

FRENCH GRAMMAR



NOUN / LE SUBSTANTIF

A **noun** is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea. Every French noun has gender (masculine or feminine) and number (singular or plural).

GENDER / LE GENRE

- A. Most nouns, including proper nouns, have a fixed gender: *la lettre* (letter), *le Mexique* (Mexico). Common endings that usually indicate gender:
Masculine: -age, -ail, -eau, -ent, -ier, -isme
Feminine: -esse, -ette, -ie, -ion, -tê, -ure
- B. Nouns with inherent gender, whether biological or social, usually respect that gender: *la mère* (mother), *le père* (father), *la bonne* (maid), *le chauffeur* (driver).
- C. Some words differ in gender only: *le bourgogne* (Burgundy, the wine), *la Bourgogne* (Burgundy, the region); *le mémoire* (memoir), *la mémoire* (memory).
- D. Some nouns—especially animals, occupations, and nationalities—change in form and in gender to fit their usage.
 1. Many undergo regular changes based on endings:

Masculine Ending	Feminine Ending	Example
majority	add -e	<i>l'ami</i> (m) → <i>l'amie</i> (f) <i>l'Anglais</i> (m) → <i>l'Anglaise</i> (f)
-n	-nne	<i>le Parisien</i> → <i>la Parisienne</i>
-t	-te	<i>le chat</i> → <i>la chatte</i>
-er	-ère	<i>un étranger</i> → <i>une étrangère</i>
-eur	-euse	<i>le vendeur</i> → <i>la vendeuse</i>
-teur	-trice	<i>l'acteur</i> → <i>l'actrice</i>
-el	-elle	<i>Michel</i> → <i>Michelle</i>
-eau		<i>le jumeau</i> → <i>la jumelle</i>

2. Some changes are irregular: *le taureau* (bull) → *la vache* (cow)
- E. Some nouns are either always masculine or always feminine, regardless of the gender of the person they designate:
Always masculine: *l'auteur* (author), *le docteur* (doctor), *l'écrivain* (writer), *le médecin* (doctor), *le peintre* (painter), *le poète* (poet), *le professeur* (professor, teacher). **Note:** To indicate or insist that the person is female, add the word **femme**: *une femme écrivain* (a [woman] writer). Colloquially, these are sometimes feminized: *la professeuse*.
Always feminine: *la personne* (person), *la connaissance* (acquaintance), *la victime* (victim).
 - F. A mixed-gender group of nouns is grammatically masculine: *Julie et Pierre sont jumeaux*. vs. *Anne et Claire sont étudiantes*.

NUMBER / LE NOMBRE

- A. Most nouns form plurals from their singular forms:

Singular Ending	Plural Ending	Example
majority	add -s	<i>le livre</i> → <i>les livres</i>
-s	no change	<i>le tapis</i> → <i>les tapis</i>
-x		<i>la voix</i> → <i>les voix</i>
-z		<i>le nez</i> → <i>les nez</i>
-au (-eau)	add -x	<i>le noyau</i> → <i>les noyaux</i>
-eu (œu)		<i>le vœu</i> → <i>les vœux</i>
-al	-aux	<i>le cheval</i> → <i>les chevaux</i>

B. Exceptions

1. Some plurals are irregular: *l'œil* → *les yeux*; *le travail* → *les travaux*; *le ciel* → *les cieux*
 2. 7 nouns ending in -ou add -x in the plural; all others add -s: *le bijou*, *le caillou*, *le chou*, *le genou*, *le hibou*, *le joujou*, *le pou*.
 3. Plurals of compound (hyphenated) nouns should be checked in a dictionary. In general, the adjective or noun components take plural markings; all other components remain fixed. *le grand-père* → *les grands-pères*; *le couvre-lit* → *les couvre-lits*.
 4. Proper names are invariable: *les Fontaine* (the Fontaine family).
- C. Some nouns only exist or are only used in the plural: *les mœurs* (cultural customs); *les vacances* (vacation).

ARTICLE / L'ARTICLE

An **article** is a small word (such as **a**, **an**, **the**) that qualifies a noun. French articles agree in number and gender with the noun they accompany.

DEFINITE ARTICLE / L'ARTICLE DÉFINI

The **definite article** corresponds to *the*; it is used when the speaker can identify the noun that follows.

	Singular		Plural
	Before consonant	Before vowel	
Masculine	le le garçon	l' l'avocat	les les garçons, les avocats
Feminine	la la fille	l' l'idée	les les filles, les idées

- A. Do not omit the definite article in a series of nouns: *Le crayon, le carnet, la lettre et l'enveloppe sont tous sur la table*.
- B. Use with scholastic subjects, except with languages after **parler** and **en**: *J'étudie le français; je parle anglais; je rêve en grec*.
- C. Use to express general ideas, feelings, or happenings: *La vie est dure. (Life is hard.) J'aime les chiens. (I like dogs.)*
- D. Use with days of the week to express regular events: *Elle va au centre commercial le vendredi. (She goes to the mall on Fridays.)* vs. *Elle va au concert vendredi. (She's going to the concert [this] Friday.)*
- E. Use with certain expressions of weight and measure to express *a(n)* or *per*: *Ça coûte 20 francs la bouteille. (That costs 20 francs a bottle.)*
- F. The definite article sometimes contracts when preceded by **à** or **de**:

	article	à + article	de + article
Masculine singular	le le garçon	au au garçon	du du garçon
Feminine singular	la la fille	à la à la fille	de la de la fille
Before vowel singular	l' l'oncle (m) l'ombre (f)	à l' à l'oncle à l'ombre	de l' de l'oncle de l'ombre
Plural	les les garçons les filles	aux aux garçons aux filles	des des garçons des filles

INDEFINITE ARTICLE / L'ARTICLE INDÉFINI

The **indefinite article** corresponds to *a(n)* and to *some* in the sense of "a few." It is used when referring to one or several of a group without specifying which one(s).

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	un un ami	des des amis
Feminine	une une amie	des des amies

- A. Omit before an unmodified nationality or profession: *Il est peintre. (He is a painter.)* vs. *C'est un excellent peintre. (He is an excellent painter.)*
- B. Omit in an exclamation following *quelle*(s): *Quelle belle journée! (What a beautiful day!)*
- C. Omit before *cent* and *mille*: *J'ai fait ça cent fois.*
- D. Change to **de** before a direct object of a negative statement: *J'ai un crayon. → Je n'ai pas de crayons. (I don't have [any] pencils.)*

PARTITIVE ARTICLE / L'ARTICLE PARTITIF

- A. The partitive article consists of **de** + **definite article**; it contracts as above to **du**, **de la**, **de l'**, **des**.
- B. Use to express *some* or *any*. *Il a du chocolat, de la glace, et des fruits. (He has some chocolate, some ice cream and some fruit.)* *As-tu des assiettes? (Do you have any plates?)*
- C. Use with *bien* (much, many); *encore* (some more); *la majorité* (the majority) *la plupart* (most): *Encore de la viande! (More meat!). La plupart des enfants sont mignons. (Most children are cute.)*
- D. When an adjective precedes the noun, just use **de**: *de bon vin, de grands idiots*.

ADJECTIVE / L'ADJECTIF

Adjectives modify nouns or pronouns. French adjectives agree in gender and number with words they modify.

GENDER / LE GENRE

Most adjectives form their feminine form by adding **-e** to their masculine form.

Rules of thumb for some common exceptions:

Masculine Ending	Feminine Ending	Example
majority	add -e	<i>constant</i> → <i>constante</i>
-e	-e	<i>probe</i> → <i>probe</i>
-x	-se	<i>aventureux</i> → <i>aventureuse</i>
-er	-ère	<i>cher</i> → <i>chère</i>
-f	-ve	<i>vif</i> → <i>vive</i>
-c	-que	<i>public</i> → <i>publique</i>
-g	-gue	<i>long</i> → <i>longue</i>
-teur	-trice	<i>consolateur</i> → <i>consolatrice</i>
-eur	-eure -euse	<i>meilleur</i> → <i>meilleure</i> <i>rêveur</i> → <i>rêveuse</i>
-l	-lle	<i>gentil</i> → <i>gentille</i>
-n	-nne	<i>bon</i> → <i>bonne</i>
-s	-sse	<i>gros</i> → <i>grosse</i>
-et	-ette -ête	<i>coquet</i> → <i>coquette</i> <i>complet</i> → <i>complète</i>

- A. Common irregular forms: *blanc* → *blanche*, *franc* → *franche*, *sec* → *sèche*, *doux* → *douce*, *faux* → *fausse*, *favori* → *favorite*, *malin* → *maligne*.
- B. Five common adjectives change their masculine singular form before a vowel (or mute **h**): *beau* → *bel*, *fou* → *fol*, *mou* → *mol*, *nouveau* → *nouvel*, *vieux* → *vieil*. They form the feminine singular from their prevowel forms: *belle*, *folle*, *molle*, *nouvelle*, *vieille*; they form two plural forms only: *le beau mec*, *le bel homme*, *le bel enfant*, *la belle fille*, *les beaux enfants*, *les belles filles*.

NUMBER / LE NOMBRE

Most adjectives form the plural by adding **-s** to their singular form: *un esprit vif* → *des esprits vifs*, *une personne gentille* → *des personnes gentilles*.

- A. Common exceptions for masculine plurals are similar to those for nouns:

Masculine singular ending	Masculine plural ending	Example
-s	no change	<i>gris</i> → <i>gris</i>
-x		<i>courageux</i> → <i>courageux</i>
-eau	-eaux	<i>nouveau</i> → <i>nouveaux</i>
-al	-aux	<i>loyal</i> → <i>loyaux</i>

1. However, some adjectives ending in **-al** form the plural by adding **-s**: *banal*, *fatal*, *final*, *naval*.

POSITION IN SENTENCE

The vast majority of adjectives follow the noun they modify. **However...**

- A. Adjectives of beauty, age, number, goodness, and size get placed in front of the noun: *beau*, *bon*, *court*, *gentil*, *grand*, *gros*, *jeune*, *joli*, *long*, *mauvais*, *nouveau*, *petit*, *vieux*, *vilain*, and others.
- B. Adjectives can be placed before the noun for emphasis: *les féroces soldats*
- C. Some common adjectives can either precede or follow the noun and change meaning according to position. When used before the noun, the adjective has the more "abstract" meaning. *un ancien ami* (a former friend)/ *une église ancienne* (an old church), *brave* (good; honest / courageous), *certain* (particular / inevitable), *cher* (dear / expensive) *grand* (important / tall), *pauvre* (pitiable / penniless), *propre* (own / clean), *seul* (sole / on one's own), *dernier* (last in series / previous to this one), *simple* (just a / unadorned), *sale* (nasty / dirty).
- D. Connect multiple adjectives on one side of the noun with **et**: *un grand diplomate allemand*, *un long et joli chemin*, *une fille intelligente et souriante*.

“...FONDEMENT DE TOUTES LES SCIENCES, / LA GRAMMAIRE, QUI SAIT RÉGENTER JUSQU’AUX ROIS...”

“...GRAMMAR, THE FOUNDATION OF ALL KNOWLEDGE, RULES OVER EVEN KINGS...”

MOLIÈRE

ADVERB / L'ADVERBE

Adverbs modify adjectives, verbs, and other adverbs. Interrogative (when?) and negative (neither) adverbs, as well as comparative and superlative forms (less quickly) are described below in separate sections.

CONSTRUCTION

- Many adverbs are formed by adding **-ment** to the masculine singular form of an adjective ending in a vowel. When the masculine singular form of an adjective ends in a consonant, the adverb is formed from the feminine singular form: *poli* ➔ *poliment*, *rapide* ➔ *rapidement*, *doux* (douce) ➔ *doucement*, *naturel* (naturelle) ➔ *naturellement*
 - Adjectives ending in **-ant** and **-ent** become adverbs ending in **-amment** and **-emment**: *suffisant* ➔ *suffisamment*, *évident* ➔ *évidemment*. **Exception**: *lent* ➔ *lentement*
 - Irregular **-ment** adverbs: *gentil* ➔ *gentiment*, *bref* ➔ *brèvement*
- Some adverbs are related to adjectives but do not end in **-ment**: *bon* ➔ *bien*; *mauvais* ➔ *mal*; *petit* ➔ *peu*; *meilleur* ➔ *mieux*.
- Some adverbs do not come from adjectives; others are composed of several words.
 - Adverbs of frequency: *jamais* (never), *de temps en temps* (sometimes), *souvent* (often), *toujours* (always)
 - Adverbs of quantity: *beaucoup* (much, many), *peu* (little), *moins* (less, fewer), *plus* (more), *tant* (so much, so many), *trop* (too much, too many), *autant* (as much, as many), *assez* (enough)
 - Others: *très* (very), *déjà* (already), *d'abord* (first), *tôt* (early), *tard* (late), *à peu près* (approximately), *vite* (quickly), *ensemble* (together), *plutôt* (rather [more likely]), *exprès* (on purpose)

POSITION IN SENTENCE

Most adverbs that modify verbs come immediately after the conjugated part of the verb. *Je ne t'ai pas encore embrassé. (I haven't kissed you yet.)*

COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

Adverbs and adjectives have comparative and superlative forms.

COMPARATIVES / LE COMPARATIF

- English equivalent:** *Ms. Piggy is shorter than Supergirl. You don't walk as quickly as I do.*

Type of comparison	Structure	Example
more...than	plus adjective que adverb	<i>Jeanne est plus intelligente (que Guy).</i> <i>avoir mangé plus récemment (qu'hier)</i>
less...than	moins adjective adverb que	<i>Guy est plus beau (que ses amis).</i> <i>courir moins vite (que Jean)</i>
as...as	aussi adjective adverb que	<i>Maire et Anne sont aussi fortes (que Pierre).</i> <i>faire ses excuses aussi poliment (que possible)</i>
not as...as	ne...pas si adjective adverb que	<i>Marie et Anne ne sont pas si fortes que Paul.</i> <i>ne pas manger si lentement (que toi)</i>

- The adjective agrees in gender and number with the first term of the comparison (the subject of the sentence).
- With numbers, **de** replaces **que**: *J'ai moins de trois amis (I have fewer than three friends.)*

SUPERLATIVES / LE SUPERLATIF

- Adjective construction:
 - If the adjective normally comes before the noun, add the definite article to the comparative form. *Aude est la plus belle fille. (Aude is the most beautiful girl.)*
 - If the adjective normally comes after the noun, repeat the definite article:

<i>le</i>	noun	<i>le</i>	<i>plus</i>	adjective
<i>la</i>		<i>la</i>		
<i>les</i>		<i>les</i>	<i>moins</i>	

Tu es l'élève le moins intéressant de la classe.
 - The construction **de + group** can follow to indicate the standard of comparison. *Cet homme est le plus fort du monde. (This man is the strongest in the world.)*
- Adverb construction: Add the definite article to the comparative form. *Je chante le plus fort. (I sing the loudest.)*

IRREGULAR COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

Adjective / Adverb	Comparative	Superlative
bon (adj)	meilleur	le meilleur
bien (adv)	mieux	le mieux
mauvais (adj)	plus mauvais, pire	le plus mauvais, le pire
mal (adv)	plus mal, pis	le plus mal, le moins bien, le pis
petit (adj)	plus petit, moindre	le plus petit, le moindre
peu (adv)	moins	le moins
beaucoup (adv)	plus	le plus

PREPOSITION / LA PRÉPOSITION

A **preposition** joins with a noun or pronoun to form a phrase: *at her house, before Wednesday, because of my parents.*

DE

- With certain verbs: *promettre à quelqu'un de faire quelque chose, se souvenir de*
- To indicate origin (with time and place): *de 4 à 5 heures* (from 4 to 5) *Je viens de Moscou. (I come from Moscow.)*
- With nouns to express "a type of something": *la carte de crédit*
- With nouns of quantity or measure (no article): *une tasse de thé* (a cup of tea)
- To denote possession or relationship: *la plume de ma tante, le fils de mon ami*
- Jouer + de + le (la, les)* for playing an instrument: *jouer du piano, jouer de la guitare*
- After adverbs of quantity when modifying noun [no article]: *J'ai beaucoup de travail.*

À

- To introduce an indirect object: *Je le donne à mon ami.*
- To introduce location, destination, or direction: *Je vais au lit. Tu es à la campagne. La porte à droite est ouverte.*
- To refer to a particular time: *à 8 heures, au mois d'octobre.* To mark the end of a time period: *de 4 à 5 heures*
- Jouer + à + le (la, les)* for playing a sport or game: *jouer au football, jouer aux échecs*
- With the purpose of an object: *une tasse à thé* (a teacup)
- To indicate a trait or characteristic: *Berthe aux grands pieds, café au lait*
- After *être* and *appartenir* to indicate possession: *Ce stylo est à Marc.*

EN

- With durations of time: *J'ai fait mes devoirs en trois heures. (I did my work in three hours.) en 1974, en été. But: au printemps.*
- To show the material of which something was made: *un sac en cuir* (a leather bag)

DANS

- To express the end of or in with a period of time: *J'y vais dans une heure. (I'll go in an hour.)*
- To say in (that is, inside): *Le frigo est dans la cuisine.*

OTHER COMMON PREPOSITIONS

- Time:** *avant* (before), *après* (after), *depuis* (since), *pendant* (during)
- Location:** *devant* (in front of), *derrière* (behind), *entre* (between), *contre* (against), *sur* (on), *sous* (under), *au-dessus de* (above), *au-dessous de* (below), *à travers* (through)
- Other common prepositions:** *avec* (with), *sans* (without), *selon* (according to), *parmi* (among), *malgré* (despite), *à cause de* (because of) *vers* (towards, around: *vers la mer, vers huit heures*), *chez* (at the home of, in the work of: *chez eux, un grand thème chez Flaubert, chez les Français*)

GOING TO AND COMING FROM GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS

Place	in, to	Example	from	Example
feminine countries	en	<i>en Russie</i>	de (d')	<i>de Russie</i>
masc. countries		<i>en Israël</i>		<i>d'Israël</i>
starting with vowel		<i>en Afrique</i>		<i>d'Afrique</i>
all continents	en	<i>en Provence</i>	de (d')	<i>de Provence</i>
all provinces				
all cities	à	<i>à New York</i>	de (d')	<i>d'Avignon</i>
masculine countries	au, aux	<i>au Maroc</i>	du, de la, des	<i>des États-Unis</i>
modified place names, (including cities)	dans + le, la, les	<i>dans le vieux Paris</i>	du, de la, des	<i>de la belle France</i>

- Most countries that end in **-e** are feminine; all other countries are masculine. **Exceptions:** *le Mexique, le Cambodge*
- Some cities have articles built into their name: *le Caire, la Havane, le Havre*

PRONOUN / LE PRONOM

A **pronoun** replaces a noun or a phrase without identifying it. Pronouns agree in gender and number with the words they replace.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS / LE PRONOM PERSONNEL

	Pronoun	Subject	Direct Object	Indirect Object	Reflexive	Emphatic
singular	I	<i>je</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>moi</i>
	you (sing)	<i>tu</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>toi</i>
	he	<i>il</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>lui</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>lui</i>
plural	she	<i>elle</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>lui</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>elle</i>
	we	<i>nous</i>	<i>nous</i>	<i>nous</i>	<i>nous</i>	<i>nous</i>
	you (pl)	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>
	they (m)	<i>ils</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>leur</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>eux</i>
	they (f)	<i>elles</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>leur</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>elles</i>

NEGATION / LA NÉGATION

- A. English equivalents:** *not, never, none, neither, nor, no one, etc.*
- B.** French generally forms negatives by sandwiching the conjugated verb between a *ne* and one of several other words (often *pas*), according to what one wants to express:

Construction	Examples
ne...pas (not)	<i>Je n'aime pas ça!</i> (I don't like that!)
ne...rien (nothing)	<i>Je ne regrette rien.</i> (I regret nothing.)
ne...personne (nobody)	<i>Il ne donne des fleurs à personne.</i> (He gives no one flowers.)
ne...jamais (never)	<i>Tu n'es jamais à l'heure!</i> (You're never on time!)
ne...plus (no more, not any longer)	<i>Elles n'y vont plus.</i> (They don't go there any longer.)
ne...ni...ni (neither/nor with nouns, adjectives, and adverbs; verbs use ne...ni...ne)	<i>Tu n'as ni argent ni esprit.</i> (You've got neither money nor wit.) <i>Je ne ris ni ne pleure.</i> (I'm neither laughing nor crying.)
ne...aucun(e) (none, no one, not any)	<i>Je ne souris à aucun type.</i> (I'm not smiling at any guy.)
ne...que (only)	<i>Nous ne voyons que des fleurs.</i> (We only see flowers.)
ne...guère (scarcely)—literary	<i>Nous n'y allons guère.</i> (We scarcely go there.)

- C.** Use *ne* alone with *cesser, oser, pouvoir, savoir, Je n'ose y penser.* (I don't dare think of it.)
- D.** Two of these elements can be combined: *Je n'ai jamais rien fait.* (I never did anything.)
- E.** The *non-ne* element can be used without a verb: *Fuir? Jamais!* (Flee? Never!)
- F.** *Jamais* can be used with a verb but without *ne* to mean *ever*: *Peux-tu jamais me pardonner?* (Can you ever forgive me?).

ASKING QUESTIONS / L'INTERROGATION

YES/NO QUESTIONS

- A. Est-ce que:** Add *Est-ce que* at the beginning of a statement to make it into a yes/no question: *Est-ce que tu as bien dormi?* (Did you sleep well?) *Est-ce qu'elle ne vient pas?* (Is she not coming?)
- B. Inversion:** Invert the subject with the conjugated verb and connect them with a hyphen to transform any statement into a question: *As-tu bien dormi?*
- Any object pronouns stay attached to the conjugated verb: *L'avez-vous vu?* (Did you see it?)
 - Negative questions keep the *ne...pas* around the inverted verb: *Ne vient-elle pas?*
 - When a third person singular verb ends in a vowel, insert *-t-* between it and the subject: *A-t-elle parlé?* (Did she speak?)
 - When the subject is a noun rather than a pronoun, construct the inversion with the appropriate pronoun; the noun begins the question: *Danielle a-t-elle parlé?* (Did Danielle speak?)
 - With *je*: Inversion is used only with verbs like *être, avoir, aller, faire*, etc. The inverted form of *Je peux* (I can; I may) is always *Puis-je?*
- C. N'est-ce pas:** Tack on to the end of the sentence to ask *doesn't it? isn't it? isn't that so? don't you think? It est adorable, n'est-ce pas?* (He's adorable, don't you think?)
- Si* is used instead of *oui* to contradict a negative yes/no question or statement. *Tu ne le vois pas? Si, je le vois.* (You don't see it? Yes, I do.)

ASKING FOR INFORMATION

- A. Interrogative adverbs:** *When, where, why, how, how much, how many*
- Adverbs: *comment* (how); *où* (where); *pourquoi* (why); *quand* (when); *combien* (how much, how many)
 - Two possible constructions:
 - Interrogative adverb + inverted phrase. *Combien de fois Guy a-t-il ri?* (How many times did Guy laugh?)
 - Interrogative adverb + *est-ce que* + phrase. *Combien d'enfants est-ce que vous avez?*
- B. Interrogative adjectives:** *Which?*

- The adjectives: *quel* (m), *quelle* (f), *quels* (m. pl.), *quelles* (f. pl.) are used to ask *which?* or *what?:* *La femme s'approche. Quelle femme?* (The woman is approaching. Which woman?) *Quel est le meilleur restaurant?*
- Interrogative pronouns: *Who, what, which one?*

Meaning	Subject	Direct Object	Object of a prep.
who, whom (for persons)	qui est-ce qui, qui <i>Qui est-ce qui est là?</i> <i>Qui est là?</i>	qui est-ce que, qui <i>Qui est-ce qu'il aime?</i> <i>Qui aime-t-il?</i>	qui <i>De qui parles-tu?</i>
what (for things)	qu'est-ce qui <i>Qu'est-ce qui se passe?</i>	qu'est-ce que, que <i>Qu'est-ce qu'elle fait?</i> <i>Que fait-elle?</i>	quoi <i>Avec quoi l'as-tu fait?</i>
which one which ones	lequel, laquelle, lesquels, lesquelles <i>Lequel est le mieux?</i> <i>Laquelle regardes-tu?</i> <i>Sur lesquels?</i>		

The forms of *lequel* contract with *à* and *de* as described in the Relative Pronouns section.

INDEFINITE CONSTRUCTIONS

Indefinite constructions involve pronouns and adjectives used to generalize or to stress nonspecificity.

A. *On* (*one, we, you, people*) is used with the possessive adjective *son, sa, ses* and reflexive pronoun *se*: *On devrait aimer sa famille.* (One should love one's family.) *On ne se comporte pas ainsi.* (One does not behave that way.)

B. The emphatic pronoun *soi* refers to any indefinite subject: *Chacun pour soi!* (Every man for himself!)

C. Tout, toute, tous, toutes (every, all [adj]): *Tous les mecs sont forts. Toute femme est belle.*

- 1. Tout; tous** (everything; everyone [pronoun]): *Il aime tout. Tous sont partis.*
- D. Quelque(s)** (*some, a few*): *quelques rêves* (a few dreams).
- Quelque chose* (something); *Est-ce que tu veux quelque chose?* (Do you want something?)
 - Quelqu'un, quelqu'une, quelques-uns, quelques-unes*: *someone, anyone; some, some people*: *Quelqu'un est parti.* (Someone has left); *Quelques-unes de mes amies sont riches.* (Some of my (girl) friends are rich.)
 - Use *de* when *quelque chose* or *quelqu'un* is modified by an adjective: *quelque chose de joli* (something pretty); *quelqu'un d'intéressant* (someone interesting).
- E. Quelconque(s)** [adj]: *any...whatsoever*: *Je veux une réponse quelconque!* (I.e., I just want an answer!)
- 1. Quiconque** [pronoun]: *who(m)ever*: *Quiconque le veut le peut.* (i.e., Absolutely anyone who wants to can.)
- F. Chaque** [adj]: *each, every*. Always singular. *J'en rêve chaque soir.*
- Chacun(e)* [pronoun]: *each, everyone*. Always singular. *Chacun sait chanter. Chacune des filles pleure.*
- G. Autre** [adj, pronoun]: *other*: *un autre destin*
- For "another," as in *one more*, use *encore un*: *Encore un instant!*
- H. Aucun(e)...ne** [sing. adj. and pronoun]: *no, none*: *Aucun homme ne pleure.* (No man cries.); *Aucun des hommes ne pleure.* (None of the men is crying.)
- I. Nul(le)...ne** [sing. adj. and pronoun]: *no, none*: *Nulle femme/Nulle ne vit.* (No woman lives.)
- J. Personne...ne** [sing. pronoun]: *nobody, no one*: *Personne ne rigole.* (Nobody is chuckling.)
- K. Rien...ne** [sing. pronoun] *nothing*: *Rien ne le dérange.* (Nothing bothers him.)

VERB / LE VERBE

A **verb** is a word that describes an action. French verbs change—are conjugated—to agree in **person** (first, second, third) and **number** (singular or plural) with their subject, and to reflect the **tense** (past, present, future, etc.), and **mood** (indicative, conditional, subjunctive, imperative) of the action.

A. The infinitive is the basic form of the verb (English infinitives are preceded by *to*: *to walk, to snivel*). Most French verbs fall into one of three regular conjugation patterns according to the ending on the infinitive: **-er** (*aimer*), **-ir** (*finir*), or **-re** (*vendre*).

ORGANIZATION

Moods: Conjugated verb tenses in French are divided into four moods according to the speaker's attitude towards the action: **indicative** (real or probable action), **subjunctive** (imagined or possible action), **imperative** (command), and **conditional** (contrary to fact).

Infinitives, participles: Every verb also has an infinitive form, and two participle forms (present, past). (Sometimes these are also considered moods.)

Simple and compound tenses: Verb tenses can be simple (one word: *he whined, if I were wealthy*), or compound (two or three words: *they have seen, Julie would have been sad*). In compound tenses, only the first verb is conjugated.

L'INDICATIF / INDICATIVE

The **indicative** has five simple tenses (*présent, imparfait, futur, conditionnel, passé simple*) and five compound tenses (*passé composé, plus-que-parfait, conditionnel passé, futur antérieur, passé antérieur*). The *passé simple* and *passé antérieur* are used in historic and literary writing only, and are not covered here.

LE PRÉSENT / PRESENT

- A. English:** *He shrieks. He is shrieking. He does shriek.*
- B. Construction:** stem + endings:

Person	-er	-ir	-re
je	aim- e	fin- is	vend- s
tu	aim- es	fin- is	vend- s
il / elle	aim- e	fin- it	vend-
nous	aim- ons	fin- issons	vend- ons
vous	aim- ez	fin- issez	vend- ez
ils/elles	aim- ent	fin- issent	vend- ent

C. Use:

- Present action: *Je chante.* (I am singing.)
- Near or inevitable future action: *Elle part ce soir.* (She leaves [is leaving] tonight.)
- Habitual or ongoing action: *Il y va souvent. Je l'aime.*
- General statements: *Le temps passe trop vite.*
- With *depuis* or the constructions *il y a...que, ça fait...que, voici...que, et voilà...que* to indicate an action begun in the past that continues in the present. *Je marche depuis longtemps.* (I've been walking for a long time.) *Ça fait six heures qu'elle danse avec lui.* (She's been dancing with him for six hours.)

SPELLING CHANGES IN CONJUGATION OF REGULAR -ER VERBS

- cer:** *c* becomes *ç* before *a* and *o*: *menacer* → *je menace, nous menaçons*
- ger:** add *-e* when the *g* precedes *a* and *o*: *songer* → *nous songeons* (present), *je songeais* (imperfect)
- yer:** *y* becomes *i* before silent *e*: *ennuyer* → *je m'ennuie, nettoyer* → *ils nettoient* **BUT:** verbs ending in **-ayer** can have either spelling: *essayer* → *j'essaierai* or *j'essayerai*
- é-[consonant]-er:** *é* becomes *è* before silent *e*: *espérer* → *j'espère* (present), *j'espérais* (imperfect)
- e-[consonant]-er:** *e* becomes *è* before a syllable containing a silent *e*: *mener* → *je mène, nous menons* (present), *nous mènerons* (future); *lever* → *il lève, vous levez* (present), *vous lèverez* (future)
- Exception:** *appeler, jeter* and the compounds they form (*rappeler, rejeter*) double the consonant instead: *j'appelle, vous jettez*

LE PASSÉ COMPOSÉ / COMPOUND PAST

- A. English:** *I came home. I did go to the store. I have done my homework.*
- B. Construction:** conjugated *avoir* or *être* + past participle. See *Notes on Compound Tenses*.

Person	-er	-ir	-re
past participle	stem + é aimé	stem + i fini	stem + u vendu
je	ai aimé	ai fini	ai vendu
tu	as aimé	as fini	as vendu
il / elle	a aimé	a fini	a vendu
nous	avons aimé	avons fini	avons vendu
vous	avez aimé	avez fini	avez vendu
ils/elles	ont aimé	ont fini	ont vendu

- C. Use:** To express a completed past action. See also *Use under the Imperfect tense*.

- A. Connect pronouns to the verb and to each other with hyphens: *Regardez-moi! Donne-les-leur!*
- B. Note that *me* and *tu* change to *moi* and *toi* when used with affirmative commands.
1. Reflexive verbs in the imperative use "to" instead of "te": *Tu te lèves. Lève-toi!*
 2. *Moi + en* and *toi + en* become *m'en* and *t'en*: *Parle-m'en! Va-t'en!*

NEGATIVE COMMANDS WITH PRONOUNS

Negative commands follow the rules for word order and pronoun use given in the personal pronoun section above, but do not use the subject: *Tu ne te lèves pas. Ne te lève pas! Vous ne m'en parlez pas. Ne m'en parlez pas! Nous n'y allons jamais. N'y allons jamais!*

LE SUBJONCTIF / SUBJUNCTIVE

The **subjunctive mood** is used to indicate doubt, uncertainty, desire, emotion, conjecture, supposition. Its use marks the action of the verb as "subjective"—in some way unverified or unverifiable.

- A. The subjunctive appears in English in constructions such as *It is important that he get a haircut*. It appears more frequently in French, even in casual conversation.
- B. Only 2 of the subjunctive mood's 4 tenses are commonly used. The **present** indicates action occurring at the same time as or in the future with respect to the main clause. The **perfect** is used for action occurring prior to that of the main clause.

LE PRÉSENT DU SUBJONCTIF / PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE

- A. **Construction:** Drop **-ent** from the *ils* form of the present indicative + endings

Person	-er	-ir	-re
je	aim- e	finisse	vende
tu	aim- es	finisses	vendes
il / elle	aim- e	finisse	vende
nous	aim- ions	finissions	vendions
vous	aim- iez	finissiez	vendiez
ils/elles	aim- ent	finissent	vendent

- B. For regular **-er** verbs, the subjunctive looks like the present or the imperfect.
- C. For regular **-re** verbs, the *nous* and *vous* forms look like the imperfect; the *ils/elles* form looks like the present.
- D. Irregular forms:
1. *avoir: aie, aies, ait, ayons, ayes, aient*
 2. *être: sois, sois, soit, soyons, soyez, soient*

LE PASSÉ DU SUBJONCTIF / PERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE

- A. **Construction:** Present subjunctive of *avoir* or *être* + past participle

Person	-er	-ir	-re
je	aie aimé	aie fini	aie vendu
tu	aies aimé	aies fini	aies vendu
il / elle	ait aimé	ait fini	ait vendu
nous	ayons aimé	ayons fini	ayons vendu
vous	ayez aimé	ayez fini	ayez vendu
ils/elles	aient aimé	aient fini	aient vendu

Verbs in the past subjunctive follow the same rules for use of *avoir* or *être* and past participle agreement as verbs in the passé composé.

USES

The subjunctive is usually used in sentences with the format: indicative main clause + (...) *que* + subjunctive clause. The order of clauses is reversible. The subjunctive is almost always introduced by *que*; however, not every *que*-clause requires the use of the subjunctive. Common situations when the subjunctive is used:

- A. An impersonal construction expressing *necessity* (*il faut que, il est nécessaire/essentiel que*), *possibility* or *probability* (*il est possible que, il est impossible que, il est douteux que, il se peut que, il semble que*).
1. The indicative is used after expressions of (*very probable*) certainty: *Il est probable qu'elle est partie, il est vrai que, il est sûr que, il est certain que, il est clair que, il est évident que, il paraît que, je suis sûr(e) que*.
 2. However, when these phrases are used in negative or interrogative expressions, they take the subjunctive: *Est-il sûr qu'elle soit partie?*
- B. Thinking and hoping in negative or interrogative. *Croire, penser, espérer, trouver, and il me semble que* are followed by the indicative in affirmative statements. *Je*

crois qu'il est intelligent. Il nous semble qu'elles sont mortes. In negative or interrogative constructions they take the subjunctive. *Est-ce que tu crois qu'il soit intelligent? Nous ne pensons pas qu'elles soient mortes.*

- C. A value judgment with *il est* and adjective such as *bon, mauvais, convenable, important, utile, rare, regrettable, naturel, temps que, il vaut mieux que*: *Il faut qu'il vienne. Il est temps qu'elles descendent. Il est regrettable que tu les aies donnés à Pierre.*
- D. An expression of emotion (happiness, sadness, ire, fear, surprise, regret, contempt, desire, etc.): *J'insiste qu'elles s'en aillent.*
- E. An expression of requesting, allowing, commanding/ preferring or forbidding: *Je préfère que tu te laisses. (I prefer that you shut up.)*
- F. A superlative + *que* showing opinion: *C'est la seule solution que l'on puisse trouver.*
- G. Certain conjunctions or indefinite expressions: *à moins que...ne (unless), de peur que/crainte que (lest, for fear that), avant que...ne (before), afin que/pour que (so that), bien que/quoque (although), jusqu'à ce que/en attendant que (until), pourvu que (provided that), sans que (without); qui que (who/whomever), quoi que (whatever...), quel que (whatever [kind of]), si/quelque...que (however), où que (wherever).*
— *Discutons en attendant qu'elle arrive./En attendant qu'elle arrive, discutons. (Let's chat until she arrives.) Je te trouverai où que tu ailles./Où que tu ailles, je te trouverai. (Wherever you go, I will find you.)*

Note: The subjunctive (and the two clause structure) is not used when the subject in the two clauses is the same. The infinitive (possibly introduced by *à* or *de*) is used instead. *Je veux réussir* (NOT *Je veux que je réussisse*).

L'INFINITIF / INFINITIVE

The infinitive has two tenses, present and past. When negated, the *ne pas* is placed before the infinitive expression.

L'INFINITIF PRÉSENT / PRESENT INFINITIVE

- A. **English equivalent:** *I like to run. Don't tell me not to go.*
- B. **Construction:** *Courir. Ne pas faire.*
Infinitives of reflexive verbs agree with the subject of the sentence. *Je veux m'en souvenir. (I want to remember.) Il est important de s'en souvenir. (It's important to remember.)*

C. Use:

1. As the complement of another verb: *Je sais chanter. Elle préfère ne pas venir.* Many verbs require the use of a preposition before the infinitive: *Elle m'a promis de ne plus le faire.*
2. In the *futur proche* and the *passé immédiat*. See below.
3. Conjugated *faire* + infinitive: Causative construction: to express *having something done* or *having/making someone do something*: conjugated *faire* + infinitive. *Hier j'ai fait nettoyer ma maison. (Yesterday I had my house cleaned.) Tu fais rire les enfants. (You're making the children laugh.) Elle s'est fait brosser les cheveux. (She had her hair brushed.)*
4. As a verbal noun:
 - a. As a subject: *Danser m'amuse. (Dancing amuses me.)*
 - b. As the object of a preposition: *Il est important d'être à l'heure. (It's important to be on time.) Il est parti sans dire au revoir. (He left without saying goodbye.)*

L'INFINITIF PASSÉ / PAST INFINITIVE

- A. **English equivalent:** *It is something, I thought, to have seen the dust of Shakespeare. 'Tis better to have loved and lost.*
- B. **Construction:** Infinitive of *avoir* or *être* + past participle (which follows rules of agreement as usual.) *avoir vu, ne pas être descendu(e), s'être reveillé(e)s*
- C. **Use:** In the same situations as the present infinitive—except that the abstract action is in the past. *Je me sens mieux après m'être lavé les mains. (I feel better after having washed my hands.)*

INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTION:

LE PASSÉ RÉCENT / RECENT PAST

- A. **English equivalent:** *I have just washed the window.*
- B. **Construction:** *venir de* + infinitive. *Je viens d'arriver.*
- C. **Use:** To express the immediate past. This construction can also be used in the imperfect: *Il venait de rentrer chez lui quand le téléphone a sonné. (He had just come home when the phone rang.)*

INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTION:

LE FUTUR PROCHE / NEAR FUTURE

- A. **English equivalent:** *I am going to peel the oranges.*
- B. **Construction:** *aller* + infinitive. *Je vais peler les oranges.*
- C. **Use:** To express intended future. Can also be used with the imperfect.

LE PARTICIPE / PARTICIPLES

LE PARTICIPE PRÉSENT / PRESENT PARTICIPLE

- A. **English equivalent:** Roughly, the **-ing** form of the verb
- B. **Construction:** Usually, present tense *nous* stem + **ant**: *aimant, finissant, vendant*
1. Exceptions: *avoir* → *ayant*, *être* → *étant*, *savoir* → *sachant*
- C. **Use:**
1. As an adjective: *une fille souriante (a smiling girl).*
Note: The endings **-e, -s, -es** (f. sing., m. pl., f. pl.) must be added to form agreement with the noun or pronoun it modifies.
 2. As a verb: *Sachant qu'ils étaient en retard, le garçon se sent dépêché. (Knowing that they were late, the boys hurried.)*
 3. As the object of "en," to express *while, upon, or by*: *On apprend en lisant. (One learns by reading.); En regardant cette peinture, j'ai commencé à aimer l'art. (Upon looking at that painting, I began to love art.)*
a. "Tout" is used before "en" to stress simultaneity and/or present a surprising contrast: *J'ai mangé mon déjeuner tout en conduisant. (I ate my lunch while I was driving.) Tout en sachant qu'il ne l'aimait pas, la fille a poursuivi le garçon qu'elle adorait. (Even though she knew/ knowing full well that he didn't love her, the girl pursued the boy she adored.)*

LE PARTICIPE PASSÉ / PAST PARTICIPLE

- A. **English equivalent:** *Fried potatoes are yummy. My brain is fried.*
- B. **Construction:** Regular verbs:

-er	-ir	vendre
aimé	fini	vendu

Many verbs have irregular past participles.

C. Use

1. In all compound conjugated tenses. *J'ai vendu la radio. (I sold the radio.)*
2. As an adjective (must agree in gender and number with noun it modifies). *Tu es fatigué(e). (You are tired.)*

LA VOIX PASSIVE / PASSIVE VOICE

- A. **English equivalent:** *I was looked at strangely.*
- B. **Construction:** a tense of *être* + past participle (which agrees in gender and number with the subject): *Ils ont été écrasés par une voiture. (They were crushed by a car.)* **Note:** The agent is usually introduced by "par," as above.
- C. **Use:**
1. To show that a subject has or had an action performed on it by another agent. Used only with transitive verbs (verbs that take a direct object)
 2. The passive voice is only used when there is an unexpressed agent that is not a person: *La maison a été détruite. (The house was destroyed, i.e., by a fire, a flood, etc.)* Otherwise, French avoids using the passive voice in the following ways:
 - a. By making the expressed agent the active subject and the passive subject the direct object: *Une voiture les a écrasés. (A car crushed them.)*
 - b. By using "on" as an active subject when the unexpressed agent is a person: *On m'a regardé bizarrement. (I was looked at strangely.)*
 - c. By making the passive subject the active subject of a reflexive verb in general statements: *Ça se fait tous les jours. (That is done everyday.)*

LITERARY TENSES

LE PASSÉ SIMPLE / HISTORIC PAST- DEFINITE PAST

- A. **Construction:** add **-ai, -as, -âmes, -âtes, -èrent** to **-er** verbs; **-is, -is, -it, -îmes, -îtes, irent** to **-ir** and **-re** verbs.
- B. **Use:** In formal and literary writing in the same way the *passé composé* is used in informal writing, newspapers, and conversation.

LE PASSÉ ANTÉRIEUR / PAST ANTERIOR

- A. **Construction:** *passé simple* of *avoir* or *être* + past participle
- B. **Use:** In formal writing, corresponds to the *plus-que-parfait*