceptions

The past participle does not agree if there is a direct object following the verb which is a part of the body:

Tammy: Je **me suis lavée**.

Tammy: I washed.

Et ensuite je **me suis lavé** les cheveux.

And then, I washed my hair.

In the second example, the direct object **les cheveux** is placed after the verb, so there is no agreement.

Furthermore, in cases where the reflexive pronoun is an **indirect object** rather than a direct object, as in the verb **se parler (parler à)**, there is no agreement.

Tammy: Puis, Bette et moi, **nous nous sommes parlé**.

Tammy: Then, Bette and I talked to each other.

negation

In the negative, the **ne** precedes the reflexive pronoun and the **pas** follows the auxiliary:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| je ne me suis pas amusé(e) | nous ne nous sommes pas amusé(e)s |
| tu ne t'es pas amusé(e) | vous ne vous êtes pas amusé(e)s |
| il / on ne s'est pas amusé | ils ne se sont pas amusés |
| elle ne s'est pas amusée | elles ne se sont pas amusées |

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Tammy: Bonjour Tex! Oh là là! Tu **ne t'es pas rasé** ce matin?

Tex: Oh ça va hein! Mon réveil n'a pas sonné! Je **me suis réveillé** trop tard. Et toi, tu **t'es rasée**?

Tammy: Monsieur Tex **s'est levé** du pied gauche aujourd'hui!

Tammy: Hi Tex! Oh dear! You did not shave this morning?

Tex: Oh that's enough, OK! My alarm clock did not go off! I woke up too late. Did *you* shave?

Tammy: Mister Tex got up on the wrong side of the bed today!



TU NE T'ES PAS RASÉ?

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futur antérieur

page: tap5

The imperfect tense (**l'imparfait**), one of several past tenses in French, is used to describe **states of being** and **habitual actions** in the past. It also has several **idiomatic uses**.

stem

The stem of the **imparfait** is the first person plural (**nous**) form of the present tense, minus the **-ons**. The imparfait stem is regular for all verbs except **être**:

| verb | present tense 'nous' form | imparfait stem |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| -er verbs: parler | nous parlons | parl- |
| -ir verbs: finir | nous finissons | finiss- |
| -re verbs: descendre | nous descendons | descend- |
| faire | nous faisons | fais- |
| prendre | nous prenons | pren- |
| partir | nous partons | part- |
| être | nous sommes | ét- |

endings

To the stem, add the endings **-ais**, **-ais**, **-ait**, **-ions**, **-iez**, and **-aient**. Note that **-ais**, **-ais**, **-ait**, and **-aient** are all pronounced alike. That means that the singular forms and 3rd person plural (the boot) all sound the same!

| danser 'to dance' | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| je dansais | nous dansions |
| tu dansais | vous dansiez |
| il / elle / on dansait | ils / elles dansaient |

| finir 'to finish' | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| je finissais | nous finissions |
| tu finissais | vous finissiez |
| il / elle / on finissait | ils / elles finissaient |

| être 'to be' | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| j' étais | nous étions |
| tu étais | vous étiez |
| il / elle / on était | ils / elles étaient |

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Stem changing verbs like **voyager** and **commencer** add an **e** or **ç** to maintain the soft **g** or **s** sound, before imparfait endings which begin with **a** (je voyage**ais**, tu voyage**ais**, il / elle / on voyage**ait**, ils / elles voyage**aient**), in other words, before all forms except nous and vous (nous voyage**ions**, vous voyage**iez**).

The imparfait of pronominal verbs is regular, with the addition of the reflexive pronoun:

| s'amuser 'to have fun' | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| je m' amusais | nous nous amusions |
| tu t' amusais | vous vous amusiez |
| il / elle / on s' amusait | ils / elles s' amusaient |

The negation is formed as usual by placing **ne ... pas** around the conjugated verb: Je **ne** dansais **pas** (I wasn't dancing / I didn't used to dance), Tu **ne** t'amusais **pas** (You weren't having a good time / You didn't used to have a good time).

Tex: Je suis allé chez Tammy ce matin. Je **voulais** la voir, mais elle n'**était** pas chez elle. J'**avais** un cadeau à lui donner. Je ne **pouvais** quand même pas le laisser devant sa porte! Donc je l'ai offert à Bette! J'espère qu'elle l'aimera.

Tex: I went to Tammy's this morning. I wanted to see her, but she was not home. I had a present to give her. I could not really leave it outside her door! So I gave it to Bette! I hope she will like it.

Joe-Bob: Bravo! Quel tombeur tu fais!

Joe-Bob: Bravo! What a Casanova you are!



imparfait: states of being, habitual actions

page: tap6

The imperfect tense (**l'imparfait**) has two primary uses: to describe on-going actions and states of being in the past, and to state habitual actions in the past. The imparfait also has several **idiomatic uses**. The passé composé and imparfait are each used quite differently in **narration**.

states of being or past description

The imparfait is used to describe people, places, conditions or situations in the past. Some verbs occur more frequently in the imparfait when they are in the past since they typically describe states of being: **être, avoir, vouloir, pouvoir**. But these verbs do sometimes occur in the passé composé.

Quand Edouard **était** adolescent, il n'**avait** qu'un rêve – devenir un grand cuisinier. Il **voulait** créer des chefs-d'oeuvre culinaires.

Notre jeune escargot gourmand, qui **adorait** la cuisine française classique, **fréquentait** les meilleures tables de Paris.

When Edouard was a teenager, he had only one dream – to become a great chef. He wanted to create culinary masterpieces. Our young food-enthusiast snail, who loved classical French cooking, frequented the best Parisian restaurants.



habitual actions in the past

The imparfait is also used to state habitual actions in the past. These past habits are often translated as 'used to, or 'would.' Distinguish between the use of 'would' for habitual past actions (imparfait) and the use of 'would' for the **conditional**. Note that the imparfait may also be translated by the simple past in English; however, the context, and often adverbs, let you know the action is a past habit.

Edouard: Tu te rappelles, en été à Paris, quand il **faisait** chaud? On **allait** toujours à 10 heures du soir chez Berthillon ... Oh, là, là, leurs glaces, leurs sorbets--fraise, framboise, noisette, pistache, des parfums exotiques. Et puis, on **se promenait** le long des quais, on **voyait** la Seine qui **coulait**, on **chantait**, on **se récitait** même des vers. Ah, Paris la nuit, Paris là-bas, mmm, en été.

Edouard: Do you remember, in the summer in Paris, when the weather was hot? We always used to go to Berthillon's at 10 o'clock in the evening ... Oh, la, la, their ice cream, their sorbets--strawberry, raspberry, hazelnut, pistachio, exotic flavors. And then, we would take walks along the quays. We would see the Seine which was flowing. We would sing, we would even recite verses. Ah, Paris in the night, Paris over there, mmm, in the summer.

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imparfait: idiomatic uses

page: tap7

The imperfect tense (**l'imparfait**) has two primary uses: to describe on-going actions or states of being in the past, and to state habitual actions in the past. The imparfait also has several idiomatic uses found in the following contexts:

suggestions

The imparfait is used to suggest an action in phrases beginning with **Si on** ... ?

Tammy: Si on **achetait** une grosse Suburban?

Tammy: What if we bought a big Suburban? (note: 'on' is often used in the sense of 'nous')

Tex: Si on **achetait** une Harley Davidson?

Tex: What about buying a Harley Davidson?



wishes

The imparfait is used to express wishes such as 'If only we didn't have a test this week!' The French equivalent structure, **si + imparfait**, may, or may not, contain the adverb **seulement**:

Tex: Si (seulement) on **avait** plus d'argent!

Tex: If (only) we had more money!

Tammy: Ah, si (seulement) mes parents nous **prêtaient** de l'argent!

Tammy: If only my parents would lend us some money!

Note that the question mark at the end of the sentence indicates a suggestion, and the exclamation mark a wish. In spoken French, however, you have to rely on context and intonation to distinguish between wish and suggestion.

Tammy: Si je me **fai sais** tatouer?

Tammy: What if I got tattooed?

Tex: Si seulement je **pouvais** avoir une moto!

Tex: If only I could have a motorcycle!

For other uses of **si + imparfait**, see **si clauses + conditional**. The imparfait also occurs in idiomatic uses with **depuis** and **venir de**.

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narration: passé composé vs. imparfait

page: tap8

The *passé composé* is used in French in answer the question 'What happened?' On the other hand, you will usually put a verb in the *imparfait* if it answers the question 'What was going on when something else happened?' Generally, the *passé composé* is used to relate events while the *imparfait* is used to describe what was going on in the past, states of being in the past, or past habits.

All this takes on special importance in narration of past actions, when both tenses often occur in the same story. Narrating a story entails both describing a setting (habitual actions, atmosphere, places and people) and recounting a plot or a series of events, actions, changes of feelings or thoughts. In general, all stories have a well delineated plot line of events, the foreground, and a background of supporting details and description. Some literary texts might subvert this rule but this is out of a conscious effort to surprise or unsettle their reader.

imparfait (setscene)

Tammy **habitait** à Fort Worth ...

Tammy lived in Fort Worth ...

passé composé (event) Avant,

et puis un jour, elle **a déménagé**. Before,

and then, one day, she moved.

The following adverbs are commonly associated with each of the past tenses:

adverbs/imparfait

tous les jours, tous les matins ...

every day, every morning

chaque jour, chaque matin, chaque mois...

each day, each morning, each month

en général, généralement, d'habitude ...

in general, usually

autrefois, à l'époque ...

in the past, long ago, at the time

toujours, souvent...

always, often

rarement ...

rarely

adverbs/passé composé

un jour, un matin, un soir ...

one day, one morning, one evening

soudain, brusquement, brutalement...

suddenly, abruptly, brusquely

tout d'un coup, tout à coup ...

all of a sudden, suddenly

tout de suite, immédiatement ...

right away, immediately

d'abord, enfin...

first of all, finally

puis, ensuite ...

then, next

Usually, when verbs like **être, avoir, pouvoir, vouloir**, and **savoir** are in a past narration, they will be in the *imparfait*, since they most likely describe a **past state of being or condition**. However, when these verbs (and others like them) occur in the *passé composé*, they indicate a **change of state or a change of condition**.

Compare these examples:



Tammy: Quand j'**avais** 15 ans, j'**habitais** à

Quand j'**ai eu** 18 ans, j'**ai déménagé** à Austin.

Tammy: When I was 15, I used to live in Fort Worth.

When I turned 18, I moved to Austin.

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The passé composé is also generally used for activities that lasted for a **precise length of time**, with a definite beginning and end. On the other hand, the imparfait is used for **indefinite lengths of time**. Look at these examples:

definite period of time:

De 1997 à 1998,

Pendant un an,

Entre dix-huit et dix-neuf ans,

Tex **a été** vendeur de T-shirts.

indefinite period of time:

Avant,

Quand il était enfant,

cette époque-là,

Tex **était** dans un couvent de Lyon. A

But ultimately it is the entire context that determines which of these two past tenses to use and not a given adverb. For example, in the sentences below, the same adverb, **un jour**, is used with the imperfect or the passé composé according to the context.

Un jour, Tex **vendait** des T-shirts à Paris quand il a été arrêté pour activité illégale.

One day, Tex was selling T-shirts in Paris when he was arrested for illegal activity. (The imparfait sets the scene to be interrupted)

Un jour, les autorités françaises **ont expulsé** Tex. One day, the French authorities deported Tex. (Event)

In the following story, note how the narration opens with an extended description of Tex' early childhood in the imparfait, which serves as explanatory background to the plot-line events in the passé composé.

Quand Tex **était** tout petit, il **habitait** dans la banlieue de Houston avec sa famille. Ce petit tatou, curieux de nature, **aimait** toujours faire de longues promenades avec ses amis pour explorer les coins et recoins de la banlieue, surtout les autoroutes!

When Tex was very small, he lived in the suburbs of Houston with his family. This little armadillo, curious by nature, always loved to take long walks with his friends to explore the nooks and crannies of the suburbs, above all the highways!

Un jour, pendant une promenade, il **s'est perdu**. Heureusement, après des heures et des heures, il **a trouvé** l'entrée de l'aéroport Bush International. Fasciné par le bruit et le mouvement, il **s'est précipité** vers les avions. Tandis qu'il **examinait** un avion de plus près, un homme l'**a brusquement pris** et il l'**a jeté** à l'intérieur avec les bagages. Huit heures plus tard, l'avion **est arrivé** à Paris, où Tex commencerait sa nouvelle vie française!

One day, during a walk, he got lost. Fortunately, after hours and hours, he found the entrance to the Bush International Airport. Fascinated by all the noise and motion, he rushed to the planes. As he was examining a plane more closely, a man abruptly took him and threw him inside with the baggage.

Eight hours later, the plane arrived in Paris, where Tex would start his new French life!

Tex **a passé** le reste de son enfance en France. En fait, il **est devenu** cent pour cent français. Quand il **était** adolescent, il **se considérait** comme un disciple de Sartre. Il ne **connaissait** rien au baseball **détestait** tout ce qui **était** américain. Mais en 1998, tout d'un coup sa vie **a changé** quand il **a découvert** que ses parents **étaient** ... américains.

Tex spent the rest of his childhood in France. In fact, he became one hundred per cent French. When he was an adolescent, he considered himself a disciple of Sartre. He knew nothing about baseball and he detested everything American. But in 1998, all of a sudden, his life changed when he discovered that his parents were ... American.

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plus-que-parfait

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formation

The pluperfect (**le plus -que-parfait**) is formed with the auxiliary in the **imparfait** followed by the **past participle** of the verb. The choice of auxiliary, **être** or **avoir**, is the same as for the **passé composé** (the **Alamo** of **être** applies).

Plus-que-parfait = auxiliary in the imparfait + past participle of verb

| manger 'to eat' | |
|---|---|
| j' avais mangé , I had eaten | nous avions mangé , we had eaten |
| tu avais mangé , you had eaten | vous aviez mangé , you had eaten |
| il, elle / on avait mangé , he, she (it) / one had eaten | ils / elles avaient mangé , they had eaten |

| aller 'to go' | |
|--|---|
| j' étais allé(e) , I had gone | nous étions allé(e)s , we had gone |
| tu étais allé(e) , you had gone | vous étiez allé(e)s , you had gone |
| il, elle / on était allé(e) , he, she (it) / one had gone | ils / elles étaient allé(e)s , they had gone |

The negation is formed in the usual manner by placing **ne ... pas** around the conjugated verb, which in this case is the auxiliary: Je **n'**avais **pas** mangé (I had not eaten), Je **n'**étais **pas** allé (I had not gone), etc.

uses

In past narration, the plus-que-parfait is used to express an **action which precedes another past action** or moment. In other words, the action in the plus-que-parfait is prior to another past action or moment. In English the plus-que-parfait is indicated by **had + past participle**. In affirmative sentences in French, it is often, but not always, accompanied by the adverb **déjà à** (already).

A l'âge de sept ans, Tex **avait déjà rédigé** dix poèmes.

At the age of seven, Tex had already composed ten poems.

Quelques années plus tard, il **avait abandonné** tout espoir de gloire littéraire. Mais il a changé d'avis quand il a lu les poèmes à Tammy.

A few years later, he had abandoned all hope of literary fame. But he changed his mind when he read the poems to Tammy.

Elle a adoré les poèmes innocents que Tex **avait écrits** pendant sa jeunesse.

She adored the innocent poems that Tex had written during his youth.

Not all instances of **had + past participle** in English are translated into plus-que-parfait in French. For example, in French **depuis** is usually used with the imperfect (**not** the pluperfect) and 'had **just** done something' is generally translated by **venir de** in the imparfait.

Le public littéraire **attendait** depuis des années la nouvelle poésie de Tex quand il a enfin retrouvé son inspiration.

The literary public **had been waiting** for years for new poetry from Tex when at last he found his inspiration again.

En fait, Tex **venait de** commencer un nouveau poème quand son éditeur a téléphoné.

In fact, Tex **had just** started a new poem when his editor called.

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Contrast the plus-que-parfait in this sentence with the examples above:

Tex **avait** (déjà) **commencé** son poème quand son éditeur a téléphoné.

Tex **had begun** his poem when his publisher called.



Remember that the opposite of **déjà** is the **negative** expression **pas encore**, just as 'already' is replaced by 'yet' in English.

Tex **n'avait pas (encore)** fini son poème quand son éditeur a téléphoné.

Tex had not (yet) finished his poem when his editor called.

In French and in English alike, the plus-que-parfait is also used to express wishes about the past, as in this example:

Editeur: Si seulement tu **avais fini** ton nouveau poème!

Editor: If only you had finished your new poem! (but you haven't)

The plus-que-parfait is also commonly used in **si clauses** followed by the past conditional. For example:

Tex à son éditeur: Imbécile! Si vous ne m'**aviez pas interrompu**, j'aurais pu finir mon nouveau poème. A cause de vous, je sens que je perds à nouveau mon inspiration.

Tex to his editor: Imbecile! If you had not interrupted me, I would have been able to finish my new poem. Because of you, I'm losing my inspiration again.

Editeur: Mon Dieu, si j'**avais su** combien les artistes étaient difficiles, je serais devenu comptable!

Editor: My God. If I had known how difficult artists were, I'd have become an accountant!

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passé simple

page: tap10

The **passé simple** is a past tense reserved primarily for written discourse. It may, however, be used in very formal spoken language, such as presidential addresses, sermons, or news broadcasting. It has traditionally been used only for events completed in the distant, historical past; however, twentieth century writers sometimes use it for stylistic effect.

The passé simple will generally be translated into English by a preterit, that is, the simple past: 'I talked'. But like the passé composé, the passé simple is used in French only to mention changes and events, while the imparfait remains the tense used for describing the setting, the atmosphere, an ongoing state of mind, or the general situation.

regular infinitives ending in -er, -ir & -re

For all regular **-er**, **-ir**, and **-re** verbs, the passé simple is formed by dropping the infinitive ending, the final two letters of the infinitive, and replacing them with the following endings. There is **no auxiliary** and this is the reason why it is called a 'simple' tense: it is a one-word tense (unlike the two-word **passé composé**). Many verbs, such as **aller**, **sortir**, and **suivre**, which are irregular in the present indicative follow the paradigm of regular verbs in their passé simple forms.

| endings for -er verbs | | endings for -ir & -re verbs | |
|------------------------------|---------------|---|---------------|
| -ai | -âmes | -is | -îmes |
| -as | -âtes | -is | -îtes |
| -a | -èrent | -it | -irent |

| parler 'to speak' | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| je parl ai | nous parl âmes |
| tu parl as | vous parl âtes |
| il / elle / on parl a | ils / elles parl èrent |

| finir 'to finish' | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| je fin is | nous fin îmes |
| tu fin is | vous fin îtes |
| il / elle / on fin it | ils / elles fin irent |

| perdre 'to lose' | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| je perd is | nous perd îmes |
| tu perd is | vous perd îtes |
| il / elle / on perd it | ils / elles perd irent |

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irregular verbs: *avoir, être, faire*

These verbs are irregular in the **passé simple**.

| avoir 'to have' | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| j' eus | nous eûmes |
| tu eus | vous eûtes |
| il / elle / on eut | ils / elles eurent |

| être 'to be' | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| je fus | nous fûmes |
| tu fus | vous fûtes |
| il / elle / on fut | ils / elles furent |

| faire 'to do' | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| je fis | nous fîmes |
| tu fis | vous fîtes |
| il / elle / on fi | ils / elles firent |

other irregular verbs

There are two sets of endings for the passé simple of irregular verbs

| endings in -i- | | endings in -u- | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| -is | -î mes | -us | -ûmes |
| -is | -îtes | -us | -ûtes |
| -it | -i rent | -ut | -urent |

Irregular verbs generally have irregular stems for the passé simple. In some cases, the stems are the same as the past participle of the verb. Stems of a few other verbs, marked with an *, are completely irregular (such as **naître**, **mourir**, **voir**). The endings are regular, however, except for **venir** and **tenir** which have irregular plural forms.

| infinitive | past participle | passé simple |
|------------|-----------------|--|
| boire | bu | je bus , tu bus , il but , nous bûmes , vous bûtes , ils burent |
| connaître | connu | je connus , tu connus , il connut , nous connûmes , vous connûtes , ils connurent |
| croire | cru | je crus , tu crus , il crut , nous crûmes , vous crûtes , ils crurent |
| devoir | dû | je dus , tu dus , il dut , nous dûmes , vous dûtes , ils durent |

|

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| | | |
|----------|--------|---|
| dire | dit | je dis , tu dis , il dit , nous dîmes , vous dîtes , ils dirent |
| écrire | écrit | j' écrivis , tu écrivis , il écrivit , nous écrivîmes , vous écrivîtes , ils écrivirent |
| falloir | fallu | il fallut |
| lire | lu | je lus , tu lus , il lut , nous lûmes , vous lûtes , ils lurent |
| mettre | mis | je mis , tu mis , il mit , nous mîmes , vous mîtes , ils mirent |
| mourir * | mort | je mourus , tu mourus , il mourut , nous mourûmes , vous mourûtes , ils moururent |
| naître * | né | je naquis , tu naquis , il naquit , nous naquîmes , vous naquîtes , ils naquirent |
| ouvrir | ouvert | j' ouvris , tu ouvris , il ouvrit , nous ouvriîmes , vous ouvriîtes , ils ouvrirent |
| pleuvoir | plu | il plut |
| pouvoir | pu | je pus , tu pus , il put , nous pûmes , vous pûtes , ils purent |
| prendre | pris | je pris , tu pris , il prit , nous prîmes , vous prîtes , ils prirent |
| recevoir | reçu | je reçus , tu reçus , il reçut , nous reçûmes , vous reçûtes , ils reçurent |
| rire | ri | je ris , tu ris , il rit , nous rîmes , vous rîtes , ils rirent |
| savoir | su | je sus , tu sus , il sut , nous sûmes , vous sûtes , ils surent |
| tenir * | tenu | je tins , tu tins , il tint , nous tîmes , vous tîtes , ils tinrent |
| venir * | venu | je vi ns , tu vins , il vi nt , nous vîmes , vous vîtes , ils vinrent |
| vivre | vécu | je vécus , tu vécus , il vécut , nous vécûmes , vous vécûtes , ils vécurent |
| voir * | vu | je vis , tu vis , il vit , nous vîmes , vous vîtes , ils virent |
| vouloir | voulu | je voulus , tu voulus , il volut , nous voulûmes , vous voulûtes , ils voulurent |

See the [conjugation reference](#) for the conjugation of other irregular verbs in the passé simple.

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Rita: Allez les enfants, c'est l'heure d'aller se coucher!

Les enfants: Ooh! Maman, maman, lis-nous une histoire! Oui, une histoire ...

Rita: Bon, d'accord. Installez-vous. Je commence . . .
"Il était une fois une ravissante jeune fille du nom de Cendrillon. Pour lui faire plaisir, son père **épousa** en seconde noce une veuve qui avait deux filles, Anastasia et Javotte. Mais hélas, le brave homme **mourut** peu après. Tout **changea** alors pour la fillette. Sa belle-mère lui **confia** les tâches les plus rudes et la **força** à coucher au grenier. Un jour, le roi **organisa** un grand bal pour marier son fils. La famille de Cendrillon **fut invitée** Anastasia, Javotte et leur mère **se rendirent** au bal mais **défendirent** à Cendrillon de les accompagner. Une fois seule, Cendrillon **se mit** à pleurer. Soudain, Cendrillon **entendit** une voix, la voix de sa marraine la Fée ..."

Rita: Ah ... ils se sont endormis!

Rita: Let's go, children. It's time to go to bed!

Children: Ooh! Mommy, mommy, read us a story! Yes, a story ...

Rita: Oh, OK. Get settled. Here we go ... "Once upon a time there was a beautiful young girl named Cinderella. To make her happy, her (widowed) father married for a second time a widow who had two girls, Anastasia and Javotte. But, alas, the good man died soon after. Everything changed for the young girl. Her stepmother gave her the hardest chores and forced her to sleep in the attic. One day, the king organized a grand ball to marry his son. Cinderella's family was invited. Anastasia and Javotte and their mother went to the ball, but they forbade Cinderella to go with them. Once alone, Cinderella started to cry. Suddenly, Cinderella heard a voice, the voice of her fairy godmother ... "

Rita: Ah ... they have fallen asleep!

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passé antérieur

page: tap11

Like the 'passé simple', the **passé antérieur** is a literary tense. They are often found together in the same text. The passé antérieur is used in literature, in formal writing, and in very formal speeches, when speaking of past events which are prior to other past actions; it is the literary equivalent of the **plus-que-parfait**. In other words, it is used for a past action that was completed before another action in the past (usually expressed in the **passé simple**).

formation

The **passé antérieur** is formed with the **passé simple** of the appropriate auxiliary (**avoir** or **être**) plus the past participle of the main verb.

Passé antérieur = auxiliary in the literary past + past participle of main verb

| parler 'to speak' | |
|--|---|
| je eus parlé , I had spoken | nous eûmes parlé , we had spoken |
| tu eus parlé , you had spoken | vous eûtes parlé , you had spoken |
| il / elle / on eut parlé , he / she / it had spoken | ils / elles eurent parlé , they had spoken |

| aller 'to go' | |
|--|--|
| je fus allé(e) , I had gone | nous fûmes allé(e)s , we had gone |
| tu fus allé(e) , you had gone | vous fûtes allé(e)s , you had gone |
| il / elle / on fut allé(e) , he / she / it had gone | ils / elles furent allé(e)s , they had gone |

For a list of verbs that use **être** as an auxiliary, like **aller**, see the [Alamo of être](#). Remember that all pronominal verbs require **être** as the auxiliary verb.

| se coucher 'to go to bed' | |
|--|--|
| je me fus couché(e) , I had gone to bed | nous nous fûmes couché(e)s , we had gone to bed |
| tu te fus couché(e) , you had gone to bed | vous vous fûtes couché(e)s , you had gone to bed |
| il / elle / on se fut couché(e) , he / she / it had gone to bed | ils / elles se furent couché(e)s , they had gone to bed |

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uses

The *passé antérieur* occurs most often in subordinate clauses; it is introduced by conjunctions such as **après** (after), **aussitôt que** or **dèsque** (as soon as). Note that, in this case, the main clause is always in the *passé simple*. The English equivalent is usually (but not always) **had + past participle**.

| prior action in the past (<i>passé antérieur</i>) | action in the past (<i>passé simple</i>) |
|---|---|
| Aussitôt qu'il fut né , | Tex commença à parler. |
| As soon as he was born, | Tex began to speak. |
| Après qu'il eut vécu quelques années à Paris, | Tex retourna dans son pays d'origine |
| After he had lived several years in Paris, | Tex returned to his native land. |
| Quand il eut publié son premier recueil de poèmes romantiques, | il y eut un grand scandale. |
| When he had published his first collection of romantic poems, | there was a big scandal. |

With **quand** and **lorsque** (when), the choice of tense depends on the meaning of each clause, as to which action occurs first. In the last example, Tex published his poems first (*passé antérieur* in the dependent clause) and then there was a scandal. However, the *passé antérieur* may also occur in the main clause, and the *passé simple* in the dependent clause: Quand il **arriva** au Texas, Tex **eut** déjà **fait** la connaissance de Tammy.



Les enfants: Maman, maman, raconte-nous la suite de l'histoire de Cendrillon!

Rita: Bon, d'accord. "On défendit à Cendrillon d'aller au bal du roi et on lui ordonna de faire le ménage dans toute la maison. Une fois seule, Cendrillon se mit au travail ... Quand elle **eut fini** de nettoyer les fenêtres, elle fit les lits. Lorsque les chambres furent propres, elle fit la vaisselle. Enfin, après qu'elle **eut rangé** toute la maison, elle éclata en sanglots ... Alors sa marraine la Fée apparut ..."

On entend les enfants ronfler.

Children: Mommy, mommy, tell us the rest of the story of Cinderella!

Rita: Oh, OK. "Cinderella was forbidden to go to the king's ball and was ordered to clean the house from top to bottom. Once alone, Cinderella started to work ... When she had finished cleaning the windows, she made the beds. When the bedrooms were clean, she did the dishes. Finally, after she had tidied up the whole house, she broke into sobs ... Then her fairy godmother appeared ..."

Sound of the children snoring.

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futur proche

formation

There are two future tenses in French, the **simple future** and the near future (**le futur proche**). The futur proche is usually translated into English as **going** + infinitive (e.g., going to eat, going to drink, going to talk). The futur proche is characteristic of spoken French but may be used in informal writing. It is formed with the verb **aller** (to go) conjugated in the present tense followed by an infinitive

| nager 'to swim' | |
|---|--|
| je vais nager , I am going to swim | nous allons nager , we are going to swim |
| tu vas nager , you are going to swim | vous allez nager , you are going to swim |
| il, elle / on va nager , he, she (it) / one is going to swim | ils / elles vont nager , they are going to swim |

To negate the futur proche, place **ne ... pas** around the conjugated form of **aller**: Je **ne** vais **pas** nager. (I am not going to swim).

Corey: Je **vais aller** à Barton Springs. J'adore l'eau. Je **vais nager**. Tu viens avec moi, Bette?

Corey: I am going to go to Barton Springs. I love water. I am going to swim. Are you coming with me, Bette?

Bette: Tu es fou! Il fait trop froid! Je **ne**vais **pas** nager!

Bette: Are you crazy? It is too cold! I am not going to swim!

Uses

The futur proche is used to refer to most future events in informal conversation. For details on usage see [future: usage](#).

Corey: Tex! Tammy! Nous **allons aller** à Barton Springs.

Corey: Tex! Tammy! We are going to go to Barton Springs.

Bette: Mais il y a de gros nuages gris, il **va pleuvoir**.

Bette: But there are big gray clouds. It's going to rain.

Corey: Chouette! Je **vais nager** sous la pluie.

Corey: Great! I am going to swim in the rain.

aller in the imperfect + infinitive

The construction **aller** + infinitive is also found with the verb **aller** in the imperfect (l'imparfait) to indicate what someone **was going to do**. For example:

Les copains **allaient partir** pour Barton Springs, quand ils ont vu un éclair.

The friends **were going to leave** for Barton Springs, when they saw lightening.

Bette: Corey, tu **vas te faire électrocuter**! Moi, je **vais faire** du shopping. Qui **va venir** avec moi?

Bette: Corey, you are going to get yourself electrocuted! I'm going to do some shopping. Who's going to come with me?

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regular subjunctive

page: tas1

The subjunctive is one of four moods in French (indicative, imperative, subjunctive and conditional). A mood is a grammatical term which helps categorize verb tenses. The subjunctive mood is used more frequently in French than in English. It has two tenses: present and past. It expresses several concepts, such as a wish, hope, or doubt, as well as an obligation or a necessity. One such expression which is always followed by the subjunctive is **il faut que** (it is necessary that ...).

-er, -re, and -ir verbs

The subjunctive endings are the same for all verbs: **-e, -es, -e, -ions, -iez, -ent**. For most verbs, the subjunctive mood is formed by dropping the **-ent** ending from the third person plural of the present indicative and adding the subjunctive endings. Note the similarities between the present indicative and the present subjunctive of **-er** verbs. This is due to the fact that the same stem is used for the subjunctive and the present indicative; the endings are also identical except for the **nous** and **vous** forms. This means that the 'boot' forms of the subjunctive of regular **-er** verbs look and sound exactly like the present indicative.

Because the subjunctive occurs in subordinate clauses, the subordinating conjunction **que** is usually included as part of the paradigm for the subjunctive forms.

| parler 'to speak' | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ... que je parle | ... que nous parlions |
| ... que tu parles | ... que vous parliez |
| ... qu'il/elle/on parle | ... qu'ils/elles parlent |

| finir 'to finish' | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ... que je finisse | ... que nous finissions |
| ... que tu finisses | ... que vous finissiez |
| ... qu'il/elle/on finisse | ... qu'ils/elles finissent |

| attendre 'to wait for' | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ... que j' attende | ... que nous attendions |
| ... que tu attendes | ... que vous attendiez |
| ... qu'il/elle/on attende | ... qu'ils/elles attendent |

In the singular for **-re** and **-ir** verbs, the subjunctive looks and sounds different from the present indicative since the stem is different for the two moods

present indicative

je **finis**

j'**attends**

present subjunctive

... que je **finisse**

... que j'**attende**

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Note that, for all conjugations, the third person plural of the present subjunctive always looks and sounds like the present indicative since the stem for the subjunctive comes from the third person plural.

proctive

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| ils parlent | ... qu'ils parlent |
| ils finissent | ... qu'ils finissent |
| ils attendent | ... qu'ils attendent |

irregular verbs with regular subjunctive forms (dormir, etc.)

Many verbs that are irregular in the present indicative are regular in forming the subjunctive. In other words, the stem is formed by removing the **-ent** ending from the third person plural of the present indicative and then the endings **-e, -es, -e, -ions, -iez, -ent** are added. Following are some irregular verbs, with the corresponding regular subjunctive forms.

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| dormir | to sleep | ... que je dorme |
| sortir | to go out | ... que je sorte |
| partir | to leave | ... que je parte |
| lire | to read | ... que je lise |
| sourire | to smile | ... que je sourie |
| dire | to say | ... que je dise |
| écrire | to write | ... que j' écrive |
| mettre | to put | ... que je mette |
| connaître | to know | ... que je connaisse |

stem changing verbs

Verbs with **stem changes** in the present indicative have one stem for the subjunctive of the 'nous' and 'vous' forms and another stem for the 'boot' forms. These verbs, such as **acheter, appeler, manger, commencer**, use the same two changes in the present subjunctive.

Tex: Il faut que j'**appelle** Paw-Paw ce soir.

Tex: I have to call Paw-Paw tonight.

Tammy: D'accord. A quelle heure est-ce qu'il faut que nous **appelions** Paw-Paw?

Tammy: Okay. What time do we have to call Paw-Paw?



Tex explique les règles à ses étudiants:

Tex explains the rules to his students:

Il faut que vous **parliez** clairement; pas de chewing-gum!

You must speak clearly; no chewing gum!

Bien sûr, il faut qu'on **fnisse** avant midi. Le déjeuner, c'est sacré!

Of course, we must end before meal times. Lunch is sacred!

Joe-Bob, il faut que tu **attendes** la fin du cours avant de dormir.

Joe-Bob, you must wait until the end of class before sleeping.

Et il faut que nous **sortions** ensemble après le cours de révision pour prendre un verre.

We must go out together after the review to have a drink.

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irregular subjunctive

page: tas2

The subjunctive is one of four **moods** in French (indicative, imperative, subjunctive and conditional). A mood is a grammatical term which helps categorize verb tenses. The subjunctive is used more frequently in French than in English. One important use of the subjunctive is after the expression **il faut que**, indicating necessity. The subjunctive also expresses a feeling or emotion such as a wish, hope, or doubt.

For most verbs, the subjunctive mood is formed by dropping the **-ent** ending from the third person plural of the present indicative and adding the endings: **-e, -es, -e, -ions, -iez, -ent**. This is known as the **regular formation** of the subjunctive.

verbs with two stems

There are several categories of irregular subjunctive formations. The first of these categories concerns verbs with two stems in the subjunctive. These verbs have a similar two-stem irregularity in the present indicative (for example, 'ils **viennent**' BUT 'nous **venons**'). The **boot stem** (for the forms je, tu, il / elle, ils / elles) is the third person plural of the present indicative, the very same as the stem for **regular formation** of the subjunctive. The first person plural of the present indicative provides the **second stem** for the 'nous' and 'vous' forms of the subjunctive. The regular subjunctive endings are added to these two stems.

| venir 'to come' | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| que je viene | que nous venions |
| que tu viennes | que vous veniez |
| qu'il / elle / on viene | qu'ils / elles viennent |

In addition to **venir**, here is a list of the most frequent verbs with two stems in the subjunctive:

infinitive

je, tu, il/elle/on, ils/elles

boot stem, for:

2nd stem, for: nous, vous

aller (to go)

que j'**a**ille

que nous **allions**

boire (to drink)

que je **bo**ive

que nous **buvions**

croire (to believe)

que je **cro**ie

que nous **cro**yions

devoir (to have to)

que je **doi** ve

que nous **dev**ions

mourir (to die)

que je **me**ure

que nous **mour**ions

prendre (to take)

que je **pre**nne

que nous **pre**nions

recevoir (to receive)

que je **reço**ive

que nous **re**cevi ons

tenir (to hold)

que je **tie**nne

que nous **tie**nions

voir (to see)

que je **vo**ie

que nous **voy**ions

vouloir (to want)

que je **ve**uille

que nous **voul**ions

irregular verbs: avoir and être

Avoir and **être** are highly irregular in the subjunctive and must be memorized. Note that the 'nous' and 'vous' forms are spelled with the letter **y** (instead of the **i** characteristic of the regular subjunctive endings). Note in particular the pronunciation of the subjunctive forms of **avoir**, which have the same vowel sound as found in **j'ai** (I have), the first person singular in the present indicative.

| avoir 'to have' | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| que j' a ie | que nous ay ons |
| que tu a ies | que vous ay ez |
| qu'il / elle / on a it | qu'ils / elles a ient |

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| être 'to be' | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| que je sois | que nous soyons |
| que tu sois | que vous soyez |
| qu'il / elle / on soit | qu'ils / elles soient |

Note the similarity of the subjunctive forms of the verbs **être** and **avoir** to their respective **imperative** forms.

irregular verbs: faire, savoir, pouvoir

The verbs **faire**, **savoir** and **pouvoir** have completely irregular stems. The endings, however, are regular.

| faire 'to do' | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| que je fasse | que nous fassions |
| que tu fasses | que vous fassiez |
| qu'il / elle / on fasse | qu'ils / elles fassent |

infinitive

savoir (to know)

pouvoir (to be able)

first person present subjunctive

que je **sache**

que je **puisse**

Note the similarity between the subjunctive and **imperative** forms of the verb **savoir**



Paw-Paw donne des conseils à son petit-fils, Tex.

Paw-Paw: Tex, mon cher, il faut que tu **saches** que la vie est courte. Tammy est une tatou formidable. Tu ne vas pas trouver une meilleure femme. Il ne faut pas que Tammy et toi **ayez** peur de vous marier.

Dépêchez-vous! Comme je l'ai dit . . . la vie est courte. Moi, je veux seulement que vous **soyez** heureux. Et une autre chose: après votre mariage, il faut que vous **veniez** me voir. Je suis tout seul en Louisiane et la famille me manque. Il faut que nous **fassions** plus de choses ensemble. Il faut que j'**ai**e plus de compagnie.

Paw-Paw is giving advice to his grandson Tex.

Paw-Paw: Tex, my dear, you have to know that life is short. Tammy is a fabulous armadillo. You are not going to find a better wife. You and Tammy must not be afraid to get married. Hurry up! As I said

. . . life is short. As for me, I only want you to be happy. And another thing. After your marriage, you must come see me. I am all alone in Louisiana and I miss my family. We have to do more things together. I've got to have more company.

subjunctive usage: obligation

page: tas3a

The subjunctive is required **after** impersonal expressions of necessity and obligation. An impersonal expression is any expression introduced by the impersonal pronoun **il**, usually translated into English by 'it'. One of the most frequent is **il faut que** (it is necessary to). When the main clause uses **il faut que**, the verb of the dependent clause which follows must be in the subjunctive. Note that there are always two different subjects in the two clauses.

Paw-Paw: Tex, **il faut que tu choisisses** le vin.

PawPaw: Tex, it is necessary that you choose the wine.

Note that the expression **il faut que** is stronger and more emphatic than the verb 'devoir' (which is followed by an infinitive): Tex doit choisir le vin (Tex must / is supposed to choose the wine).

Below are other common impersonal expressions of obligation and necessity. Note that they are all followed by the conjunction **que** which introduces a subordinate clause with a verb in the subjunctive:

- il est important que**, it is important that
- il est nécessaire que**, it is necessary that
- il est essentiel que**, it is essential that
- il est inévitable que**, it is unavoidable that
- il vaut mieux que**, it is better that
- il est préférable que**, it is preferable that
- il est indispensable que**, it is indispensable that



Paw-Paw: Peut-être que ce ne sont pas mes affaires, mais... j'ai remarqué que Tammy a choisi le vin à ta place. Ecoute, mon cher, **il est préférable que les hommes choisissent** le vin et **que les femmes fassent** la cuisine.

Tex: Merci pour les conseils, PawPaw, mais **il est important que vous compreniez** que les temps changent. Aujourd'hui les femmes font beaucoup de choses qu'elles ne pouvaient pas faire autrefois.

Paw-Paw: Ah, je comprends! C'est Tammy qui porte la culotte et pas toi! Alors **il faut que je t'achète** un tablier, ma petite.

Paw-Paw: Maybe, it's none of my business, but ... I noticed that Tammy chose the wine instead of you. Listen, my dear, it's better that men choose the wine and that women do the cooking.

Tex: Thanks for the advice, PawPaw, but it is important that you understand that times are changing. Now women do a lot of things that they used to not be able to do.

Paw-Paw: Oh, I understand. It's Tammy who wears the pants, not you! Well now, I'll have to buy you an apron, my little girl.

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subjunctive usage: doubt

page: tas3b

The choice of mood indicates the speaker's degree of uncertainty: subjunctive implies the speaker doubts the existence or possibility of what is being described; indicative implies the speaker believes or is certain that what is being described is possible or does exist.

expressions of doubt and uncertainty

The subjunctive occurs in dependent clauses introduced by verbs and expressions of **doubt or uncertainty** whenever there are two different subjects in the two clauses linked by the subordinating conjunction **que**.

il est possible que, it is possible that
il est impossible que, it is impossible that **il est**
incroyable que, it is unbelievable that **il est douteux**
que, it is doubtful that **douter que**, to doubt that

Où est Edouard? Chez MacDo?

Oh non! **Il est impossible qu'**Edouard **soit** chez MacDo!

Where is Edouard? At MacDonald's?

Oh no! It is impossible that Edouard be at MacDonald's!

interrogatives and negatives

Doubt is commonly expressed by **questioning or negating** a statement.

Crois-tu que Corey **soit** chez MacDo?

Oui, je crois que Corey est chez MacDo.

Mais Edouard? Non, je **ne crois pas qu'**Edouard **soit** chez MacDo.

Do you believe that Corey is at MacDonald's?

I believe Corey is at MacDonald's.

But Edouard? No, I don't believe that Edouard is at MacDonald's.

The following expressions imply **certainty**, so when they are used in affirmative statements, they are followed by the **indicative**.

croire que, to believe that
penser que, to think that
être sûr que, to be sure that
trouver que, to find that
se douter que, to suspect that
supposer que, to suppose that
avoir l'impression que, to have the impression that
il est vrai que, it is true that
il paraît que, it appears that
il est probable que, it is probable that
il (me) semble que, it seems (to me) that
il est clair que, it is clear that
il est évident que, it is evident that
il est certain que, it is certain that

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However, when these expressions are used in either the **interrogative** or the **negative**, **doubt** is introduced. Consequently, in the subordinate clause, the **subjunctive** is used. On the other hand, when expressions of doubt are negated, they indicate certainty and thus are followed by the indicative: **Je ne doute pas qu'Edouard est un escargot distingué** (I do not doubt that Edouard is a distinguished snail = I am certain that ...).

In the following dialogue, the subjunctive is highlighted in blue and the indicative in orange.



Tammy: Je suppose que nous **allons** nous marier. Il est clair que tu m'**aimes**.

Tex: Mais Tammy, euh, je ne crois pas que tu **sois** prête pour le mariage. Et puis, je ne suis pas sûr que tes parents **soient** d'accord. Non, non, vraiment, je ne trouve pas que ce **soit** une bonne idée.

Tammy: Te semble-t-il que je **sois** trop jeune? Tu n'es pas certain que je **sois** la femme de ta vie?

Tex: Oh, chérie, je ne doute pas que tu **es** la femme de ma vie. Mais il est évident que nous **sommes** trop jeunes pour le moment. En plus, il est certain que je n'**ai** pas encore assez d'argent.

Tammy: I suppose that we are going to get married. It is clear that you love me.

Tex: But, Tammy, uh, I don't think that you are ready for marriage. And then, I am not sure your parents would approve. No, no, really, I don't think this is a good idea.

Tammy: Does it seem to you that I am too young? You're not sure that I am the woman of your life?

Tex: Oh, my dear, I do not doubt that you are the woman of my life. But it is obvious that we are too young right now. Also, it is certain that I don't have enough money yet.

relative clauses

When **relative clauses** express **uncertainty**, they also trigger the use of the **subjunctive**. If the existence of the antecedent, or referent, is not certain, then the subjunctive is used to highlight this uncertainty. On the other hand, if the existence or possibility of the antecedent is likely and/or definite, then the doubt is removed and the indicative is used.

In the following dialogue, the subjunctive is highlighted in blue and the indicative in orange.

Tammy: Je cherche un tatou qui **est** intelligent, bilingue et intéressant. Mais à vrai dire, je l'ai déjà trouvé!

Tex: Existe-t-il une seule fille qui ne **soit** pas obsédée par le mariage? N'y a-t-il rien qui **puisse** la détourner?

Tammy: Y-a-t-il quelque chose qui **puisse** le convaincre?

Tammy: I am looking for an armadillo who is intelligent, bilingual and interesting. But, actually, I have already found him!

Tex: Is there one girl who is not obsessed with marriage? Isn't there anything that can divert her?

Tammy: Is there anything that might convince him?

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superlatives

The use of a **superlative** can influence the choice between the subjunctive and the indicative. The subjunctive is used after superlative expressions that contain a **subjective** opinion. On the other hand, if the superlative expression contains a **fact** or a completely **objective** opinion, then the indicative is used since the idea is devoid of any sort of doubt.

The following list contains a group of common expressions that are superlative-like in their use.

le seul, the only

l'unique, the only

il n'y a que, there is only

le dernier, the last

le premier, the first

le meilleur, the best

In the following dialogue, the subjunctive is highlighted in blue and the indicative in orange.

Tex: Tammy est la plus belle tatou que je **connaisse**.
Mais quand même, j'ai, j'ai peur du mariage.

Tammy: Tex est le seul tatou français que je **connais**.
Il est vraiment unique.

Tex: Tammy is the prettiest armadillo that I know. But even so, I'm, I'm afraid of marriage.

Tammy: Tex is the only French armadillo that I know. He is truly unique.

subjunctive usage: will, emotion, desire

page: tas4

will and desire

The subjunctive is used in dependent clauses after expressions of will and desire whenever there are two different subjects in the two clauses linked by the subordinating conjunction **que**. Here is a list of common verbs expressing will and desire:

aimer que, to like that ...

aimer mieux que, to prefer that ...

attendre que, to wait, expect that ...

désirer que, to desire that ...

exiger que, to require that ...

préférer que, to prefer that ...

souhaiter que, to hope that ...

vouloir que, to want that ...

vouloir bien que, to be willing that ...

Tex **veut qu'** Edouard **fasse** la cuisine ce soir. Tex wants Edouard to cook this evening.

Note however that **espérer** (to hope) is an exception and is followed by the indicative: 'Tex espère qu'Edouard préparera du couscous ce soir' (Tex hopes that Edouard will prepare couscous this evening). Remember that when there is only one subject, the conjugated verb is followed by an infinitive: 'Edouard ne veut pas faire la cuisine' (Edouard does not want to cook).

emotion

The subjunctive is used after expressions of emotion and opinion. Remember that the subjunctive is found in the subordinate clause of sentences that contain a change of subject from the main clause to the subordinate clause. Here is a list of common expressions of emotion with which the subjunctive is found in the subordinate clause:

être content(e) que, to be happy that

être heureux(/ se) que, to be happy that

être ravi(e) que, to be delighted that

être étonné(e) que, to be surprised that

être mécontent(e) que, to be unhappy that

être malheureux(/se) que, to be unhappy that

être triste que, to be sad that

être surpris(e) que, to be surprised that

Tammy **est ravie que** nous **venions** dîner chez elle ce soir.

Fiona **craint qu'** on **mette** un pesticide autour de l'immeuble de Tammy.

être impatient(e) que, to be impatient that

être désolé(e) que, to be sorry that

regretter que, to regret that

se réjouir que, to rejoice, celebrate that

craindre que, to fear that

redouter que, to fear that

avoir peur que, to fear that

Tammy is delighted that we are coming to dinner at her house this evening

OR

Tammy's delighted that we will come to dinner at her house this evening.

Fiona is afraid that they're putting pesticides around Tammy's apartment building.

OR

Fiona is afraid that they will put pesticides around Tammy's apartment building.



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Notice how there are two ways of translating these two sentences. Because the subjunctive is the tense for hypotheses and potentialities, it sometimes has a future meaning. Only the context will determine if the action in the subjunctive refers to the present or future time.

opinion

Here is a list of common impersonal expressions of opinion; there are many more such expressions since any adjective may be used. Remember that impersonal expressions always have 'il' as the subject. These expressions are followed by a dependent clause in the subjunctive.

il est bon que, it is good that

il est juste que, it is fair that

il est dommage que, it is unfortunate that

il est utile que, it is useful that

il est urgent que, it is urgent that

il est logique que, it is logical that

one subject

If expressions of emotion or opinion have only one subject throughout the sentence, then the preposition **de** + infinitive replaces **que** + subjunctive (See [ways to avoid the subjunctive](#)). Contrast the previous examples with these sentences:

Tammy **est ravie de recevoir** des amis.

Tammy is delighted to have friends over.

OR

Tammy is delighted she's going to have friends over.

Fiona **craint de ne pas pouvoir** venir.

Fiona is afraid she cannot come.

OR

Fiona is afraid she won't be able to come.

Il est bon de pouvoir s'amuser avec ses amis.

It is good to be able to have fun with one's friends.

Tex et Tammy organisent un repas pour leurs copains ce soir.

Tex and Tammy are preparing a meal for their friends tonight.

Tammy: Tex, je voudrais que tu **choisisses** un bon vin. Mais je préfère que ce **soit** un rouge s'il te plaît. Il serait dommage que nous **buviions** du vin blanc avec du boeuf.

Tammy: Tex, I would like you to pick a good wine. But I would prefer a red wine please. It would be a pity to drink a white wine with beef.

Tex réfléchit un moment, puis il choisit un vin californien.

Tex reflects a moment and then he chooses a Californian wine.

Tammy: Mais enfin Tex, pas un vin américain! Il serait préférable que nous **ouvrions** une bouteille de Bordeaux ou de Bourgogne

Tammy: Tex! Not an American wine! It would be better if we opened a bottle of Bordeaux or Burgundy!

Tex: Ma chère Tammy, j'ai bien peur que nous n'**ayons** plus de vins français en réserve!

Tex: My dear Tammy, I am afraid we're out of French wines!

Tammy: Tu es sûr? Je suis étonnée qu'il n'y **ait** plus de vin français.

Tammy: Are you sure? I'm really surprised that there isn't any more French wine.

conjunctions that take the subjunctive

page: tas5

When the following conjunctions introduce a subordinate clause with a new subject, they always trigger the subjunctive. Remember that the subjects of the subordinate clause and of the main clause are **different**. In the examples below, the verb in the subjunctive is underlined>.

conjunctions expressing intention: *pour que, afin que, de sorte que (in order that, so that)*

Bette drague Tex **pour qu'** il lui donne de bonnes notes.

Bette is hitting on Tex so that he will give her good grades.

Bette drague Tex **afin que** Tammy soit jalouse.

Bette is hitting on Tex so that Tammy will be jealous.

Bette drague Tex **de sorte que** Tammy et Tex se disputent.

Bette is hitting on Tex so that Tammy and Tex will fight.



Conjunctions expressing fear: *de crainte que, de peur que (for fear that, I est)*

Mais Tex n'a rien dit à Tammy **de crainte qu'** elle (**ne**)* se fâche.

But Tex hasn't said anything to Tammy for fear that [lest] she be angry.

Il ne veut pas en parler **de peur que** Tammy soit blessée.

He doesn't want to bring it up for fear that [lest] Tammy be hurt.

* **ne** is optional. It is sometimes added to certain subjunctive clauses for stylistic purposes, in these cases it does not negate the verb.

conjunctions expressing time: *avant que (before), en attendant que (while waiting for), jusqu'à ce que (until)*

Pourtant, il doit faire quelque chose **avant que** Tammy (**ne**) se rende compte de ce qui se passe!

Yet he must do something before Tammy realizes what's going on!

Tex prend un café **en attendant que** Tammy le rejoigne.

Tex is having a cup of coffee while waiting for Tammy to join him.

Il va réfléchir au problème **jusqu'à ce qu'**elle arrive.

He's going to think about this problem until she arrives.

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Conjunctions expressing obstacles or restrictions: *bien que, quoi que (al hough), à moins que (unless)*

Tammy a du mal à croire l'histoire de Tex, **bien qu'** il ait l'air sincère.

Tammy finds it difficult to believe Tex's story, although he looks sincere.

Tammy: Alors Bette n'est pas une vraie amie, **à moins que** ce (ne) soit toi qui la drague.

Tammy: So Bette is not a true friend, unless it is you who has been hitting on her.

conjunctions expressing a condition: *à condition que (on the condition that), pourvu que (provi ded that), sans que (wi thout)*

Tammy: Ecoute, Tex, je veux bien te faire confiance, **à condition que** tu me promettes de tout me dire.

Tammy: Listen Tex, I'm willing to trust you, if you promise that you will tell me everything.

Je veux bien pardonner aussi à Bette, **pourvu qu'** elle ne recommence pas.

I am also willing to forgive Bette, provided that she never does it again.

conjoining conjunctions which have the same subject

The subjunctive is required after a few conjunctions even when the subject stays the same from the main clause to the dependent clause. These four conjunctions are **bien que, quoi que, pourvu que, jusqu'à ce que**.



TEX VEUT ATTENDRE
JUSQU'À CE QU'IL
SE SENTE PRÊT.

Tammy aime Tex **bien qu'** elle le trouve puéril par moments.

Tammy loves Tex although she finds him childish at times.

Quoi que Tammy soit sûre de vouloir épouser Tex, elle ne veut pas précipiter les choses.

Although Tammy is certain she wants to marry Tex, she does not want to rush things.

Tex veut attendre **jusqu'à ce qu'** il se sente prêt.

Tex wants to wait until he feels ready.

Tammy veut bien patienter un peu **pourvu que** Tex n'attende pas trop longtemps.

Tammy is happy to wait a bit more provided that Tex doesn't wait too much longer.

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past subjunctive

page: tas6

Formation

The past subjunctive resembles the passé composé in that it is formed with the present subjunctive of the appropriate **auxiliary verb (avoir or être)** and the past participle of the main verb.

| rire 'to laugh' | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| que j'aie ri | que nous ayons ri |
| que tu aies ri | que vous ayez ri |
| qu'il / elle / on ait ri | qu'ils / elles aient ri |

| sortir 'to go out' | |
|--|--|
| que je sois sorti(e) | que nous soyons sorti(e)s |
| que tu sois sorti(e) | que vous soyez sorti(e)s |
| qu'il / elle / on soit sorti(e) | qu'ils / elles soient sorti(e)s |

uses

The past subjunctive is normally used in dependent clauses that describe an action which **precedes** the action of the main clause. The past subjunctive is introduced by the same kinds of clauses that introduce the present subjunctive (See subjunctive of [obligation](#), [doubt](#), [will](#), [emotion](#), [desire](#) and [conjunctions that take the subjunctive](#)). Note the **past tense meaning** of the event encoded in the past subjunctive. The present subjunctive, on the other hand, indicates a simultaneous action or a future action. Compare these sentences (present subjunctive in orange, past subjunctive in blue):

Tammy: Je suis surprise que tu **écriv** ce livre.

Tammy: I am surprised that you are writing this book.

Tex: Je suis surpris que tu **ai es lu** ce livre.

Tex: I am surprised that you have read this book

Tammy: J'ai été surprise que tu **écriv** ce livre.

Tammy: I was surprised that you were writing this book.

Tex: J'ai été surpris que tu **ai es lu** ce livre.

Tex: I was surprised that you had read this book

Note that the tense of the verb in the main clause in French does not predict the tense of the subjunctive in the dependent clause. The choice between the present and past subjunctives depends on the **chronological relationship** between the two clauses.

Tammy: Tex est content que la France **ait gagné** la Coupe du Monde en 98.

Tammy: Tex is happy that France won the 1998 World Cup.

Mais je doute qu'il **soit sorti** après la finale parce qu'il avait trop bu.

But, I doubt that he went out after the final game because he had drunk too much.

Ma mère n'était pas sûre que Tex **ait aimé** le vin qu'elle avait envoyé.

My mom wasn't sure that Tex had liked the wine that she sent for the game.

Mais j'ai peur que Tex et Edouard **l'aient** trop **aimé**!

But, I'm afraid that Tex and Edouard liked it too well!

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subjunctive summary

page: tas7

WEDDINGS is a mnemonic device that can help you recall the main points concerning the subjunctive. What are some of the essential components of a wedding?

First, there are always two people who get married at a wedding. And just like a wedding, the subjunctive requires **two different subjects** in two different clauses.

Second, a ring is often used to symbolize the couple's union at a wedding. And just like the ring, the subordinating conjunction **que** is essential in joining together the two clauses.

Remember that there are also certain other **conjunctions** which always require the subjunctive.

And finally, the wedding party (the bride and groom and parents and friends) often run the gamut of emotions during the marriage ceremony: **doubt, happiness, sadness, desire**. Similarly, the subjunctive is a mood that indicates a speaker's attitude or opinion about the events expressed. The use of the subjunctive is often triggered by an expression of emotion.

In summary, remember that a wedding always contains the following: **two different people (subjects)** joined by a ring (**que**) in an **emotion-laden context!** The different categories that describe the contexts for the subjunctive spell out **weddings**:



| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| WILL | Moi, je veux seulement que vous soyez heureux. |
| EMOTION | Je suis heureuse que tu veuilles m'épouser, Tex! |
| DOUBT | Mais Tammy, euh, je ne crois pas que tu sois prête pour le mariage. |
| DESIRE | Je désire que tu m'épouses, Tex! |
| INTERROGATIVES | Existe-t-il une seule fille qui ne soit pas obsédée par le mariage? |
| NEGATIVES | Je n'ai pas l'impression que Tammy soit la femme de ta vie, Tex! |
| GENERAL STATEMENTS | Tex, mon cher, il faut que tu saches que la vie est courte. |
| SUPERLATIVES | Tammy est la plus belle tatou que je connaisse! |

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ways to avoid the subjunctive

page: tas8

Although the subjunctive is commonly used in French, many alternative turns of phrase are often used to avoid the subjunctive.

impersonal expressions with infinitive clauses

Many impersonal expressions which take the subjunctive can be modified and completed with infinitive clauses instead. Note that the infinitive construction eliminates the subject of the original dependent clause.

subjunctive

Il est important que tu **boives** du vin. (It is important that you drink wine.)

Il est préférable que tu **sois** poli. (It is preferable / advisable that you be polite.)

Il est essentiel que tu **lises** les journaux. (It is essential that you read the papers.)

Il est dommage que tu **fumes** autant. (It is a pity that you smoke so much.)

infinitive

Il est important **de boire** du vin. (It is important to drink wine.)

Il est préférable **d'être** poli. (It is preferable / better to be polite.)

Il est essentiel **de li re** les journaux. (It is essential to read the papers.)

Il est dommage **de fumer** autant. (It is a pity to smoke so much.)



IL EST IMPORTANT
DE BOIRE DU VIN

conjunction replaced by preposition + infinitive

Some conjunctions which are normally followed by the subjunctive have corresponding prepositions, so the sentence can often be rephrased using **one subject**, with an infinitive following the preposition.

| conjunction + subjunctive | translation | preposition + infinitive |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| à condition que | on the condition (that) | à condition de |
| afin que | so that, in order to | afin de |
| à moins que | unless | à moins de |
| avant que | before | avant de |
| de crainte que | for fear that (of), lest | de crainte de |
| de peur que | for fear that (of), lest | de peur de |
| en attendant que | while waiting for (to) | en attendant de |
| pour que | in order that (to) | pour |
| sans que | without | sans |

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conjunction + subjunctive (2 subjects)

Bette drague Tex pour que Tammy soit jalouse. Tex est victime de harcèlement sexuel! (Bette is hitting on Tex in order that Tammy be jealous. Tex is a victim of sexual harrassment!)

Tex ne dit rien à Tammy de peur qu'elle se mette en colère. (Tex does not say anything to Tammy for fear that she get angry.)

preposition + infinitive (1 subject)

Bette drague Tex **pour rendre** Tammy jalouse. Tex est victime de harcèlement sexuel! (Bette is hitting on Tex in order to make Tammy jealous. Tex is a victim of sexual harrassment!)

Tex ne dit rien à Tammy **de peur de** la **mettre** en colère. (Tex does not say anything to Tammy for fear of making her angry.)

conjunction replaced by preposition + object

Some conjunctions, like **jusqu'à ce que** and **bien que**, which introduce the subjunctive, may be restated using prepositions followed by a noun:

conjunction + subjunctive

Jusqu'à ce que Tammy arrive, Tex est très pensif. (Until Tammy arrives, Tex is very pensive.)

Quand elle arrive, il lui sourit, bien qu'il ait des soucis. (When she arrives, he smiles at her, although he is worried.)

preposition + noun

Jusqu'à l'arrivée de Tammy, Tex est très pensif. (Until Tammy's arrival, Tex is very pensive.)

Quand elle arrive, il lui sourit, **malgré** ses soucis. (When she arrives, he smiles to her despite his worries.)

other structural transformations

The following pairs of sentences will give you still more ways to avoid the subjunctive.

subjunctive

Tammy: Je ne suis pas sûre que tu sois prêt pour le mariage. (I am not sure that you are ready for marriage.)

Tammy: Il est possible que tu sois l'homme de ma vie. (It is possible that you may be the man of my life.)

Bette: Je n'ai pas l'impression que Tammy soit la femme de ta vie, Tex. (I don't think that Tammy is the woman of your life.)

Tex: Tammy, j'ai besoin que tu viennes me voir. (Tammy, I need you to come and see me.)

avoiding the subjunctive

Tex: Je ne sais pas **si** je suis prêt pour le mariage. (I don't know if I am ready for marriage.)

Tex: Je suis **peut-être** l'homme de ta vie. (Maybe I am the man of your life.)

Tammy: J'ai l'impression que Bette **n'est pas** la femme de ta vie, Tex. (I think that Bette is not the woman of your life.)

Bette: Viens me voir chez moi, Tex. J'ai besoin **de** te voir. (Come and see me, Tex. I need to see you.)

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Conditional

page: tac1

The conditional is used to refer to hypothetical events. It occurs in polite requests and most frequently with **if** clauses. In French, it is called **le conditionnel** and is most often translated by **would** in English.

formation

The stem used to form the conditional is the same as the stem of the **future** (usually the infinitive). The conditional endings are **-ais, -ais, -ait, -ions, -iez, -aient** (These are also the imperfect endings).

| jouer 'to play' | |
|--|--|
| je jouera is , I would play | nous jouer ions , we would play |
| tu jouera is , you would play | vous jouer iez , you would play |
| il, elle / on jouer ait , he, she (it) /would play | ils / elles jouer aient , they would play |

The above formation works for **-er** verbs (aimer, j'**aimerais**), **-ir** verbs (finir, je fin**irais**) and **-re** verbs (vendre, je vendr**ais**). Remember to drop the final **e** from the infinitive stem of **-re** verbs .

pronunciation

The **r** in the stem is representative of the conditional, as well as the future. Only the difference in the pronunciation of the endings distinguishes the two. The difference between the **je** forms is subtle. Note also how the **e** of the infinitive of **-er** verbs changes in the future and conditional forms.

| regarder 'to look at' | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| future | conditional |
| je regarder ai | je regarder ais |
| tu regarder as | tu regarder ais |
| il / elle regarder a | il / elle regarder ait |
| nous regarder ons | nous regarder ions |
| vous regarder ez | vous regarder iez |
| ils / elles regarder ont | ils / elles regarder aient |

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irregular stems

Verbs with irregular future stems use the same irregular stems in the conditional. Here is a list of the most common irregular stems:

| infinitive | stem | conditional | translation |
|------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| aller | ir- | j'irais | I would go |
| avoir | aur- | j'aurais | I would run |
| courir | courr- | je courrais | I would run |
| devoir | devr- | je devrais | I would be obliged to |
| envoyer | enverr- | j'enverrais | I would send |
| être | ser- | je serais | I would be |
| faire | fer- | je ferais | I would do |
| falloir | faudr- | il faudrait | it would be necessary |
| mourir | mourr- | je mourrais | I would die |
| obtenir | obtiendr- | j'obtiendrais | I would obtain |
| pleuvoir | pleuvr- | il pleuvrait | it would rain |
| pouvoir | pourr- | je pourrais | I would be able |
| recevoir | recevr- | je recevrais | I would receive |
| savoir | saur- | je saurais | I would know |
| tenir | tiendr- | je tiendrais | I would hold |
| venir | viendr- | je viendrais | I would come |
| voir | verr- | je verrais | I would see |
| vouloir | voudr- | je voudrais | I would want |

verbs with spelling changes

Some verbs with spelling changes in the present form their future/conditional stem regularly. These include verbs like préférer, espérer, manger, and commencer.

| infinitive | stem | conditional | translation |
|------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| préférer | préférer- | je préférerais | I would prefer |
| espérer | espérer- | j'espérerais | I would hope |
| manger | manger- | je mangerais | I would eat |
| commencer | commencer- | je commencerais | I would start |

Verbs with spelling changes like appeler, employer and acheter add **-r** to the present of the **je** form to create their future stem.

| present tense | stem | conditional | translation |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| j'appelle | appeller- | j'appellerais | I would call |
| j'emploie | emploier- | j'emploierais | I would use |
| j'achète | acheter- | j'achèterais | I would buy |

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uses

wishes or requests

The conditional expresses potentiality. It is used to express a wish or a suggestion, to make a request, or to accept or extend invitations. It is less direct and more polite than the imperative. The verbs 'pouvoir', 'vouloir', and 'devoir' are often found in the conditional to diminish the strength of a command. In most cases, the conditional is translated as meaning **would** in English. However, **je pourrais** means 'I could', **je devrais** means 'I should' and **je voudrais** means 'I would like'. Also do not confuse 'would' in English meaning 'used to' which should be translated as an **imparfait** in French, and NOT as the conditional: A Paris, Joe-Bob allait au MacDo tous les jours. (In Paris, Joe-Bob would/used to go to McDonald's everyday).



Joe-Bob et Tammy se trouvent au restaurant où Edouard travaille comme serveur.

Joe-Bob and Tammy are at the restaurant where Edouard works as a waiter.

Edouard: Bonsoir Madame, Monsieur. **Aimeriez-vous** commander un apéritif pour commencer?

Edouard: Good evening, would you like to order drinks to start?

Tammy: Oh oui! **Pourrions-nous** avoir un Ricard et un Perrier? Ensuite, je **voudrais** une salade verte, s'il vous plaît.

Tammy: Oh yes, could we have one Ricard and one Perrier? Then I would like a green salad, please.

Joe-Bob: Je veux un hamburger.

Joe-Bob: I want a hamburger.

Edouard: Monsieur, vous **devriez** être plus poli dans ce restaurant, sinon, je **pourrais** oublier votre commande!

Edouard: Sir, you should be more polite in this restaurant, or else I could forget your order!

hypothetical action

The conditional is used when making statements which are contrary to present facts. It expresses a hypothetical result which depends on (stated or implied) circumstances which do not exist. In order for the action expressed by the conditional to occur, something else must take place first. Note that the condition in the **si** or **if** clause, is always stated in the imparfait. (See 'si' clauses for further examples.)

Tex et Joe-Bob regardent la télé. 'Le gros lot se monte à 30 millions de dollars. Que **feriez-vous** si vous **gagniez**?'

Tex and Joe-Bob are watching television. 'The Lottery is at 30 million dollars. What would you do if you won?'

Tex: Moi, j'**écrierais** sans cesse des livres de philosophie.

Tex: I would write philosophy books non-stop.

Joe-Bob: Moi j'**achèterais** mon diplôme d'université.

Joe-Bob: I would buy my university diploma.

possibility or uncertainty

The conditional is also used to give information whose accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Journalists often use it to report events which are not known to be true.

Tammy et Bette regardent la télé. Soudain, leur programme préféré est interrompu et un commentateur annonce:

Tammy and Bette are watching television. Suddenly, their favorite program is interrupted and a commentator announces:

Une tornade vient de s'abattre sur Hubbard, Texas. Il y **aurait** plusieurs victimes. Un tatou et un écureuil **seraient** gravement blessés. Restez avec nous, nous **devrions** avoir plus de détails d'ici quelques secondes ...'

A tornado just struck in Hubbard, Texas. Allegedly, there are several casualties. An armadillo and a squirrel seem to be seriously wounded. Stay with us, we should have more details in a few seconds ...'

Presque immédiatement, le téléphone sonne. Tammy répond: 'A ..., Allô?'

Almost immediately, the phone rings. Tammy answers: 'He ..., Hello?'

A l'autre bout, Tex dit: 'Tammy, c'est moi, Tex. Ne t'inquiète pas, on va très bien. Je rentrerai bientôt.'

At the other end, Tex says: 'Tammy, it's me Tex. Don't worry we're fine. I'll be home soon.'

reported speech (indirect discourse)

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In addition, the conditional is used to represent the future in relation to a narration in the past when reported speech is used to tell what someone said.

Tex a dit qu'il **rentrerait** bientôt.

Tex said he would be home soon.

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Past Conditional

page: tac2

The past conditional represents, as its name implies, the past of the present conditional mood. In French, the past conditional is called **le passé du conditionnel** or **le conditionnel antérieur**. Both the present and past conditional express hypothetical situations or conditions.

formation

The past conditional is a compound tense, i.e. it has two parts, an auxiliary and the past participle. The past conditional is formed with the conditional of the auxiliary (either **avoir** or **être**) and the past participle of the main verb.

Past conditional = auxiliary in the conditional + past participle

| dire 'to say' | |
|--|---|
| j' aurais dit , I would have said | nous aurions dit , we would have said |
| tu aurais dit , you would have said | vous auriez dit , you would have said |
| il / elle / on aurait dit , he, she (it) / one would have said | ils / elles auraient dit , they would have said |

In the past conditional (as with the passé composé), you have to choose between **avoir** and **être** as the auxiliary. While most verbs use **avoir** as an auxiliary, **pronominal verbs** and verbs of movement generally use **être** (see the [Alamo of être](#)). Just as for the passé composé with **être**, in the past conditional with **être**, the past participle agrees in gender and in number with the subject.

| partir 'to leave' | |
|---|--|
| je serais parti(e) , I would have left | nous serions parti(e)s , we would have left |
| tu serais parti(e) , you would have left | vous seriez parti(s) , you would have left |
| il / elle / on serait parti/partie , he, she (it) / one would have left | ils / elles seraient partis/parties , they would have left |

uses

Like the [present conditional](#), the past conditional is used for hypotheses. Unlike the present conditional, however, it is used to describe or imagine events and actions which failed to happen. This is why it is often used to express regret about events which did not occur. In most cases, the past conditional is translated as meaning **would have** as in English. However, **j'aurais pu** means 'I could have'; **j'aurais dû** means 'I should have', and **j'aurais voulu** means 'I would have liked'.

Tex: J'**aurais aimé** être artiste.

Tex: I would have liked to be an artist.

Corey: J'**aurais voulu** être beau.

Corey: I would have liked to be handsome.

Tammy: Je n'**aurais pas dû** écouter Bette.

Tammy: I should not have listened to Bette.

Edouard: J'**aurais pu** être un chef célèbre!

Edouard: I could have been a famous chef!



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The past conditional is found in **si clauses** with the pluperfect. This is because **si clauses** with the pluperfect also describe events that did not occur, or rather conditions which were not fulfilled so that the event in the past conditional could occur. In the dialogue below, all the verbs in the past conditional describe events that would have happened had the original condition been fulfilled. Note that the unfulfilled condition is implied in each occurrence of the past conditional.

Tex et Edouard discutent de la vie en Amérique.

Tex and Edouard are discussing life in America.

Edouard: Si tu n'avais pas vendu de T-shirts aux touristes, qu'est-ce qui **serait arrivé**?

Edouard: If you hadn't sold t-shirts to tourists, what would have happened?

Tex: Ben, d'un côté, je **serais resté** en France, bien sûr. Mais, de l'autre, je **n'aurais pas connu** le Texas et je **ne serais pas devenu** ami avec Tammy. Et tous mes copains ici **auraient perdu** l'occasion de connaître un philosophe distingué!

Tex: Well, on the one hand, I would have stayed in France, of course. But on the other hand, I would not have seen Texas and I would not have become friends with Tammy. And all my friends here would have lost the opportunity to know a distinguished philosopher!

possibility or uncertainty

The past conditional, like the present conditional, gives information on a past event about which the accuracy cannot be guaranteed. It is used by journalists and reporters.

Tammy et Bette regardent la télé. Soudain, leur programme préféré est interrompu et un commentateur annonce:

Tammy and Bette are watching television. Suddenly, their favorite program is interrupted and a commentator announces:

'Une tornade vient de s'abattre sur Hubbard, Texas. Elle **aurait fait** plusieurs victimes. Un tatou et un écureuil **aurai entêté** gravement blessés ...'

'A tornado just struck in Hubbard, Texas. It is said to have caused several casualties. An armadillo and a squirrel seem to have been seriously wounded ...'

Presque immédiatement, le téléphone sonne. Tammy répond 'A ... , Allô?' A l'autre bout, Tex dit 'Tammy, c'est moi, Tex. Ne t'inquiète pas, on va très bien. Je rentrerai bientôt.'

Almost immediately, the phone rings. Tammy answers, 'He ... , Hello?' At the other end, Tex says, 'Tammy, it's me Tex. Don't worry we're fine. I'll be home soon.'

reported speech (indirect discourse)

Just as the conditional represents the future in a past time narration, the past conditional represents the future perfect (futur antérieur) in a **past time narration** to tell what someone would have done.

Tex a dit qu'il **serait rentré** plus tôt, si l'orage n'avait pas éclaté.

Tex said he would have been home sooner, if it had not stormed.

si clauses

page: tcc3

Si clauses (if clauses in English) indicate possibilities, which may or may not become reality. They refer to the present, past, and future. These conditional sentences have two parts: the condition, or **si** clause, and the main or result clause which indicates what will happen if the condition of the **si** clause is met.

The tense of the result clause depends on the tense of the **si** clause. In other words, the tense of the two clauses follow a prescribed sequence.

si + present (présent)

| si clause | result clause |
|---|---|
| si + present (possible condition) | present or future or imperative |

This first type of **si** clause is used in cases where the condition may be fulfilled and thus the consequence is seen as **possible**. In the following dialogue, you will see **si** clauses in the present followed by result clauses in the present, in the future and in the imperative:

Tammy est en train de lire un petit quizz sur la personnalité et l'amour dans un magazine.

Tammy is reading a little quiz about personality and love in a magazine.

Tammy: **Si** tu **veux**, tu **peux** répondre aux questions, Tex.

Tammy: If you want, you can answer the questions, Tex.

Tex: D'accord. Mais **si** tu **peux, choisis** les questions les plus croustillantes!

Tex: OK, but choose the juiciest questions if you can!

Tammy: Entendu. Première question: Qu'est-ce que vous **ferez** demain ... **si** vous **trouvez** l'amour de votre vie?

Tammy: OK. First question: What will you do tomorrow ... if you find the love of your life?

Tex: **Si** je **rencontre** l'amour de ma vie, je l'épouserai, bien sûr!

Tex: If I meet the love of my life, I will marry her, of course!

Note that either the **si** clause or the result clause may begin a sentence, but the same tenses remain specific to each clause ('Qu'est-ce que vous ferez demain si vous trouvez l'amour de votre vie?' is the same as 'Si vous trouvez l'amour de votre vie, qu'est-ce que vous ferez?')

si + imperfect (imparfait)

| si clause | result clause |
|--|--------------------|
| si + imperfect (contrary to current facts) | conditional |

This second type of **si** clause is contrary to fact in the present. The consequence is thus seen as **impossible**. Note that in French, the imperfect is used in the **si** clause, never the conditional.



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Le quizz continue.

Tammy: **Si** vous **étiez** une voiture, que **seriez**-vous?

Tex: **Si j'étais** une voiture, je **serais** la légendaire 2CV.

Tammy: **Si** vous **étiez** un fruit, lequel **choisiriez**-vous?

Tex: **Si j'étais** un fruit, je **choiserais** le raisin pour pouvoir me transformer en vin.

Tammy: **Si** vous **étiez** une femme, que **feriez**-vous?

Tex: **Si j'étais** une femme, je ne **lirais** pas les quiz dans les magazines.

The quiz continues.

If you were a car, what would you be?

Tex: If I were a car, I would be the legendary 2CV.

Tammy: If you were a fruit, which one would you choose?

Tex: If I were a fruit, I would choose grapes, so that I could be transformed into wine.

Tammy: If you were a woman, what would you do?

Tex: If I were a woman, I would not read the quizzes in magazines.

si + pluperfect (plus-que-parfait)

| si clause | result clause |
|--|-------------------------|
| si + pluperfect (contrary to past facts) | past conditional |

This last type of **si** clause is used for situations that are contrary to past fact. The result clause thus expresses an unrealized **past** possibility.

Et le quizz continue.

Tammy: Qu'est-ce que vous **auriez fait, si** vous **étiez né** à College Station?

Tex: **Si j'étais né** à College Station, j'**aurais préféré** Texas A&M à UT. Quelle horreur!

Tammy: **Si** vous n'**aviez** pas **connu** Tammy, qu'est-ce que vous **auriez fait**?

Tex: Je n'**aurais** jamais **répondu** à un tel quizz, **si** je n'**avais** pas **connu** Tammy!

And the quiz continues.

Tammy: What would you have done, if you had been born in College Station?

Tex: If I had been born in College Station, I would have preferred Texas A&M over UT! How terrible!

Tammy: If you hadn't met Tammy, what would you have done?

Tex: I would never have taken such a quiz, if I hadn't met Tammy!



**SI J'ÉTAIS NÉ À COLLEGE STATION,
J'AURAIS PRÉFÉRÉ TEXAS A&M À UT**

Distinguish between **si** clauses (if-clauses) and questions that are reported in **indirect speech**. Observe the difference between these two sentences:

Question in indirect speech

Si clause

Tex demande **si** Tammy est prête.

Tex: Tammy, **si** tu es prête, on peut partir tout de suite.

Tex is asking if Tammy is ready.

Tex: Tammy, if you are ready, we can leave right now.

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Reported Speech in the Present

page: tad1

reporting statements

To report what someone else says or thinks, link the main clause (**il dit**, **il pense**, etc.) and the subordinate clause with **que** (**qu'** in front of a word beginning with a vowel):

Tex et Tammy ont une querelle d'amoureux. Fiona essaie de les raccommoder.

Tex and Tammy are having a lovers' tiff. Fiona is trying to patch things up.

Tammy: Tu ne m'écoutes jamais!

Tammy: You never listen to me!

Tex (devant la télé): Je n'ai pas entendu.

Tex (in front of the TV): I did not hear.

Fiona: **Elle dit que tu** ne l'écoutes jamais.

Fiona: She is saying that you never listen to her.



reporting questions

To report simple yes/no questions, use **si**. Note that **si** changes to **s'** in front of a word beginning with an **i** (**s'il**), but does not change before other vowels (**si elle**, **si on**).

Tammy: Est-ce que tu vas faire un effort?

Tammy: Are you going to make an effort?

Tex (toujours devant la télé): Quoi?

Tex (still in front of the TV): What?

Fiona: **Elle te demande si tu** vas faire un effort.

Fiona: She is asking you if you are going to make an effort.

Tex: Bien sûr, mais après le match de foot.

Tex: Sure, but after the soccer game.

To report an information question use the interrogative word **quand**, **comment**, **où**, etc.:

Tammy: Où étais-tu hier soir? Comment as-tu rencontré cette grande blonde? Quand finit ce match?

Tammy: Where were you last night? How did you meet that tall blonde? When does this game finish?

Tex: Comment?

Tex: Excuse-me?

Fiona: **Elle te demande où tu étais** hier soir, **comment tu as** rencontré cette grande blonde et **quand ce match finit**.

Fiona: She is asking you where you were last night, how you met that tall blonde and when this game finishes.

To report questions starting with **que**, **qu'est-ce que**, and **qu'est-ce qui**, use **ce que** and **ce qui**. Note that the inverted subject and verb return to normal order when reporting a **que** question:

Tex: Je ne comprends pas! Qu'est-ce qu'elle veut dire? Qu'est-ce qui se passe?

Tex: I don't understand! What does she mean? What's going on?

Fiona: Tammy, **Tex ne comprend pas ce que** tu veux dire. **Il ne comprend pas ce qui** se passe.

Fiona: Tammy, Tex does not understand what you mean. He does not understand what's going on.

Tammy: Que faisait-il avec cette grande blonde?

Tammy: What was he doing with that tall blonde?

Fiona: Tex, **Tammy veut savoir ce que tu faisais** avec cette grande blonde.

Fiona: Tex, Tammy wants to know what you were doing with that tall blonde.

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reporting orders

To report an order, replace the imperative by **de (d') + infinitive**:

Tammy: Tex, éteins tout de suite cette télévision! Ecoute-moi! Ne fais pas l'idiot!

Tex: Pardon?

Fiona: **Tammy t'ordonne d'éteindre** tout de suite cette télévision. En plus, **elle te dit de l'écouter. Elle te demande de ne pas faire** l'idiot.

Tammy: Tex, turn this TV off immediately! Listen to me! Don't be stupid!

Tex: Excuse me?

Fiona: Tammy is ordering you to turn this TV off immediately. And she is telling you to listen to her. She is asking you not to be stupid.

reporting answers

To report yes and no answers, use **que**:

Plus tard, Fiona raconte la fin de l'histoire à ses amis.

Fiona: . . . et soudain, Tammy demande à Tex s'il peut éteindre la télé et il lui répond **que** NON.

Later, Fiona tells the end of the story to her friends.

Fiona: . . . and suddenly, Tammy asks Tex if he can turn off the TV and he answers NO.

Reported Speech in the past

page: t:32

reporting statements

To report what has been said or thought in the past, link the main clause introduced by 'il a dit', 'je pensais', etc. and the subordinate clause with **que/qu'**. The tense of the verb in the subordinate clause also changes.

Trey: Je suis amoureux de toi Tammy!

Trey: I am in love with you Tammy.

Tammy: Comment? Tex m'**a dit que** tu **avais** une petite amie!

Tammy: What? Tex told me you had a girlfriend!

what tense in the subordinate clause?

When the main clause is in the past, the subordinate clause must also be in the past tense. They belong to the same time frame. This rule is known in French as the 'concordance des temps,' the agreement or concordance of the tenses. Look at these examples:



quote

present

Tammy: Hé Tex, j'**aime** beaucoup ton frère Trey. (Hey Tex, I really like your brother Trey.)

passé composé

Tammy : Trey **est devenu** sexy. (Trey has become sexy.)

future

Tammy : Nous **louerons** la vidéo 'Les Liaisons dangereuses.' (We'll rent the video 'Dangerous Liaisons'.)

reported speech

=> imparfait

Elle a dit qu'**elle aimait** beaucoup Trey. (She said that she really liked Trey.)

=> plus-que-parfait

Elle a dit que **Trey était devenu** sexy. (She said that Trey had become sexy.)

=> conditional

Elle a dit qu'**ils loueraient** la vidéo ... (She said that they would rent the video ...)

reporting questions

To report yes/no questions, use **si**. Note that **si** changes to **s'** in front of a word beginning with an **i** (**s'il**), but does not change before other vowels (**si elle, sion**).

Tammy: Tu aimes les films horreur?

Tammy: Do you like horror films?

Trey: Qu'est-ce que tu as dit?

Trey: What did you say?

Tammy: **Je t'ai demandé si** tu **aimais** les films horreur.

Tammy: I asked if you liked horror films.

To report an information question use the interrogative word **quand, comment, où**, etc.:

Trey: Quand vas-tu quitter mon frère?

Trey: When are you going to leave my brother?

Tammy: Qu'est-ce que tu disais?

Tammy: What were you saying?

Trey: Je te **demandais quand tu allais quitter mon frère**.

Trey: I was asking you when you were going to leave my brother.

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To report questions starting with **que**, **qu'est-ce que**, and **qu'est-ce qui**, use **ceque (ce qu')** and **ce qui** :

Tex: Trey, qu'est-ce que tu vas faire ce soir avec Tammy?

Trey: Qu'est-ce que tu as dit?

Tex: Je te **demandais ce que tu allais faire** ce soir avec Tammy.

Tex: Trey, what are you going to do tonight with Tammy?

Trey: What did you say?

Tex: I was asking what you were going to do with Tammy tonight.

reporting orders

To report an order, replace the imperative by **de/d' + infinitive**:

Tex: Sois poli avec Tammy! Ne flirte pas avec elle!

Trey: Hein?

Corey: **Tex t'a dit d'être** poli avec Tammy et **de ne pas flirter** avec elle!

Tex: Be polite with Tammy! Don't flirt with her!

Trey: Huh?

Corey: Tex told you to be polite with Tammy and not to flirt with her!

reporting answers

Note that to report yes/no sentences use **que**:

Trey: Tammy, tu veux m'épouser?

Tammy: Non.

Trey: Qu'as-tu dit?

Tammy: Je t'ai dit **que** non. C'est Tex que j'aime!

Trey: Tammy, do you want to marry me?

Tammy: No.

Trey: What did you say?

Tammy: I told you no. It is Tex I love.

Fiona et Bette ont entendu dire que Trey a demandé à Tammy de l'épouser.

Fiona: Je t'assure Bette, Trey m'a **raconté qu'il avait acheté** une grosse bague en diamants pour Tammy.

Bette: Et moi qui **croyait que** Trey **était** amoureux de moi! Quelle déception!

Fiona: Mais je **n'ai pas su** si Tammy **avait raconté** l'histoire à Tex ou **si elle avait gardé** le secret! Alors chut!

Fiona and Bette have heard rumors that Trey has proposed to Tammy.

Fiona: Really Bette, Trey told me that he had bought a big diamond ring for Tammy.

Bette: And I thought that Trey was in love with me! What a disappointment!

Fiona: But I did not find out if Tammy had told the story to Tex or if she had kept it secret ... So shush!

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Active vs. passive voice

page: tgv1

'Voice' refers to the relationship between the subject and the verb in a sentence. A sentence is said to be in the **active voice** if the subject is performing the action of the verb. For example, 'Tex is calling Tammy.' In this sentence, the subject (Tex) performs the action of calling Tammy. Active subjects are called 'agents'.

The **passive voice**, on the other hand, refers to a sentence in which the subject receives the action. In other words, the subject is passive, or acted upon by the agent. For example: 'Tammy is being called by Tex.' In this sentence, Tammy receives the action performed by Tex, the agent.

formation

= conjugated form of **être** + past participle of main verb (+ **par** + agent)

Note that the past participle always agrees in number and gender with the subject.

Les Aggies **sont battus**
(**par** les Longhorns).

The Aggies are beaten (by
the Longhorns).

Les Aggies **ont été
battus**
(**par** les Longhorns).

The Aggies were beaten
(by the Longhorns).

Les Aggies **seront
battus**
(**par** les Longhorns).

The Aggies will be beaten (by
the Longhorns).



The agent, when mentioned, is usually preceded by **par**. However, with the verbs **aimer**, **connaître**, and **respecter**, the agent is introduced by **de** instead.

Tammy est aimée **de** Tex.

Tammy is loved by Tex.

Tex est bien connu **de** toutes les étudiantes et respecté **de** tous les professeurs.

Tex is well-known to all the female students and respected by all the professors.

uses

The passive voice places the focus on the object of the verb rather than the subject:

Tex a écrit le livre *Guerre et Amour*.

Tex wrote the book *War and Love*.

Le livre *Guerre et Amour* **a été écrit par** Tex.

The book *War and Love* was written by Tex.

The passive voice draws attention to an event without necessarily mentioning who is responsible for it:

Oh, Corey et Fiona **ont été enlevés!**

Oh, Corey and Fiona were abducted!



The passive voice is often used for inventions, laws, and, logically enough, for events that one falls victim to:

Les parents de Tex **ont été écrasés**.

Tex' parents were run over.

La loi SOS-tatou **a été votée**.

The SOS-armadillo law has been passed.

Un nouveau genre de grammaire **a été créé**.

A new kind of grammar was created.

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ways to avoid the passive

The passive voice is used more frequently in English than in French. Thus, in French, when the agent of the verb can be identified, it is better to use the active voice and make the agent the subject of the verb.

A common way to avoid the passive in French is to use the active voice with **on** as the subject. For example, 'I was told that Tex loves Tammy' would be translated as '**Onm'a dit** que Tex aimait Tammy'.

When making general statements about known facts, pronominal verbs are often used:



Le football américain **se joue** à onze.

Football is played with 11 players.

Le vin rouge **se boit** à température ambiante.

Red wine is drunk at room temperature.

Les frites **se mangent** avec du ketchup.

Fries are eaten with ketchup.

Le français **se parle** en Louisiane.

French is spoken in Louisiana.

Tammy et Tex regardent les informations à la télé. Le journaliste déclare:

Tammy and Tex are watching the news on TV. The journalist states:

Aujourd'hui, l'équipe des Aggies **a été battue** et le moral des joueurs **est** profondément **affecté par** cette défaite, la dixième fois de suite cette saison. Par contre, les Longhorns ont beaucoup de succès. Depuis que le trophée Heisman **a été remporté par** le légendaire Ricky Williams, rien ne les arrête.

Today, the team of the Aggies was defeated and the morale of the players is deeply affected by this defeat, the tenth time in a row this season. In contrast, the Longhorns are having a lot of success. Since the Heisman trophy was won by the legendary Ricky Williams, nothing can stop them.

Interrogatives

page: int1

Introduction to Interrogatives

An **interrogative construction** is a grammatical form used to ask a question. There are two kinds of questions: yes/no questions and information questions. So-called yes/no questions may be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.

Are you a student at the University of Texas?
Have you ever been to Sixth Street or Barton Springs?
Do you know how many Aggies it takes to screw in a lightbulb?

Information questions contain a specific interrogative word (who, what, when, why, how) and cannot be answered with a yes or no. Their purpose is to elicit a specific piece of information.

Who is Tex?
When did he come to Texas?
How did he learn French?

Besides using 'est-ce que', questions in French can be formed by **inversion** of the subject and verb.

Parlez-vous français? Do you speak



formulating questions

The word 'do' is used in English question formation. In similar fashion, French yes / no questions can be formed with the phrase **est-ce que**.

There are several other ways to ask a question in French. For instance, a **tag question** is a question word or phrase 'tagged' on to the end of a statement which requires a confirmation with a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Vous parlez français, **n'est-ce pas**? You speak French, **don't you**?

Finally, the most common way to ask a question in French conversation is to use **rising intonation**. In this kind of interrogative construction, the word order is the same as a declarative sentence, but the speaker's voice rises at the end to signal the question.

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Yes/No Questions: *est-ce que, n'est-ce pas*

page: int2

questions with intonation

One of the easiest ways to ask a question that may be answered by yes/no is to raise the pitch of your voice at the end of a statement. In a declarative statement, the pitch normally falls.

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Tex: Trey, tu aimes la philosophie? | Tex: Trey, do you like philosophy? |
| Trey: Non. Je n'aime pas la philosophie. | Trey: No. I do not like philosophy. |
| Tex: Tu connais Sartre? | Tex: Do you know Sartre? |
| Trey: Non. Qui est-ce? | Trey: No. Who is that? |
| Tex: Gloups! C'est l'auteur du chef d'oeuvre existentialiste, La Nausée. | ar ar |



questions using 'est-ce que ... ?'

Another way to ask a yes/no question is to place **est-ce que** before a statement. Note that **que** becomes **qu'** before a vowel.

| | |
|--|--|
| Trey: Et toi, Tex, est-ce que tu aimes les films? | Trey: And you, Tex, do you like films? |
| Tex: Bien sûr, j'adore les films. | Tex: Of course, I adore films. |
| Trey: Est-ce que tu connais Yoda? | Trey: Do you know Yoda? |
| Tex: Non. Qui est-ce? | Tex: No. Who is that? |
| Trey: Duh ... | Trey: Duh |

questions using 'n'est-ce pas ?'

N'est-ce pas? ar

| | |
|--|--|
| Trey: Tu connais 'La guerre des étoiles,' n'est-ce pas? Yoda, c'est le petit sage. | Trey: You know 'Star Wars,' don't you? Yoda is the little wise man. |
| Trey: Yoda est mon héros. Tu ne connais pas Yoda? | Trey: Yoda is my hero. You don't know Yoda? |
| Tex: Ah, si, si, si*, je connais le petit philosophe. Est-ce que tu es fou? Yoda n'est pas Sartre. | Tex: Ah, yes, yes, yes, I do know the little philosopher. Are you crazy? Yoda is not Sartre. |
| Trey: Oh, mais la philosophie de Yoda est plus intéressante que la philosophie existentialiste de La Nausée! Tu es d'accord, n'est-ce pas? | Trey: Oh, but Yoda's philosophy is more interesting than the existentialist philosophy of La Nausée! You agree, don't you? |
| Tex: Quel crétin! Retourne à tes jeux électroniques! | Tex: What an idiot! Go back to your video games! |

*Si is used to answer 'yes' to a negative question.

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Questions with subject/verb inversion

page: int3

inversion

Formal questions may be asked by reversing the subject pronoun/verb order and linking the two with a hyphen. You may have already seen inversion in fixed expressions like the following greetings: 'Comment allez-vous?', 'Comment vous appelez-vous?', 'Quelle heure est-il?'.

Joe-Bob choisit ses cours pour le semestre prochain.

Joe-Bob is choosing his classes for next semester.

Joe-Bob: Corey, **as-tu** des idées?

Joe-Bob: Corey, do you have any ideas?

Tammy et Bette, **connaissez-vous** de bons cours?

Tammy and Bette, do you know any good courses?



addition of -t- in third person singular

In the third person singular, when the verb ends in a vowel, a **-t-** is added to make the liaison possible.

Corey se parle à lui-même: himself:

Corey thinks to

Voyons. Joe-Bob **aime-t-il** les lettres? Non!

Let's see. Does Joe-Bob like the humanities? No!

A-t-il envie d'étudier les maths? Non!

Does he want to study math? No!

Va-t-il devenir médecin? Oh, jamais!

Is he going to become a doctor?

Aime-t-il les filles? Oui!

Oh, never! Does he like girls? Yes!

Alors, j'ai une

So, I have an

idée. Corey: Joe-

idea. Corey: Joe-

Bob ... Joe-Bob:

Bob ... Joe-Bob:

Mmm.

Mmm.

Corey: J'ai un cours pour toi: 'La vie intime des animaux.'

Corey: I have a course for you: 'Animal Intimacy.'

addition of a pronoun with a noun or proper name

When the subject is a proper name or noun, the corresponding subject pronoun (**il**, **elle**, **ils**, or **elles**) is added for inversion with the verb.

Joe-Bob: Et **les belles filles** suivent-elles ce cours?

Joe-Bob: Do pretty girls take this class?

Corey: Oh, oui.

Corey: Oh, yes.

Joe-Bob: **Ce cours** est-il difficile?

Joe-Bob: Is this class difficult?

Corey: Oh, non ça.

Corey: Oh, no.

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compound tenses

In compound tenses, such as the passé composé, the subject pronoun is inverted with the auxiliary (the conjugated verb).

Joe-Bob: Corey, **as-tu suivi** ce cours?

Joe-Bob: Corey, did you take this class?

Corey: Oui, mais j'ai raté l'examen final.

Corey: Yes, but I flunked the final exam.

negation

Ne precedes the conjugated verb and the second half of the negative (**pas, jamais, plus**, etc.) follows the pronoun.

Joe-Bob: Pourquoi **n'as-tu pas** réussi l'examen?

Joe-Bob: Why didn't you pass the exam?

Corey: Oh, j'ai trouvé que l'examen était trop technique. Moi, je suis plus romantique que scientifique.

Corey: Oh, I thought that the exam was too technical. I am more romantic than scientific.

'est-ce' and 'y a-t-il'

The inverted forms of 'c'est' and 'il y a' are **est-ce** and **y a-t-il**

Joe-Bob: **Est-ce** possible?

Joe-Bob: Is this possible?

N'y a-t-il pas un seul cours facile pour moi?

Isn't there a single easy course for me?



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Interrogative and Exclamative: *quel*

page: int4

Quel is an adjective. Like any other adjective, it agrees in number and gender with the noun it modifies. Remember to make the liaison between **quels / quelles** and a following word beginning with a vowel (**quels** animaux).

| masculine singular | masculine plural | feminine singular | feminine plural |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| quel | quels | quelle | quelles |

interrogative **quel**

Quel is generally translated into English by 'what' or 'which'. It is always followed by a noun or by the verb 'être' + noun.

| | |
|--|---|
| Un petit tatou: Maman, maman, quel est le nom de ce tatou? | A little armadillo: What's the name of this armadillo? |
| Rita: Oh, c'est Tex, ton oncle. | Rita: Oh, it's Tex, your uncle. |
| Un petit tatou: Quel âge aTex?. | A little armadillo: How old isTex? |
| Rita: On ne sait pas. | Rita: We don't know. |
| Un petit tatou: Quelles sont les qualités de Tex? | A little armadillo: What are Tex's good points? |
| Rita: Oh, il est intelligent,débrouillard, mais aussi cynique et pessimiste. | Rita: Oh, he's intelligent,resourceful, but also cynical and pessimistic. |



exclamative **quel**

Quel may also be used for emphasis. In this instance, **quel** is followed either by an adjective or a noun, and it means 'what' or 'what a'. Note that there is an exclamation mark at the end of the sentence.

| | |
|--|--|
| Tammy: Quel beau tatou! | Tammy: What a handsome armadillo! |
| Joe-Bob: Non, quel tatou snob! Quelle belleminette! | Joe-Bob: No, what a snobby armadillo! What a beautiful kitty! |
| Tammy: Quelle chatte méchante! | Tammy: What a mean cat! |
| Ah, quels animaux absurdes! | Ah, what absurd animals! |



interrogative pronouns

page: int5

questions about people

Qui is used to ask questions about people. It may be the subject or the direct object in a sentence or 'whom?'. You may also choose to use the longer forms: **qui est-ce qui** to ask 'who?', **qui e**



As the subject: **qui** , **qui est-ce qui**

As the direct object: **qui** , **qui est-ce que**

Bette: **Qui** est à la porte? Oh, c'est toi, Tammy.

Qui cherches-tu?

Tammy: Je cherche Tex.

Bette: Il n'est pas là.

Cinq minutes plus tard ...

Bette: Encore! **Qui est-ce qui** est à la porte? Oh! C'est toi, Tex!

Qui est-ce que tu cherches? Moi peut-être?

Tex: Non, je cherche Tammy.

Bette: Elle n'est pas là.

Bette: **Who** is at the door? Oh, it's you Tammy.

Whom are you looking for?

Tammy: I'm looking for Tex.

Bette: He's not here.

Five minutes later ...

Bette: Again! **Who** is at the door? Oh! It's you Tex!

Whom are you looking for? Me perhaps?

Tex: No, I'm looking for Tammy.

Bette: She's not here.

As the object of a preposition: **qui**

Tex: Ouvrez! Ouvrez!

Bette: Oui?!

Tex: Tu as vu Tammy?

Bette: Oui.

Tex: **Avec qui** est-ce qu'elle est partie?

Bette: **Pour qui** me prends-tu? Je ne la surveille pas!

Tex: Oh, la, la, calme-toi, ma petite.

Tex: Open! Open!

Bette: Yes?!

Tex: Have you seen Tammy?

Bette: Yes.

Tex: **Whom** did she leave **with**?

Bette: Who do you think I am (**whom** do you take me **for**)? I don't watch her!

Tex: Oh, la, la, calm down, my little one.

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questions about things

Qu'est-ce qui , **que** and its longer form **qu'est-ce que** are used to ask questions about things. They are used to ask 'what?'. **Que** and its longer form **qu'est-ce que** are direct objects in a sentence, whereas **qu'est-ce qui** may be used only as the subject. (There is no short form of **qu'est-ce qui** .)

As the subject: **qu'est-ce qui**

As the direct object: **que**, **qu'est-ce que**

As the object of a preposition: **quoi**

Tammy arrive chez Bette. Elle voit Tex et Bette ensemble.

Tammy: **Qu'est-ce qui** se passe, Tex?

Tex: Rien, mon chou, je te cherchais.

Tammy: Oui, d'accord, mais **qu'est-ce que** tu fais avec ... elle!

Tex: Oh, **de quoi** tu parles?

Tammy: Tex, ne fais pas l'innocent avec moi



Tammy arrives at Bette's house. She sees Tex and Bette together

Tammy: **What's** going on, Tex?

Tex: Nothing, my dear. I was looking for you.

Tammy: Yes, ok, but **what** are you doing with ... her!

Tex: Oh, **what** are you talking **about**?

Tammy: Don't act innocent with me!

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Interrogative pronoun lequel

page: int6

Lequel, **lesquels**, **laquelle**, **lesquelles** are pronouns, i.e. they are used in place of a noun. They are used to ask the questions 'which one?' or 'which ones?' They assume the number and gender of the nouns they replace and contract with the prepositions **à** and **de**.

| Preposition | Masculine singular | Masculine plural | Feminine singular | Feminine plural |
|----------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| | lequel | lesquels | laquelle | lesquelles |
| with à | auquel | auxquels | à laquelle | auxquelles |
| with de | duquel | desquels | de laquelle | desquelles |



Corey: Oh Tammy, j'adore les films sur les insectes!

Tex: I love bug movies!

Tammy: **Lesquels** tu aimes?

Tammy: Which ones do you like?

Corey: Oh, 'A Bug's Life,' et puis 'Antz,' les classiques quoi!

Tex: Oh, 'A Bug's Life,' and then 'Antz,' in other words, the classics!

Tammy: Et tu préfères lequel?

Tammy: Which one do you prefer?

Corey: Hmm ... Probablement 'The Fly.'

Corey: Hmm ... Probably 'The Fly.'

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Interrogative words: où, quand, comment

page: int7

Où (where), **quand** (when), **comment** (how), **pourquoi** (why), **combien** (how much), **combien de** (how many) may be used to ask questions with **subject/verb inversion** or with **est-ce que**. Note that the question word goes before **est-ce que**.



Bette pose des questions à Edouard pour en savoir davantage sur Tex.

Bette: **Où** Tex est-il né?

Edouard: Comment?

Bette: **Où** est-ce que Tex est né?

Edouard: Au Texas.

Bette: **Quand** a-t-il rencontré Tammy?

Edouard: Comment?

Bette: **Quand** est-ce qu'il a rencontré Tammy?

Edouard: Il y a deux ans à Lyon.

Comment est-il venu aux Etats-Unis?

Edouard: Qu'est-ce que tu as dit?

Comment est-ce qu'il est venu aux Etats-Unis?

Edouard: Il a été expulsé de France!

Bette: **Pourquoi** porte-t-il toujours un béret?

Edouard: Comment?

Bette: **Pourquoi** est-ce qu'il porte toujours un béret?

Edouard: Il n'a pas de cheveux. Sans chapeau il risque des coups de soleil.

Bette: **Combien** est-il payé?

Edouard: Comment?

Bette: **Combien** est-ce qu'il est payé?

Edouard: Pas assez. Les tuteurs sont mal payés.

Bette: **Combien de** cigarettes fume-t-il par jour?

Edouard: Comment?

Bette: **Combien de** cigarettes est-ce qu'il fume par jour?

Edouard: Je ne sais pas, mais il fume de moins en moins depuis son arrivée au Texas. Dis donc, tu es bien curieuse

Bette asks Edouard questions to find out more about Tex.

Bette: Where was Tex born?

Edouard: Pardon?

Bette: Where was Tex born?

Edouard: In Texas.

Bette: When did he meet Tammy?

Edouard: Pardon?

Bette: When did he meet Tammy?

Edouard: Two years ago in Lyon.

Bette: How did he come to the United States?

Edouard: What did you say?

Bette: How did he come to the United States?

Edouard: He was deported from France.

Bette: Why does he always wear a beret?

Edouard: Pardon?

Bette: Why does he always wear a beret?

Edouard: He doesn't have any hair. Without a hat he risks getting sunburned.

Bette: How much is he paid?

Edouard: Pardon?

Bette: How much is he paid?

Edouard: Not enough. Tutors are not paid well.

Bette: How many cigarettes does he smoke every day?

Edouard: Pardon?

Bette: How many cigarettes does he smoke every day?

Edouard: I don't know, but he's smoking less and less since he came to Texas. Say, you are very curious.

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