

***Au boulot!***

**REFERENCE GRAMMAR OF FRENCH**

Revised Edition



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## INTRODUCTION

This reference grammar is intended for college students enrolled in elementary through intermediate French. It should be of use in succeeding years, but advanced students will also need to refer to more detailed grammars such as Grevisse's *Le Bon Usage* or Judge and Healey's *A Reference Grammar of French*.

First- and second-year texts to be used in conjunction with this reference grammar will allude to specific sections herein when the relevant constructions are introduced. Although some constructions we discuss here exceed the level of elementary or even some intermediate courses, students should be able to profit from the explanation and discussion of each grammatical construction, whether or not they are expected to use that grammatical construction in the course they are taking at the time. This tool will allow students to find answers to most questions that are likely to arise as they read, listen to tapes or videos, or attempt to write creative compositions.

Most of the terminology we use is traditional, but some of the explanations include terms and concepts from modern linguistics that we consider helpful in clarifying the way French works. A glossary containing some of the terms that students have had questions about is included as Appendix IV.

## THE PLAN OF THE TEXT

The basic communicative unit of a language is the sentence. The "complete" sentence that language teachers refer to so often is composed of a subject and a predicate—that is, the thing the speaker is talking about and whatever is said about it. (For example, in "The pen is on the table," the pen is the subject and is on the table is the predicate.) In Part I of this reference grammar, we describe the constituents that are found within sentences and how they work in the functional units (subject and predicate). In Part II, we discuss the ordering of those constituents in the basic kinds of sentences, as well as the construction of more complex sentences. Part III contains discussions of various constructions and groups of words that students often ask about, but that don't fit into an orderly discussion of the grammar of French.

Sentences come in three main types: statements, questions, and commands, and each of these may be either affirmative or negative. Subjects can be proper nouns, common nouns, pronouns, or something more complex, such as another sentence. Predicates consist of a verb and its complement, if any. (For example, in "John whistles," the verb whistles has no complement, but in "John whistles a pretty tune," it has the complement, "a pretty tune.") Some of those complements may be proper nouns, common nouns, or pronouns. In other words, noun-phrase structures may occur either in the subject or the predicate part of the sentence. As we consider specific constructions, we regularly indicate how they fit into various kinds of sentences and into the subject or predicate.

Although many of the statements we make regarding grammar apply to both English and French, significant differences do exist between the two languages, both in the lexicon (that is, the full set of words in a language, the entire "vocabulary") and in the use and ordering of grammatical constructions. We point out the similarities and differences whenever we think it helpful in explaining to English-speaking students how French works.

A word of caution. We have tried to make the information as accessible as possible by structuring the reference grammar in what we consider a logical order and by providing an index and a glossary of grammatical terms. Nevertheless, as we know from years of experience in working on introductory grammars and in using LE BON USAGE, no index will include every term the student is looking for. We advise you to take time right away to read the table of contents and scan the entire work; your own mind will do the job that none of us can do in classifying and setting memory records for you.

We hope you enjoy the book: grammar can be unbelievably fun and we have tried sincerely to make the looking-up process as non-frustrating as possible.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the students and graduate teaching assistants at the University of Kansas, and the students at St. Olaf College, who have given suggestions for changes and additions to the Reference Grammar. In advance, we thank all others who may give us constructive criticism for further improvements in a later edition.

# *Part I*

## *The Structural Units Found in Sentences*

## THE NOUN PHRASE - *LE GROUPE NOMINAL*

A noun phrase can occur in the subject or in the predicate (more precisely, in the complement part of the predicate, as the direct object or the indirect object of the verb, as the object of a preposition, or as the predicate nominative<sup>1</sup>). The three basic types of noun phrase structures are: pronoun (as in "We are happy"); proper noun (as in "Mary saw John yesterday"); common noun phrase (as in "The professor talked to several new students").

### 1.0 Noun Phrase: Pronouns - *Les pronoms*

Pronouns, as the term (pro-nouns) indicates, take the place of nouns. After we've named, identified, described, or pointed to a person, an object, or an abstract concept, we usually refer to that entity with a pronoun in any subsequent sentence.

#### 1.1 PRONOUNS: PERSONAL PRONOUNS - *LES PRONOMS PERSONNELS*

In French, the personal pronouns (which often refer to a specific person or persons but can also refer to other living beings or to specific concrete objects) have different forms depending on their function, on whether they refer to one or to more than one object or person, and—in the third person—on whether they refer to a masculine or feminine object or person (as you may already know, objects have **grammatical gender** in French). Each function is discussed in a separate subsection below; the respective gender and person-number forms are presented in tables.

##### 1.1.1 Personal Pronouns: Subject Function - *Les pronoms personnels, sujet*

The forms of the personal pronoun when used as the subject of the verb are:

---

	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
First person	je	<i>I</i>	nous	<i>we</i>
Second person	tu	<i>you</i>	vous	<i>you</i>
Third person	elle	<i>she, it, f.</i>	elles	<i>they, f</i>
	il	<i>he, it, m.</i>	ils	<i>they, m.</i>
	on	<i>one</i>		

---

---

<sup>1</sup>Sorry about the jargon: a "~~predicate~~ nominative" is just a noun phrase after the verb "to be," as in "John is a professor." We picked up the term from Latin grammarians, because the noun phrase in question is a predicate, but—whereas predicates are usually in the "accusative" case—this one is in the nominative case. Think of the verb "to be" (*être* in French) as an equals sign (=).

*Tu* is always grammatically singular, while *vous* is always grammatically plural (that is, it takes a plural verb form). *Tu* designates only one person and is used generally among family members, close friends, colleagues, students; *vous* is always used when the speaker is addressing more than one person and is the normal form used when addressing just one person to whom the speaker would not use *tu* (generally more formal situations).

*Ils* refers either to a group of males (or objects of masculine grammatical gender) exclusively or to any group that contains at least one entity of masculine gender. For example, "*Marie, Jacques et Hélène sont amis. Ils vont souvent au théâtre ensemble.*"

*On* is indefinite, i.e., does not normally have a clear antecedent, and is equivalent to English "one" (as in "One never knows, does one?"), "they" (as in "They don't really eat snails in France, do they?"), or "you" (as in "You never know what Mary will say"). This little word is extremely useful, speakers of French often use *on* where we might use a passive construction in English (see Section 8.2, p. 72), they also use *on* as a substitute for *nous*, as for example in "*On y va?*" ("Shall we go?")

### Function and use of the subject pronouns

The subject pronouns function just as they do in English. They replace nouns already mentioned or otherwise identified (for example, the situational context clearly tells us that "*I*"/*je* refers to the person speaking), and they are the grammatical subject of a verb.

Je suis malade.

Elle cherche son passeport.

Vous connaissez le président.

Nous avons les valises.

*I'm sick.*

*She is looking for her passport.*

*You know the president.*

*We have the suitcases.*

### 1.1.2 Personal Pronouns: Direct Object - *Les pronoms personnels: complément d'objet direct*

The forms of the personal pronoun used as direct object of the verb are:

SINGULAR			PLURAL	
First person	me, moi	<i>me</i>	nous	<i>us</i>
Second Person	te, toi	<i>you</i>	vous	<i>you</i>
Third Person	la	<i>her, it, f</i>	les	<i>them</i>
	le	<i>him, it, m.</i>		

*Les* is used to replace both masculine and feminine plural nouns. Context normally makes it clear in French whether the antecedent is masculine or feminine, just as it does in English (where the form "them" is also ambiguous as to gender).



The *moi, toi* forms replace *me, te* when they are in stressed position, as for example in the affirmative imperative construction (commands).

In addition to referring to a male person or a grammatically masculine object, *le* is also used when the antecedent is neuter, as for example when it refers to a whole sentence:

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| - Jean part aujourd'hui.         | <i>"John is leaving today."</i> |
| - Oui, je le sais.               | <i>"Yes, I know (it)."</i>      |
| - Est-ce que le prof est malade? | <i>"Is the professor sick?"</i> |
| - Non, je ne le pense pas.       | <i>"No, I don't think so."</i>  |

### Function and use of direct object pronouns

The direct object pronouns function as they do in English: they replace direct object nouns. However, you'll notice quickly that they regularly (with one simple exception, the affirmative imperative construction) are placed in front of the verb of which they are the object, not after it. Note that little phrase, "of which they are the object": it's very important; examples c.1. and 2., below, illustrate how important it is.

### Order of direct object pronouns

a. With simple ("synthetic", one-word) verb forms, the order is obvious. The pronoun precedes the verb.

- |                   |                                      |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Nous la suivons.  | <i>We are following her.</i>         |
| Je les achèterai. | <i>I'll buy them.</i>                |
| Elle nous aimait. | <i>They loved (used to love) us.</i> |
| Il vous attend.   | <i>He's waiting for you.</i>         |

b. In compound ("analytic," two-word) verb forms, the order still is fairly straightforward: the direct object again precedes the whole verb, which is the auxiliary plus past participle. In the first example, *avons* is the auxiliary and *suivie* is the past participle.

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Nous l'avons suivie.                                   | <i>We followed her.</i>     |
| Ils nous avaient vus.                                  | <i>They had seen us.</i>    |
| [the <i>nous</i> refers to males]                      |                             |
| Elle les a cherchés.                                   | <i>She looked for them.</i> |
| [the <i>les</i> refers to objects of masculine gender] |                             |

c. When the verb construction is a verb plus infinitive, follow the meaning of the phrase to determine where the object pronoun should go.

1. Very often in these constructions, the pronoun is the object of the infinitive, so naturally it precedes the infinitive.

Il veut nous aider.

*He wants to help us.*

(it's not that he wants us, he wants to help us)

Je commençais à le faire.

*I was beginning to do it*

(it's not that I was beginning it,

I was beginning to do it)

On peut vous remplacer.

*We can replace you.*

(it's not that we can you, it's that we can replace you)

2. The pronoun, of course, can be the object of the first verb:

Elle nous invite à partir.

*She's inviting us to leave.*

(and ~~circumlocutively~~)

Nous l'empêchons de fumer.

*We prevent him/her from smoking*

d. Imperative constructions successfully elude the general rule.

1. In the affirmative imperative the pronoun follows the verb, just as in English <sup>2</sup>

Rendez-les aux étudiants!

*Give them (back) to the students!*

Finis-le!

*Finish it!*

Chantons-la!

*Let's sing it!*

2. However, when we are negative in our commands, we revert to the general rule: pronoun objects precede the verb.

Ne les rendez pas aux étudiants!

*Don't give them (back) to the students!*

Ne le finis pas!

*Don't finish it!*

Ne me touchez pas!

*Don't touch me!*

---

<sup>2</sup>Remember that, in this stressed position, *me* and *le* become *moi* and *toi*: e.g. *Lève-toi*.

### 1.1.3 Personal Pronouns: Indirect Object Function - *Les pronoms personnels, complément d'objet indirect*

The forms of the personal pronoun used as indirect object of the verb are:

---

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
First Person	<b>me, moi</b> <i>to me</i>	<b>nous</b> <i>to us</i>
Second Person	<b>te, toi</b> <i>to you</i>	<b>vous</b> <i>to you</i>
Third Person	<b>lui</b> <i>to her/him</i>	<b>leur</b> <i>to them, m/f</i>

---

Both *lui* and *leur* are ambiguous as to the gender of the antecedent. As in most other such cases of ambiguity, the problem is almost always resolved by the context. ("Them" is similarly ambiguous in English, for instance, but rarely causes confusion, because the people involved in the conversation know the people or things that they are talking about.)

The *moi, toi* forms replace *me, te* when they are in stressed position, as for example in the affirmative imperative construction (commands).

#### Function and use of the indirect object pronoun

Indirect object pronouns in French serve a function similar to that of the equivalent forms in English, but—like the direct object pronouns in French—they are regularly placed in front of the verb of which they are the indirect object. (Please also look at the comments on direct object pronouns in Section 1.1.2.)

It is customary to give the English indirect object form (as we do above) with the preposition "to," but that can be misleading. The indirect object of the verb represents the person to whom (or for whom) something is done and is not simply a translation of "to x." See the discussion of the pronominal adverb *y* for additional comments (1.3).

It is also important to note that many verbs in French take an indirect object whereas the equivalent verbs in English take a direct object, and vice versa. For example:

Elle leur obéit.  
[indirect object in French]

*She obeys them*  
[direct object in English]

Je l'écoute.  
[direct object in French]

*I'm listening to him*  
[indirect object in English]

For additional examples, see Section 28.3. Also, develop the habit, especially when writing compositions, of checking verbs in your dictionary to see which prepositions are used with each one.

## Order of indirect object pronouns

Like the direct object pronouns, indirect object pronouns regularly precede the verb of which they are the object. Again, note the importance of that phrase, "of which they are the object" – see the comments under direct object pronouns (1.1.2) and consider carefully the examples below.

- a. With a simple verb, the pronoun precedes that verb:

Je lui parle.	<i>I'm talking to him/to her</i>
Elle me rendra l'examen.	<i>She'll give me back the exam.</i>
Je t'offre mon cœur.	<i>I offer you my heart</i>
Il me donne un baiser.	<i>He gives me a kiss.</i>

- b. With a compound verb, the indirect object precedes the full verb form, thus it precedes the auxiliary:

Il nous a donné les billets.	<i>He gave us the tickets.</i>
Je lui ai montré la photo.	<i>I showed him the picture.</i>
Vous leur aviez déjà parlé.	<i>You had already spoken to them.</i>

- c. When the verb construction is a verb plus infinitive, just follow the meaning of the phrase

1. Very often, the pronoun is the indirect object of the infinitive, so naturally it precedes the infinitive.

Il va leur parler.	<i>He's going to talk to them</i>
Je voudrais te raconter une histoire.	<i>I'd like to tell you a story.</i>
J'aime lui donner des muguets.	<i>I like to give her/him (context tells you which) lilies of the valley.</i>

2. However, the pronoun can be the indirect object of the first verb:

Il te dit de partir.	<i>He's telling you to leave.</i>
Nous lui demandons de se dépêcher.	<i>We ask him/her. (context tells you which) to hurry</i>

- d. Imperative constructions once again elude the general rule, just as they did for direct object pronouns (1.1.2.d).

1. In the affirmative imperative, the pronoun follows, just as in English.

Dites-nous la vérité!	<i>Tell us the truth!</i>
Parle-leur!	<i>Talk to them!</i>
Demandez-lui de nous téléphoner!	<i>Ask him to call us!</i>
Donne-moi <sup>3</sup> ton passeport!	<i>Give me your passport!</i>

---

<sup>3</sup>Notice that in this position (it is "stressed"), the pronoun *me* has become *moi*. See Section 1.2, Disjunctive Pronouns.

2. However, in the negative imperative, the pronoun precedes the verb, in accordance with the general rule.

Ne **me** chante pas cette chanson!  
Ne **leur** écrivons plus!

*Don't sing that song to **me**!*  
*Let's not write **them** any more!*

#### 1.1.4 Personal Pronouns: Reflexive Pronouns - *Les pronoms réfléchis*

The forms of the reflexive personal pronouns are: *me, te, se, nous, vous, se*. The use of these pronouns is discussed in the section on reflexive verbs (Sec. 9)

### 1.2 PRONOUNS: DISJUNCTIVE PRONOUNS - *LES PRONOMS DISJONCTIFS*

The disjunctive pronouns (also called "stressed/stress" pronouns or "tonic" pronouns) are strictly "personal" pronouns: they refer only to animate beings. They're usually treated separately from the other personal pronouns (subject, direct object, indirect object: Section 1.1) because of their particular functions and because of the special forms *moi, toi, and soi, and lui:elle, eux:elles*.

The two most common names for these forms may help explain their characteristics: we call them "disjunctive" because they do not always "join" the rest of the sentence in the way other pronouns do; we call them "stressed" because the tonic stress (i.e., louder and stronger pronunciation, which accounts for the special forms) falls on them.

The forms of the disjunctive pronoun are:

---

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
First person	<b>moi</b>	<b>nous</b>
Second person	<b>toi</b>	<b>vous</b>
Third person	<b>lui, m.</b> <b>elle, f.</b> <b>soi (goes with on)</b>	<b>eux, m.</b> <b>elles, f.</b>

---

## Functions and uses of the disjunctive pronoun

### (PERSONAL) OBJECT OF A PREPOSITION:

Il est parti avec **elle**.  
Nous comptons sur **toi**.  
Asseyez-vous devant **eux**.  
Pensez à **nous**.<sup>4</sup>  
Elles habitent à côté de **lui**.

*He left with **her**.*  
*We're counting on **you**.*  
*Sit down in front of **them**.*  
*Think about **us**/Keep **us** in mind.*  
*They live next to **him**.*

### ONE-WORD RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS:

- Qui est à la porte?  
- **Moi**. (never "Je")  
- Qui as-tu choisi?  
- **Elle**.  
- Avec qui êtes-vous sorti?  
- **Eux**.

*"Who's at the door?"*  
*"**Me**." [some would say "I"]*  
*"Who(m) did you choose?"*  
*"**Her**." [pointing]*  
*"With whom did you go out?"*  
*"**Them**."*

### PREDICATE NOMINATIVE -- AFTER *C'est*:

C'est toi qui as fait cela?  
C'est toi qui as fait cela.  
Ce sont **eux** qui ne comprennent pas.  
- Qui est à la porte?  
- C'est **nous**.  
- Ce n'est pas **moi** qui l'ai prise en photo.

*Is it you who did that?*  
*You're the one who did that.*  
*They're the ones who don't understand.*  
*"Who's at the door?"*  
*"It's **us**."*  
*"I'm not the one who took her picture."*

### FOR EMPHASIS

In this case, the disjunctive pronoun often is used in addition to a regular personal pronoun—subject, direct object, or indirect object.

**Lui** ne comprend rien.  
OR:  
**Lui**, il ne comprend rien.  
**Il** nous le donne à nous.  
Je lui parle à elle.<sup>5</sup>  
**Moi**, je n'en sais rien.

***He** doesn't understand anything.*  
***Him**, he doesn't understand anything.*  
***He's** giving it to **us**.*  
*I'm talking to **her**.*  
***I** don't know anything about it.*

---

<sup>4</sup>Note that the disjunctive pronoun is used with verbs like *penser à* and *s'intéresser à* (see Section 1.3) not the indirect object pronoun.

<sup>5</sup>In the case of third person indirect object forms (*lui, leur*), the disjunctive pronoun may be used to make it clear when one is referring to a male or a female (*lui:elle*), or to males or females (*eux:elles*).

### 1.3 PRONOUNS: ADVERBIAL PRONOUNS (PRONOMINAL ADVERBS) - LES ADVERBES PRONOMINAUX

The forms of the two so-called "pronominal adverbs" are:

---

y	<i>to it, to that place, there</i>
en	<i>from it, from that place. of it/them, thence</i>

---

Unlike the personal pronouns, the adverbial pronouns (more often called pronominal adverbs) replace not a noun or noun phrase, but a preposition plus noun/noun phrase construction. We call them pronouns because their position in the sentence is the same as that of the direct and indirect object pronouns; they are adverbial because their principal meaning is adverbial: "place where."

#### Function and use of the adverbial pronouns

*Y* most often replaces prepositional phrases beginning with *à*, *sur*, *dans*, and other location prepositions; in other words, it is used in phrases that indicate "where~~to~~" or "where~~at~~".

Je vais <b>à Paris</b> .	<i>I'm going to Paris.</i>
→ J'y vais.	→ I'm going <i>there</i> .
Les papiers sont <b>dans la serviette</b> .	<i>The papers are in the briefcase.</i>
→ Ils y sont.	→ They are <i>there</i> (in it).

However, *y* does not replace *à* plus its object when that represents an indirect object (see 1.1.3).

Je parle <b>à Jean</b> .	<i>I'm speaking to John.</i>
→ Je <b>lui</b> parle.	→ I'm speaking to <i>him</i> .
J'obéis <b>à mes professeurs</b> .	<i>I obey my professors.</i>
→ Je <b>leur</b> obéis.	→ I obey <i>them</i> .

Nor does it replace the idiomatic construction *à* plus personal object with verbs like *penser*, *s'intéresser* and *s'adresser*. One uses the disjunctive pronoun.

Je pense <b>à Françoise</b> .	<i>I'm thinking of Françoise.</i>
→ Je pense <b>à elle</b> .	→ I'm thinking of <i>her</i> .
Elle s'intéresse <b>à Marcel Proust</b> .	<i>She's interested in Marcel Proust.</i>
→ Elle s'intéresse <b>à lui</b> .	→ She's interested in <i>him</i> .
On s'adresse <b>au gérant</b> .	<i>You speak to the manager.</i>
→ On s'adresse <b>à lui</b> .	→ You speak to <i>him</i> .

NOTE: A very common way of expressing "there" in colloquial speech is with the adverb *là*. Usually the speaker is pointing, literally or figuratively.

- Où sont mes lunettes?
- Là, sur la table.

*"Where are my glasses?"*  
*"There, on the table."*

Marc est là, devant vous.

*Mark is (right) there in front of you.*

However, *y* is also a high-frequency word in the spoken language and in general must be used when the place to which/at which has just been mentioned.

EN replaces two kinds of constructions:

(1) Like *y*, it replaces prepositional phrases (but instead of phrases indicating where at/where to, it replaces those indicating where from.

- Quand est-ce qu'ils reviennent de Bordeaux?
- Ils en reviennent demain.

*"When are they getting back from Bordeaux?"*  
*"They get back tomorrow."*

- Lucie, vient-elle d'Annecy?
- Oui, elle en vient.

*"Does Lucy come from Annecy?"*  
*"Yes, she's from there."*

(2) it also replaces partitive and indefinite constructions (see also 2.2.3).

- Tu as des stylos?
- Oui, j'en ai.
- Il a une voiture?
- Bien sûr, il en a même deux<sup>6</sup>.
- Veux-tu des dépliants?
- Non, je n'en veux pas.

*"Do you have (any) pens?"*  
*"Yes, I have some (I do)."*  
  
*"He has a car?"*  
*"Sure. In fact, he has two."*  
[we do not usually say "two of them"]  
*"Do you want some leaflets?"*  
*"No, I don't want any."*

---

<sup>6</sup>In French, a numeral cannot stand alone. One must say, e.g., "*Il a deux voitures*," or "*Il en a deux*," (two of them), never \*"*il a deux*."



## Order of all object pronouns, including adverbial pronouns

As explained for the direct and indirect object pronouns, these conjunctive object pronouns precede the verb of which they are the object. When there is more than one object pronoun, there is a fixed order within that group.

The following is the fixed order (except for affirmative imperative constructions):

---

<i>me</i>				
<i>te</i>	<i>le</i>			
<i>se</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>lui</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>en</i>
<i>nous</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>leur</i>		
<i>vous</i>				
<i>se</i>				

---

Thus, whether the 1st or 2nd person pronoun (or the reflexive *se*: first column) is a direct or indirect object, it precedes a third person pronoun. 1st and 2nd person pronouns are infrequently combined (except in introducing someone, and that is usually done with at least one name, or using the disjunctive pronoun for one of the objects), so don't worry about it. All personal pronouns precede the adverbial pronouns, and *y* always precedes *en*. If you like mnemonic devices, you may choose to compare the final sequence to the sound of a donkey: *y en* sounds like "*hi han*," which is the French way of writing out a donkey's braying. Also, for the 3rd person forms (all beginning with *l*) note that the correct order is alphabetical (*le lui, la leur, les leur*, etc.).

### 1.4 PRONOUNS: INDEFINITE "DEMONSTRATIVE" PRONOUNS - *LES PRONOMS INDEFINIS*

The true demonstrative pronouns are treated in the next section. The indefinite pronouns, discussed here, are high-frequency forms that you'll need for day-to-day communication and that, in fact, are often called "demonstrative." It makes sense, as you can see from the English equivalents, "this," "that," "these." Let's forget the terms by which we refer to them and just discuss the use of these forms as words.

Note that all of the words listed replace indefinite antecedents in the sense that the thing replaced has not been clearly mentioned and has no clear gender or number: otherwise, we'd use a personal pronoun or a true demonstrative pronoun.

#### CE

As an indefinite pronoun (*ce* has many other functions: see 2.2.5 and especially all of 22), *ce* most often refers to an idea or notion that both the speaker and hearer have in mind or to a sentence that has just been uttered/written.

- Jean est déjà parti.  
- C'est dommage. Je voulais lui parler.  
C'est une bonne idée.  
[the idea has been suggested by a previous speaker]

"John has already left."  
"That's too bad. I wanted to talk to him."  
That (It)'s a good idea.

*Ce* may also be used, in a limited set of constructions and in the spoken language only, to refer to something the speaker and hearer are looking at.

C'était cher?

[they are looking at a car, for example]

*Was it expensive?*

C'est difficile?

[a student asking a friend about an exam]

*Is it difficult?*

## CECI and CELA

The simplest equivalent of *ceci* is "this" and it works fine, so long as you don't think of *ceci* as being in strict contrast with *cela*, whose simplest equivalent is "that." Like *ce*, they are both used to refer to whole statements, ideas, or questions; also, more often than for *ce*, both are used to refer to objects, ideas, or abstract concepts that the speaker is pointing out or emphasizing (literally or figuratively) but has not named.

- Les Américains sont riches.

- Cela n'est pas vrai.

[reference to a previous statement]

*"Americans are rich."*

*"That's not true."*

Ceci n'est pas très clair.

[pointing at a statement, as a teacher might in discussing a composition with a student]

*This/That's not very clear.*

Cela n'est pas une fleur.

[pointing at something a (short) distance away]

*That's not a flower.*

Ceci est à moi.

[pointing at something close, perhaps in the person's hand]

*This is mine.*

Cela n'a aucune importance.

[reference to a previous statement, most likely by the other speaker]

*That's not at all important.*

Ecoutez bien ceci: il n'y aura pas de class lundi.

[reference to something about to be announced]

*Listen to this: there will be no class Monday*

## ÇA

This very common form is an abbreviation of *cela*, but occurs much more frequently, as one learns almost immediately when beginning to use French.

Comment ça va?

Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?

Ça, c'est mon affaire.

*How are things? (How goes it?)*

*What's that?*

*That's my business.*

## 1.5 PRONOUNS: DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS - LES PRONOMS DEMONSTRATIFS

The true demonstrative pronouns refer to objects (persons, animals, abstract concepts) previously mentioned. They are most obviously different from the indefinite pronouns discussed in Section 1.4 in that their antecedents are always specific and show gender and number. The forms are:

---

The antecedent is:	SINGULAR	PLURAL
FEMININE	celle	celles
MASCULINE	celui	ceux

---

### Function and use of demonstrative pronouns

The demonstrative pronoun is used to refer to a specific set (one or more) of members of some previously designated group: "Do you want an orange?" "Sure, I'll take **this one**."

In French, the way you indicate which one(s) you are referring to (in addition to the ever-efficient pointing system) is to use one of the following formulae:

(1) When both the speaker and hearer can see (literally or figuratively) the object in question, the speaker adds *-ci* or *-là* to the appropriate demonstrative pronoun form (according to gender and number). This is more or less the equivalent of "this one," "these" (*celui-ci, celle-ci, ceux-ci, celles-ci*) or "that one," "those" (*celui-là, celle-là, ceux-là, celles-là*) and is understandably more common in spoken French than in written French<sup>7</sup>.

(2) The speaker may also specify which one(s) by mentioning who possesses the one(s) in question, using *de* after the demonstrative pronoun:

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| - Quelle voiture préférez-vous? | <i>"Which car do you prefer?"</i>            |
| - Celle de mon père.            | <i>"My father's."</i>                        |
| - De quels films parlez-vous?   | <i>"Which movies are you talking about?"</i> |
| - (De) ceux de Jean Renoir.     | <i>"The ones by Jean Renoir."</i>            |

(3) Or the speaker may use a relative pronoun construction, as in:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| - Enfin, tu as choisi un roman?        | <i>"So, did you choose a novel?"</i>               |
| - Oui, celui que Marie m'a recommandé. | <i>"Yes, the one that Mary recommended to me."</i> |

Remember that the demonstrative pronouns are never used alone. They're always followed by *-ci* or *-là*, or by one of the constructions in (2) or (3) above.

---

<sup>7</sup>It does occur in written French when it is used as the equivalent of "the former" (*celui-là/celle-là*) or "the latter" (*celui-ci/celle-ci*).

## 1.6 PRONOUNS: INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS - *LES PRONOMS INTERROGATIFS*

Interrogative pronouns, like negative words ("never," "no one," etc.) serve two functions simultaneously: they signal that you are asking a question, and they fill one of the syntactic slots, such as SUBJECT, OBJECT, INDIRECT OBJECT. As far as form is concerned, there are two sets of interrogative pronouns; we'll call them the QUI-pronouns and the LEQUEL-pronouns.

### 1.6.1 Interrogative Pronouns/QUI-type - *Les pronoms interrogatifs, qui...*

#### Forms of the QUI-type interrogatives

---

When the referent is a person (set of persons),

*and the function is*

*you should use:*

SUBJECT

**qui**<sup>8</sup> (or *qui est-ce qui*)

DIRECT OBJECT

**qui** (+ inversion or *est-ce que*)

OBJECT OF PREPOSITION  
(including *à* + indirect object)

Prep + **qui** (+ inversion or *est-ce que*)

#### Examples:

**Qui** a ouvert la porte?

*Who* opened the door?

**Qui** avez-vous vu hier?

*Who* did you see yesterday?

A **qui** est-ce que tu parles?

*Who* are you talking to?

Avec **qui** est-ce que Paul a dansé?

*With whom* did Paul dance?

---

(See the next page for cases in which the referent is not a person.)

---

<sup>8</sup>The last letter of *qui* never elides, that is, it is never dropped in front of another vowel.

---

When the referent is not a person (but is a thing, a plant, an animal),

*and the function is*

*you should use:*

SUBJECT

qu'est-ce qui

DIRECT OBJECT

que (+ inversion), OR qu'est-ce que

OBJECT OF PREPOSITION

Prep + quoi (+ inversion or est-ce que)

### Examples:

Qu'est-ce qui est sur la table?

*What's on the table?*

Que veux-tu faire?

*What do you want to do?*

De quoi parles-tu?

*What are you talking about?*

Qu'est-ce qu'il veut dire?

*What does he mean?*

---

Note that, in all the QUI-type forms, it turns out that the initial *qui* or *que* indicates whether the pronoun refers to a person (*qui*) or non-person (*que*), while the ending *qui* or *que* indicates whether it is a subject (*qui*) or an object (*que*).

### Order of interrogative QUI-type pronouns

They come first, as they do in English.

#### SUBJECT

Qui t'a donné ce stylo?

*Who gave you this pen?*

Qui est ce monsieur?

*Who is that man?*

Qu'est-ce qui est sur la table?

*What is on the table?*

Qu'est-ce qui se passe?

*What's going on?*

Note that not only is the order the same as that of a simple declarative sentence, but that—for this group, where the interrogative word is the subject—there is no other interrogative structure involved, neither inversion, nor the use of a separate est-ce que. (We emphasize "separate": the forms Qu'est-ce qui and Qui est-ce qui should be considered as one-word units.) Compare the following questions and answers:

- Qui t'a donné ce stylo?

*"Who gave you this pen?"*

[or]

- Qui est-ce qui t'a donné ce stylo?

*"Who gave you this pen?"*

- Jean m'a donné ce stylo.

*"John gave me this pen."*

- Qu'est-ce qui est sur la table?

*"What is on the table?"*

- Mon livre est sur la table.

*"My book is on the table."*

On the other hand, when the interrogative pronoun fulfills a syntactic function other than that of subject, it is out of its normal position for that function and thus triggers a change in the sentence, either the use of inversion of subject and verb or the addition of est-ce que.

**DIRECT OBJECT** (*qui* for people; *que* for things, plants, animals)

Qui regardez-vous?	<i>Who(m) are you looking at?</i> <sup>1</sup>
Qui est-ce que vous regardez?	<i>Who(m) are you looking at?</i>
Que regardez-vous?	<i>What are you looking at?</i>
Qu'est-ce que vous regardez?	<i>What are you looking at?</i>

**OBJECT OF A PREPOSITION.** (*qui* for people, *quoi* for things)

A qui as-tu rendu l'article?	<i>Who'd you give the article to?</i>
A qui est-ce que le général a donné l'argent?	<i>To whom did the general give the money?</i>
Sur qui comptez-vous?	<i>Who(m) are you counting on?</i>
Chez qui est-ce que le gala aura lieu?	<i>At whose house will the gala party take place?</i>
De quoi parlez-vous?	<i>What are you talking about?</i>
Sur quoi as-tu mis les papiers?	<i>What did you put the papers on?</i>

In French, the preposition must always precede *qui* or *quoi*. It cannot come at the end of the sentence, as it often does in English (for example, "Who(m) did you give the article to?" and others in the set just above).

### 1.6.2 Interrogative Pronouns/LEQUEL-type - *Les pronoms interrogatifs, le quel...*

**Forms of the "LEQUEL-type" interrogative pronouns**

Referent is:	SINGULAR	PLURAL
MASCULINE	lequel	lesquels
FEMININE	laquelle	lesquelles

NOTE: The masculine singular form and both plural forms contract with the prepositions *à* and *de* to give *auquel*, *duquel*, *auxquels*, *desquels*, *auxquelles*, *desquelles*. (See Section 21.1 on contraction.)

## Function and use of LEQUEL-type interrogative pronouns

The LEQUEL interrogative construction is much more specific than the QUI-type. As you see, it has gender and number, so it has to have a clear referent, either a previously mentioned antecedent (cinema fans' example) or an item mentioned directly after the LEQUEL form (beer drinkers' example).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| - Il y a tant de bons films à voir.                 | <i>"There are so many good films to see."</i>           |
| - Lequel va-t-on choisir?                           | <i>"Which one are we going to choose?"</i>              |
| - Laquelle de ces bières préférez-vous?             | <i>"Which of these beers do you prefer?"</i>            |
| - As-tu vu les vestes de vison dans cette boutique? | <i>"Did you see the mink jackets in that boutique?"</i> |
| - Lesquelles?                                       | <i>"Which ones?"</i>                                    |

## Order of LEQUEL-type interrogative pronouns

No matter what its syntactic function is, the LEQUEL-type pronoun comes in first position in the sentence. (If it is the object of a preposition, it is of course preceded by that preposition, but the whole unit is still in first position).

**SUBJECT.** If it is the subject, the rest of the sentence follows normal word order (no *est-ce que*, no inversion):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Lequel de vos frères est à Paris?                    | <i>Which one of your brothers is in Paris?</i>       |
| Lesquelles de ces lettres sont arrivées aujourd'hui? | <i>Which of these letters arrived today?</i>         |
| Laquelle de ces aquarelles est à Maurice?            | <i>Which one of these water colors is Maurice's?</i> |

**OBJECT.** If it is the direct object, one inverts the subject and verb or one uses *est-ce que*:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Laquelle de ces bières est-ce que vous préférez? | <i>Which of these beers do you prefer?</i>  |
| Lesquels de ces romans avez-vous lus?            | <i>Which of these novels have you read?</i> |

**OBJECT-of-PREPOSITION.** When the LQL pronoun is the object of a preposition, that whole construction is still first in the sentence and, again, one uses *est-ce que* or inverted word order.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Dans laquelle de ces bouteilles est-ce qu'on a mis le bon vin? | <i>In which of these bottles did they put the good wine?</i> |
| Sur lequel de ces officiers comptez-vous?                      | <i>Which one of these officers are you counting on?</i>      |
| Auxquels de ces étudiants avez-vous donné un <u>A</u> ?        | <i>Which of these students did you give an <u>A</u> to?</i>  |
| Duquel de ces serpents as-tu peur?                             | <i>Which one of these snakes are you afraid of?</i>          |

## 1.7 PRONOUNS: POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS - *LES PRONOMS POSSESSIFS*

Like the demonstrative pronouns, the possessive pronoun forms are often not included in first- or second-year textbooks. A student may select a slightly different construction, using the possessive adjective to express most of the same relationships.

The form of the possessive pronoun varies according to the person who possesses the object(s) concerned and also according to the gender and number of the object(s) possessed, as is indicated in the table below:

---

	THE OBJECT(S) POSSESSED IS/ARE			
	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
<i>THE POSSESSOR</i>				
<i>IS</i>	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
<i>1st Singular</i>	<b>le mien</b>	<b>la mienne</b>	<b>les miens</b>	<b>les miennes</b>
<i>2nd Singular</i>	<b>le tien</b>	<b>la tienne</b>	<b>les tiens</b>	<b>les tiennes</b>
<i>3rd Singular</i>	<b>le sien</b>	<b>la sienne</b>	<b>les siens</b>	<b>les siennes</b>
<i>1st Plural</i>	<b>le nôtre</b>	<b>la nôtre</b>	<b>les nôtres</b>	<b>les nôtres</b>
<i>2nd Plural</i>	<b>le vôtre</b>	<b>la vôtre</b>	<b>les vôtres</b>	<b>les vôtres</b>
<i>3rd Plural</i>	<b>le leur</b>	<b>la leur</b>	<b>les leurs</b>	<b>les leurs</b>

---

Voilà ton livre et voici **le mien**.  
Jean **m'a** rendu sa copie,  
où est **la vôtre**?

- Où sont tes clés et celles de Janette?
- **Les miennes** sont sur la table.

*There's your book and here's **mine**.*  
*John gave me his paper;*  
*where's yours?*

*"Where are your keys and Janet's?"*  
***Mine** are on the table."*



## 2.0 NP: Common Noun Phrase - *Le groupe nominal*

A "common" noun, as opposed to a "proper" noun, is one that refers to a member (or members) of a set of objects--whether persons, flora, fauna, objects, or abstract concepts--without naming it/them. We say "common noun phrases" because common nouns most often occur in full noun phrases.

The typical common noun phrase is made up of an obligatory determiner, one or more optional modifiers (adjectives and any accompanying adverbs), and the noun.

**Examples:** (underlined word is the head noun; word in caps is the OBLIGATORY DETERMINER; the remaining words are optional adjectives/adverbs)

UN très petit chat

LA voiture bleue

CE grand garçon

MON meilleur ami

LA vérité

DU pain

*a very little cat*

*the blue car*

*that big boy*

*my best friend*

*the truth OR truth (in general)*

*bread OR some bread*

### 2.1 COMMON NP: COMMON NOUNS - *LES NOMS COMMUNS*

#### 2.1.1 Common Nouns: Gender - *Le genre*

French has "grammatical" gender, that is, all nouns, whether or not they refer to living beings that have natural gender (male or female) are marked as either "masculine" or "feminine". There is no apparent logical system for determining the classes of words that are masculine as opposed to those that are feminine: you simply have to learn the gender of a noun as you learn to use that word.

With nouns that refer to persons, you can depend on your knowledge of natural gender: words that unambiguously refer to males are masculine (*un frère, un homme, un garçon*), those that unambiguously refer to females are feminine (*une soeur, une femme, une jeune fille*). Words that refer to individuals in their professional capacity or vocation, however, are not always easy to handle. Some have two forms, with fairly distinctive endings: *acteur/actrice, prince/princesse, chanteur/chanteuse, directeur/directrice*. Others have only one form, usually the masculine, and current usage of those words is not consistent. For example, it's usually *un professeur*, whether the professor is a male or a female person. That is true also for *un médecin* ("doctor") but one hears and sees: *une femme médecin, Madame le professeur, la professeur*, etc. Students at this level should be aware of the situation, but are not expected to handle the problem: just learn the gender of the words we ask you to produce; that will be quite sufficient.

NOTE: If you learn nouns with the indefinite article you will remember the gender much more easily.

### 2.1.2 Common Nouns: Number - *Le nombre*

In French, count nouns (those that refer to countable objects) are usually clearly marked as either singular or plural. Again, they are marked by the determiner that goes with them (sure, an -s is usually added to the noun for the plural, but you can't hear it, so the change in the determiner--which involves a distinct difference in both spelling and pronunciation--is more noticeable): *un garçon/des garçons, la jeune fille/les jeunes filles, ce stylo/ces stylos, cette porte/ces portes*.

The great majority of nouns add -s to the singular form to give the written plural: *hommes, nations, professeurs, livres*.

For reasons that involve the history of orthography (spelling conventions) as well as sound changes in the language, there are some common exceptions to the -s final. A few of these are:

Nouns that already have a "plural" ending (-s, -x, -z) do not add an additional -s: *un fils, trois fils; le roux, les roux; le nez, les nez*

Most nouns that end in -al in the singular, take -aux in the plural, and many that end in -ail, -eu, -ou, end in an -x in the plural: *un journal, des journaux; un travail, des travaux; un feu, des feux; le pou, les poux*.

A few special cases: *ciel/cieux, oeil/yeux*.

We strongly recommend against your trying to memorize any rules regarding how to form the plural of nouns or adjectives. It is much better to learn them as they come up as part of the word. Studying the word and using it frequently is the best way to gain control of the proper spelling and pronunciation.

NOTE: In your reading, you'll see that French generally does not follow the English pattern of making proper nouns plural: one writes "*les Dupont*", without an -s, whereas we normally write (and say) "the Duponts."

## 2.2 COMMON NP: DETERMINERS - *LES DETERMINANTS*

"Determiners" is a cover term for such things as definite ("the") and indefinite ("a, an") articles, possessive ("my"), demonstrative ("this"), and interrogative ("which") adjectives, and certain quantifiers (like "some," "many," "four").

NOTE: One determiner is regularly required in each noun phrase, but never more than one.

### 2.2.1 Determiners: The Indefinite Article - *l'article indéfini*

The forms of the indefinite article are:

---

un	masculine singular	un garçon	<i>a boy/waiter</i>
une	feminine singular	une table	<i>a table</i>
des	masc/fem plural	des garçons des tables	<i>(some) boys (some) tables</i>

---

#### Function and use of the indefinite article

The indefinite article is just that, indefinite. As the first element in a common noun phrase, it simply indicates that the speaker is talking about "a" (*un. une*) member of some set of countable objects, or some members (*des*) of such a set: no particular one or ones. In most situations, it is very similar to the indefinite article in English. Examples:

Avez-vous un livre?

Il y a des stylos sur la table.

Je regarde un monsieur qui monte dans le train.

Tu as une raquette de tennis?

*Do you have a book?*

*There are (some) pens on the table.*

*I'm looking at a man who is getting on the train.*

*Do you have a tennis racket?*

Obviously, as in English, as soon as the speaker and hearer have identified the person or object, we switch to the definite article or some other more specific determiner. For example, a follow-up to the last sentence might be:

Le monsieur s'arrête.

Oui, ma raquette est sous le lit.

*The man is stopping.*

*Yes, my racket is under the bed.*

### 2.2.2 Determiners: The Definite Article - *l'article défini*

The forms of the definite article are:

---

le	masculine singular	le garçon	<i>the boy/waiter</i>
la	feminine singular	la table	<i>the table</i>
l'	masc/fem singular	l'ami	<i>the friend</i>
	when the next word begins with a vowel sound	l'amie	<i>the friend</i>
les	masc/fem plural	les hommes	<i>(the) men</i>
		les femmes	<i>(the) women</i>

---

NOTE: Remember that the masculine singular (*le*) and the plural form (*les*) contract with the prepositions *à* and *de* to form *au*, *aux*, *du*, *des*. (See Section 21.1.)

#### Function and use of the definite article

1. As in English, the definite article is used very often to refer to something that the speaker or hearer has already noted (something previously mentioned or pointed at).

Donnez-moi le livre.

[Speaker is asking for a particular book: one that has been mentioned earlier, or to which s/he is pointing.]

*Give me the book.*

Voici le stylo que vous cherchiez.

[Speaker is showing the listener a pen that has already been mentioned.]

*Here's the pen you were looking for.*

Tu veux voir la jument? La voilà!

[Listener has just mentioned a particular horse.]

*You want to see the mare? There she is!*

2. Unlike English, French uses the definite article to refer to something in general or in the abstract.

La vie est dure.

La patience est une vertu.

Les étudiants sont paresseux.

[The speaker was wrong, of course. But the grammar is good.]

*Life is rough.* (no article)

*Patience is a virtue.* (no article)

*Students are lazy.* (no article)

3. There are other uses of the definite article in French that are different from English and that students often have difficulty remembering. It is important to note these distinctions:

a. In referring to a time period (a day, a time of the day), we use "in the" or "on," whereas French uses a definite article.

Il fait la sieste l'après-midi.

*He takes a nap in the afternoon (each afternoon, every afternoon).*

Elle ne sort que le lundi.

*She only goes out on Monday(s).*

L'été,<sup>9</sup> il fait chaud.

*In the summer, it's warm.*

Elle travaille à la maison le mardi matin.

*She works at home on Tuesday mornings.*

b. Whereas we almost always use the possessive adjective with parts of the body, French uses the definite article when the "owner" is already established, as when there is a reflexive verb.

Je me suis cassé la cheville.<sup>10</sup>

*I broke my ankle.*

Nous nous brossons les cheveux.

*We brush our hair.*

c. French uses the definite article with units in a statement of price, for example, where we would use "per."

Ça coûte vingt francs le kilo.

*That costs twenty francs per (a) kilogram.*

Les salades coûtent quatre francs la pièce.

*The heads of lettuce cost four francs each.*

---

<sup>9</sup>For the seasons, there are also the more common expressions *en été*, *en hiver*, and *au printemps*.

<sup>10</sup>In this sentence, *je* and *me* already indicate whose ankle is broken, hence there is no need to use the possessive adjective. It is redundant in French.

### 2.2.3 Determiners: The Partitive Article - *l'article partitif*

The forms of the partitive article are:

---

du	masculine singular	du pain	bread
de la	feminine singular	de la viande	meat
de l'	masc. or fem. singular, when the next word begins with a vowel sound	de l'air (m.) de l'eau (f.)	air water
de, d'	replaces all of the above when they are negated	pas de pain pas de viande pas d'air pas d'eau	no bread no meat no air no water

---

#### Function and use of the partitive article

Like all articles, the partitive is a determiner and thus fills the important role of introducing a noun phrase, in this case a common noun that is not countable--what is often called a "mass" or a "non-count" noun.

The concept involved in the use of the partitive construction is quite simple. We recognize the concept in English but we just don't happen to have a specific form, no "partitive article" that we have to use. In a sentence using the first example above, for example, we might say, "Did you buy some bread." ("*As-tu acheté du pain?*").<sup>11</sup> The speaker could say "Did you buy bread?", omitting the word "some", but the French speaker has to use the partitive article.

When we refer to a "mass" noun, we mean something--like air, bread, water, courage--that cannot be counted or thought of easily in discrete units. The indefinite article, therefore, doesn't work (in neither English nor French do we normally say "a courage/*un courage*", "a water/*une eau*").

The definite article only works for "mass" nouns in two situations: when we are speaking about an identifiable and previously mentioned unit (part) of the thing in question ("the bread on the table/*le pain sur la table*", "the patience of my prof/*la patience de mon prof*"--correct both in English and in French); or when we are discussing the quality/mass in general ("Water is necessary for life/*L'eau est nécessaire pour la vie*", "Patience is a virtue/*La patience est une vertu*"--definite article correct in French, not in English, see 2.2.2). Whenever we speak about an indefinite amount of one of the mass nouns, we must use a partitive construction in French.

---

<sup>11</sup>Note that "some" is an equivalent, in this case, for *du*, but is not a partitive article; it's an indefinite quantifier, which it usually is in English. We do not have a "partitive article" in English.

It helps to think in terms of the kinds of sentences in which we often find partitive constructions. Examples:

1. Sentences that assert (or negate, or question) the existence or presence of some quality or some non-count object. Note that such sentences often contain the *il y a* ("there is") construction.

a/	Il y a du pain sur la table.	<i>There's bread on the table.</i>
	Il n'y pas de pain ici.	<i>There's no bread here.</i>
	Y a-t-il de la neige?	<i>Is there any snow?</i>
	Il y a de l'eau dans ce vase.	<i>There's (some) water in that vase.</i>

2. Sentences that contain transitive verbs like *avoir*, *vouloir*, *acheter*, and *trouver*. When the complement of those verbs (the direct object) is an indefinite amount of a non-countable quality/object, the article for that complement is the partitive.

Il a du courage.	<i>He has courage.</i>
Ils n'ont pas de patience.	<i>They don't have any patience.</i>
Voulez-vous du vin?	<i>Do you want any (some) wine?</i>
Elle n'a pas d'enthousiasme.	<i>She has no enthusiasm.</i>

#### NOTES:

1. No plural forms were used in the preceding examples. That is because the partitive refers to non-count nouns and therefore to things that have no number (neither plural nor singular, really). That may mask the fact that the plural of the indefinite article, *des*, also refers to indefinite quantities of things--but of countable things:

Il y a des pêches sur la table.	<i>There are peaches on the table.</i>
Je n'ai pas d'amis.	
<i>I don't have any friends.</i>	
As-tu trouvé des exemples?	<i>Did you find any examples?</i>
Il a acheté des pulls.	<i>He bought some sweaters.</i>

2. Since the indefinite article is just that, indefinite, you'll also often find countable indefinite items in sentences such as those that we've used to illustrate the partitive above. These are not partitive constructions, they're just indefinite.

Veux-tu une pomme?	<i>Do you want an apple?</i>
Il y a un stylo sur le plancher.	<i>There's a pen on the floor.</i>
As-tu un avocat?	<i>Do you have a lawyer?</i>

3. As listed in the table, when a construction that would contain a full partitive (or an indefinite article) is negated, the determiner form is simply *de*. We repeat some of the examples already given:

Je n'ai pas d'amis.

[indefinite article: not *des*, but *de*]

*I don't have **any** friends.*

Ils n'ont pas de patience.

[partitive: not *de la*, but *de*]

*They don't have **any**/They have no patience.*

Il n'y a pas de pain ici.

[partitive: not *du*, but *de*]

*There isn't **any** bread here.*

Please note one important exception to this convention: The indefinite article and partitive article are not replaced by *de* after a negative with the verb *être*.

Ce sont des stylos -->

C'est une table. -->

C'est du vin. -->

C'est un pissenlit. -->

Ce ne sont pas des stylos.

Ce n'est pas une table.

Ce n'est pas du vin.

Ce n'est pas un pissenlit.

*We are intentionally leaving space here for students to add examples and explanations that their instructors may give them or that they find (and prefer) in the Au boulot! Workbooks.*



### 2.2.4 Determiners: The Possessive Adjective - *l'adjectif possessif*

The forms of the possessive adjective are:

---

<u>The person who possesses the item is:</u>						
<u>The item possessed is:</u>	<u>SINGULAR</u>			<u>PLURAL</u>		
	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
<i>masc. sing.</i>	<b>mon</b>	<b>ton</b>	<b>son</b>	<b>notre</b>	<b>votre</b>	<b>leur</b>
<i>fem. sing.*</i>	<b>ma</b>	<b>ta</b>	<b>sa</b>	<b>notre</b>	<b>votre</b>	<b>leur</b>
<i>m. or f. pl.</i>	<b>mes</b>	<b>tes</b>	<b>ses</b>	<b>nos</b>	<b>vos</b>	<b>leurs</b>

---

\* When the following word begins with a vowel sound, the form is *mon*, *ton*, or *son*, whether the item possessed is masculine or feminine, for example: *mon ami* and *mon amie* (the *n* is pronounced, in liaison with the following vowel). More examples are given below.

#### Function and use of the possessive adjective

The possessive adjective lets the speaker state who owns a designated object, just as it does in English. We must be careful to remember that all the possessive adjectives, like all other adjectives in French, agree in gender and number with the noun they modify. More specifically, they indicate clearly whether the object possessed is singular or plural, and the first three indicate whether the possessed object is of masculine or feminine gender. English does neither. English, however, shows whether or not third person singular possessors are masculine or feminine ('his' vs 'her'), whereas French does not: *sa* (like *ma*, *ta*) indicates that the item possessed is feminine, not that the possessor (owner) is feminine.

Note also that French often uses the definite article, rather than the possessive adjective, in reference to parts of the body (see end of Section 2.2.2).

### Examples of the Possessive Adjective

<b>ma tante</b>	<i>my aunt</i>	Possessor: Item possessed:	1st person sing. fem. sing.
<b>mon livre</b>	<i>my book</i>	Possessor: Item possessed:	1st person sing. masc. sing.
<b>mes amis</b>	<i>my friends</i>	Possessor: Item possessed: masc. pl.	1st person sing.
<b>ton ami</b>	<i>your friend</i>	Possessor: Item possessed: masc. sing.	2nd person sing.
<b>ton amie<sup>12</sup></b>	<i>your friend</i>	Possessor: Item possessed:	2nd person sing. fem. sing.
<b>ta cassette</b>	<i>your cassette</i>	Possessor: Item possessed:	2nd person sing. fem. sing.
<b>tes stylos</b>	<i>your pens</i>	Possessor: Item possessed:	2nd person sing. masc. pl.
<b>son frère</b>	<i>his/her<sup>13</sup> brother</i>	Possessor: Item possessed:	3rd person sing. masc. sing.
<b>notre ami</b>	<i>our friend</i>	Possessor: Item possessed:	1st person pl. masc. sing.
<b>notre amie</b>	<i>our friend</i>	Possessor: Item possessed: fem. sing.	1st person pl.
<b>nos notes</b>	<i>our grades</i>	Possessor: Item possessed:	1st person pl. fem. pl.
<b>leur fils</b>	<i>their son</i>	Possessor: Item possessed:	3rd person pl. masc. sing.
<b>leurs stylos</b>	<i>their pens</i>	Possessor: Item possessed:	3rd person pl. masc. pl.

---

<sup>12</sup>Both of these phrases (*ton ami*, *ton amie*) are pronounced exactly the same: the ambiguity regarding gender of the friend would be resolved by context.

<sup>13</sup>In this case, we cannot tell without context whether the possessor is male or female (“his brother or her brother”). As noted for *ton ami*, *ton amie*, there would also be ambiguity regarding the “possessed” item in *son ami*, *son amie*.

### 2.2.5 Determiners: The Demonstrative Adjective - *l'adjectif démonstratif*

The forms of the demonstrative adjective are:

---

Masculine singular	ce	<i>ce garçon, ce stylo</i>
Masculine singular when the next word begins with a vowel sound	cet	<i>cet ami, cet homme</i>
Feminine singular	cette	<i>cette femme, cette amie</i>
Plural (masc. or fem)	ces	<i>ces garçons, ces amis ces femmes, ces amies</i>

---

#### Function and use of the demonstrative adjective

The demonstrative adjective has much the same function as its equivalent in English ("this" or "that"/"these" or "those"). Like all other determiners, it is the initial element in a noun phrase and agrees in gender and number with the noun of that noun phrase.

The "this" versus "that" (and "these" versus "those") contrast is not as important in French as it is in English and is only noted when the contrast is sharp. In such cases, "this" is signaled by adding *-ci* to the noun, "that" by adding *-là* to the noun.

Examples:

Cet homme ne veut pas m'écouter.

Ce village est pittoresque.

Cette histoire est incroyable.

Ces tableaux-ci sont plus intéressants que  
ces tableaux-là.

Ce body-ci est moins épais que ce body-là.

*This/That man does not want to  
listen to me.*

*This village is picturesque.*

*That story is incredible.*

*These paintings are more interesting than  
those paintings.*

*This leotard is thinner than that leotard.*

## 2.2.6 Determiners: The Interrogative Adjective - *l'adjectif interrogatif*

The forms of the interrogative adjective are:

---

Masculine singular	quel	<i>quel homme, quel stylo</i>
Feminine singular	quelle	<i>quelle amie, quelle femme</i>
Masculine plural	quels	<i>quels garçons, quels amis</i>
Feminine plural	quelles	<i>quelles tables, quelles amies</i>

---

### Function and use of the interrogative adjective

Like most interrogative words (see, for example, section 1.6 on interrogative pronouns), the interrogative adjective has two functions: it signals a question, specifically an "information" or "WH-" question (not a "yes/no" question), and it has its basic syntactic function, like other determiners, of introducing a noun phrase. It not only comes first in the noun phrase (again, like other determiners), but that noun phrase regularly will be first in the sentence, since it is the element that marks it as a question. (Of course, it can be preceded by a preposition.) See Section 1.6 for Interrogative Pronouns.

Examples:

De quel bâtiment parlez-vous?

*What building are you talking about?*

Quelles phrases regardez-vous?

*What sentences are you looking at?*

Quel ami est-ce qu'il a vu?

*What (which) friend did he see?*

Quelle clé ouvre cette porte?

*What key opens this door?*

Devant quel délégué avez-vous dit cela?

*In front of which representative did you say that?*

### Order of the interrogative adjective

As we stated above, the interrogative adjective comes first in the noun phrase, and its noun phrase is first in the question-sentence. Note that we have to use inversion or *est-ce que* if the noun phrase of the interrogative adjective is not the subject of the sentence. If it is the subject, as in the last example, the word order is the same as for a straight statement (*Cette clé ouvre la porte.*, "This key opens the door."). The same is true for an interrogative pronoun subject (*Qui ouvre la porte?*, "Who is opening the door?").

## 2.3 COMMON NOUN PHRASE: QUANTIFIERS - *LES QUANTIFIEURS*

### 2.3.1 Quantifiers: The Numerals - *Les adjectifs numéraux*

#### The Cardinal Numerals from 0-1.000.000

0. zéro	10. dix	20. vingt
1. un	11. onze	21. vingt et un
2. deux	12. douze	22. vingt-deux
3. trois	13. treize	23. vingt-trois
4. quatre	14. quatorze	24. vingt-quatre
5. cinq	15. quinze	25. vingt-cinq
6. six	16. seize	26. vingt-six
7. sept	17. dix-sept	27. vingt-sept
8. huit	18. dix-huit	28. vingt-huit
9. neuf	19. dix-neuf	29. vingt-neuf
30. trente	31. trente et un	32. trente-deux

[For 32-39, 42-49, and so on, the convention is the same as for *trente-deux*, that is, the 10's name followed by a dash, followed by the digit name.]

40. quarante	41. quarante et un	42. quarante-deux
50. cinquante	51. cinquante et un	52. cinquante-deux
60. soixante	61. soixante et un	62. soixante-deux
70. soixante-dix	71. soixante et onze	72. soixante-douze
80. quatre-vingts	81. quatre-vingt-un	82. quatre-vingt-deux
90. quatre-vingt-dix	91. quatre-vingt-onze	92. quatre-vingt-douze
100. cent	101. cent un	
200. deux cents	201. deux cent <sup>14</sup> un	

1.000<sup>15</sup> mille (mil for dates: 1630, mil six cent trente)<sup>16</sup>  
 1.001 mille un  
 2.000 deux mille (mille is invariable, no -s)  
 1.000.000 un million (million is a noun, and it takes an -s)

---

<sup>14</sup>No -s on *cent* if another numeral follows it.

<sup>15</sup>Note the period. A comma is used for the decimal point. Often a blank space replaces the period: 1 000.

<sup>16</sup>Dates are given as in the example (*mil six cent trente*) or, as in English, *seize cent trente*. When we use the first one, "one thousand" is usually spelled *mil*, not *mille*.

### 2.3.2 Quantifiers (Expressions of Quantity): Indefinite - *les quantifieurs indéfinis*

The indefinite quantifiers are:

<u>Quantifiers</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Examples</u>
<b>beaucoup</b>	<i>many</i> (with count nouns) <i>much</i> (with non count nouns)	beaucoup de garçons beaucoup d'air
<b>assez</b>	<i>enough</i> (with count nouns and with non count nouns)	assez d'étudiants assez d'eau
<b>trop</b>	<i>too many</i> (with count nouns) <i>too much</i> (with non-count nouns)	trop d'exercices trop de pain
<b>autant</b>	<i>as many</i> (with count nouns) <i>as much</i> (with non-count nouns)	autant de francs autant d'argent
<b>plus</b>	<i>more</i> (with count nouns, <u>and</u> with non-count nouns)	plus de garçons plus de pain
<b>la plupart</b>	<i>most, the majority</i> ( <u>only</u> occurs with count nouns)	la plupart des étudiants
<b>bien</b>	<i>many</i> ( <u>only</u> occurs with count nouns)	bien des exercices
<b>plusieurs</b>	<i>several</i> ( <u>only</u> occurs with count nouns)	plusieurs garçons plusieurs filles
<b>quelques</b>	<i>some</i> ( <u>only</u> occurs with count nouns)	quelques garçons quelques filles

Note the difference in the constructions with *plusieurs* and *quelques* as opposed to the other quantifiers. These last two are followed immediately by the noun (no connecting particle), whereas the others are followed by *de* plus the noun. Quantifiers (expressions of quantity) are an interesting but thorny problem in most languages, and you will see exceptions to the examples in the table. However, at the elementary/intermediate level, you should use these expressions as suggested. Check your dictionary if you have a problem: it will be faster and easier than working through a more advanced grammar.

## 2.4 COMMON NOUN PHRASE: DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVES - *LES ADJECTIFS QUALIFICATIFS*

The descriptive (or "qualifying") adjective is more a matter of vocabulary than of grammar: the main task you have is to become familiar with enough of them to use them when you want to describe something in a reasonably interesting and complete fashion. There are, however, some grammatical points to discuss, as follow.

### 2.4.1 Adjectives: Gender - *l'adjectif: genre*

Adjectives agree in gender (and number) with the noun they modify. It is often best to learn an adjective in its feminine form, because it's easier to work your way back to the masculine form, but there really is no serious problem here: frequent use will lead you to proper use the great majority of the time.

As you've probably noticed already, French indicates feminine gender by adding an *-e* to the masculine form. In the spoken language, the *-e* itself is not heard, but the masculine and feminine forms usually sound quite different because the final consonant (if any) is pronounced when followed by *-e*. Also, the addition of the *-e* often leads to a different spelling, as well as a different sound. If you'll just look at this list once in a while, you'll become familiar with all the changes that are important.

<b>grande</b>	<b>grand</b>	Drop the <i>-e</i> from the feminine form to obtain the masculine form; the masculine form therefore ends in a consonant, and final consonants are usually not pronounced.
<b>sportive</b>	<b>sportif</b>	Drop the <i>-e</i> from the feminine form and change the <i>v</i> to <i>f</i> to derive the masculine form; this <i>-f</i> is pronounced.
<b>rouge</b>	<b>rouge</b>	Both forms end in <i>-e</i> . (That <i>e</i> is part of the word, not an indicator of gender.)
<b>fatiguée</b>	<b>fatigué</b>	Drop the <i>-e</i> from the feminine form to obtain the masculine form; there is no change in pronunciation.
<b>bleue</b>	<b>bleu</b>	Again, drop the <i>-e</i> to obtain the masculine form; no change in pronunciation.
<b>heureuse</b>	<b>heureux</b>	Drop the <i>-e</i> from the feminine form and change the remaining <i>s</i> to <i>x</i> . The final <i>-x</i> of the masculine form is not pronounced.

### 2.4.2 Adjectives: Number - *l'adjectif: nombre*

Adjectives agree in number (and gender) with the noun they modify. An *-s* is added to form the written plural of most adjectives; exceptions are similar to those for nouns (see 2.1.2). The added *-s* is normally not heard, unless there is *liaison* with a vowel sound beginning the following word, as in the first two examples below.

(For complete discussion of *liaison*, see the Pronunciation Section.)

Examples:

ma jolie amie  
le petit enfant  
un grand bateau  
un professeur sympathique  
quel beau tableau!  
un homme courageux  
une femme courageuse  
il est normal

mes jolies amies  
les petits enfants  
trois grands bateaux  
des professeurs sympathiques  
quels beaux tableaux!  
des hommes courageux  
des femmes courageuses  
ils sont normaux

### 2.4.3 Adjectives: Order - *l'adjectif: l'ordre*

Most adjectives follow the noun that they modify. (It sometimes seems to a beginning student that the opposite is true: the reason is that the adjectives that precede are short, common adjectives that occur very frequently.)

Examples:

un professeur sympathique  
un orage épouvantable  
une pièce intéressante  
un homme courageux  
une femme mystérieuse  
un repas délicieux  
des livres verts  
un vieillard actif

*an understanding (nice) professor*  
*a horrible storm*  
*an interesting play*  
*a courageous man*  
*a mysterious woman*  
*a delicious meal*  
*green books*  
*an active elderly man*

You will have noticed by now that many of these adjectives that follow the noun are long. That is a useful rule of thumb, but don't depend on it. One rule you can depend on is that color adjectives (*bleu*, *vert*, *rouge*, and so on) regularly follow the noun.



There are some very common, high-frequency adjectives that regularly precede the noun.

Examples:

une <b>longue</b> carrière	<i>a long career</i>
un <b>petit</b> enfant	<i>a small child</i>
une <b>belle</b> maison	<i>a beautiful house</i>
un <b>grand</b> garçon	<i>a big (tall) boy</i>
ces <b>jolies</b> fleurs	<i>these pretty flowers</i>
un <b>bon</b> stylo	<i>a good pen</i>
un <b>gros</b> marronnier	<i>a big chestnut tree</i>

Here is a list, in alphabetical order, of adjectives that regularly precede the noun (we strongly recommend that you memorize this list):

<b>beau (bel)</b> <sup>17</sup> , <b>belle</b>	<b>mauvais, mauvaise</b>
<b>mauvais, mauvaise</b>	<b>nouveau (nouvel)</b> <sup>18</sup> , <b>nouvelle</b>
<b>bon, bonne</b>	<b>petit, petite</b>
<b>faux, fausse</b>	<b>vieux (vieil)</b> <sup>19</sup> , <b>vieille</b>
<b>grand, grande</b>	<b>vilain, vilaine</b>
<b>gros, grosse</b>	<b>vrai, vraie</b>
<b>haut, haute</b>	
<b>joli, jolie</b>	
<b>long, longue</b>	

Also, all ordinal numerals regularly precede the noun:

**premier, première**  
**deuxième**  
**troisième**  
(and so on)

---

<sup>17</sup>The form *bel* is the masculine form used in front of words that begin with a vowel (*un bel homme*)

<sup>18</sup>The form *nouvel* is the masculine form used in front of words that begin with a vowel (*un nouvel ami*).

<sup>19</sup>The form *vieil* is the masculine form used in front of words that begin with a vowel (*un vieil homme*). The *l* is pronounced like a *y*.

Finally, there are some adjectives that may either precede or follow the noun, with a difference in meaning signalled by the contrasting position. This distinction is not always respected by speakers, so one should depend on context more to determine meaning, but it will be helpful to see an example and note the following comment: In general, when one of these adjectives precedes it carries a more figurative meaning; when it follows it carries a more literal meaning.

un homme pauvre  
un pauvre homme  
un prof ancien  
mon ancien prof  
une chemise propre  
ma propre chemise

*a poor man* [= not rich]  
*an unfortunate man*  
*an old professor*  
*my old (former) professor*  
*a clean shirt*  
*my own shirt*

#### 2.4.4 Adjectives: Comparison - l'adjectif: le degré relatif

Adjectives usually denote a quality that comes in varying amounts, strengths, or degrees (big, bigger; happy, happier; fortunate, equally fortunate, more fortunate, less fortunate). French, like English, has a way to indicate comparative values of an adjective. The system is as follows:

##### The comparative - *le comparatif*

a. To indicate greater (more, better), use *plus* in front of the adjective.

Jean est grand.  
Louise est **plus** grande (que Jean).  
Marie est heureuse.  
Hélène est **plus** heureuse (que Marie).  
Mon prof de chimie est bizarre.  
Mon prof de français est **plus** bizarre (que mon prof de chimie).  
Ces chemises sont chères.  
Les chemises bleues sont **plus** chères que ces chemises.  
Ce clochard est assez débrouillard.  
Mais celui-là est même **plus** débrouillard.

*John is big/tall.*  
*Louise is bigger/taller (than John).*  
*Mary is happy.*  
*Helen is happier (than Mary).*  
*My Chemistry prof is odd.*  
*My French prof is odder (than my Chem prof).*  
*These shirts are expensive.*  
*The blue shirts are more expensive than these shirts.*  
*This tramp is pretty resourceful.*  
*But that one is even more resourceful.*

b. To indicate less (worse), use *moins* in front of the adjective.

Ce livre est cher.  
Ce livre est **moins** cher que cet objet d'art.  
Hélène est charmante.  
Hélène est **moins** charmante que Louise.

*This book is expensive.*  
*This book is less expensive than that art object.*  
*Helen is charming.*  
*Helen is less charming than Louise.*

c. To indicate equality, use *aussi* in front of the adjective.

Jean est grand.

Marie est **aussi grande que** Jean.

Le ciel est bleu.

Tes yeux sont **aussi bleus que** le ciel.

Laurent est rusé.

Laurent est **aussi rusé qu'**Emile.

*Paul is tall.*

*Mary is **as tall as** John.*

*The sky is blue.*

*Your eyes are **as blue as** the sky.*

*Lawrence is cunning.*

*Lawrence is **as cunning as** Emile.*

### The superlative - *le superlatif*

It is also possible to single out one person or thing as having a certain quality to the "nth degree"—the greatest. To do that in French, simply put the definite article in front of the word *plus* (or, in the other direction, *moins*):

Jeanne est l'étudiante **la plus ambitieuse de** la classe.<sup>20</sup>

Henri est le joueur **le plus petit de** l'équipe

Marc est le joueur **le moins fatigué**.

*Joan is **the most** ambitious student **in** the class.*

*Henry is **the smallest** player **on** the team.*

*Mark is **the least** tired player.*

NOTE: There are two irregular (synthetic) forms of the comparative and superlative:

bon, bonne  
meilleur, meilleure  
**le (la) meilleur(e)**

*good*  
*better*  
*best*

mauvais, mauvaise  
**pire [plus mauvais(e)]<sup>21</sup>**  
**le (la) pire [le/la plus mauvais(e)]**

*bad*  
*worse*  
*(the) worst*

---

<sup>20</sup>Note that we now have two definite articles, one in front of the noun (*l'étudiante*) and one in front of the superlative expression (*la plus ambitieuse*). This convention holds even when the adjective would normally precede the noun, as in the following example.

<sup>21</sup>The regular (analytic—two part) form, *plus mauvaise*, is much more common than *pire*. However, readers will see *pire* and also a neuter (adverbial) form, *pis*, in older texts and in fixed expressions (for example, *tant pis* and *aller de mal en pis*).

### 3.0 NP: Proper Nouns - *les noms propres*

A proper noun (name of a particular person or place--always capitalized in English, usually capitalized in French) is a full noun phrase all by itself. As in English, proper nouns in French most often occur without an article or limiting adjective. Some examples:

**Cocteau** a écrit des pièces et des romans.  
Nous allons visiter **Paris**.

*Cocteau wrote plays and novels.*  
*We're going to visit Paris.*

However, a determiner (usually the definite article) may be used, either because it is part of the name, as in *Le Havre*, or because it is needed to distinguish two or more individuals of the same name, as in:

**Le Jean Cocteau** dont je parle  
était un écrivain, pas un boulanger.

*The Jean Cocteau that I'm talking about  
was a writer, not a baker.*

Unlike English, French includes the definite article with names of countries in certain contexts (also see Section 15.1):

Je visite **la** France.  
L'Espagne est un beau pays.  
L'ancien Zaïre (**le** Congo) est un pays francophone.

*I am visiting France.*  
*Spain is a beautiful country.*  
*The former Zaire (the Congo)<sup>22</sup> is a French-speaking country.*

---

<sup>22</sup>As you see, there are countries for which we use the definite article in English also.

## 4.0 NP: Sentences (clauses, infinitive constructions) as Noun Phrases

In elementary and intermediate college courses you are not likely to be expected to produce very complex sentences in which a clause serves as a noun phrase (an NP), but it is important for your reading and aural comprehension that you recognize such constructions. Furthermore, you will use two particular kinds (the complementary infinitive and the subordinate clause) frequently as the direct object of the verb.

### AS SUBJECT:

The infinitive may be used as the subject of a sentence. Since it is "neutral"--no identifiable referent involved--it is often used for sayings.

Vouloir c'est pouvoir.  
Partir c'est mourir un peu.

("Where there's a will there's a way.")  
*To leave is to die a little.*

A clause may also function as the subject.

Que Jean-Luc ne voulait pas  
partir était évident.

*That Jean-Luc didn't want to  
leave was obvious.*

### AS COMPLEMENT (DIRECT OBJECT)

By far the most common occurrence of clauses and infinitives as noun phrases is as the direct object of a verb. In this section, we simply want to present the general pattern to help you focus on how these constructions have a function similar to that of a noun phrase like *son père*. The details of infinitive constructions and of subordinate clauses are given in Sections 12.1 and 7.3.2. In the following examples, the verb is underlined and the DIRECT OBJECT is in capital letters.

Le garçon aime SON PERE.  
[a common NP is the object]

*The boy loves HIS FATHER.*

Le garçon aime CHANTER.  
[an infinitive is the object or "complement"]

*The boy likes TO SING.*

Je veux DU PAIN.  
[a common NP is the object]

*I want SOME BREAD.*

Je veux ACHETER DU PAIN.  
[an entire infinitive clause is the object of veux, and du pain the object of acheter]

*I want TO BUY SOME BREAD.*

Je veux QUE VOUS PARTIEZ TOUT DE SUITE. *I want YOU TO LEAVE RIGHT AWAY.*  
[an entire subordinate clause is the object, *tout de suite* modifies *partiez*.]

Elle dit "BONJOUR."  
[a quoted sentence is the object]

*She says "HELLO."*

Elle dit QUE JEAN EST MALADE.  
[a subordinate clause is the object]

*She says THAT JOHN IS SICK.*

## THE VERB PHRASE (VP) - *LE GROUPE VERBAL*

### 5.0 VP: Parts of the Construction - *Les éléments du syntagme*

Just as the noun is central to the common noun phrase, the verb is central to the verb phrase. It may be accompanied by various complements, modifiers and negative particles. Let's look at a few examples, just to get the big picture before we begin discussing each part in detail.

(The subject in each of these sentences is *Les étudiants*; everything else is part of the verb phrase.)

Les étudiants regardent le professeur.

*The students are looking at the professor.*

*regardent* is the main verb; it is synthetic in form (simple, or one-word), in the present tense, and it is **transitive**, that is, it takes a direct object.

*le professeur* is the direct object of *regardent*; as you see, full noun phrases follow the verb of which they are the object, just as they do in English.

Les étudiants veulent parler avec le professeur.

*The students want to talk with the professor.*

*veulent* is the main verb; it is a synthetic form (simple, one-word), in the present tense, and it takes a complementary infinitive construction as its complement.

*parler avec le professeur* is the complement of the main verb; *parler*, which is also a verb, has as its own complement the adverbial prepositional phrase *avec le professeur*.

Les étudiants ne lui ont pas rendu leurs devoirs.

*The students did not give him/her their homework papers.*

*ont ... rendu* is the verb; it is analytic in form (compound or two-word, with the auxiliary *ont* and the past participle *rendu*), is directly negated, and has both an indirect object (the pronoun *lui*) and a direct object (the noun phrase *leurs devoirs*).

*ne* precedes the entire verb phrase: that is standard.

*pas* comes directly after the auxiliary, which is the conjugated part of the verb construction—the part that changes in person and number: that is also standard.

Les étudiants marchaient lentement vers l'université. *The students were walking slowly towards the university.*

*marchaient* is the verb; it is synthetic in form (simple or one-word), in the imperfect tense, and—being intransitive—takes no direct object.

*lentement* is an adverb modifying the verb.

*vers l'université* is an adverbial prepositional phrase modifying the entire verb phrase.

## 6.0 THE VERB: Tense - *le verbe: temps*

NOTE: The terms below refer to tenses that occur in the indicative mood. (See also 7. and 7.1.)

The term "tense" refers to the way in which many languages, including English and French, indicate by the form of the verb what relative time period is under consideration in a sentence: present, past, or future.

For present "time" French has just one "tense": the présent (English has simple present, emphatic present, and progressive present).

Nous **parlons** français

*We speak French.*

*We do speak French.*

*We are speaking French.*

For past time French has the passé composé (in form like our present perfect, but in function/meaning like both our present perfect and preterite), the imparfait (only roughly like our past progressive), and the plus-que-parfait (very much like our pluperfect).

Passé composé

J' **ai** trouvé le stylo.

*I have found the pen.*

*I found the pen.*

Imparfait

Je **cherchais** le stylo.

*I was looking for the pen.*

*I looked for the pen.*

Plus-que-parfait

J' **avais** trouvé le stylo.

*I had found the pen.*

For future time French has a futur (simple) (like our "will" + infinitive), a futur antérieur (like our compound future), and--just as we do in English--French uses the verb *aller* ("to go") + INFINITIVE very frequently to express the future (futur proche).

Futur (simple)

Je **ferai** les devoirs

*I'll do the homework.*

Futur antérieur

Elle **aura** terminé l'exercice.

*She will have finished the exercise.*

Futur proche

Nous **allons** partir à 18 heures.

*We're going to leave at 6 o'clock.*

Although there is no "progressive" form in French (no direct equivalent of "I am swimming" or "I was swimming") one can express that notion with *en train de* (meaning, more or less, "in the process of").

Je **suis en train de** nager.

*I am swimming.*

J' **étais en train de** nager.

*I was swimming.*

## 6.1 PRESENT TENSE - *LE PRESENT DE L'INDICATIF*

### FORMS

As is true for all tenses, each verb has six person-number forms for the present tense: 1st, 2nd and 3rd, singular and plural (corresponding to the subjects: *je, tu, il/elle/on; nous, vous, ils/elles*). Obviously the 3rd singular and 3rd plural verb forms go with singular nouns and plural nouns respectively.

Although we traditionally speak of six different person-number forms, and there is some logic to doing so, it will become immediately apparent that, particularly in the spoken language, there are many fewer forms to learn to use. For example, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd singular, and 3rd plural all sound the same in *je parle, tu parles, il parle, ... ils parlent*.

The majority of so-called "irregular" verb forms are in the present tense. It is vital that you use these forms correctly and often, in meaningful contexts, if you wish to develop control of the language.

### FUNCTION/USES.

a. The most obvious and most common function of the present tense form is to indicate an action, state or condition in present time:

Il parle français.

*He speaks French.* [general present]  
*He is speaking French.* [at the moment]  
*He does speak French.* [assertion of current ability]

Elle est malade.

*She is sick.* [now]

Le train arrive.

*The train is arriving.* [coming in on the track right now]

Ils portent tous des pantalons verts.

*They're all wearing green pants.*

Note that we have given some of the English equivalents immediately above using the present progressive ("to be" + PRESENT PARTICIPLE) and some using the emphatic present ("do/does" + INFINITIVE). Never attempt to "translate" those English constructions into French. (As noted above, in the general introduction to TENSE, there is an idiom, *en train de*, that can be used to express the progressive aspect. See the last paragraph of Section 6.0.)



b. When used in the following kinds of constructions (with *depuis* and with *il y a ... que*) the present tense still expresses an action or state going on at present (at the time of speech), but more precisely indicates an action that began at some point in the past and is still going on.

Je t'attends depuis vingt minutes.

*I've been waiting for you for twenty minutes.*

Il y a trois semaines que je n'ai pas de voiture.

*I've been without a car for three weeks.*

- Depuis quand cherchez-vous cet homme?

*"How long have you been looking for this man?"*

- Nous le cherchons depuis le mois d'août.

*"We've been looking for him since August."*

Nous sommes en France depuis un an.

*We've been in France for a year.*

Il y a quatre jours qu'il est chez vous.

*He has been at your place for four days.*

In both English and French, the present tense form is frequently used to express future time, particularly in colloquial speech:

Je pars pour Paris demain.

*I'm leaving for Paris tomorrow.*

Il vient ce soir.

*He's coming tonight.*

J'arrive!

*I'm on my way. [not yet there]*

## 6.2 PAST TENSE - LES TEMPS DU PASSE

All of the following sets of forms, in 6.2.1 through 6.2.5, indicate actions or states or conditions in past time. They differ in various ways dependent on various kinds of factors. We'll point out the importance of each of these factors as we take up each tense-form.

### 6.2.1 Past Tense: Compound Past - *Le passé composé*

#### FORM

The *passé composé* is an analytic verb form, composed of an auxiliary verb (the present tense of *être* or *avoir*) and the past participle of the main verb. Since it is an integral functional unit, the two parts are usually found in immediate succession (e.g., *J'ai fini mon travail*; *Il est parti pour Paris*), but some negative particles and some adverbs can occur between the auxiliary and the past participle. In addition, if there is inversion with a subject pronoun, that subject pronoun is connected to the auxiliary (e.g., *Est-il parti pour Paris?*). You'll find examples of negatives and adverbs between the auxiliary and past participle in the illustrations below.

#### FUNCTION

The *passé composé* is the workhorse of the past tense forms. It is used in both written and spoken French and regularly designates an action or state or condition as completed—as opposed to one viewed as continuing or continuous (even though it may indeed denote an action that took some time to complete or a condition that existed for a long time).

### Examples of the *passé composé*:

[both of the following are easily seen as completed actions]

Il a fini ses devoirs.

*He finished his homework*

Elle est partie hier.

*She left yesterday.*

[weather is a condition and, of course, it was ongoing "yesterday," but the speaker in the following example sees the day and its weather as a unit, analogous to a "wrapped up" package]

Il a fait beau hier.

*It was a beautiful day yesterday.*

[and, again in this one, the "good time" presumably went on for a while, but it is seen as a "done deal."]

Ils se sont bien amusés.

*They had a good time.*

[in the following example, we also have a past condition that continued for some time, a condition that the speaker sees as completed, as a total past unit, and it has a "trigger," the preposition *pendant* which regularly goes with the *passé composé*]

Elles ont été malades pendant trois jours.

*They were sick for three days.*

By far the most common use of the *passé composé* is to express an action completed in the past, as we will illustrate by the examples we give in separate sections on so-called "*être*," "*avoir*," and "reflexive" verbs.

#### a. *Passé composé*: "*avoir*" verbs

The large majority of verbs take *avoir* as the auxiliary for compound tenses (the *passé composé* and others). These include all transitive verbs that are not reflexive as well as many intransitive verbs.

#### Examples of transitive "*avoir*" verbs.

Il a fini ses devoirs.

*He finished his homework.*

Nous n'avons pas regardé la télé.

*We didn't watch TV.*

J'ai compris la question.

*I understood the question.*

Il a pris l'argent.

*He took the money.*

#### Examples of intransitive "*avoir*" verbs.

Nous avons souvent parlé de lui.

*We often spoke about him.*

Il a marché vers la porte.

*He walked toward the door.*

Note that the past participle in the *avoir* construction agrees in gender and number with a preceding direct object.

- Où sont mes clés?

*"Where are my keys?"*

- Je les ai vus sur la table.

*"I saw them on the table."*

- Pourquoi m'as tu embrassé?

*"Why did you kiss me?"*

- Parce que je t'aime, Marie.

*"Because I love you, Mary."*

- Tu as vu mes amis Lucienne et Cécile?

*"Did you see my friends Lucienne and Cecile?"*

- Non, je ne les ai pas vus.

*"No, I didn't see them."*

b. *Passé composé*: "être" verbs

There is a small group of intransitive verbs that take *être* as the auxiliary. Note that NOT ALL INTRANSITIVE VERBS are "être" verbs, just a specific subset.

We provide a list below and we have provided a chart on the inside back page to help you check quickly which verbs take *être*, but we prefer that you recognize that the set includes verbs of motion to and from, plus some others that are figuratively related to that motion, plus the verb *rester*, "to remain," and that you use them enough to internalize the list without having to think of it as a list.

Verbs that regularly take *être* as the auxiliary.

aller	to go
arriver	to arrive
descendre	to go down, get off
devenir	to become
entrer	to enter
monter	to go up, get on
mourir	to die
naître	to be born
partir	to leave
passer <sup>23</sup>	to pass by, go by
rentrer	to go back home
rester	to remain
retourner	to return (to a place)
revenir	to come back
sortir	to go out
tomber	to fall (down)
venir	to come

There are a number of tricks for remembering this list. If you visualize well, try the "House of *être*" on the inside book cover. If a mnemonic works for you, remember that the first letters of most of the common verbs are in MR/MRS VAN DER TRAPP.

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<sup>23</sup>The verb *passer* has a number of meanings, and takes either *être* or *avoir* as the auxiliary according to the meaning. It takes *être* when it means "to pass by," as in *Il est passé devant le café*. Among the meanings that go with *avoir* are "to take," as in *J'ai passé l'examen ce matin*, and "to play/show," as in *On a passé ce film au Ciné Beaubourg hier soir*. See also the comment immediately following the list of "être" verbs.

Some of the so-called "*être*" verbs may be used transitively--usually with a slightly different meaning. In such cases, they become "*avoir*" verbs:

Elle a descendu les bagages. [ <i>les bagages</i> is the direct object-- <i>descendre</i> is being used transitively]	<i>She brought down the luggage.</i>
Elle est descendue du train. [ <i>descendre</i> is being used intransitively; there is no direct object, just a prepositional phrase, <i>du train</i> ]	<i>She got off the train.</i>
J'ai passé le weekend chez Michel. [ <i>le weekend</i> is the direct object-- <i>passer</i> is being used transitively]	<i>I spent the weekend at Michael's.</i>
Il est passé chez elle après le dîner. [ <i>passer</i> is being used intransitively--there is no direct object]	<i>He went over to her house after dinner.</i>
Il a sorti un revolver de sa poche. [ <i>un revolver</i> is the direct object-- <i>sortir</i> is being used transitively]	<i>He took a revolver out of his pocket.</i>
Elle est sortie avec Marc trois fois. [ <i>sortir</i> is being used intransitively--there is no direct object]	<i>She went out with Mark three times.</i>
Il a monté l'escalier. [in French, <i>l'escalier</i> is the direct object-- <i>monter</i> is being used transitively]	<i>He went up the stairs.</i>
Il est monté dans l'avion. [ <i>monter</i> is being used intransitively--there is no direct object]	<i>He got into the airplane.</i>

Note that the past participle of an "*être*" verb agrees in gender and number with the grammatical subject.

Jean est parti. [masculine singular subject, nothing added]	<i>John left.</i>
Marie est partie. [feminine singular subject, add an <i>e</i> ]	<i>Mary left.</i>
Nous sommes allés au cinéma. [one or more males included in the group; masculine plural subject, add an <i>-s</i> ]	<i>We went to the movies.</i>
Elles sont sorties hier soir. [feminine plural subject, add <i>e</i> and <i>s</i> ]	<i>They went out last night.</i>

c. *Passé composé*: Reflexive Verbs - *Les verbes pronominaux*

All verbs used reflexively (many verbs are regularly reflexive; others may be used in reflexive constructions) take *être* as the auxiliary in the *passé composé*.

Elle s'est levée à six heures.

Je me suis dépêché.

Nous nous sommes amusés.

Je me suis dit qu'il fallait partir.

Vous vous êtes parlé longtemps.

*She got up at six o'clock.*

*I hurried up.*

*We had a good time.*

*I told myself that I'd better leave.*

*You spoke to each other for a long time.*

Note that the past participle of a reflexive verb usually agrees in gender and number with the preceding direct object. In other words, although the auxiliary is *être*, the agreement rule appears to be the same as that for *avoir* verbs. Of course, the direct object is frequently the reflexive pronoun (which represents the subject), as in the first example: however, as you see in the second example, that is not always the case.

Elle s'est lavée.

Elle s'est lavé les mains.

[(the direct object, les mains, follows; thus no agreement)]

Nous nous sommes bien amusés.

*She washed (herself).*

*She washed her hands.*

*We had a good time.*

## 6.2.2 Past Tense: Imperfect - *l'imparfait*

### FORM

The imperfect tense is formed very simply: the inflections (endings) are the same for all verbs:

-ais	-ions
-ais	-iez
-ait	-aient

and are attached to the stem of the first person plural form (the *nous* form) of the present tense, as follows:

<u>First person plural</u>		<u>Stem</u>		<u>Sample imperfect form</u>
Nous parlons	-->	<u>parl-</u>	-->	vous <u>parliez</u>
Nous finissons	-->	<u>finiss-</u>	-->	tu <u>finissais</u>
Nous avons	-->	<u>av-</u>	-->	j' <u>avais</u>
Nous écrivons	-->	<u>écriv-</u>	-->	elles <u>écrivaient</u>

The only exception is the verb *être*, which has a stem closely related to the infinitive:

<u>être</u>	-->	<u>ét-</u>	-->	il <u>était</u>
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### FUNCTION

The imperfect tense is used when describing an action going on in the past or repeated in the past (habitual), or when describing a state or condition in progress in the past.

Je prenais une douche quand le téléphone a sonné.      *I was taking a shower when the phone rang.*  
[past action, in progress when something else happened]

Il neigeait ce matin.      *It was snowing this morning.*  
[past condition, seen as ongoing]

Quand j'étais enfant, nous allions tous les jeudis  
au Jardin du Luxembourg.      *When I was a child, we used to go every  
Thursday to the Luxembourg Gardens.*  
[past condition, and past habitual action]

NOTE: There have been volumes written on the distinction between the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*, that is, when and why each should be used. We feel that the descriptions we have given above for the *imparfait* and for the *passé composé* are sufficient at the elementary and intermediate level, but we recognize that—by following these "rules"—students may misuse the imperfect in some contexts. For further discussion, see LE BON USAGE (Sections 1765-1778) or Judge & Healey's A REFERENCE GRAMMAR OF FRENCH (4.2.3-2.3.5 and 2.2-2.2.7).

### 6.2.3 Past Tense: Preterite - *le passé simple*

For our purposes, the *passé simple* is a tense form that must be recognized in reading French--and that's all. You will not be expected to produce it: you can legitimately use the imperfect and *passé composé* in all the usual written exercises at the college elementary and intermediate levels. The *passé simple* is essentially never used in spoken French and is appropriately referred to as the "book tense" or "literary tense." It is found in literature (including fairy tales and other children's literature), in newspaper and journal/magazine articles, and in formal expository prose (manuals, essays, official documents).

#### FORM

A "simple" or synthetic tense, the *passé simple* is formed with a stem (usually the same as the past participle stem) and a set of endings. We provide full listings in the verb tables for all of the verbs that you are likely to meet in your readings at this level.

We feel it is not particularly efficient use of your time to try to memorize the sets of endings or stems for the *passé simple*, particularly since it is unlikely that the average student will ever have to produce them. We provide full lists of the forms in the verb section, however, and, as you refer to those lists when you read, you will find it comparatively easy to recognize the more common verbs. The most common sets of endings are:

#### **-er verbs**

-ai  
-as  
-a  
-âmes  
-âtes  
-èrent

#### **-ir verbs**

-is  
-is  
-it  
-îmes  
-îtes  
-irent

#### **-re verbs**

-us  
-us  
-ut  
-ûmes  
-ûtes  
-urent

These endings are for the major conjugations as listed, and for most irregular verbs.

### 6.2.4 Past Tense: Pluperfect - *le plus-que-parfait*

The *plus-que-parfait* is "more than perfect," that is, one step further back in time, and corresponds very closely to the English pluperfect (past perfect) tense.

#### FORM

It is a compound tense, like the *passé composé*, with the auxiliary verb in the *imparfait*. The rules for choice of auxiliary verb (*être* or *avoir*) are exactly the same as those for the *passé composé*, as is true for all compound verb forms in French.

#### FUNCTION

a. The *plus-que-parfait* refers to an action that took place before another past action that is mentioned in the sentence (or has just been mentioned in an ongoing conversation).

Elle <b>était déjà partie</b> quand nous sommes arrivés.	<i>She <b>had already left</b> when we arrived.</i>
Il <b>avait déjà tapé</b> son texte sur ordinateur quand il l'a perdu.	<i>He <b>had already entered</b> his text on the computer when he lost it.</i>

b. It is also used in the "if-clause" of a contrary-to-fact conditional sentence. See also Section 27.4.

Si j' <b>avais compris</b> votre question, j'aurais pu y répondre.	<i>If I <b>had understood</b> your question, I would have been able to answer it.</i>
S'il <b>était parti</b> plus tôt, il l'aurait regretté.	<i>If he <b>had left</b> earlier, he would have regretted it.</i>

### 6.2.5 Past Tense: Immediate Past - *le passé immédiat*

Properly speaking, this is not a tense, but an idiomatic structure that uses a present tense form to express past time. When one wants to express the fact that something has been done very recently, just before the moment of speaking, one uses the construction *venir + de + INFINITIVE*, with *venir* in the present tense.

- Où est Jean?	<i>"Where's John?"</i>
- Il <b>vient d'arriver</b> .	<i>"He just arrived/He <b>has just arrived</b>."</i>
- Quand vas-tu ouvrir la lettre?	<i>"When are you going to open the letter?"</i>
- Mais je <b>viens de le faire</b> .	<i>"I've <b>just done so</b>."</i>
Je suis fatigué, je <b>viens de me lever</b> .	<i>I'm tired; I <b>just got up</b>.</i>

Not surprisingly, if you change the tense of *venir* to the imperfect, you produce a construction that expresses that an action had been completed just before another past event.

Je <b>venais de rentrer</b> quand le téléphone a sonné.	<i>I <b>had just come back</b> in when the telephone rang.</i>
Il <b>venait d'acheter</b> une maison quand son entreprise a fait banqueroute.	<i>He <b>had just bought</b> a house, when his business went bankrupt.</i>



## 6.3 FUTURE TIME - LE FUTUR, L'AVENIR

There are three constructions that regularly express that an action or state will take place or be in effect at some future time.

### 6.3.1 Future Tense - *le futur simple*

#### FORM

All verbs, without exception, take the same set of endings for the simple future tense, and those endings correspond to the present tense of the verb *avoir* ( *-ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ont* ). The future stem for all verbs ends in an *-r* and for many verbs (all the so-called regular verbs, as well as many others), the stem is simply the infinitive (e.g., *parler-*, *finir-*, *partir-*, *rendr-* ), as you see in the examples and in the verb tables.<sup>24</sup>

There are, sad to say, many verbs with an irregular future stem, which you'll have to learn. Some of the common ones are:

aller	→	ir-	J'irai au théâtre.
avoir	→	aur-	Ils auront cinq ans.
être	→	ser-	Je serai ravi.
faire	→	fer-	Elle le fera.
venir	→	viendr-	Nous viendrons demain.
envoyer	→	enverr-	Je te l'enverrai.

You will quickly note that the immediate future (6.3.3) is generally sufficient for colloquial French, but you should become familiar with the simple (synthetic) future tense: it is certainly used often enough to be important for communication.

#### FUNCTION

Aside from the general purpose of expressing future time, the *futur* is used regularly in two sequence-of-tense constructions.

a. Whenever the main clause expresses future time (whether the verb is in the future tense or not), the verb in any dependent clause that begins with *quand*, *lorsque*, *dès que*, or *aussitôt que* must be in the future tense.

Je le lui dirai <u>quand il arrivera</u> .	<i>I'll tell him <u>when he gets here</u>.</i>
[note the difference between French ( <i>arrivera</i> , future) and English ("gets here," present)]	

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<sup>24</sup>The *-e* drops off the stem of *-re* verbs before the future endings are affixed to it.

b. In *si*-clause constructions (See also Section 27.4), when the verb in the *si*-clause is in the present tense, the verb in the result clause will be in the present, or the imperative, or the future tense.

Si tu m'accompagnes, je te montrerai mon jardin. *If you come with me, I'll show you my garden.*  
 [Note that in this case, the French is just like the English.]

S'il arrive avant 19 heures, dites-lui de me téléphoner. *If he arrives before 7 PM, tell him to call me.*  
 [Again, the French is like the English.]

Si elle me parle je l'écoute. *If/whenever she speaks to me, I listen to her.*  
 [French and English use the same tense, but we would use "whenever" more often than "if."]

Si tu m'aides avec ma voiture, je ferai ton ménage. *If you help me with my car, I'll do your housework.*

Si tu veux regarder ce film, tais-toi! *If you want to watch this movie, be quiet!*

### 6.3.2 Future Tense: The Compound Future - *le futur antérieur*

The *futur antérieur*, like its equivalent in English, is still used by many native speakers who have good control of the standard language, but it is not always found in constructions that "require" it according to traditional rules. It is not a construction that the average American student will use.

Je te parlerai dès que j'aurai fini mes devoirs. *I'll talk to you as soon as I've finished my homework.*

Je lirai ce roman quand j'aurai terminé l'autre. *I'll read this novel when I've finished the other one.*

#### FORM

Like all the compound tenses, the *futur antérieur* is composed of an auxiliary (*être* or *avoir*: same distribution as explained in detail for the *passé composé*) plus a past participle. The auxiliary in this case is in the *futur simple*.

Dès que je me serai levée ... *As soon as I've gotten up ...*  
 Aussitôt que Jean m'aura téléphoné... *As soon as John called me ...*

#### FUNCTION

The *futur antérieur* is found principally in subordinate clauses introduced by the conjunctions *dès que* and *aussitôt que* and refers to an action that will have been completed before some other (future) action will take place.

Aussitôt que Jean m'aura téléphoné, nous pourrons partir. *As soon as John has called (me), we can leave.*  
 Il te donnera sa voiture dès que tu auras appris à conduire. *He'll give you his car (just) as soon as you've learned to drive.*

### 6.3.3 Future Tense: Immediate Future - *le futur proche*

This tense is the most common way to express future time and is the form most often used in simple sentences. Although the *futur proche* is also used in more complex sentences and in subordinate clauses, it is the *futur simple* that most often appears in subordinate clauses introduced by *quand* or *lorsque*. (See section 6.3.1.a.)

#### FORM

The verb *aller* in the present tense plus the INFINITIVE constitutes the *futur proche* construction.

#### FUNCTION

The *futur proche* construction has nearly the same range of uses as its English equivalent:

Je vais fermer la porte.	<i>I'm going to close the door.</i>
Vas-tu le voir demain?	<i>Are you going to see him tomorrow?</i>
Ils ne vont pas partir.	<i>They aren't going to leave.</i>
Ils vont cultiver les champs demain.	<i>They're going to work the fields tomorrow.</i>

NOTE: As in English, the *futur proche* is used very often and is not restricted to indicating "near" future, despite its name. We, and the French, can both say, "He's going to travel in Europe next year." (*Il va voyager en Europe l'année prochaine.*)

### 6.4 CONDITIONAL TENSE - *LE CONDITIONNEL*

The conditional "tense" is sometimes designated as the conditional "mood," sometimes as the "past of the future." We'll continue to call it a tense, since that is the tradition in American textbooks.

#### 6.4.1 Conditional Tense: Simple Conditional - *le conditionnel présent*

#### FORM

The *conditionnel* is formed by taking the same stem that is used for the future and adding the set of endings for the imperfect:

*-ais, -ais, -ait, -ions, -iez, -aient*

Two examples, just to illustrate the form:

je parlerais	je ferais
tu parlerais	tu ferais
on parlerait	elle ferait
nous parlerions	nous ferions
vous parleriez	vous feriez
ils parleraient	elles feraient

## FUNCTION

The conditional has three different functions or meanings, each important and fairly common, so it is important to be able to comprehend it and then use it in the appropriate contexts.

a. It is used with verbs of volition (*vouloir, aimer*) to soften a request. (It's probably best to learn this simply as a vocabulary item, and in fact it is introduced early in most textbooks.)

Je voudrais partir maintenant, papa.	<i>I'd like to leave now, Dad.</i>
Pourriez-vous me passer le sel, s'il vous plaît.	<i>Could you pass me the salt, please.</i>
Aimeriez-vous un dessert?	<i>Would you like a/some dessert?</i>

b. It is used in past indirect discourse to replace what would be a future tense form in direct discourse (see Section 27.3).

### DIRECT DISCOURSE:

Je partirai demain.	<i>I'll leave tomorrow.</i>
Ma femme reviendra la semaine prochaine.	<i>My wife will return next week.</i>
Je t'aiderai à le faire.	<i>I'll help you do it.</i>
Je ne le ferai jamais plus!	<i>I'll never do it again!</i>

### INDIRECT DISCOURSE, present tense:

Il dit qu'il partira demain.	<i>He says he'll leave tomorrow.</i>
Il dit que sa femme reviendra la semaine prochaine.	<i>He says his wife will return next week.</i>
Elle répond qu'elle m'aidera à le faire.	<i>She replies that she'll help me do it.</i>
Elle crie qu'elle ne le fera jamais plus.	<i>She cries out that she'll never do it again.</i>

### INDIRECT DISCOURSE, past tense:

Il a dit qu'il <b>partirait</b> demain.	<i>He said that he'd leave tomorrow.</i>
Il a dit que sa femme reviendrait la semaine prochaine.	<i>He said his wife would return next week.</i>
Elle a répondu qu'elle m' <b>aiderait</b> à le faire.	<i>She replied that she would help me do it.</i>
Elle a crié qu'elle ne le <b>ferait</b> jamais plus.	<i>She cried out that she would never do it again.</i>

c. It is used in so-called "conditional" sentences, in the result clause when the "if-clause" is in the imperfect tense. This is a sequence-of-tense rule that you can depend on. (See also Section 27.4)

### "Si" IMPARFAIT, (result) CONDITIONNEL

Si j'avais dix mille dollars, j'irais au Japon.	<i>If I had ten thousand dollars, I'd go to Japan.</i>
Tu ne me dirais pas cela si tu m'aimais.	<i>You wouldn't say that to me if you loved me.</i>

#### 6.4.2 Conditional Tense: Conditional Anterior - *le conditionnel passé*

As usual, the compound tense form mirrors the simple form in both form and function. It takes the conditional tense of the auxiliary (*être* or *avoir*, following the same rules as for the *passé composé*) plus a past participle. It is less common in the first two functions (a. and b., above), but occurs fairly frequently in conditional sentences (c. above):

Si tu étais arrivé à l'heure, tu aurais pu finir l'examen.

*If you had arrived on time, you would have been able to finish the exam.*

Si vous étiez parti plus tôt, vous seriez arrivé à l'heure.

*If you had left earlier, you would have arrived on time.*

Just as in English, the first ("if") part of the conditional sentence does not have to be a compound form:

Si j'étais riche, j'aurais déjà fait le tour du monde.

*If I were rich, I would have already taken a trip around the world.*

Si j'avais une voiture à moi, je serais déjà partie.

*If I had my own car, I would already have left.*

**If you're in the mood for a mood change, please turn to the next page.**

## 7.0 The Verb: Mood - *le mode*

Mood is a term from traditional grammar that divides verb forms into two or more large sets that reflect the attitude of the speaker towards the content of what he or she is saying. We recognize three moods in French: the **indicative**, the **subjunctive**, and the **imperative**. As we mentioned earlier, many grammarians (and almost all grammars published in France) classify the conditional as a mood also. For the purposes of a teaching grammar such as this one, it really is not important whether or not we count the conditional as a mood, or for that matter whether we recognize and name a category called "mood" at all. All you have to learn to do is produce the proper sets of verb forms in certain constructions, as we'll detail below. Nevertheless, it probably helps to see that those choices fit a general pattern as described for each "mood."

### 7.1 MOOD: INDICATIVE MOOD - *L'INDICATIF*

The large majority of verb forms are in the indicative mood. All of the forms discussed throughout Section 6 are indicative. As you will see if you look back at all the examples, they are statements, questions, negations--many different kinds of locutions--but all share the quality of reflecting a neutral linguistic attitude on the part of the speaker. Why do we say "linguistic attitude?" Consider these examples:

Tu es très gentil.

Enfin, tu as fini?!

Non, je ne vais pas t'accompagner.

*You're very nice.*

*Well, have you finally finished?*

*No, I'm not going to go with you.*

We can all imagine situations in which the speaker has very strong feelings about the content of the statement, question or negation above, but note that, linguistically, all that the speaker has done is give information, ask a question, or reply to a request. These are all in the indicative mood, grammatically.

**FORM and FUNCTION:** See all the discussions above under "Tense" (Sections 6-6.4.2). In other words, we have been discussing the "indicative mood" most of the time until now.

## 7.2 MOOD: IMPERATIVE MOOD - L'IMPERATIF

In the imperative, the verb construction indicates that the speaker wants the hearer(s) to do or not to do something. The linguistic attitude is not neutral: it is expressed by the total verb construction, which is noticeably different from the various indicative constructions.

### FORM

As in English, the imperative is a present tense form, without the subject pronoun.

Parlez!	<i>Speak!</i>
Ecoutez-moi!	<i>Listen to me!</i>
Donne-moi ton stylo!	<i>Give me your pen!</i>
Allons au théâtre!	<i>Let's go to the theater!</i>
Ne me dis pas de bêtises!	<i>Don't be stupid (Don't say stupid things to me)!</i>
Tais-toi!	<i>Be quiet!</i>

NOTE: The 2nd singular form of all verbs that end in *-er* (whether they are "regular" or "irregular") drop the *-s* of the present indicative form, unless the verb is followed by a ~~word~~ <sup>syllabated pronoun</sup> that begins with a vowel sound.

> Va-t'en!  
> Vas-y!

Get out of here! (Go away!) < Va à la bibliothèque  
Go to it!/Go ahead! < Parle à ton petit frère >

(See also the discussion of imperative constructions for word order rules, particularly with pronoun objects. Sections 1.1.2 and 1.1.3.)

### FUNCTION

As stated above, the imperative is used as it is in English, to command/order/request someone to do/not to do something. We can always soften a "command": the following are in descending order of firmness, the last one using a conditional verb form rather than the imperative.

Donnez-moi vos copies!	<i>Give me your papers!</i>
Donnez-moi vos copies, s'il vous plaît!	<i>Give me your papers, please!</i>
Voudriez-vous bien me donner vos copies.	<i>Would you please give me your papers?</i>

### 7.3 MOOD: SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD - LE SUBJONCTIF

In many grammars, there is much discussion of the way that the subjunctive is determined by, and expresses, a particular set of attitudes on the part of the speaker: certain emotions (fear, joy, anger), a sense of necessity or obligation, or desire. All of these are indeed found in one or another subjunctive construction, but--despite our general characterization of "mood" (see the statement in Section 7), we strongly urge you to approach the French subjunctive mood from the point of view of the structures in which they are found and the particular sets of verbs, verbal expressions and conjunctions that trigger the use of the subjunctive forms. The few instances in which that approach does not work are beyond the level of an elementary or intermediate college text.

#### 7.3.1 Subjunctive Mood: Tenses and Forms - *les temps et les formes*

a. The present subjunctive is by far the most common of the subjunctive mood tenses and is the one emphasized in most first- and second-year college texts. Like the present indicative, the present subjunctive has the same set of endings for most verbs, even "irregular" ones:

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
-e	-ions
-es	-iez
-e	-ent

The stem for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd singular, and 3rd plural present subjunctive for all regular verbs as well as most irregular verbs is found by dropping *-ent* from the third-person plural form of the present indicative.

<u>3rd plural, present indicative</u>	<u>Stem</u>	<u>Sample subjunctive form</u>
ils parlent	--> <u>parl</u>	--> que tu parles
ils finissent	--> <u>finiss</u>	--> qu'il finisse
ils rendent	--> <u>rend</u>	--> que je rende
ils partent	--> <u>part</u>	--> qu'elle parte

For the 1st and 2nd plural--again for most verbs--use the (indicative) imperfect forms: for example, *que nous parlions, que vous finissiez, que nous rendions, que vous partiez*). Some examples of full verb sets follow:

PARLER	FINIR	VENDRE
que je parle	que je finisse	que je vende
que tu parles	que tu finisses	que tu vendes
qu'il parle	qu'elle finisse	que l'on vende
que nous parlions	que nous finissions	que nous vendions
que vous parliez	que vous finissiez	que vous vendiez
qu'ils parlaient	qu'elles finissent	qu'elles vendent



## SAVOIR

que je sache  
que tu saches  
qu'elle sache  
que nous sachions  
que vous sachiez  
qu'ils sachent

## SORTIR

que je sorte  
que tu sortes  
qu'elle sorte  
que nous sortions  
que vous sortiez  
qu'elles sortent

## PRENDRE

que je prenne  
que tu prennes  
qu'il prenne  
que nous prenions  
que vous preniez  
qu'elles prennent

(The preceding are just examples: present subjunctive forms of all verbs usually found in first- and second-year college texts are given in the Verb Tables. Note that *savoir* does not use the imperfect for the 1st and 2nd plural forms: the same stem is used throughout.)

b. The past subjunctive is simply the *passé composé* of the subjunctive—thus the auxiliary is in the present subjunctive. All the usual rules of choice of auxiliary and agreement of past participle apply as they do for the *passé composé* and all other compound verb forms.

(with AVOIR)

que j'aie fini  
que tu aies fini  
qu'il ait fini  
que nous ayons fini  
que vous ayez fini  
qu'elles aient fini

(with ETRE)

que je sois entré(e)  
que tu sois entré(e)  
qu'elle soit entrée  
que nous soyons entré(e)s  
que vous soyez entré(e)(s)  
qu'ils soient entrés

c. The imperfect subjunctive, which you will find in advanced reading passages (like the *passé simple* in the indicative mood) but will not be asked to produce or even recognize formally, is not given in the verb tables. It may be helpful for recognition (enough to lead you to the right verb as you try to find what the form represents) to note that the third person singular forms almost always end in a vowel (with circumflex) plus *t* (e.g., *parlât, finît, eût, fût, prît*) and that the other person-number forms often contain -ss- (e.g. *fusses, eussions, chantassiez, mentissent*).

d. The pluperfect subjunctive is a compound tense form composed of the auxiliary in the imperfect subjunctive plus the past participle of the main verb. Again, like the *passé simple* and the imperfect subjunctive, this tense may occur in reading passages but you will not be required to produce it.

(with AVOIR)

que j'eusse fini  
que tu eusses fini  
qu'elle eût fini  
que nous eussions fini  
que vous eussiez fini  
qu'ils eussent fini

(with ETRE)

que je fusse entré(e)  
que tu fusses entré(e)  
qu'elle fût entrée  
que nous fussions entré(e)s  
que vous fussiez entré(e)(s)  
qu'ils fussent entrés

### 7.3.2 Subjunctive Mood: Functions and Conditions of Use - *les fonctions, l'emploi*

#### a. General

We will focus on when the subjunctive forms occur and will give most examples with the present subjunctive. The past subjunctive is used when the subjunctive verb expresses something that happened before the moment of speaking. Since that situation does not occur very frequently in combination with contexts that require the subjunctive, the present subjunctive is used much more often.

The present subjunctive refers to both present and future time (there is no future subjunctive in French).

Before we begin to look at verbs, verbal expressions, and conjunctions that "trigger" the subjunctive, let's emphasize two general constructional rules:

(1) The subjunctive verb forms occur only in subordinate clauses (that is, NOT in independent clauses or sentences), introduced by *que*, including specific "compound conjunctions" formed with *que*, such as *pour que*, *afin que*, *quoique* (complete list given in section g.).

There are, of course, exceptions to the rule that the subjunctive occurs only in subordinate clauses. In the first place, there are some fixed expressions that occur in independent sentences, such as *Béni sois tu*, "May you be blessed," or *Vive la France*, "Long live France."

Furthermore, other conjunctions besides *que* (like *quand*, *si*, and the relative pronouns) may introduce the subjunctive; however, that occurs with optional, not obligatory, subjunctives.

(2) There is most often a change of subject from the main clause to the subjunctive subordinate clause. If there is not, the preference is for an infinitive construction (and in some cases it is even obligatory). We will point this out in some of the examples below.

#### b. Verbs that take the subjunctive

When the verb of the main clause is a "trigger" for the subjunctive, the verb in a following (dependent) subordinate clause introduced by *que* is always in the subjunctive. Rather than grouping these verbs by meaning-classes, we list them alphabetically, but you will easily observe that the list generally includes verbs that express some emotion, desire, or expression of necessity or volition (one's will to do something) on the part of the speaker.

To illustrate the construction, we'll first present some of the most common "trigger" verbs that one encounters at the elementary and intermediate level:

<b>falloir</b>	Il faut que tu prennes un taxi.	<i>You have to take a taxi.</i>
<b>vouloir</b>	Tu veux que je le fasse?	<i>Do you want me to do it?</i>
<b>aimer</b>	J'aimerais que vous partiez tout de suite.	<i>I'd like you to leave right away.</i>
<b>préférer</b>	Vous préférez que je ne dise rien?	<i>You prefer that I say nothing at all?</i>
<b>craindre</b>	Il craint que tu ne <sup>25</sup> sois fâchée.	<i>He's afraid that you're angry.</i>
<b>demander</b>	Jean demande que je reste ici jusqu'à midi.	<i>John asks that I remain here until noon.</i>
<b>désirer</b>	Elle désire que nous assistions au concert.	<i>She wants us to attend the concert.</i>
<b>douter</b>	Je doute qu'il l'épouse.	<i>I doubt that he'll marry her.</i>
<b>s'étonner</b>	Je m'étonne que tu ne le comprennes pas.	<i>I'm surprised that you don't understand it.</i>
<b>souhaiter</b>	Elle souhaite que je sorte avec quelqu'un d'autre.	<i>She wishes that I'd go out with someone else.</i>

Following is a longer, but still not exhaustive, list of verbs that regularly take the subjunctive. They are in alphabetical order, and we indicate in the adjoining column the meaning-class that each verb belongs to.

#### LIST OF VERBS THAT REGULARLY TRIGGER THE SUBJUNCTIVE

##### The "trigger" verb:

aimer  
consentir  
craindre  
désirer  
demander  
douter  
empêcher  
s'étonner  
falloir (il faut)  
ordonner  
se plaindre  
préférer

##### What it expresses:

opinion, feeling  
opinion, feeling  
opinion, feeling  
volition; opinion, feeling  
volition  
impossible, not likely  
volition  
opinion, feeling  
volition  
volition  
opinion, feeling  
opinion, feeling

---

<sup>25</sup>This is a pleonastic *ne* that occurs for stylistic reasons after certain verbs and conjunctions. It is not something that is necessary for elementary or intermediate students to use.

se réjouir  
souhaiter  
supposer  
vouloir

opinion, feeling  
opinion, feeling  
not likely  
volition

NOTE: If there is no change of subject with *vouloir*, an infinitive construction is obligatory.):

Tu veux le faire?

*Do you want to do it?*

**NOT:** \*Tu veux que tu le fasses.

Vous voulez venir?

*Do you want to come?*

**NOT:** \*Vous voulez que vous veniez?

NOTE: Many verbs are not followed by the subjunctive in subordinate clauses introduced by *que*, even though some of them may seem to indicate a similar point of view (that is, volition, desire, fear,...) on the part of the speaker. Verbs of saying and thinking, for example, are not regularly followed by the subjunctive, nor is the verb *espérer*<sup>26</sup>

Il me dit qu'il viendra.

*He tells me he will come.*

Il m'a dit qu'il viendrait.

*He told me he would come.*

Nous pensons qu'ils sont fous.

*We think they are crazy.*

J'espère qu'elle va mieux.

*I hope she's feeling better.*

However, as noted under f. below, when verbs of thinking and saying are in the negative or interrogative, they may be followed by the subjunctive.

Je ne dis pas qu'il vienne.

*I don't say that he'll come.*

Elle ne pense pas que ce soit vrai.

*She doesn't believe that this is true.*

Croyez-vous qu'il parte?

*Do you (really) think that he will leave?*

### c. Impersonal verbs

These are verbs that regularly occur in the third person singular (with *il*). When they are followed by a subordinate clause introduced by *que* (rather than, for example, by an infinitive construction), the verb in the subordinate clause is in the subjunctive.

falloir      Il faut que tu ailles voir ce film.

*You have to go see this film.*

sembler      Il semble que Jean vende tous ses disques.

*It seems that John is selling all his records.*

valoir mieux      Il vaut mieux que tu restes avec nous.

*It would be better for you to stay with us.*

---

<sup>26</sup> However, in recent years more and more native speakers do use the subjunctive in subordinate clauses dependent on *espérer*. We hesitate to say it is "correct," but we think that students at this level should not be penalized if they make that "mistake."

#### d. Impersonal expressions with être + ADJECTIVE

These are expressions composed of *il* or *ce* + *être* + ADJECTIVE + a subordinate clause introduced by *que*. The ones listed below regularly take the subjunctive in the subordinate clause. As in (b) above, we list them alphabetically (according to the adjective). We'll give most examples with *il*, because that is the more frequent pronoun, although *ce* is used frequently in colloquial speech.

bon	Il est bon que vous ayez décidé de nous aider.	<i>It's good that you decided to help us.</i>
dommage	C'est dommage qu'elle ne puisse pas nous rejoindre.	<i>It's a shame that she can't join us.</i>
juste	Il est juste que nous t'aidions.	<i>It's right that we should help you.</i>
logique	Il est logique qu'on le fasse ainsi.	<i>It's logical that it be done that way.</i>
possible	Il est possible qu'il vienne.	<i>It's possible that he'll come.</i>
temps	Il est temps qu'il l'épouse.	<i>It's (about) time he married her.</i>

#### NOTES:

(1) The list above is not a complete list, but includes all the impersonal expressions likely to be used actively in first- or second-year college French.

(2) There are, of course, many impersonal expressions that do not take the subjunctive. In contrast with the expressions that take the subjunctive (see the characterization of subjunctive contexts at the beginning of Section 7.3), the expressions that take the indicative can be characterized as indicating a fact or something of which the speaker is certain.

#### Examples:

	<u>Il est vrai</u> que la grammaire française est très facile.	<i>It's true that French grammar is very easy.</i>
But:	Est-il vrai que la grammaire française soit facile?	<i>Is it true that French grammar is easy?</i>
	<u>Il est certain</u> que nous n'arriverons pas à l'heure.	<i>It's certain that we won't arrive on time.</i>
But:	Est-il certain que nous n'arrivions pas à l'heure?	<i>Is it certain that we won't arrive on time?</i>

Note: The subjunctive is optional in each of the “but” examples: see f below.

### e. Personal Expressions with être + ADJECTIVE

These are verbal expressions composed of a (personal) subject pronoun or noun, + *être* + ADJECTIVE + a subordinate clause introduced by *que*. Those listed below regularly take the subjunctive in the subordinate clause. As for (b) and (c) above, these adjectives could be listed by semantic category, but we feel it is more useful to give you an alphabetical listing.

content	Nous sommes contents que vous soyez venus.	<i>We're glad that you (all) came.</i>
désolé	Il sera désolé que tu ne saches pas l'adresse.	<i>He'll be very sorry that you don't know the address.</i>
étonné	Je suis étonnée que tu ne comprennes pas.	<i>I'm very surprised that you don't understand.</i>
fâché	Elle est fâchée qu'il ne lui téléphone plus.	<i>She's angry that he doesn't call her anymore.</i>
heureux	Etes-vous heureux qu'elle parte demain?	<i>Are you happy that she's leaving tomorrow?</i>

All of the preceding personal expressions (and others: this is not an exhaustive list) always take the subjunctive in subordinate clauses introduced by *que*, whether they are affirmative or interrogative, declarative or negative.

There are a few personal verbal expressions that normally do not take the subjunctive (but see Section f, to follow):

certain	Je suis certain qu'elle viendra.	<i>I'm certain she will come.</i>
sûr	Nous sommes sûrs qu'il l'achètera.	<i>We're sure that he'll buy it.</i>

### f. Optional subjunctive

All of the above (a-e) are verbs/verbal expressions that regularly take the subjunctive in subordinate clauses introduced by *que*. There are, in addition, some verbs and verbal expressions that may and often do take the subjunctive in subordinate clauses introduced by *que*, depending on additional factors, principally whether the main verb is in the negative or interrogative.

The following constructions, which in general express belief, conviction, or thought, take the subjunctive only when they are negative or interrogative and even then do not always do so. In other words, this is a case in which the subjunctive is selectively used by the speaker to indicate doubt (the speaker chooses to imply that he or she does not believe *x* will/did occur). We feel you should know about this use of the subjunctive but will not ask you to control the distinction between the indicative and subjunctive in such constructions in our text. We much prefer to emphasize the obligatory use of subjunctive forms triggered by specific verbs and expressions, as in Sections a through e above.

<b>croire</b>	Croyez-vous qu'il vienne/vient? [by using the subjunctive, the speaker indicates more doubt]	<i>Do you think he's coming?</i>
	Je ne crois pas que tu me dises toute la vérité.	<i>I don't think you're telling me the whole truth.</i>
<b>dire</b>	Très bien, je ne dis pas que ce soit certain, mais...	<i>OK, I don't say that this is certain, but . . .</i>
<b>penser</b>	Penses-tu qu'il finisse/finira à l'heure?	<i>Do you think he'll finish on time?</i>
<b>sûr</b>	Jacques n'est pas sûr que vous l'acceptiez.	<i>Jim isn't sure that you'll accept it.</i>

**g. Conjunctions that take the subjunctive**

No matter what the main verbal construction is, the subjunctive is found in subordinate clauses introduced by the following conjunctions.

<b>afin que</b>	Je te le dis afin que tu saches ce que je veux faire.	<i>I'm telling you so that you'll know what I want to do.</i>
<b>à moins que</b>	Nous le ferons à moins que Jean soit là.	<i>We'll do it unless John is there.</i>
<b>avant que</b>	Elle l'aura terminé avant que tu (ne) viennes.	<i>She'll have it finished before you come.</i>
<b>bien que</b>	Bien qu'elle ne veuille pas m'aider, je vais essayer.	<i>Even though she doesn't want to help me, I'm going to try.</i>
<b>jusqu'à ce que</b>	Je vais répéter jusqu'à ce que tu comprennes.	<i>I'm going to repeat until you understand.</i>
<b>pour que</b>	Je lui donne le camion pour qu'il transporte le frigo.	<i>I'm giving him the truck so that he'll transport the fridge.</i>
<b>pourvu que</b>	Nous l'achèterons pourvu que François hérite de son père.	<i>We'll buy it provided that François inherits from his father.</i>
<b>quoique</b>	Quoique tu dises que tu n'en veux pas, je sais que tu en prendras.	<i>Even though you say you don't want any, I know you'll take some.</i>

### 7.3.3 Subjunctive Mood: Alternative Constructions

You will sometimes hear that the subjunctive is disappearing in French as it has, essentially, in English. That is an incorrect statement: the subjunctive mood forms still occur frequently in both written and spoken French—not just in textbooks and literature. However, it is true that people will use alternate constructions (that mean more or less the same thing) very often both in colloquial speech and in informal writing.

The simplest alternative is to avoid producing a subordinate clause introduced by *que*. For example, instead of saying any of the following,

Il faut que tu partes tout de suite.	<i>You have to leave right away.</i>
Il faut que nous partions tout de suite.	<i>We have to leave right away.</i>
Il faut que je parte tout de suite.	<i>I have to leave right away.</i>
Il faut que tu voies/nous voyions... ce film.	<i>You/we... have to see this movie.</i>

one can use the infinitive:

Il faut partir tout de suite.	<i>One/you/we have to leave right away.</i>
Il faut voir ce film.	<i>One/you/we have to see this movie.</i>

Obviously, the infinitive construction is ambiguous without context, but we usually speak with a context, so there is no problem using it.

Another alternative is to insert a verb that does not govern the subjunctive:

Je suis heureux que tu prennes l'avion.	<i>I'm happy that you're taking the plane.</i>
Nous sommes tristes que vous vouliez déjà partir.	<i>We're sad that you already want to leave.</i>

COULD BE REPHRASED:

Je suis heureux de savoir que tu prends l'avion.	<i>I'm happy to learn that you're taking the plane</i>
Nous sommes tristes de savoir que vous voulez déjà partir.	<i>We are saddened to learn that you already want to leave.</i>



## 8.0 The Verb: Voice - *le verbe: la voix*

"Voice" is a term used in classifying verb constructions as to whether the agent of the action mentioned is the grammatical subject or if the agent is some other person, in which case the grammatical subject is "passive", that is, undergoes the action. The concept is interesting, but for using French at this level, there are just a few structural rules that we need to mention, as given below in 8.2.

### 8.1 VOICE: ACTIVE - *LA VOIX ACTIVE*

The active voice is much more common than the passive in English, and even more so in French. All the examples of tenses and moods on the preceding pages are active voice constructions.

### 8.2 VOICE: PASSIVE - *LA VOIX PASSIVE*

#### FORM

The passive is formed in French, as in English, with the verb *être* ('to be') plus the past participle. (There is no reason to confuse this construction with the active construction in the *passé composé* with *être* verbs: you'll recall that all *être* verbs are intransitive, that is, do not take an object; all passive constructions, on the other hand, involve transitive verbs--all of which would take *avoir* as the auxiliary in the active *passé composé* construction). Consider the following examples:

*aller*, an *être* verb, cannot be made passive. When it is used with *être*, it is in the *passé composé*:

Marie est allée au cinéma.

*Mary went to the movies.*

*marcher*, an *avoir* verb, but also intransitive like *aller*, cannot be made passive.

\*Marie est marchée au cinéma.

*Mary is walked to the movies.*

[NOT a correct sentence in French; in English, it's grammatically correct, but very awkward. It's correct because "walk" can be transitive: "Susan walked Mary to the movies."] ]

*construire*, an *avoir* verb that is also transitive, can be made passive.

Ce pont est construit par les Américain.  
Cette ville a été construite par les Grecs.

*This bridge is built by the Americans.  
This city was built by the Greeks.*

The agent in a complete passive construction is introduced by *par* (when the activity is generally physical and/or concrete) or by *de* (when the activity is generally emotional and/or more abstract).

Jean a été frappé par son père.  
Le roi est aimé de ses sujets.

*John was hit by his father.*  
*The king is loved by his subjects.*

La voiture a été complètement démolie par ce camion.  
Les animaux sont aimés des enfants.

*The car was totally destroyed by this truck.*  
*Animals are loved by children.*

But note that the active construction is generally preferred in French:

Ce camion a complètement démoli la voiture.  
Les enfants aiment les animaux.

*This truck totally destroyed the car.*  
*Children love animals.*

**Agreement.** As is true for *être* verbs (see section 6.2.1.b), the past participle in a passive construction agrees in gender and number with the subject.

La reine est aimée de ses sujets.

*The queen is loved by her subjects.*

As mentioned above, the passive is not a very frequent construction in French. When the agent is known, French much more commonly retains the active construction. When the agent is not known or not made explicit, French uses the indefinite *on*, with an active construction.

La porte a été fermée.  
—> On a fermé la porte.

*The door was closed.*  
—> *Someone closed the door.*

There are also a number of verbs regularly used in the reflexive form to express what we might express in English with the passive. Some of the most common are seen in these examples:

La Tour Eiffel se trouve à Paris.  
Les portes se ferment à 18h00.  
Cela ne se fait pas.

*The Eiffel Tower is found (located) in Paris.*  
*The doors close (are closed) at 6 p.m.*  
*That isn't done.*

## FUNCTION AND USE

Students in college elementary or intermediate French courses should not be concerned with producing passive constructions: they are rare.

The use of the passive by native speakers is more or less stylistically controlled: the speaker/writer wants to vary sentence patterns, or wants to remove the subject (agent) from the initial position in order to place something else there, thus giving the other word or construction special prominence.

## 9.0 The Verb: Reflexive Verbs - *Les verbes pronominaux*

The term "reflexive verb" refers to a verb construction in which the action of the verb literally or figuratively "reflects back" to the subject. In French the construction is called "pronominal" because a reflexive pronoun is an essential part of the construction. There are some special characteristics of reflexive constructions that need not concern us here, but students must recognize and learn to use the more common verbs: they occur frequently and are necessary for day-to-day communication.

The reflexive pronoun forms are: *me*, *te*, *se* for the singular, and *nous*, *vous*, *se* for the plural. They may function either as direct objects or indirect objects, depending on the particular sentence, but in either function they regularly precede the verb of which they are the object. Here are some examples:

Je m'appelle Claude Le Roux.  
[Literally: "I call myself..."]

*My name is Claude Le Roux.*

Elle se lave.  
(washing herself: *se* is the direct object)

*She is washing.*

Elle se lave les mains.  
[here, *se* is the indirect object, *les mains* is the direct object]

*She is washing her hands.*

Nous ne nous levons pas à six heures.  
[negative particles follow regular order.]

*We don't get up at six o'clock.*

Ils se sont vus deux fois.  
[reciprocal use of reflexive; *se* is the direct object]

*They saw each other twice.*

Elles se sont dit "au revoir".  
[reciprocal use of reflexive; *se* is the indirect object]

*They said "goodbye" (to each other).*

Il devrait se dépêcher.  
[note that *se* precedes *dépêcher*, not *devrait*]

*He ought to hurry up.*

As you see, the reflexive construction, in the *passé composé*, uses the verb *être* as the auxiliary, but shows agreement between the past participle and a preceding direct object. For further discussion, see Section 6.2.1.

The following are some common reflexive verbs. As you see in the last two examples above, other verbs can be used in a reflexive construction, but the following are most commonly used reflexively.

s'en aller	to go away
s'amuser	to have a good time
s'appeler	to be called, to be named
s'arrêter	to stop
se coucher	to go to bed
se dépêcher	to hurry up
s'habiller	to get dressed
se laver	to wash, get washed
se lever	to get up
se mettre à (faire quelque chose)	to begin to (do something)
se moquer de	to make fun of
se plaindre	to complain
se rappeler (+ direct object) <sup>27</sup>	to remember
se souvenir de	to remember

Be careful to note that, although reflexive verbs are listed regularly with the third person reflexive pronoun and the infinitive (*se laver*), that pronoun must change as necessary to indicate the same person-number as the subject, even when the reflexive verb is in its infinitive form:

Je vais **me** lever tôt demain.

[the reflexive verb is in its infinitive form, in the *futur proche* construction; the reflexive pronoun is **me** (not *se*) to agree with its antecedent, *je*.]

*I'm going to get up early tomorrow.*

Nous nous sommes habillés.

[in this case, one should not make the mistake of using *se*]

*We got dressed.*

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<sup>27</sup> Although most grammar books still say that *se rappeler* is followed by a direct object, many native speakers use it with *de*.

## 10.0 The Verb: Impersonal Constructions - *les verbes impersonnels*

All that we mean by "impersonal" in the title "impersonal constructions" is that the grammatical subject is not a person. In such constructions, the person involved in the activity is usually the direct or indirect object of the verb, or is not explicitly mentioned at all.

The most common impersonal verbs are the following: expressions of weather (*il pleut*, "it's raining;" *il neige*, "it's snowing;" *il fait beau*, "it's nice weather;"); clock-time expressions (*Il est trois heures*, "It's three o'clock"); impersonal constructions that take a subordinate clause, including many mentioned in the discussion of the subjunctive (*il faut*, *il vaut mieux*; *il est bon que*, *il est nécessaire que*). See Section 7.3.2.

Two other impersonal constructions that are useful to know at this level are:

**falloir: il ... faut**

(this is another use of *il faut*, that is, different from its use with the subjunctive)

Il me faut trois heures pour y aller.

*It takes me three hours to get there.*

Il me faudra plus d'argent pour terminer ce projet.

*I'll need more money to finish this project.*

**plaire: il/ça ... plaît**

Ça te plaît de me traiter ainsi?

*You enjoy treating me like that?*

Elle te plaît cette voiture?

*Do you like this car?*

Il te plaît ce restaurant?

*Do you like this restaurant?*

The verb *plaire* is also used with a personal subject, but still has a twist to it that you need to watch:

Tu me plais, chéri.

*I like/love you, darling.*

[Literally: "You please me."]

When the "personal" subject is a thing, rather than a human being, the "twist" is gone, and it's more like the impersonal construction:

Ce film m'a plu.

*I liked this movie.*

Ce disque te plaira.

*You'll like this record.*

## 11.0 The Verb: Present Participle -- *le participe présent*

### FORM

The present participle is formed by adding *-ant* to a stem which is—for all verbs except *être*, *avoir*, and *savoir*—the same as the 1st person plural stem, of the present indicative. Examples:

<u>Infinitive</u>	<u>1st person plural</u>	<u>Present Participle</u>
parler	nous parlons	parlant
finir	nous finissons	finissant
vendre	nous vendons	vendant
sortir	nous sortons	sortant

There are just three irregular stems:

être	(nous sommes)	étant
avoir	(nous avons)	ayant
savoir	(nous savons)	sachant

### FUNCTION

The present participle form has three functions:

a. As a descriptive or qualifying adjective. In this function it is regularly found in a common noun phrase, after the noun that it modifies, or—less often—in predicate adjective position (as in the last example).

Examples:

Il y a de l'eau courante?	<i>Is there running water?</i>
C'était un couteau tranchant.	<i>It was a sharp knife. (cutting)</i>
Le patron est charmant.	<i>The boss is charming.</i>
Ce sont des sculptures éblouissantes.	<i>These sculptures are out of this world.</i>

b. As a verbal adjective. In this function it both modifies a noun and also retains its verbal force, taking a complement:

Cet homme traversant <sup>28</sup> la rue est mon père.	<i>That man crossing the street is my father.</i>
Ne voulant pas l'encourager, je suis parti sans répondre.	<i>Not wanting to encourage him, I left without answering.</i>
Ne pouvant pas lui téléphoner, j'ai dû lui écrire.	<i>Not being able to call him/her, I had to write.</i>
En conduisant sur l'autoroute, j'aime aller vite.	<i>Driving on the Interstate, I like to go fast.</i>

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<sup>28</sup>Many grammarians would argue that this is not good French; it is better to say, "*Cet homme qui traverse la rue...*"

c. As a gerund (gérondif). In this function, the present participle construction serves as an adverbial, showing the purpose (cause), or manner, or time of an action. It is also regularly preceded by *en*. It modifies the entire clause to which it is attached.

En sortant du bureau, le patron  
a entendu sonner le téléphone.  
[the gerund tells when the boss heard the phone ring]

*As he left the office,  
the boss heard the phone ring.*

En travaillant jour et nuit,  
ils ont réussi à conclure le traité.  
[the gerund tells how they managed to conclude the treaty]

*By working day and night,  
they succeeded in concluding the treaty.*

En conduisant sur l'autoroute, j'aime aller vite.  
[the gerund tells us when/how the driver likes to go fast]

*Driving on the Interstate, I like to go fast.*

## 12.0 The Verb: Infinitive - *le verbe: l'infinitif*

### 12.1 INFINITIVE: PRESENT INFINITIVE - *L'INFINITIF PRESENT*

#### FORM

The present infinitive is the the form you find first in a standard dictionary. It always contains an *-r-* as the last or next-to-last letter (*parler, finir, vendre, dire, avoir, connaître*).

#### FUNCTIONS

- a. A very common use of the infinitive is as a complementary infinitive, that is, as a noun phrase complement of another verb, with or without its own complement.

J'aime chanter.

[here, the infinitive has no complement, no direct object]

*I like to sing.*

Je veux trouver mes clés.

[in this case, the infinitive has its own complement, the direct object, *mes clés*]

*I want to find my keys.*

This very common and simple construction resembles the equivalent one in English, except that in French the verb that governs (takes) the complementary infinitive will take either *à* or *de* or no particle/preposition before the infinitive. There is no "rule" for this, no way to classify the verbs.

We list in Sections 12.1.1-3 some of the more common verbs in each group. Good dictionaries and reference grammars for more advanced students and/or professors will give you all you need later on.

- b. One finds the infinitive construction also after a number of prepositions other than *à* or *de* (which are really particles in the complementary infinitive construction: they have no obvious prepositional force). Many of those indicate purpose, as can be seen in the examples that follow:<sup>29</sup>

Je suis venu ici pour vous parler.

Il s'est arrêté afin de regarder le plan de la ville.

Elle est partie sans nous dire <<au revoir>>.

Avant de parler, il faut penser.

*I came here in order to talk to you.*

*He stopped so as to look at the map of the city.*

*She left without saying "goodbye."*

*Before speaking, one should think.*

NOTE. You'll have noted that the English equivalent of the infinitive is sometimes a present participle. Be careful of that: the only preposition that takes a present participle in French is *en* (see Section 11-c). Also note, as detailed in the next section, that *après* takes only the past infinitive, never a present infinitive.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Note that verbs that normally take no particle (like *venir* in the first example) may be used with *pour, afin de*, with a clear meaning, a clear sense of purpose.

<sup>30</sup>The exceptions, *après boire, après déjeuner*, are not significant for this level. See Grevin, Section 2365a.



### 12.1.1 Verbs that take à with the complementary infinitive

aider	Il m'aide à installer mon ordinateur. <i>He's helping me install my computer.</i>
apprendre	Nous avons appris à dessiner des éléphants. <i>We learned to draw elephants.</i>
chercher *	Il cherche à nous persuader. <i>He's trying to persuade us.</i>
commencer	La nuit commence à tomber. <i>Night is beginning to fall..</i>
continuer	Le chauffeur continue à conduire trop vite. <i>The driver continues to drive too fast.</i>
encourager	Le prof nous encourage à étudier. <i>The professor encourages us to study.</i>
enseigner	Elle lui enseigne à conduire. <i>She's teaching him/her to drive.</i>
inviter	Je t'invite à nous accompagner. <i>I invite you to come with us.</i>
se mettre	Elle va se mettre à chanter. <i>She's going to begin to sing.</i>
réussir	Vous n'avez pas réussi à vous taire. <i>You didn't succeed in being quiet..</i>
servir *	L'eau sert à étancher la soif. <i>Water is used to quench thirst..</i>
tenir *	Elle tient à te parler. <i>She insists on speaking to you.</i>

(See also verbal expressions, such as *il/c'est* + adjective, that are followed by *à* + infinitive.)

---

\* These verbs have an idiomatic, special meaning when followed by *à* + infinitive.

### 12.1.2 Verbs that take *de* with the complementary infinitive

accepter	Tu acceptes de nous aider? <i>Do you agree to help us?</i>
cesser	Si les fleurs cessaient de fleurir, le monde serait triste. <i>If flowers stopped blooming, the world would be a sad place.</i>
conseiller	On me conseille de quitter ce poste. <i>They're advising me to quit this job.</i>
décider	Elle va décider de partir, je te l'assure. <i>She'll decide to leave, I assure you.</i>
demander	Il nous a demandé de répéter. <i>He asked us to repeat.</i>
dire	Nous lui avons dit de rester dans la voiture. <i>We told him to stay in the car.</i>
empêcher	Cela ne vous empêche pas d'essayer encore une fois. <i>That doesn't prevent you from trying again.</i>
essayer	Comme passe-temps je vais essayer de jouer aux échecs. <i>As a hobby, I'm going to try to play chess.</i>
offrir	Il a offert de nous aider. <i>He offered to help us.</i>
oublier	Tu as oublié de lui en parler? <i>You forgot to talk to him about it?</i>
permettre	Ce contrat lui permet de compléter son salaire. <i>This contract allows him/her to supplement his/her salary.</i>
refuser	Il a refusé de nous parler. <i>He refused to talk to us.</i>
regretter	Je regrette de t'en avoir parlé. <i>I'm sorry to have spoken to you about it.</i>

(See also verbal expressions, such as *il/c'est* + adjective, that are followed by *de* + infinitive.)

### 12.1.3 Verbs that take no particle with the complementary infinitive

aimer	Elle n'aime pas parler sur un répondeur. <i>She doesn't like to talk on an answering machine.</i>
aller	Ils vont prendre le vol de retour de dix heures. <i>They're going to take the ten o'clock return flight.</i>
compter	Elle compte aller en France l'été prochain. <i>She expects to go to France next summer.</i>
croire	Ils croient vous comprendre. <i>They think they understand you.</i>
détester	Vous détestez monter dans un avion. <i>You hate to fly/get on an airplane.</i>
devoir	(See the full chart on this verb, Section 25.)
espérer	Nous espérons le voir demain. <i>We hope to see him tomorrow.</i>
laisser	Laisse-moi partir. <i>Let me leave.</i>
oser	Je n'ose pas lui demander cela. <i>I don't dare ask her/him that.</i>
pouvoir	Il peut ouvrir cette porte. <i>He can open this door.</i>
préférer	Elle préfère rester ici. <i>She prefers to remain here.</i>
savoir	Savez-vous planter des choux? <i>Do you know how to plant cabbage?</i>
venir *	Marie vient vous voir ce soir. <i>Mary is coming to see you tonight.</i>
vouloir	Marc veut nous y accompagner. <i>Mark wants to go (there) with us.</i>

---

\* This verb, *venir*, also occurs in the idiomatic expression, *venir de* + INFINITIVE, which means "to have just." See Section 6.2.5.

## 12.2 INFINITIVE: PAST INFINITIVE - *L'INFINITIF PASSE*

### FORM

The past infinitive is another compound form; unlike the *passé composé*, however, the auxiliary is not a present tense form, but a present infinitive:

**après avoir fini**

**après être parti(e)(s)**

**après s'être couché(e)(s)**

### FUNCTION

We listed the forms above with *après* because it is the main construction in which the past infinitive occurs in French, and to emphasize that the present infinitive is never used after *après* (see footnote 30). The entire construction is a modifier of the nearest noun phrase, as it is in English:

Après m'être habillé, je suis sorti.

*After getting dressed, I went out.*

Après m'être habillée, je suis sortie.

*After getting dressed, I went out.*

[Note that the person speaking is feminine.]

Après avoir fermé la porte,  
il a commencé à nous parler très doucement.

*After closing the door,  
he began to speak to us very softly.*

Après l'avoir fermée, il est parti.

*After having closed it, he left.*

[a feminine direct object, such as a door]

Après avoir joué au golf, nous avons pris un verre.

*After playing golf/after we played golf, we  
had a drink.*

Après être tombé, je me suis relevé.

*After falling down/after I fell, I got up again.*

### 13.0 The Verb: Causative Constructions - *le causatif*

The "causative" expresses the idea: "to have (cause) someone do something" or "to have something done." In French, that is conveyed by the verb *faire* + INFINITIVE.

Napoléon a fait bâtir l'Arc de Triomphe.  
Faites entrer les étudiants.  
Tu vas lui faire répéter le cours?

*Napoleon had the Arc de Triomphe built.*  
*Have the students come in.*  
*You're going to have him take the course over again?*  
*We had our house painted.*  
*Have them sit down.*  
*This/that baby is cute; make him smile.*

Nous avons fait peindre notre maison.  
Faites-les s'asseoir.  
Ce bébé est mignon, faites-le sourire.

**Order of complements: nouns and pronouns.**

1. When there is only one object complement, it is treated as direct object of the entire construction (*faire* + INFINITIVE), so a noun object follows the infinitive and a pronoun object precedes *faire*.

Il a fait pleurer sa femme.  
Il l'a fait pleurer.  
Il a fait signer le contrat.  
Il l'a fait signer.  
Il a fait rire tout le monde.  
Il les a fait rire.

*He made his wife cry.*  
*He made her cry.*  
*He had the contract signed.*  
*He had it signed.*  
*He made everybody laugh.*  
*He made them laugh.*

NOTE: In the affirmative imperative, the object pronoun follows the verb *faire*.

Faites-la chanter.  
L'avion? Faites-le atterrir!

*Have her sing.*  
*The airplane? Have it land.*

2. When there are two object complements, the word referring to what has to be done is in the form and order of a direct object (whether noun or pronoun) and the person to perform the action is in the form and order of an indirect object (whether noun or pronoun).

Il leur a fait chanter la Marseillaise.  
Il lui a fait observer l'évident.

*He had them sing the Marseillaise.*  
*He made/had him/her see the obvious.*

NOTE: You may have noted in the example, *Il l'a fait pleurer*, that the past participle of *faire* is invariable in this construction (no agreement with the preceding direct object).

## 14.0 The Relative Clause - *la proposition relative*

### 14.1 THE RELATIVE CLAUSE: GENERAL - *LA PROPOSITION RELATIVE: GENERALITES*

#### FORM

The relative clause is a sentence-type construction composed of a subject and predicate in which a pronoun (the "relative" pronoun) functions as either the subject, direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition. That relative pronoun always comes first (except when it is preceded by a preposition, in which case of course the preposition comes first) in the relative clause, thus often disturbing the normal word order. (See Section 14.2 for a table of the relative pronouns.)

L'homme qui pilote l'avion est mon père.

*The man who is piloting the airplane is my father.*

[qui is the subject, so normal word order prevails in the relative clause]

L'homme que vous avez vu hier est mon père.

*The man (that)<sup>31</sup> you saw yesterday is my father.*

[que is the direct object, so normal word order is disturbed: the object comes before the subject (vous), but the rest is in standard order, same as in English]

There are more examples below which clearly show the word order with the various relative pronouns.

#### FUNCTION

The relative clause functions in its entirety (that is, the whole construction) as a modifier of the noun that is the antecedent of the relative pronoun in that relative clause.

L'homme que vous avez vu hier est mon père.

*The man you saw yesterday is my father.*

[the relative clause is: que vous avez vu; it describes the man mentioned in the main sentence, helps the reader identify the person that the speaker is talking about; the relative pronoun is: que, and its antecedent is l'homme]

Le monsieur dont la fille est malade est allé  
chercher le médecin.

*The man whose daughter is sick went  
to find the doctor.*

[the relative clause is: dont la fille est malade; it describes the man mentioned in the main sentence, identifies him for the listener; the relative pronoun is: dont, "of whom," and its antecedent is l'homme]

Le client qui vient de me téléphoner a fait une  
réservation.

*The customer who just called me made a  
reservation.*

[the relative clause is qui vient de me téléphoner; it identifies which client made a reservation]

La chanson que vous avez chantée est très connue.

*The song that you sang is very well-known.*

[the relative clause is que vous avez chantée; it identifies which song is well known]

---

<sup>31</sup>In English, the relative pronoun often can be omitted; in French, it never can be dropped.

## 14.2 THE RELATIVE CLAUSE: RELATIVE PRONOUNS - *LES PRONOMS RELATIFS*

### FORM

The relative pronoun has distinct forms corresponding (1) to its function within the relative clause (subject, direct object, indirect object, object of a preposition), and (2) to its antecedent (whether it is human or not). The following table summarizes that information:<sup>32</sup>

<i>Function of the Relative Pronoun in the Relative Clause</i>	<u>When the antecedent is:</u>	
	HUMAN	NOT HUMAN
<i>SUBJECT</i>	qui	qui
<i>DIRECT OBJECT</i>	que	que
<i>INDIRECT OBJECT</i>	à qui	auquel <sup>33</sup> à laquelle auxquels auxquelles
<i>OBJECT OF PREPOSITION</i> (other than <i>de</i> )	qui	lequel, laquelle, lesquels, lesquelles
<i>OBJECT OF de</i> <sup>34</sup>	dont	dont

<sup>32</sup> A form of *LEQUEL* may be used to replace any of the *qui/que* forms (except *dont*), whether the antecedent is human or non-human, but students in college elementary or intermediate French should follow the table given here.

<sup>33</sup> Indirect objects are usually human beings ("He gives the book to Mary."), but we do personify animals and even inanimate objects, so the *LEQUEL* forms may occur in this construction.

<sup>34</sup> Many grammar books state that *de* + RELATIVE PRONOUN must be replaced by *dont*, but many native French speakers say *de qui, duquel, desquels*, etc.

## FUNCTION

We'll give examples of each function for each type of antecedent.

We start with the left column of the FORM table, that is, for cases when the antecedent of the relative pronoun is a human being.

### Subject

Le chef **qui** a inventé ce plat est renommé.

[*qui* is the subject of *a inventé*]

*The chef **who** invented this dish is renowned.*

### Direct Object

Le garçon **que** vous avez frappé est mon fils.

[*que* is the direct object of *avez frappé*]

*The boy (**that/whom**) you hit is my son.*

### Indirect Object

La femme **à qui** je parlais est une chanteuse célèbre.

[*qui* is the indirect object of *parlais*, as signaled by *à*]

*The woman **to whom** I was speaking is a famous singer.*

### Object of a Preposition

L'étudiant **devant qui** tu es assis est malade.

[*qui* is the object of the preposition *devant*]

*The student **in front of whom** you are seated is sick.*

### Object of the Preposition *de*

Le prof **dont** je me plains ne veut pas me voir.

*The professor I'm complaining about<sup>35</sup> doesn't want to see me.*

---

<sup>35</sup> Note that it would be considered awkward today in English to construct the sentence with "about whom," but French requires the use of a complete relative clause construction, beginning with *dont*.



This second set of examples is for the right column of the FORM section, for which the antecedent of the relative pronoun is not human:

(This time, unlike in the previous set, we give two examples, and do not explicitly repeat the function of each pronoun.)

### Subject

Le livre **qui** est sur la table est rouge.  
Le puits **qui** est devant la maison est profond.

*The book (that is) on the table is red.  
The well(that is) in front of the house is deep.*

### Direct Object

La voiture **que** j'ai achetée est noire.  
Ce n'étaient pas des mouches **que** tu as écrasées,  
mais des abeilles.

*The car that I bought is black.  
Those weren't flies that you squashed,  
but bees.*

### Indirect Object

Le chat **auquel** tu donnes le lait es gros.  
Le navire **auquel** il a donné sa vie vient de couler.

*The cat you're giving the milk to is fat.  
The ship to which he gave his life just sank.*

### Object of a Preposition

J'ai perdu la serviette **dans laquelle** tu as mis  
ces papiers.  
L'érable **sur lequel** tu aimais grimper s'est  
effondré.

*I lost the briefcase in which you put  
those papers.  
The maple tree you used to like to climb  
in collapsed.*

### Object of the Preposition de

L'église **dont** je parle est Saint Eustache.  
Voilà la liste des choses **dont** j'ai besoin.

*The church I'm talking about is Saint Eustache.  
Here is the list of things that I need.*

### 14.3 THE COMPOUND RELATIVE PRONOUN - *CE ATTRIBUT*<sup>36</sup>

Instead of functioning as an adjectival clause, the relative clause can function as a subject or direct object noun phrase. In that case, there is no specific antecedent, instead *ce* is used with the relative pronoun (*qui*, *que*, or *dont*) and we call that construction a compound relative. It's useful to note that the equivalent in English is "what" and to take the whole construction (*ce qui*, *ce que*, or *ce dont*) as a single unit.

The compound relative clause construction as subject:<sup>37</sup>

Ce que tu as dit n'est pas vrai.

Ce qui est sur la table est à moi.

Ce qu'il fait est inutile.

*What you said is not true.*

*What is on the table is mine.*

*What he is doing is useless.*

The compound relative clause construction as object:

Je ne crois pas ce qu'il dit.

Tu ne sais pas ce que tu dis.

As-tu vu ce qui était dans la salle?

Je ne vois pas ce dont tu as besoin.

Elle ne fait pas ce qu'il faut.

*I don't believe what he says.*

*You don't know what you're saying.*

*Did you see what was in the room?*

*I can't see what you need.*

*She doesn't do what is necessary.*

---

<sup>36</sup> Grevisse discusses this construction in various sections, principally in Section 1163.

<sup>37</sup> Note that we specify that the construction is being used as the subject of the main clause. The relative pronoun itself is either subject or object (direct or indirect) of the verb within its own clause.

## 15.0 The Prepositional Phrase - *la préposition et son régime*<sup>38</sup>

The prepositional phrase is composed of a preposition and its complement, a noun phrase. Its function is adverbial: it modifies the verb, verb phrase or the whole clause/sentence. Examples:

Elle travaille dans une banque.

Il a mis le livre sur la table.

Malgré sa sincérité, on ne l'a pas cru.

*She works in a bank.*

*He put the book on the table.*

*In spite of his sincerity, they didn't believe him.*

There are some particular groups of prepositions which we'll consider separately in the following two sections.

### 15.1 PREPOSITIONS WITH GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS<sup>39</sup>

This is a matter of knowing the right words, not really a question of grammar. Certain prepositions are used with names of cities, feminine countries, masculine countries, other geographical locations and they don't regularly correspond to what we'd expect, considering the usual "translations" of those prepositions.

To say "go to," "travel in," "be in," or "be at" a geographical location:

CITIES: *à*

Je vais à Paris.

Je les ai rencontrés à Bordeaux.

Il passe l'hiver à Nice.

Je l'ai vu à Rennes

*I'm going to Paris.*

*I met them in Bordeaux.*

*He is spending the winter in Nice.*

*I saw it in Rennes. [referring to un film]*

FEMININE COUNTRIES/CONTINENTS: *en*<sup>40</sup>

Nous allons en France.

Il voyage en Chine.

Elle est en Europe.

Ils vont aller en Allemagne.

*We're going to France.*

*He's traveling in China.*

*She's in Europe.*

*They're going to go to Germany.*

---

<sup>38</sup>See Grevisse, Sections 2250 ff.

<sup>39</sup>Grevisse does not contain a separate section specifically on the selection of prepositions with geographical locations. To review usage and exceptions, it is necessary to read through sections 2274 to 2460, *L'emploi de certaines prépositions*.

<sup>40</sup>In general, countries whose name (in French!) end in an -e (except *le Mexique*, *le Cambodge*) are feminine. The preposition *en* is used even with masculine countries if they begin with a vowel: *en Israël*.

MASCULINE COUNTRIES: au, à l' (à + le)

Elle va au Canada.

On fabrique ces radios au Japon.

Il passe ses vacances au Mexique.

*She's going to Canada.*

*They make these radios in Japan.*

*He spends his vacations in Mexico.*

To say "come from" or "be from" a geographical location:

CITIES: de

Il vient de New York.

Ils arrivent de Londres.

Ils sont de Montpellier.

*He comes from New York.*

*They're arriving from London.*

*They're from Montpellier.*

FEMININE COUNTRIES/CONTINENTS: de

Elle revient de France.

Ce sont des vins d'Espagne.

*She's coming back from France.*

*These are wines from Spain.*

[The article, however, is retained when *de* means "of", showing possession, e.g. *Paris est la capitale de la France*, "Paris is the capital of France."]

MASCULINE COUNTRIES: du, (de + le)

Il vient du Brésil.

Elle est du Gabon.

*He comes from Brazil.*

*She is from Gabon.*

Miscellaneous comments:

Some of our states (United States) are feminine, some masculine, and we have found that native speakers of French traveling in the United States are not consistent in assigning gender, except to obvious ones, such as California (*en Californie*). With masculine states, the basic form is "*dans le*," with feminine it is "*en*." The following are some examples of current usage:

J'habite en Floride.

J'habite dans le Kansas.

Il voyage cette année dans le Texas.

Nous venons du Colorado.

Elle vient de Georgie.

*I live in Florida.*

*I live in Kansas.*

*He's traveling this year in Texas.*

*We come from Colorado.*

*She comes from Georgia.*

One can also express "at/to/in" with *dans l'état de/du/de la/de l'* and, in fact, this is the preferred form for New York State.

However, native speakers do not seem to be consistent in the use of *de* or *en*.  
~~J'habite dans l'état de New York.~~

*I live in New York.*

Exemple: *J'habite dans l'état de N.Y.*

The United States (the nation) itself is plural, so:

Ils vont aux Etats-Unis.  
Ils rentrent des Etats-Unis.

*They're going to the United States.*  
*They're coming back from the United States.*

There are various ways of treating islands, island-nations, and other geographical-political entities, all of which are best handled as vocabulary items: a good dictionary will provide the answer.

NOTE: The verb *visiter*, often used in these contexts, does not take a prepositional complement: it takes a direct object.

Je vais visiter la France.  
Marie a visité le Mexique.

*I'm going to visit France.*  
*Marie visited Mexico.*

BUT: Je vais en France.  
Il voyage en France.  
Elle va voyager au Japon.

*I'm going to France.*  
*He's traveling in France.*  
*She's going to travel in Japan.*

## 15.2 PREPOSITIONS OF LOCATION (NOT GEOGRAPHICAL) - *LES PREPOSITIONS DE LIEU*

This again is a question of vocabulary rather than grammar: there is no "grammatical rule" that we can give you to help classify the prepositions and their meanings/uses. What we will do is list the more common prepositions alphabetically, comment on them, and give some examples.

Please note that the translations we give are rough equivalents, which we emphasize by putting them in parentheses. As you will see, there is no simple one-to-one relationship between the prepositions of English and of French.

---

à

(to, at, in)

This preposition, like *de*, contracts with the definite article (masculine singular, and masculine and feminine plural: *à + le* → *au*, *à + les* → *aux*). Also, like *de*, it serves as a particle in the complementary infinitive construction (12.1-a) and is used to express possession. As a preposition of location, its use is quite clear.

Nous allons au théâtre.  
Je vais à la banque.  
Je vais rester à la maison.  
C'est le fils à Marie et Robert.

*We're going to the theater.*  
*I'm going to the bank.*  
*I'm going to remain at the house.*  
*He's Mary and Robert's son.*

---

---

avec

(with)

Avec qui vas-tu au cinéma?

*Who(m) are you going to the movies with?*  
*OR With whom are you going to the movies?*

---

à côté de

(next to, alongside)

La pharmacie est à côté de la boulangerie.  
J'habite à côté du cinéma.

*The pharmacy is next to the boulangerie.*  
*I live next to the movie theater.*

---

dans

(in, into)

Mon livre est dans la serviette.  
Il entre dans le métro.<sup>41</sup>  
Elle est dans sa chambre.

*My book is in the briefcase.*  
*He's going into the metro.*  
*She's in her room.*

---

de

(from, of, about)

This preposition, like *à*, contracts with the definite article (masculine singular, and masculine and feminine plural: *du, des*). Also, like *à*, it serves as a particle in the complementary infinitive construction (12.1-a). A very common use is in the possessive construction (remember, French has no "apostrophe s" for the possessive). And, of course, it is found in the partitive construction (2.2.3). We first give an example of its use as a preposition of location, then one in which it expresses possession.

Quand vas-tu sortir du bureau?  
C'est le frère de Marie-Hélène?

*When are you going to leave the office?*  
*Is he Marie-Hélène's brother?*

---

derrière

(behind)

Sa bicyclette est derrière le garage.  
Je vais m'asseoir derrière toi.

*His bicycle is behind the garage.*  
*I'm going to sit behind you.*

---

devant

(in front of)

Mettez-le devant la chaise.  
Elle attend devant la maison.

*Put it in front of the chair.*  
*She's waiting in front of the house.*

---

---

<sup>41</sup>The preposition is required in French; in English "enter" does not require a preposition: "He is entering the house." In other words, "enter" is a transitive verb, and *entrer* is an intransitive verb (and, as you may recall, an intransitive "être" verb).

---

**en face de**

(opposite, across from)

Le restaurant est en face de la gare.

*The restaurant is across the street from the railroad station.*

Le cinéma est juste en face de l'arrêt.

*The movie theater is right in front of the (bus) stop.*

---

**loin de**

(far from)

Le musée est loin de la gare.

*The museum is far from the railroad station.*

J'habite pas loin du centre.

*I live not far from downtown.*

---

**près de**

(near)

Le restaurant est près de la Tour Eiffel.

*The restaurant is near the Eiffel Tower.*

On est près du café.

*We're near the café.*

---

**sous**

(under)

La corbeille est sous la table.

*The wastebasket is under the table.*

Sous le pont d'Avignon, l'on y....

*Under the bridge at Avignon, they....*

---

**sur**

(on, on top of)

Son stylo est sur la table.

*His pen is on the table.*

Vous pouvez laisser les verres sur le comptoir.

*You can leave the glasses on the counter.*

---

## 16.0 The Adverbial Modifiers - *les adverbess, les locutions adverbiales, et les propositions adverbiales ou circonstancielles*

Adverbial modifiers include both single-word adverbs (English: “slowly”) and adverbial phrases (English: “in the morning”). All of them may function as modifiers of adjectives, verbs, other adverbs, and as modifiers of the verb phrase as a whole or of the sentence as a whole.

FORM (for adverbs and adverbial phrases)

### 16.1 ADVERBS - *LES ADVERBES*

Most adverbs are formed from adjectives. In general, the rule is to add *-ment* to the feminine form of the adjective, but--as you see below--there are some exceptions (which we have underlined). Examples:

<u>Adjective, f.</u>	<u>Adverb</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
heureuse	heureusement	<i>happily, fortunately</i>
lente	lentement	<i>slowly</i>
rapide	rapidement	<i>rapidly, fast</i>
complète	complètement	<i>completely</i>
vraie	<u>vraiment</u> <sup>42</sup>	<i>truly, really</i>
seule	seulement	<i>only</i>
naturelle	naturellement	<i>naturally</i>

Adjectives that end in -ent or -ant (except the word *lent*) form the adverb by dropping -ent, -ant and substituting -emment, -amment. Both sound the same.

évident <sup>43</sup>	évidemment	<i>obviously</i>
courant	couramment	<i>fluently</i>
prudent	prudemment	<i>prudently</i>
savant	savamment	<i>wisely, knowingly</i>

In addition, there are some adverbs not formed from adjectives.

très	<i>very</i>
bien	<i>well (also very)</i>
mal	<i>badly</i>
vite	<i>quickly, fast</i>

---

<sup>42</sup>As you see, the *-e* of the feminine adjective form has been dropped in modern spelling.

<sup>43</sup>We do not give the feminine form for these because, historically, the adverb was formed from the masculine forms.



### 16.1.1 Adverbs: The Comparative and Superlative - *les adverbes: le comparatif et le superlatif*

In almost exactly the same way as we do for adjectives, we can indicate relative degrees of the value of an adverb by using the function words *moins, plus, aussi, (+...que)* and make it "the most," by adding the definite article (invariable *le* in this case) in front of the function word.

Marie marche plus vite que Paul.  
Tu parles aussi mal que mon père.  
Zut! Maintenant je comprends  
moins bien qu'avant.  
Je conduis plus prudemment que mon mari.  
Tu manges moins vite que Julien.

*Mary walks faster than Paul.  
You speak as badly as my father.  
Damn! Now I understand  
less well than before.  
I drive more prudently than my husband.  
You eat less fast than Julien.*

### 16.2 ADVERBIAL PHRASES - *LES LOCUTIONS ADVERBIALES*

Adverbial phrases are prepositional phrases that modify a verb or predicate (verb phrase), describing the "when," "where," "how" of some event or condition. For form, see Section 15; for function, see below; for order, just note that adverbial phrases are necessarily relatively long and therefore tend to be at the beginning or end of a sentence or clause. There are many examples in 16.3-5, but one quick one here.

Il est arrivé à six heures.

*He arrived at six o'clock.*

[à six heures modifies the predicate (*est arrivé*), telling us when "he" arrived]

FUNCTION (for adverbs and adverbial phrases, i.e., all "adverbials")

All adverbials function as modifiers and all have a wide range of uses. It is true, however, that certain adverbials are more likely to occur in certain positions or fulfill certain functions, as you'll see below.

### 16.3 MODIFYING ADJECTIVES OR MODIFYING OTHER ADVERBIALS

For this function, the adverb most often is one of the intensifiers, like *très, fort, bien* (colloquially, *vachement, terriblement, carrément*, etc.), and almost always directly precedes the word it modifies.

Il est très malade.  
J'ai très mal compris.  
Ça, c'est fort intéressant.  
Elle est vachement stupide.

*He is very sick.  
I very badly misunderstood.  
That's very interesting.  
She's incredibly (really) stupid.*

## 16.4 MODIFYING THE VERB

In the majority of cases, one-word adverbs directly follow the verb that they modify. If the verb has a noun as its direct object, that noun may precede the adverb (see Section 16.5). If the verb form is compound (e.g., *passé composé*) a small subset of adverbs may occur between the auxiliary and the past participle. There is no neat word-order rule for adverb placement.

Il parle lentement.  
Elle a vite compris.  
Elle nous a parlé sérieusement.  
Vous parlez bien (le)<sup>44</sup> français.  
Il nous chante doucement.  
J'ai facilement complété l'examen.  
Elle l'a expliqué clairement.

*He speaks slowly.*  
*She quickly understood.*  
*She spoke to us seriously.*  
*You speak French well.*  
*He sings sweetly (softly) to us.*  
*I easily finished the exam.*  
*She explained it clearly.*

## 16.5 MODIFYING THE VERB PHRASE, THE PREDICATE, OR THE SENTENCE

If you just think about the meaning, it is usually fairly easy to see when an adverb modifies the whole verb phrase or sentence: the range or scope of modification is greater than it is for words that directly modify just the action of the verb. Notice in the following examples how similar the constructions are in English:

Nous ferons nos devoirs demain.  
Demain il va nous dire la vérité.  
Il a mis les livres sur le banc.  
Elle est partie sans nous parler.  
J'aurais dû lui téléphoner hier!  
Aujourd'hui il va nous raconter une histoire.  
Je l'ai fait tout de suite.

*We'll do our homework tomorrow.*  
*Tomorrow, he'll tell us the truth.*  
*He put the books on the bench.*  
*She left without speaking to us.*  
*I should have called him/her yesterday!*  
*Today, he's going to tell us a story.*  
*I did it right away.*

---

<sup>44</sup>We place the *le* in parentheses because, as a rule, names of languages after the verb *parler* are not preceded by the article, except when there is an adverb or other word or phrase between *parler* and the language, as there is here (*bien*). Current usage appears to be leaning toward omitting *le* even when there is a (short) word in that position.

## 16.6 INTERROGATIVE ADVERBS - LES ADVERBES INTERROGATIFS

Like all interrogative words, the interrogative adverbs have two functions: (1) they signal that this is a question of the "information-requesting" type (not a "yes/no" question) and (2) they are adverbial modifiers. They can be classified according to certain restrictions on word order as we illustrate below.

Most commonly, one uses *est-ce que* and normal word order with interrogative adverbs. We recommend you use *est-ce que* regularly when you produce such questions except when you have acquired, through frequent use, easy inversion forms, such as "*Comment allez-vous?*"

Où est-ce que Jean est allé?	<i>Where did John go?</i>
Pourquoi est-ce que le professeur cherchait sa serviette?	<i>Why was the professor looking for his briefcase?</i>
Quand est-ce que tu pars pour la France?	<i>When are you leaving for France?</i>
Comment est-ce qu'il va voyager?	<i>How is he going to travel?</i>

The more complex inversion formula definitely is used, however, and you should be able to recognize it. The order is (1) interrogative adverb, (2) noun subject, (3) inversion of the verb and a "dummy" pronoun subject [that is, the verb followed by a subject pronoun].

Pourquoi le professeur cherche-t-il sa serviette? [the noun subject is <i>le professeur</i> , the "dummy" pronoun is <i>il</i> (referring, of course, to the professor)]	<i>Why is the prof looking for his briefcase?</i>
Combien ce livre a-t-il coûté?	<i>How much did this book cost?</i>
Comment ta mère a-t-elle rencontré ton père?	<i>How did your mother meet your father?</i>

But the following interrogative adverbs may be followed by inversion of a noun subject with the verb, if the verb is simple (not compound).

Où va Jean? [ <i>va</i> is <u>simple</u> ; if it were <u>compound</u> ( <i>est allé</i> ), this construction would not be possible]	<i>Where is John going?</i>
Combien vaut ce diamant?	<i>How much is this diamond worth?</i>
Comment va Marie?	<i>How is Mary?</i>

Colloquially, one hears frequently an interrogative adverb followed by regular word order.

Combien tu as payé cette voiture?	<i>How much did you pay for this car?</i>
Pourquoi il a fait ça?	<i>Why did he do that?</i>

# **Part II**

## **The Order of Major Constituents in the Three Basic Sentence Types**

## 17.0 Affirmative Declarative Sentences - *les propositions affirmatives*

The standard word order of affirmative declarative sentences in French is very close to that of English and should present no difficulties to the student. It is SUBJECT + VERB + COMPLEMENT. Complement is a cover term for direct objects, indirect objects, infinitive constructions, and other more complex forms that 'complete' the sense of the verb: all of these function much as they do in English.

Following are some examples, with the subject printed in capital letters, the verb underlined, and the complement with no marking.

DAVID a tué Goliath.

LES ENFANTS mangeaient des bonbons.

ELLE est allée au théâtre.

JE vois des oiseaux!

*David killed Goliath.*

*The children were eating candy.*

*She went to the theater.*

*I see some birds!*

There is one major exception to the basic word order rule, and that is when the direct or indirect object is a personal pronoun, or when there is a pronominal adverb (*y*, or *en*). As explained in more detail in 1.1 and 1.3, these forms regularly precede the verb of which they are the complement. A few examples here (see others in 1.1, 1.3):

DAVID l'a tué.

LES ENFANTS *en* mangeaient.

ELLE *y* est allée.

J'*en* vois.

*David killed him.*

*The children were eating some.*

*She went there.*

*I see some.*

## 18.0 Negative Declarative Sentences - *les propositions négatives*

The simple negative (equivalent to "does not," "will not," "isn't," etc.) poses no problems once we accept the notion of a "double negative" (both *ne* and *pas*) as being correct. Other negatives (equivalent of "never," "no longer," "nobody," "nothing") are a bit more complex, but not very difficult.

### 18.1 THE SIMPLE NEGATIVE - *LE NEGATIF (SIMPLE)*

The simple negative is indicated by the use of *pas* after the verb. As for all negatives, the entire verb phrase (or predicate) is preceded by *ne*. In most cases, that means *ne...pas* "surrounds" the verb, and that is the way the construction is often described.

Note that when we say "*pas* follows the verb," we are referring (1) to the verb whose action/condition it negates, and (2) to the conjugated part of a compound verb construction. Consider the following examples:

Elle n'est pas malade.

*She isn't sick.*

[*Est* is the only verb in this sentence; it is a conjugated form, specifically the third person singular present indicative. *Pas* follows it.]

Nous ne ferons pas nos devoirs.

*We won't do our homework.*

[*Ferons* is the only verb in this sentence; it is a conjugated form, specifically the first person plural future. *Pas* follows it.]

Je ne veux pas aller au cinéma.

*I don't want to go to the movies.*

[*Veux* and *aller* are both verbs, but it's the "wanting" that the speaker is denying/negating, not the "going." Also note that *veux* is a conjugated form, while *aller* is not. *Pas* follows *veux*.]

Il a décidé de ne pas aller au cinéma.

*He decided not to go to the movies.*

[In contrast to the preceding sentence, in this one it is the "going" (*aller*) that is negated. Simple negation of infinitives is *ne pas*, as one unit in front of the infinitive. This, by the way, is the only time that *ne* and *pas* come together.]

Ils n'ont pas vu ce film.

*They didn't see this film.*

[*Ont...vu* is one verb, in two parts. In this case, the parts are separated by *pas*, as they are sometimes separated by other negatives and some adverbs. *Ont* is the conjugated part of the compound verb and therefore, according to the rule, *pas* follows it.]

## 18.2 THE COMPLEX NEGATIVE

By "complex," we don't mean to imply that these words and constructions are especially complicated. They're not. It's simply that, as in English, it's possible in French to express more than simple negation: one can say "never," "no longer," "no one," "nothing," etc., and even put those negative concepts together in various combinations; of course, in English, we have to worry about "double negatives."

The one most important thing to remember is that, as soon as you introduce one of the other negatives, you can add others in French, but you must eliminate *pas*.

We restate: You cannot have *pas* with the other negatives. (There is an exception: *pas* can be followed by the privative *que*, as illustrated in section b below.)

Like interrogative words, these negatives have functions in addition to negation (they're adverbs or noun-like forms). In most cases, they take their position in the sentence according to their syntactic function. Here are some examples, with comments. You'll note that, as always, the "negative marker," *ne*, precedes the entire verb phrase/predicate.

### a. Fully negative constructions

Personne ne vient.

*No one is coming.*

[*Personne* is the subject as well as being a negative word. Its function as subject determines its position in the sentence: compare "*Jean ne vient pas.*" ]

Je n'ai vu personne.

*I saw no one.*

[*Personne* is the direct object. It follows the verb, the whole verb.<sup>45</sup> same position as any direct object noun: compare "*Je n'ai pas vu mon ami.*" ]

Rien n'est arrivé.

*Nothing happened.*

[*Rien* is the subject, thus in first position.]

Je n'ai rien vu.

*I saw nothing.*

[A minor apparent exception. *Rien* could certainly be called the direct object: compare "*Je n'ai vu personne,*" "*J'ai vu le monument.*" However, *rien* does regularly go after the auxiliary, the conjugated form of the verb in a compound verb form. In other words, it acts more like *pas* or the adverbial negatives.]

Je n'en sais rien.

*I know nothing about it.*

[Simple tense form (not compound), so *rien* really has no place else to go.]

Ils ne viendront plus.

*They won't come anymore.*

Il n'a jamais étudié le français.

*He never studied French.*

Je ne le vois jamais plus.

*I never see him anymore.*

Tu n'as plus rien à dire?

*You have nothing further to say?*

Je n'ai jamais rencontré ton frère.

*I've never met your brother.*

[All five of the above are "adverbial" negatives. All come after the conjugated form of the verb. As you see in the third and fourth examples, it is possible to use more than one at a time.]

#### b. The "partially negative" or "privative" construction

Unlike all of the above, the construction *ne ... que* is used to negate everything except the item that is singled out by the *que*. In all other ways, it works like a complex negative.

Je n'ai que trois amis.

*I have only three friends.*

Il ne veut que travailler.

*He only wants to work.*

Il n'a jamais fait que cela.

*He never did anything but that.*

Nous ne mangeons que des bonbons.

*We only eat candy.*

Combining *pas* with *ne...que* obviously reverses the effect of the privative.<sup>46</sup>

Il n'y a pas que Paris à visiter.

*There's not just Paris to be visited.*

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<sup>45</sup>Personne is the only negative word that regularly follows the past participle.

<sup>46</sup>See Grevisse, Section 2226.

## 19.0 Interrogative Sentences - *les propositions interrogatives*

It is very important to note, explicitly, that there are two major classes of questions: (1) "yes/no" questions, and (2) "information-requesting" questions. Although the same syntactic constructions may be used for either type of question, there are some restrictions dependent on the type. However, the crucial difference is in the spoken language: "Yes/no" questions are asked with an easily recognized rising intonation, very similar to the one we use in English, while info-requesting questions are posed with essentially the same intonation as a declarative sentence, again much as we do in English.

### 19.1 "YES/NO" QUESTIONS

#### a. Intonation

The simplest way to make a "yes/no" question (and a perfectly correct, natural and common way) is to maintain standard declarative word order and use a rising intonation pattern. We'll indicate the intonation pattern here by the usual spelling convention, a question mark.

#### STATEMENT

Jean va au théâtre.  
Il a acheté une voiture.  
Les enfants sont au lit.  
Tu as trouvé tes clés.

#### QUESTION

Jean va au théâtre?  
Il a acheté une voiture?  
Les enfants sont au lit?  
Tu as trouvé tes clés?

#### b. Est-ce que

The next simplest way to form a "yes/no" question (also perfectly correct and natural--and the most frequent with more complex sentences) is to insert *est-ce que* in front of standard declarative word order. (Remember, the intonation is also rising: *est-ce que* doesn't signal "yes/no" all by itself in the spoken language.)

#### STATEMENT

Jean va au théâtre.  
Il a acheté une voiture.  
Les enfants sont au lit.  
Ils sont allés voir leurs cousins la semaine passée.

#### QUESTION

Est-ce que Jean va au théâtre?  
Est-ce qu'il a acheté une voiture?  
Est-ce que les enfants sont au lit?  
Est-ce qu'ils sont allés voir leurs cousins la semaine passée?



c. N'est-ce pas?

Another simple way of asking a "yes/no" question (this time with the rising intonation only on the added "tag" expression)<sup>47</sup> is to maintain standard word order and add the expression *n'est-ce pas*. Note that the English equivalent is much more complex, since we usually have to use a form of "do" or "to be", in the proper tense and person-number, whereas the French expression is invariable. We'll give translations here.

Il est malade, n'est-ce pas?

*He's sick, isn't he?*

Tu as trouvé tes clés, n'est-ce pas?

*You found your keys, didn't you?*

Ils viennent ce soir, n'est-ce pas?

*They're coming tonight, aren't they?*

C'est un bon film, n'est-ce pas?

*It's a good movie, isn't it?*

d. Inversion (= verb followed by subject)

Inversion is simple and quite natural--when the subject is a pronoun. When the subject is a noun, there are restrictions on whether or not one can use full inversion (that is, verb followed by the noun subject). Also, with a noun subject, it is possible to leave the noun phrase in its normal position and then you must insert a dummy subject pronoun after the verb.

We urge you to use *est-ce que* when in doubt, and in general to use the question-makers in sections a-c in preference to inversion.

However, you will certainly use inversion with pronoun subjects in simple questions such as the following. (Again, recall that we use rising intonation with these "yes/no" questions, no matter what other question-form may be used.)

STATEMENT

Il va au cinéma.

Elle comprend la question.

Tu as trouvé tes clés.

Vous avez fait vos devoirs.

QUESTION

*Va-t-il<sup>48</sup> au cinéma?*

*Comprend-elle<sup>49</sup> la question?*

*As-tu trouvé tes clés?*

*Avez-vous fait vos devoirs?*

NOTE: Do not combine *n'est-ce pas* (nor *est-ce que*) with inversion!

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<sup>47</sup>A "tag" expression is one that is added on to a sentence, usually to make it into a question, but sometimes for other purposes. An example in English is "You're leaving tomorrow, aren't you?" The speaker is requesting confirmation of his/her expectation that the person addressed is leaving the following day.

<sup>48</sup>Note that a *-t-* must be inserted when the verb ends in a vowel (which is common for *-er* verbs (*parle-t-il*)).

<sup>49</sup>The *-d* is linked to the following vowel (*-l*) and is pronounced as a *l*.

Finally, here are some examples of inversion with a noun subject. As explained in Section 16.6, the only time you can have full inversion (verb followed by noun subject) is with certain interrogative adverbs; therefore, there are no such cases for "yes/no" questions.

Les enfants ont passé la nuit chez un ami.

*The children spent the night at a friend's house.*

Les enfants ont-ils passé la nuit chez un ami?

*Did the children spend the night at a friend's house?*

[*Les enfants* is the noun subject, in normal position; *ils* is the dummy pronoun subject, in inverted position (inverted with the verb) to signal the question.]

Votre camarade de chambre est allé tout seul  
à la réunion.

*Your roommate went to the meeting (all)  
alone.*

Votre camarade de chambre est-il allé  
tout seul à la réunion?

*Did your roommate go to the meeting  
(all) alone?*

[*Votre camarade de chambre* is the noun phrase subject, in normal position; *il* is the dummy pronoun subject, in inverted position (inverted with the verb) to signal the question.]

## 19.2 INFORMATION-REQUESTING QUESTIONS

Since, as we pointed out at the beginning of this section on interrogatives, "info-requesting" questions are distinguished from "yes/no" questions by the fact that all "yes/no" questions use a strong rising intonation pattern, it's clear that intonation is not one of the techniques available for signaling "info-requesting" questions. Furthermore, as you can see from the meaning, *n'est-ce pas* cannot be used in forming these kinds of questions [since *n'est-ce pas* is asking for confirmation ("isn't that so") of what the speaker believes to be true, it is necessarily a "yes/no" question].

Thus, we are left with either inversion or *est-ce que* to form "info-requesting" questions, and we'll urge you again to depend principally on *est-ce que*.

a. Est-ce que

To form an "info-requesting" question using *est-ce que*, one inserts that expression after the interrogative word/expression (pronoun or adverbial) and before all the rest of the sentence. **DO NOT** place *est-ce que* in front of the interrogative word.

[For further details, see Sections 1.6, 2.2.6, and 16.6.]

Pourquoi est-ce qu'ils sont allés au cinéma hier soir?	<i>Why did they go to the movies last night?</i>
Qui est-ce que vous avez vu en classe hier?	<i>Who(m) did you see in class yesterday?</i>
Comment est-ce que je peux vous remercier?	<i>How can I thank you?</i>
Où est-ce que tu as mis le livre?	<i>Where did you put the book?</i>
A quelle heure est-ce qu'il est revenu?	<i>(At) what time did he come back?</i>
Qu'est-ce qu'on a trouvé sous la voiture?	<i>What did they find under the car?</i>
Dans quel film est-ce que Catherine Deneuve a fait son début?	<i>In what film did Catherine Deneuve make her debut?</i>
[In this last example, the <i>est-ce que</i> follows the noun ( <i>film</i> ), which is introduced by <i>quel</i> .]	

b. Inversion<sup>50</sup>

To form an information-requesting question using inversion, the speaker follows a procedure similar to the one we described for "yes/no" questions.

(1) If the subject is a pronoun, inversion is comparatively simple.

Pourquoi sont-ils allés au cinéma?	<i>Why did they go to the movies?</i>
Comment allez-vous?	<i>How are you?</i>
Quand est-il revenu?	<i>When did he come back?</i>
Quand veux-tu partir?	<i>When do you want to leave?</i>
Qui a-t-il vu ce matin?	<i>Who(m) did he see this morning?</i>
Laquelle de ces robes vas-tu mettre?	<i>Which of these dresses are you going to wear/put on?</i>
Qu'a-t-il dit?	<i>What did he say?</i>

(2) If the subject is a noun, inversion is more complicated, and full inversion is only possible under severe constraints (see Section 16.6). The standard inversion system is to insert a dummy pronoun after the verb, as previously mentioned in Section 19.1.d:

Pourquoi les Romains ont- <u>ils</u> envahi la Gaule?	<i>Why did the Romans invade Gaul?</i>
Quand vos amies sont- <u>elles</u> arrivées à Londres?	<i>When did your friends arrive in London?</i>
Sous quel prétexte le criminel est- <u>il</u> entré dans la banque?	<i>Under what pretext did the criminal enter the bank?</i>

<sup>50</sup>Note that inversion also occurs in statements that begin, for example, with *aussi* meaning "therefore." You may encounter such constructions in your reading, but we do not think it is necessary for you to learn it at this level.

### 19.3 INTERROGATIVE-NEGATIVE

When you pose a question in the negative, apply all the rules for the negative that are discussed in 18.2 above. Although the construction can begin to appear quite complex, there really are no added problems except to note that, when you have inversion, the negative word follows the inverted pronoun (which is connected to the verb by a hyphen) rather than directly following the verb. Note that the verb and pronoun in inversion (connected by a hyphen, a *trait d'union*) cannot be separated.

Consider the following:

Ils sont allés au théâtre.

Sont-ils allés au théâtre?

Ils **ne** sont **pas** allés au théâtre.

**Ne** sont-ils **pas** allés au théâtre?

N'as-tu **pas** complété tes devoirs?

*They went to the theater.*

*Did they go to the theater?*

*They didn't go to the theater.*

*Didn't they go to the theater?*

*Haven't you finished your homework?*

## 20.0 Imperative Sentences

Imperative sentences are those in which a speaker commands (or firmly or politely requests, depending on the situation) some second person to do/not to do something. As we do in English, the French omit the subject pronoun in such sentences.

Partez!	<i>Leave!</i>
Dis-moi la vérité.	<i>Tell me the truth!</i>
Arrêtez! (Arrête!)	<i>Stop!</i>

Also as in English, the verb comes first in the imperative construction when it is affirmative.

Allons au théâtre.	<i>Let's go to the theater.</i>
Rentrez tout de suite.	<i>Go home right away!</i>
Donne-moi <sup>51</sup> mon chapeau!	<i>Give me my hat!</i>

Still as in English, the complements (prepositional phrases, adverbs, direct and indirect object nouns and pronouns) all follow the verb in the affirmative imperative construction.

Achetez cette voiture.	<i>Buy this car.</i>
Parlez plus lentement.	<i>Speak more slowly.</i>
Ecris à ta tante.	<i>Write to your aunt.</i>
Posons-leur des questions.	<i>Let's ask them some questions.</i>
Rendez-les-nous!	<i>Give them back to us!</i>
Allez-y!	<i>Go to it! Go ahead! [Literally: Go there!]</i>
Achète-m'en.	<i>Buy me some.</i>

Yes, there is one exception. Unlike English, in negative imperative sentences, the direct and indirect object pronouns (including *y* and *en*) precede the verb. All other complements still follow it.

[For further details, see Section 1.1.2.d and 1.1.3.d.]

Ne me dites pas cela.	<i>Don't tell me that.</i>
N'y allez pas.	<i>Don't go there.</i>
Ne le rends pas à Michelle.	<i>Don't give it back to Michelle.</i>

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<sup>51</sup>Note that the object pronoun (indirect object here) follows the verb in the affirmative imperative. This is the only exception to the rule that object pronouns precede the verb of which they are the object. See Sections 1.1.2-4.

# ***Part III***

## ***Miscellanea***

[In this part, we will discuss constructions and words that do not fit neatly under either of the preceding large classes of grammatical phenomena. Some are morphological (word-formation) questions, or matters of spelling conventions; some are special lexical matters—words that deserve individual discussion; some are properly "syntax" questions that did not fit logically into either of the first two parts.]

## 21.0 The verbal expressions *il y a, voici, voilà*

### 21.1 *IL Y A*<sup>52</sup>

The expression *il y a*, which involves use of the verb *avoir* in the third person singular and can be used in all tenses, is used to state the presence or existence of something.

Since it is usually used to mention something not previously mentioned, *il y a* almost always is followed by an indefinite noun phrase: one that starts with an indefinite article or a partitive article. Consider the following examples:

Il y a un livre sur la table.	<i>There's a book on the table.</i>
Il y a des poissons dans ce lac.	<i>There are (some) fish in this lake.</i>
Il y avait du pain dans le frigo.	<i>There was (some) bread in the refrigerator.</i>

Although this is a fairly "tight" idiomatic construction, the parts can sometimes be separated from each other. For example, *en* can occur between *y* and *a*, and the negative or interrogative can cause *il* to be separated or moved. All such changes follow the usual rules for pronoun object order (*y* before *en*) or the negative or interrogative constructions. Consider the following examples:

Y a-t-il du pain?	<i>Is there any bread?</i>
Il y en avait dans le frigo.	<i>There was some in the refrigerator.</i>
N'y a-t-il pas de fête cette année?	<i>Isn't there a festival this year?</i>

### 21.2 *VOICI / VOILA*

These expressions together are easily distinguished from the preceding one (*il y a*). They do not simply assert the existence or presence of something, but rather they are used to point (literally or figuratively) at something fairly definite, usually something in view of both the speaker and hearer.

Voici ton stylo.	<i>Here's your pen.</i>
Voici la rue qu'on cherche.	<i>Here's the street we're looking for.</i>
Voilà mon père.	<i>There's (here's) my father.<sup>53</sup></i>
Voilà une bonne idée.	<i>There's (here's) a good idea.</i>
[Some idea just mentioned, for example, by the other speaker.]	

As you see in the examples, the direct object nouns follow the verbal expressions *voici* and *voilà*. (They are direct objects because the expression literally means "See here.") When the object is a pronoun, it precedes, according to the usual rule.

Le voici.	<i>Here it is.</i>
Les voilà.	<i>There they are.</i>

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<sup>52</sup>Remember that, when followed by a time expression, *il y a* expresses the equivalent of "ago." For example, *Je l'ai vu il y a deux minutes* means "I saw him two minutes ago."

<sup>53</sup>The difference between *voici* and *voilà* is not so sharp that one must always translate *voilà* with "there" and *voici* with "here."

## 22.0 Contraction and Elision

The following are spelling (orthographic) conventions that reflect variations in pronunciation. They are important.

### 22.1 CONTRACTION

The prepositions *à* and *de* contract with the definite article and with the pronoun *LEQUEL* as follows:

<i>à + le</i>	→	<i>au</i>	
<i>à + les</i>	→	<i>aux</i>	[that's either masculine or feminine]
<i>de + le</i>	→	<i>du</i>	
<i>de + les</i>	→	<i>des</i>	[that's either masculine or feminine]
<i>à + lequel</i>	→	<i>auquel</i>	
<i>à + lesquels</i>	→	<i>auxquels</i>	
<i>à + lesquelles</i>	→	<i>auxquelles</i>	
<i>de + lequel</i>	→	<i>duquel</i>	
<i>de + lesquels</i>	→	<i>desquels</i>	
<i>de + lesquelles</i>	→	<i>desquelles</i>	

NOTE-1: The direct object pronouns (*le* and *les*), DO NOT contract with the prepositions *à* and *de*:

<i>Il commence à le faire.</i>	<i>He's beginning to do it.</i>
<i>Je viens de les voir.</i>	<i>I just saw them.</i>

NOTE-2: Neither the feminine singular article (*la*), nor the article when it is *l'* (singular and in front of a word beginning with a vowel sound, whether it represents *le* or *la*) contract with these prepositions:

<i>Il va à la bibliothèque.</i>	<i>He's going to the library.</i>
<i>Il y a de l'ail dans ce plat.</i>	<i>There's garlic in this dish.</i>

NOTE-3: The special forms of certain adjectives (such as *bel* and *cet*) also reflect variations in pronunciation (usually with an interesting historical explanation).

[For further details, see Sec. 2.2.5, the Demonstrative Adjective, and the footnotes to individual adjectives in Sec. 2.4.3]



## 22.2 ELISION

The *-e* and *-a* of *le* and *la* (whether as articles or as object pronouns) elide--that is, are dropped and replaced by an apostrophe--when the following word begins with a vowel sound.

<b>le garçon</b>	but	<b>l'ami</b>
<b>la jeune fille</b>	but	<b>l'amie</b>

[Whether masculine or feminine (*le* or *la*), if the word begins with a vowel, the vowel of the article is dropped.]

<b>le hasard</b>	but	<b>l'hôtel</b>
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[*hasard* starts with an "aspirate" *h*, *hôtel* does not<sup>54</sup>]

The other words that elide a final vowel are all the monosyllables that end in *-e*, including some two-syllable prepositions and conjunctions that contain *que*. Here is a full list, in which we repeat *le* and *la*.

<b>ce</b>	[ <i>ce</i> as a pronoun, not as a demonstrative adjective, for which the form <i>cet</i> is used in front of vowels]
<b>de</b>	
<b>je</b>	
<b>le, la</b>	
<b>me</b>	
<b>ne</b>	
<b>que and quoique, presque, lorsque</b>	
<b>se</b>	
<b>te</b>	

Finally, the *-i* of the conjunction *si* ("if"), elides with a following *i-* (and only a following *i-*, no other vowel sound).<sup>55</sup>

<b>S'il vient, je lui parlerai.</b>	<i>If he comes, I'll speak to him.</i>
<b>S'il était gentil, je lui donnerais des bonbons.</b>	<i>If he were nice, I'd give him some candy.</i>
<b>Si elle vient, je lui parlerai.</b>	<i>If she comes, I'll speak to her.</i>

---

<sup>54</sup>An "aspirate *h*" is one that, although it is silent like all *h*'s in standard French, acts like a consonant in preventing elision and *liaison*. There are a few fairly common words that begin with aspirate *h*: they are listed in this book, as they are in most dictionaries, with an asterisk (\**hasard*, \**honte*, and so forth.)

<sup>55</sup>It is only *si* that elides the *-i* before *i-*; *qui* does not do so (e.g. *Le monsieur avec qui il est allé au théâtre.*).

## 23.0 The Dynamic Duo: *Il est* and *C'est*

### 23.1 GENERAL COMMENTS

It is an unfortunate fact in the history of the teaching of French in the United States that the use of *il est* as opposed to *c'est* has always been considered a problem. The truth is that the question of choosing to say *il est* versus *c'est* in most contexts is rather easily internalized—that is, the unspoken rules can be acquired via repeated meaningful use. However, it is admittedly difficult to provide an explanation that covers all the uses of these constructions and satisfies all learners and all teachers. That difficulty is due partially to the inadequacies of all grammatical theory and partially to the inadequacies of textbook writers.

Our approach will be to make some general comments, then take up each function-type separately, with examples. First, the comments:

- a. We believe that if you will simply use these expressions as they are presented in class and in the materials we provide, you'll acquire the ability to use them yourself correctly and smoothly. Please give it time.
- b. There are two major kinds of constructions that involve the use of *c'est/il est*: one in which they are followed by a simple predicate complement (a pronoun, a noun alone, a noun with modifiers, or a predicate adjective), and a second one in which they are followed by a more complex complement (adjective + *à* or *de* + infinitive). We treat each kind separately, the first in 23.2 through 23.4, the second in 23.5.
- c. Also, there are two "meanings" or uses of the pronoun *il* in expressions that are usually included in *c'est/il est* discussions: One obvious use of the word *il* is as a **personal pronoun that replaces a masculine noun**, as in *Jean n'est pas américain. Il est français*. Obviously, in such cases, we can also include *elle* in the discussion: *Marie n'est pas américaine. Elle est française*. The other use of *il* (and only *il*, never *elle*) is as an **impersonal pronoun/particle**, as in *Il est difficile de piloter un avion*. It will help immensely if you understand the concept of personal vs impersonal use of the pronoun *il*.
- d. The pronoun *ce* (*c'*), in addition to being "indefinite," that is, not having an explicit definite antecedent, can be used impersonally in the same way that *il* is sometimes used, and can often be substituted for *il/elle* in colloquial usage.

### 23.2 IL-ELLE/C'EST + RELIGION, NATIONALITY OR PROFESSION

For this use of *c'est* vs. *il-elle est* you can apply a very simple formal rule. It goes like this:

If you use *c'est* then you **MUST** use some kind of modifier (i.e., an adjective, or even just a determiner--an article) with the following noun. If you use *il/elle* then you **MAY NOT** use anything with the following word--no determiner, no adjective.

Il est médecin.  
C'est un médecin.  
Elle est professeur.  
Tu connais Madame Pouche?

*He's a doctor.*  
*He's a doctor.*  
*She's a professor.*  
*Do you know Madame Pouche?*

C'est un très bon professeur.

*She's a very good professor.*

[The context, that is, the previous sentence, told us this was "she"; the word *professeur* is masculine, therefore we say *un, bon*, not *une, bonne*<sup>56</sup>]

Il est canadien.  
C'est un Canadien.<sup>57</sup>  
Il est juif.  
C'est un juif.

*He's Canadian.*  
*He's (a) Canadian.*  
*He's Jewish.*  
*He's Jewish / He is a Jew.*

Note that **any** definite subject (proper noun, full common noun phrase, any **personal** pronoun) followed by *être*, followed by the name of a profession, religion or nationality, **MUST** delete the article with the profession/religion/nationality (examples designated as "a"), **UNLESS** there are other modifiers (examples designated as "b").

- a. Je suis catholique.
- b. Je suis **un** catholique **pratiquant**.
- a. Jean-Paul est infirmier.
- b. Jean-Paul est **un** infirmier **très capable**.
- a. Mon père est suisse.
- b. Mon père est **un** Suisse  
**qui ne parle qu'une langue!**

*I'm (a) Catholic.*  
*I'm a practising Catholic.*  
*Jean-Paul is a (male) nurse.*  
*Jean-Paul is a very competent nurse.*  
*My father is Swiss.*  
*My father is a Swiss who speaks only one language!*

---

<sup>56</sup>In our more enlightened times, names of professions that were traditionally masculine (grammatical gender) have been assigned both masculine and feminine gender, so one does now hear--though not frequently--*C'est une très bonne professeur*. It is most common in less formal French, e.g. *La prof est formidable!*, *C'est une très bonne prof*.

<sup>57</sup>Note that we have capitalized the names of nationalities after *c'est* + indefinite article. That is because, in this construction, the nationality is a **noun**, whereas in "*Il est canadien*," it is an **adjective**. Remember that French tends to avoid capitalization in general.

### 23.3 THE USES OF C'EST

NOTE: We're focusing on *c'est* (as opposed to *il est* or *elle est*), followed by a simple complement, not when it's followed by the infinitive construction; for that, see Section 23.5.

a. *C'est* must be used when the predicate complement (i.e., the words on the other side of the verb "to be," *est* in this case) is a personal pronoun, a proper noun, or any modified noun ("modified" means any modifier, including just the indefinite article).

C'est moi.	<i>It's me.</i>
C'est elle.	<i>It's her.</i>
C'est nous.	<i>It's us.</i>
Ce sont <sup>58</sup> eux.	<i>It's them. (m.)</i>

[examples with personal pronouns as the predicate complement]

C'est Jacques.	<i>It's James.</i>
C'est Marie.	<i>It's Mary.</i>
Ce sont les Dupont.	<i>It's the Duponts.</i>

[examples with proper nouns as the predicate complement]

C'est un livre.	<i>It's a book.</i>
C'est une vieille dame.	<i>It's an elderly lady.</i>
C'est un petit garçon.	<i>It's a little boy.</i>
Ce sont des clés.	<i>Those are keys.</i>

[examples with a modified noun (by an adjective or just an article) as the predicate complement]

b. *C'est* must be used when the predicate complement is the name of a nationality, religion, or profession, and it is modified—even with just an indefinite article. See 23.2 for examples.

c. *C'est* must be used when the referent (that is, the thing referred to, not the complement on the other side of *est*) is not a person or other explicit antecedent having gender and number—in other words, when the referent is indefinite (an idea, a concept, a whole statement). In such cases, *ce* (the *c* of *c'est*) is a weak form of *cela*.

C'est une bonne idée.	<i>That's (it's) a good idea.</i>
Au contraire, c'est nul!	<i>No way, it's stupid!</i>
C'est vrai.	<i>That's true.</i>
Ce serait super!	<i>That would be great!</i>

[referring to a statement someone has just made]

C'était le comble!	<i>That was the last straw!</i>
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[referring to some act/statement that occurred/was made in the past]

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<sup>58</sup>This is the only plural verb form that occurs with the tonic (or "stressed" or "disjunctive") pronouns in this construction. The singular, *est*, is used with first and second plural forms, as well as first and second singular forms, and—of course—third singular forms.

d. *C'est must be used* in giving a calendar date or day.<sup>59</sup>

C'est le vingt-cinq octobre.  
C'est lundi.

*It's October 25th.  
It's Monday.*

[See also 23.5 in which we contrast *c'est* and *il est* followed by adjective + *de* or *à* + infinitive.]

## 23.4 THE USES OF *IL EST* (IMPERSONAL) AND *IL/ELLE EST* (PERSONAL)

NOTE: We're focusing on *il est, elle est* (as opposed to *c'est*), followed by a simple complement, not when it is followed by the infinitive construction; for that see Section 23.5.

a. *Il/Elle est* (personal) must be used when the complement is an adjective and the antecedent is clear, having gender and number.

- Comment est ton ami? *"What's your friend like?"*  
- Il est grand; il est sympa. *"He's tall; he's nice."*

[The antecedent is clear: it's *ton ami*, which is masculine singular, thus *il*]

- Tu connais Marie? *"Do you know Mary?"*  
- Oui, elle est très intelligente. *"Yes, she's very intelligent."*

[The antecedent is clear: it's *Marie*, which is feminine singular, thus *elle*.]

b. *Il/Elle est* (personal) must be used when the complement is the name of a religion, nationality or profession and it is not modified at all (not even by an indefinite article). See 23.2.

c. *Il/Elle est* (personal) must be used when the complement is a prepositional phrase (usually of location, such as *dans ton sac*, "in your bag") and the antecedent is a person. If the antecedent is an animal, plant or a definite inanimate object, one often does use *il* or *elle*, but *ce* is sometimes used in informal speech.

- Où est Jean? *"Where's John?"*  
- Il est devant la bibliothèque. *"He's in front of the library."*  
- Je cherche mes clés. *"I'm looking for my keys."*  
- Elles sont dans ton sac. *"They're in your bag."*  
- Tu as vu le chat? *"Have you seen the cat?"*  
- Oui, il est dans la cuisine. *"Yes, he's in the kitchen."*  
- Où est mon livre? *"Where's my book?"*  
- Il est sur la table. *"It's on the table."*

- Où est le bureau de tabac? *"Where is the tabac?"*  
- C'est là, à côté de la poste. *"It's right there, next to the post office."*

[example of more colloquial use, with *c*]

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<sup>59</sup>It is also correct to say "*Nous sommes...*" as, for example, in *Nous sommes le vingt-cinq octobre, Nous sommes lundi*.

d. *Il est* (impersonal) must be used in giving clock time.

*Il est six heures.*

*It's six o'clock.*

*Il est trois heures et demie.*

*It's three-thirty.*

### 23.5 *IL EST* AND *C'EST* FOLLOWED BY ADJECTIVE + *A* OR *DE* + INFINITIVE

For these constructions, it is helpful to recall that *ce* is most often an indefinite pronoun, that is, it has a referent but an indefinite one (an idea, a concept, a notion, a whole previous statement--not a specific person or thing), and that *il* is impersonal, that is, it has no referent at all.

Although there are exceptions, we urge you to follow these two rules:

a. Use *C'est* + *à* + infinitive when the infinitive stands alone. In such cases, it is usually a transitive verb (that is, it's a verb that takes an object, but there is no explicit direct object given).

*C'est facile à faire.*

*That's easy to do.*

*C'est bon à manger.*

*That's (It's) good to eat.*

*C'est difficile à trouver.*

*It's difficult to find (it).*

b. Use *Il est* + *de* + infinitive when the infinitive has a complement, either a direct or indirect object or some prepositional phrase.

*Il est facile de faire cela.*

*It's easy to do that.*

*Il est bon de manger lentement.*

*It's good to eat slowly.*

*Il est difficile de trouver un bon restaurant dans cette ville.*

*It's difficult to find a good restaurant in this city.*

*Il est agréable de marcher sous la pluie.*

*It's pleasant to walk in the rain.*

*Il n'est pas acceptable de rire pendant la messe.*

*It's not acceptable to laugh during Mass.*

## 24.0 Clock Time - *l'heure*

Following is a listing of most of the common expressions regarding clock time. Note that the French use the 24-hour clock very often, not just in timetables or movie schedules. People will often say "*Il est quinze heures*" rather than "*Il est trois heures de l'après-midi.*"

Quelle heure est-il?	<i>What time is it?</i>
Il est une heure. <sup>60</sup>	<i>It's one o'clock.</i>
Il est trois heures.	<i>It is three o'clock.</i>
Il est deux heures et demie <sup>61</sup> .	<i>It's half past two.</i>
Il est cinq heures et quart.	<i>It's a quarter past five.</i>
Il est sept heures moins le quart.	<i>It's a quarter to seven.</i>
Il est huit heures dix <sup>62</sup> .	<i>It's eight ten.</i>
Il est six heures moins deux <sup>63</sup> .	<i>It's two minutes to six.</i>
Il est midi.	<i>It's noon.</i>
Il est midi et demi.	<i>It's twelve-thirty/thirty past noon.</i>
Il est minuit.	<i>It's midnight.</i>
Il est quinze heures.	<i>It's three p.m.</i>
Il est seize heures trente.	<i>It's four-thirty p.m.</i>
Il est dix-neuf heures quarante-cinq.	<i>It's seven forty-five p.m.</i>
Il est trois heures du matin.	<i>It's three in the morning.</i>
Il est trois heures de l'après-midi.	<i>It's three p.m.</i>
Il est huit heures du soir.	<i>It's eight at night.</i>

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<sup>60</sup>Note that *heure* is singular (no -s) for "one o'clock," but plural for all others.

<sup>61</sup>There is an -e on *demi* to agree with *heure*. When *demi* follows *midi* or *minuit*, which are masculine, no -e is added.

<sup>62</sup>For the number of minutes past the hour, use the appropriate numeral from 1 (*une*) to 59 (*cinquante-neuf*), without anything between it and the word "*heure(s)*."

<sup>63</sup>For the number of minutes before ("to") the hour, use the appropriate numeral from 1 (*une*) to 29 (*vingt-neuf*), directly after *moins* (no article).

## 25.0 Devoir

As a main verb, *devoir* means "to owe" and requires no special discussion. As a modal auxiliary (in English, some modal auxiliary verbs are "would," "can," "must"), followed by infinitive constructions, it has many meanings and connotations. The following chart should help you recognize its many uses according to the choice of tense-form.

In this chart, "time" means the time referred to by the speaker; "tense" means the specific tense-form of the verb *devoir* that is used.

**Note: We number the examples on the next page; the numbers here refer to those examples**

IF THE SPEAKER IS REFERRING TO THE:	He/she uses this tense of <i>devoir</i>	to express:
PRESENT	<i>présent</i>	necessity or obligation (01) AND expectation or probability (02) "must do it" / "is supposed to do it" [yes, it's ambiguous: context usually makes it clear what the speaker intends (03-05)]
PAST	<i>passé composé</i>	obligation or necessity (08) "had to do it" [and <u>did</u> ] probability (06) "probably did it" / "must have done it"
	<i>imparfait</i>	expectation (09) or probability (07) "probably <u>was</u> "
	<i>conditionnel antérieur</i>	an unfulfilled obligation (12)) "should have done it"
FUTURE	<i>conditionnel</i>	obligation (or necessity) (10) "ought to do it"
	<i>futur</i>	necessity (or obligation) (11) "will have to do it"
	<i>présent</i>	expectation (or probability) "is to do it"



Some sentences with devoir:

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 01 | Je dois partir demain.   | <i>I have to leave tomorrow.</i>               |
| 02 | Elle doit être ici.  | <i>She must be here.</i>                       |
| 03 | Elle doit arriver à six heures.  | <i>She's due to arrive at six. /</i>           |
| 04 |  | <i>She's supposed to arrive at six.</i>        |
| 05 | [context will tell you which meaning holds]  | <i>She must arrive at six.</i>                 |
| 06 | J'ai dû oublier de vous le dire.   | <i>I must have forgotten to tell you.</i>      |
| 07 | Jacques devait être fatigué.   | <i>Jim must have been tired.</i>               |
| 08 | J'ai dû travailler hier soir.  | <i>I had to work yesterday evening.</i>        |
| 09 | Elle devait arriver à midi.<br>[–but she didn't and we're anxiously waiting]                               | <i>She was (supposed) to get here at noon.</i> |
| 10 | Je devrais partir, Fifi.<br>[–but it's nice here by the fire, so let it snow and I'll stay a while longer] | <i>I ought to leave, Fifi.</i>                 |
| 11 | Nous devons le couvrir.  | <i>We'll have to cover it.</i>                 |
| 12 | Ils auraient dû t'aider.<br>[–but they didn't]   | <i>They should have helped you.</i>            |

## 26.0 The Three Faces of *tout*

*Tout* can mean "all," or "every," or "(the) whole," or even "very," depending on its syntactic function and the context in which it is used. It can have, as an adjective, four forms:

<i>tout</i>	masculine singular
<i>toute</i>	feminine singular
<i>tous</i>	masculine plural
<i>toutes</i>	feminine plural

However, *tout* is invariable in some other functions. Let's take one syntactic function at a time.

### 26.1 THE ADJECTIVE *TOUT*

In this use, *tout* is normally followed by a determiner, usually the definite article.

J'ai mangé tout le pain.	<i>I ate all the bread.</i>
Elle y est restée toute la nuit.	<i>She stayed there all night.</i>
Tous les soldats sont partis.	<i>All (of) the soldiers left.</i>
Il a parlé à toutes les étudiantes.	<i>He spoke to all the (female) students.</i>

### 26.2 THE ADVERB *TOUT*

In this use, *tout* is similar in meaning to *très* or *fort*: it is an intensifier. Although adverbs are usually invariable, *tout* can occur with *-e* before feminine adjectives. (It is never plural in this function, however.)

J'étais tout heureux de le voir.	<i>I was very happy to see him.</i>
Elle était toute surprise de le voir.	<i>She was very surprised to see him.</i>

### 26.3 THE PRONOUN *TOUT*

There are two possibilities here: either there is a clear antecedent or there is not.

- a. With a clear antecedent, *tout* agrees with its antecedent (either masculine or feminine plural).

Tu vois ces roses? Elles sont toutes très jolies.	<i>You see these roses? They're all very pretty.</i>
Mes étudiants sont très gentils.	<i>My students are very nice.</i>
Ils sont tous <sup>63</sup> venus me voir à l'hôpital.	<i>They all came to see me at the hospital.</i>

---

<sup>63</sup>As a pronoun (never as an adjective), *tous* is pronounced /tus/, with the final *-s* heard.

- b. When there's no clear antecedent, one uses only *tout*.

J'ai compris **tout** ce qu'il a dit.

*I understood everything he said.*

## 27.0 Some Sequence of Tense Rules and Hints

In this section, we group a number of constructions that involve time expressions, conjunctions, and prepositions that are indicators of particular tense forms.

You'll note that, except for the last section, 27.5, all these constructions involve a main clause and a subordinate clause of some sort. As you've probably observed when you first used these constructions in class, the verb in the subordinate clause is always somehow tied to the one in the main clause--its tense (or mood) is usually determined by its relationship to that verb, often indicated by some connecting word.

### 27.1 SUBORDINATE CLAUSES INTRODUCED BY *QUE* AND DEPENDENT ON SPECIFIC SETS OF VERBS AND VERBAL EXPRESSIONS

See the entire section on the Subjunctive, 7.3.2.

### 27.2 SUBORDINATE CLAUSES INTRODUCED BY *QUAND, LORSQUE, DES QUE, AND AUSSITOT QUE*

- a. The most important thing to remember is that, when the time of the main verb is future (implied or explicit), you must use the future in the subordinate clause. That is quite different from English.

Je te paierai quand tu me donneras les billets.  
Demandez-lui d'entrer dès qu'il sera arrivé.

*I'll pay you when you give me the tickets.  
Ask him to come in as soon as he arrives  
(has arrived).*

- b. Note that *quand* and *lorsque* can also be used in parallel tense constructions in the present and in the past (with the *imparfait*).

Je le vois chaque soir quand il promène son chien.

*I see him every evening when  
he walks his dog.*

[repeated present action: future tense not required and not appropriate]

Lorsque j'avais six ans, mon père était dans l'armée. *When I was six, my father was in the army.*

### 27.3 SUBORDINATE CLAUSES INTRODUCED BY *QUE* (OR *SI*) AND DEPENDENT ON A VERB OF SAYING

These are all "indirect discourse" constructions: either indirect statements or indirect questions. If the main verb is present (or future) tense, the verb in the subordinate clause is the same as it would be in direct discourse. If the main verb is past, then the subordinate clause verb is "one step back" from the verb of the direct discourse equivalent, if that is possible (e.g., *présent* becomes *imparfait*, *futur* becomes *conditionnel*, but *imparfait* remains *imparfait*).

#### DIRECT DISCOURSE

(Jean dit) "Je vais partir."

(On a demandé) "Vous ferez le voyage?"

*(John says) "I'm going to leave."*

*(They asked) "Are you going to take the trip?"*

#### INDIRECT DISCOURSE

Jean a dit qu'il allait partir.

On lui a demandé si elle ferait le voyage.

*John said he was going to leave.*

*They asked her if she would take the trip.*

Elle lui disait qu'il fallait obéir.

*She was telling him that we (one, they) had to obey.*

## 27.4 SUBORDINATE CLAUSES INTRODUCED BY *SI*

These are commonly known as "conditional" sentences although they do not all exactly fit that classification. In any case, there is a good, dependable sequence-of-tense rule for these constructions:

If the subordinate clause (the one introduced by <i>si</i> ) is:	... the main clause ("result") will be:
present tense	future tense (or possibly present or imperative, depending on context)
Si tu me <b>donnes</b> ton numéro, je te <b>téléphonerai</b> demain. S'il t' <b>embrasse</b> , <b>embrasse-le</b> . S'il m' <b>embrasse</b> , je le <b>frappe</b> .	<i>If you give me your number, I'll call you tomorrow. If he kisses you, kiss him. If he kisses me, I hit him.</i>
imperfect tense	conditional tense
Si j' <b>avais</b> 6.000 francs, j' <b>irais</b> à Nice.	<i>If I had 6,000 francs, I'd go to Nice.</i>
pluperfect tense	past conditional tense
Si tu <b>avais fait</b> tes devoirs, tu n' <b>aurais pas raté</b> l'examen.	<i>If you had done your homework, you wouldn't have failed the exam.</i>

## 27.5 PRESENT TENSE WITH *DEPUIS* AND *IL Y A (VOILA)...* *QUE*

This is the construction we call "Past to present, inclusive" (and, when the verb is in the imperfect, "Past to past, inclusive"). It is used to express the fact that an action or state began at some point in the past and is still going on at the time of speech (or, with the imperfect, was still going at at some designated moment in the past). THIS CONSTRUCTION IS DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT FROM THE EQUIVALENT ENGLISH CONSTRUCTION: French uses the present tense (e.g. *je fais cela*) where English uses a past tense ("I have done that/I have been doing that"); or French uses the imperfect tense (e.g. *je faisais cela*) where English uses a "double past" tense ("I had been doing that").

Note that *depuis* can be used to introduce either the moment in the past when the action/condition began or the period of time during which the action/condition has (had) been in progress. *Il y a ... que* can only be used to indicate the period of time, not the beginning moment.

Je l'attends depuis vingt minutes.

[STRESS ON DURATION]

*I've been waiting for him for twenty minutes.*

Elle fait cela depuis son départ.

[STRESS ON MOMENT ACTION BEGAN]

*She's been doing that since his departure.*

Il y a trois jours qu'il travaille ici.

Je l'attendais depuis trente minutes  
quand il a téléphoné.

*He's been working here for three days.*

*I'd been waiting for him for thirty minutes  
when he called.*

Exception: The *passé composé* is used in this construction when the action is negated.

Je ne l'ai pas vu depuis l'été passé.

*I haven't seen him since last  
summer.*

Also note carefully that *il y a* (WITHOUT *que*, and at the end of the sentence) has a completely different sense, "ago." In that case, it is used with the *passé composé*.

Je l'ai vu il y a trois jours.

*I saw him three days ago.*

Finally, note that, to indicate duration of an action/condition in the past (NOT continuing to the time of speech), we use *pendant*, usually with the *passé composé*, to indicate completed action.

Ils ont étudié pendant trois heures hier soir.

*They studied for three hours  
last night.*

## 28.0 Some Meaning and Construction Problems with Certain Verbs

### 28.1 MANQUER

- a. As a simple transitive verb, with a direct object like "the train" or "my appointment," *manquer* works just like "miss" in English.

J'ai manqué le train.

*I missed the train.*

- b. When it conveys the meaning "to miss someone," *manquer* is like *plaire* (see Section 10): the person who is "missed" is the grammatical subject; the person who actively "misses" the other person is the indirect object.

Tu me manques.

*I miss you.*

Il manque à ses parents.

*His parents miss him.*

Cette année, sa copine lui a manqué.

*This year, he missed his girlfriend.*

[Note the difference from English: the subject and object are inverted.]

- c. To express the notion that someone lacks something, the verb *manquer* is followed by *de* plus the name of the item.

Ils manquent de courage.

*They don't have any courage.*

Pendant le match, il a manqué d'énergie.

*During the game, he didn't have any energy.*

## 28.2 "LEAVING, GOING (AWAY), AND RETURNING"

a. Note the distinct uses of the verbs that mean "to leave."

(1) *Partir* (one of the verbs conjugated with *être* in compound tenses) means "to depart, to go away, to leave from/for." It cannot be followed by a direct object (remember, all *être* verbs are intransitive).

Jacques est parti à vingt heures.  
Ils partent pour Paris dans trente minutes.

*James left at eight o'clock.*  
*They are leaving for Paris in thirty minutes.*

(2) *Quitter* has the sense of "to leave something/someone." It takes a direct object, which must be included. (Therefore, in the *passé composé*, it is conjugated with *avoir*.)

Ils ont quitté Paris à dix-huit heures.  
Elle va quitter son ami.

*They left Paris at six o'clock.*  
*She's going to leave her friend.*

(3) *Laisser* is also transitive, like *quitter*, but more precisely conveys the meaning of leaving something/someone "behind," most often something small or moveable.

Ils ont laissé la voiture dans le parking.  
Laissez les clés sur la table.

*They left the car in the parking lot.*  
*Leave the keys on the table.*

b. Now note the distinctions for verbs that mean "to go away" or just "to go."

(1) We've already seen that *partir* means "to go away/leave." *S'en aller* has approximately the same meaning and may be used more or less in the same contexts. (It is sometimes more emphatic.)

Il s'en va.  
Il part.  
Pourquoi es-tu partie?  
Va-t-en!

*He's going away.*  
*He's leaving/going away.*  
*Why did you leave?*  
*Go away! Get out of here!*

(2) The verb *aller*, meaning "to go," must have a complement, that is, the destination must be noted, even if only by the adverbial pronoun, *y*. Unlike *partir* and *s'en aller*, it conveys the notion of going "someplace."

Nous allons au cinéma.  
Elle y va tous les samedis.

*We're going to the movies.*  
*She goes there every Saturday.*



c. Finally, let's consider the various verbs that mean "to return."

(1) *Rendre* means "to give back" (to return something to someone) or "to turn in."

Rendez-moi ce livre.

*Give me back that book.*

Rendez vos copies.

*Turn in your homework.*

(2) *Rentrer* fairly narrowly refers to coming or going back home.

Je vais rentrer tout de suite.

*I'm going right back home.*

Tu es rentré assez tard hier soir.

*You came home pretty late last night.*

Il est rentré en France.

*He went back (home) to France.*

Je vais rentrer chez moi tout de suite.

*I'm going home right away.*

[The place one is returning to can be mentioned; it is not redundant.]

(3) *Retourner* means to go back to a place; *revenir* means to come back from (or to) a place.

Je veux retourner à Paris.

*I want to return/go back to Paris.*

[speaker is not in Paris]

Elle est revenue de Londres hier.

*She came back from London yesterday.*

[speaker is in the same city that the person referred to is in; and it's not London]

Nous revenons à Paris le 7 avril.

*We get back to Paris on April 7th.*

[speaker is in Paris, probably giving an itinerary]

### 28.3 DOES THE VERB TAKE A DIRECT OR AN INDIRECT OBJECT?

There are a number of verbs in French that regularly take a direct object whereas the English equivalent takes an indirect object (or a similar prepositional construction), and vice versa. We list some of the more common examples; there are more. Good dictionaries include this information with the verb entry.

---

#### French takes a direct object

#### English takes an indirect object or a similar prepositional construction

**attendre**  
J'attends le train.

*to wait for*  
*I'm waiting for the train.*

**chercher**  
Il cherche son fils.

*to look for*  
*He's looking for his son.*

**écouter**  
Tu écoutes la radio?

*to listen to*  
*Are you listening to the radio?*

**regarder**  
Nous regardons une photo.

*to look at*  
*We're looking at a photo.*

---

#### French takes an indirect object or a similar prepositional construction

#### English takes a direct object

**assister (à)**  
Nous assistons au concert.

*to attend*  
*We're attending the concert.*

**obéir (à)**  
Il leur obéit.

*to obey*  
*He obeys them.*

**répondre (à)**  
Répondez à la question.

*to answer*  
*Answer the question.*

**ressembler (à)**  
Elle ressemble à sa mère.

*to resemble (look like)*  
*She looks like her mother.*

**téléphoner (à)**  
Je vais lui téléphoner.

*to call (telephone)*  
*I'm going to call her.*

## 29. 0 Weather Expressions

Most weather expressions use the verb *faire*, but some important ones do not. The following list provides sufficient variety for you to complain and to voice pleasure over the weather.

**Quel temps fait-il?**

**Il fait beau.**

**Il fait mauvais (temps).**

**Il fait froid/chaud.**

**Il fait frais.**

**Il fait doux.**

**Il fait du vent. Il y a du vent.<sup>65</sup>**

**Il fait du soleil. Il y a du soleil.**

*What's it like out?*

*How's the weather?*

*It's nice.*

*It's bad weather.*

*It's cold/hot.*

*It's cool.*

*It's mild.*

*It's windy.*

*It's sunny.*

**Le soleil brille.**

**Il y a des nuages.**

**Le ciel est couvert.**

**Il pleut.**

**Il neige.**

**Il gèle.**

**Il y a un orage.**

**Il y a des éclairs.**

**Il y a des coups de tonnerre.**

**Ça tonne / Il tonne.**

*The sun is shining.*

*It's cloudy/There are clouds.*

*It's overcast.*

*It's raining.*

*It's snowing.*

*It's freezing.*

*There's a storm.*

*There's lightning.*

*There's thunder.*

*It's thundering.*

As usual for vocabulary items, rather than true grammatical questions, you should consult the dictionary for more specific descriptions of the weather.

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<sup>65</sup>Note the use of the partitive article (*du*) with *vent* and *soleil* in these expressions.

# APPENDIX I: Verb Tables

**NOTES:** Please read these notes before using the tables.

1. Each table follows exactly the same pattern:

- a. The **infinitive** (the dictionary entry form) **at the top**, followed by the basic English translation.
- b. The **past participle**, followed by the first person singular form of the *passé composé*, thus reminding you of the proper auxiliary (*avoir* or *être*) to use in compound tenses.
- c. The **present participle**, which always ends in *-ant*.
- d. A **complete listing of the present indicative** forms, all persons, singular and plural.
- e. For the **imperfect, future, and conditional**, just the first person singular of each. Remember:

The future tense endings for all verbs are:

-ai	-ons
-as	-ez
-a	-ont

The conditional and imperfect endings for all verbs are:

-ais	-ions
-ais	-iez
-ait	-aient

- f. Finally, the full set of forms for the present subjunctive, the past definite (*passé simple*), and the imperative.

2. For regular verbs, we give a model verb for each of the three conjugations (*parler* for *-er* verbs, *finir* for *-ir* verbs, and *vendre* for *-re* verbs). In all cases, except for certain verbs of the *-er* conjugation (for those, see the Pronunciation Section: Spelling Conventions: 7, g), once you know that a verb belongs to one of these conjugations of regular verbs, you simply follow the model to obtain the correct form.

3. The irregular verbs, including *avoir* and *être*, are then given in alphabetical order.

**REGULAR -er VERB MODEL: *parler*, "to speak"**

Past Participle	<i>parlé</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> :	<i>j'ai parlé,...</i> ]
Present Participle	<i>parlant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je parle</i> <i>tu parles</i> <i>elle parle</i>	<i>nous parlons</i> <i>vous parlez</i> <i>ils parlent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je parlais</i>	
Future	<i>je parlerai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je parlerais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je parle</i> <i>tu parles</i> <i>il parle</i>	<i>nous parlions</i> <i>vous parliez</i> <i>elles parlent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je parlai</i> <i>tu parlas</i> <i>on parla</i>	<i>nous parlâmes</i> <i>vous parlâtes</i> <i>ils parlèrent</i>
Imperative	<i>parle<sup>1</sup>, parlons, parlez</i>	

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**REGULAR -ir VERB MODEL: *finir*, "to finish"**

Past Participle	<i>fini</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> :	<i>j'ai fini,...</i> ]
Present Participle	<i>finissant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je finis</i> <i>tu finis</i> <i>elle finit</i>	<i>nous finissons</i> <i>vous finissez</i> <i>elles finissent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je finissais</i>	
Future	<i>je finirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je finirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je finisse</i> <i>tu finisses</i> <i>il finisse</i>	<i>nous finissions</i> <i>vous finissiez</i> <i>elles finissent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je finis</i> <i>tu finis</i> <i>elle finit</i>	<i>nous finîmes</i> <i>vous finîtes</i> <i>ils finirent</i>
Imperative	<i>finis, finissons, finissez</i>	

---

<sup>1</sup>On all -er verbs the final -s of the present tense form is dropped for the imperative; it is added back on only when the following word begins with a vowel sound, which is rare. (See *aller*, in which *va* goes to *vas-y*.)

## REGULAR *-re* VERB MODEL: *vendre*, "to sell"

Past Participle	<i>vendu</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : <i>j'ai vendu,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>vendant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je vends</i> <i>tu vends</i> <i>on vend</i>	<i>nous vendons</i> <i>vous vendez</i> <i>elles vendent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je vendais</i>	
Future	<i>je vendrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je vendrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je vende</i> <i>tu vendes</i> <i>elle vende</i>	<i>nous vendions</i> <i>vous vendiez</i> <i>ils vendent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je vendis</i> <i>tu vendis</i> <i>on vendit</i>	<i>nous vendîmes</i> <i>vous vendîtes</i> <i>elles vendirent</i>
Imperative	<i>vends, vendons, vendez</i>	

---

So much for the three regular verb conjugations: the following pages provide an alphabetical listing of all the irregular verbs you will officially encounter (that is, at some point you will be expected to be able to use them on your own) in the two-year program, including the auxiliary verbs, *avoir* and *être*. (Note that the dictionary we expect all students to use gives extensive information on all verbs.

## *aller*, "to go"

Past Participle	<i>allé</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : <i>je suis allé(e),...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>allant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je vais</i> <i>tu vas</i> <i>elle va</i>	<i>nous allons</i> <i>vous allez</i> <i>ils vont</i>
Imperfect	<i>j'allais</i>	
Future	<i>j'irai</i>	
Conditional	<i>j'irais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>j'aille</i> <i>tu ailles</i> <i>on aille</i>	<i>nous allions</i> <i>vous alliez</i> <i>elles aillent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>j'allai</i> <i>tu allas</i> <i>il alla</i>	<i>nous allâmes</i> <i>vous allâtes</i> <i>elles allèrent</i>
Imperative	<i>va,</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>allons, allez</i>	

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## *s'asseoir*, "to sit (down)"

Past Participle	<i>assis</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : <i>je me suis assis(e),...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>s'asseyant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je m'assieds</i> <i>tu t'assieds</i> <i>elle s'assied</i>	<i>nous nous asseyons</i> <i>vous vous asseyez</i> <i>ils s'asseyent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je m'asseyais</i>	
Future	<i>je m'assiérai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je m'assiérais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je m'asseye</i> <i>tu t'asseyes</i> <i>on s'asseye</i>	<i>nous nous asseyions</i> <i>vous vous asseyiez</i> <i>elles s'asseyent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je m'assis</i> <i>tu t'assis</i> <i>il s'assit</i>	<i>nous nous assîmes</i> <i>vous vous assîtes</i> <i>elles s'assirent</i>
Imperative	<i>assieds-toi, asseyons-nous, asseyez-vous</i>	

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<sup>2</sup>An -s is added if the next word begins with a vowel sound.

## ***avoir*, "to have"**

Past Participle  
Present Participle

*eu* [*Passé composé*: *j'ai eu*,...]  
*ayant*

Present Indicative

<i>j'ai</i>	<i>nous avons</i>
<i>tu as</i>	<i>vous avez</i>
<i>on a</i>	<i>elles ont</i>

Imperfect

*j'avais*

Future

*j'aurai*

Conditional

*j'aurais*

Present Subjunctive

<i>j'aie</i>	<i>nous ayons</i>
<i>tu aies</i>	<i>vous ayez</i>
<i>il ait</i>	<i>ils aient</i>

Past Definite  
(*Passé simple*)

<i>j'eus</i>	<i>nous eûmes</i>
<i>tu eus</i>	<i>vous eûtes</i>
<i>elle eut</i>	<i>ils eurent</i>

Imperative

*aie*,<sup>3</sup> *ayons*, *ayez*

---

## ***boire*, "to drink"**

Past Participle  
Present Participle

*bu* [*Passé composé*: *j'ai bu*,...]  
*buvant*

Present Indicative

<i>je bois</i>	<i>nous buvons</i>
<i>tu bois</i>	<i>vous buvez</i>
<i>elle boit</i>	<i>ils boivent</i>

Imperfect

*je buvais*

Future

*je boirai*

Conditional

*je boirais*

Present Subjunctive

<i>je boive</i>	<i>nous buvions</i>
<i>tu boives</i>	<i>vous buviez</i>
<i>on boive</i>	<i>elles boivent</i>

Past Definite  
(*Passé simple*)

<i>je bus</i>	<i>nous bûmes</i>
<i>tu bus</i>	<i>vous bûtes</i>
<i>il but</i>	<i>elles burent</i>

Imperative

*bois*, *buvons*, *buvez*

---

<sup>3</sup>The second singular imperative form for *avoir*, like *-er* verbs, has no *-s*, unless the next word begins with a vowel, which is highly unlikely.



***conduire*, "to drive" (*séduire*, "to seduce")**

Past Participle	<i>conduit</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : <i>j'ai conduit</i> ,...]	
Present Participle	<i>conduisant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je conduis</i>	<i>nous conduisons</i>
	<i>tu conduis</i>	<i>vous conduisez</i>
	<i>elle conduit</i>	<i>ils conduisent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je conduisais</i>	
Future	<i>je conduirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je conduirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je conduise</i>	<i>nous conduisions</i>
	<i>tu conduises</i>	<i>vous conduissiez</i>
	<i>on conduise</i>	<i>elles conduisent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je conduisis</i>	<i>nous conduisîmes</i>
	<i>tu conduisis</i>	<i>vous conduisîtes</i>
	<i>il conduisit</i>	<i>elles conduisirent</i>
Imperative	<i>conduis, conduisons, conduisez</i>	

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***connaître*, "to know / be acquainted with"**

Past Participle	<i>connu</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : <i>j'ai connu</i> ,...]	
Present Participle	<i>connaissant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je connais</i>	<i>nous connaissons</i>
	<i>tu connais</i>	<i>vous connaissez</i>
	<i>elle connaît</i>	<i>ils connaissent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je connaissais</i>	
Future	<i>je connaîtrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je connaîtrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je connaisse</i>	<i>nous connaissions</i>
	<i>tu connaisses</i>	<i>vous connaissiez</i>
	<i>on connaisse</i>	<i>elles connaissent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je connus</i>	<i>nous connûmes</i>
	<i>tu connus</i>	<i>vous connûtes</i>
	<i>il connut</i>	<i>elles connurent</i>
Imperative	No imperative form.	

***courir*, "to run"**

Past Participle	<i>couru</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : j'ai couru,...]	
Present Participle	<i>courant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je cours</i> <i>tu cours</i> <i>elle court</i>	<i>nous courons</i> <i>vous courez</i> <i>ils courent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je courais</i>	
Future	<i>je courrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je courrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je coure</i> <i>tu coures</i> <i>on coure</i>	<i>nous courions</i> <i>vous couriez</i> <i>elles courent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je courus</i> <i>tu courus</i> <i>il courut</i>	<i>nous courûmes</i> <i>vous courûtes</i> <i>elles coururent</i>
Imperative	<i>cours, courons, courez</i>	

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***croire*, "to believe, think"**

Past Participle	<i>cru</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : j'ai cru,...]	
Present Participle	<i>croyant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je crois</i> <i>tu crois</i> <i>elle croit</i>	<i>nous croyons</i> <i>vous croyez</i> <i>ils croient</i>
Imperfect	<i>je croyais</i>	
Future	<i>je croirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je croirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je croie</i> <i>tu croies</i> <i>on croie</i>	<i>nous croyions</i> <i>vous croyiez</i> <i>elles croient</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je crus</i> <i>tu crus</i> <i>il crut</i>	<i>nous crûmes</i> <i>vous crûtes</i> <i>elles crurent</i>
Imperative	<i>crois, croyons, croyez</i>	

***devoir*, "to owe, ought to" [See REF GRAM: 25]**

Past Participle	<i>dû</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : j'ai dû,...]	
Present Participle	<i>devant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je dois</i> <i>tu dois</i> <i>elle doit</i>	<i>nous devons</i> <i>vous devez</i> <i>ils doivent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je devais</i>	
Future	<i>je devrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je devrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je doive</i> <i>tu doives</i> <i>on doive</i>	<i>nous devions</i> <i>vous deviez</i> <i>elles doivent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je dus</i> <i>tu dus</i> <i>il dut</i>	<i>nous dûmes</i> <i>vous dûtes</i> <i>elles durent</i>
Imperative	No imperative form.	

---

***dire*, "to say"**

Past Participle	<i>dit</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : j'ai dit,...]	
Present Participle	<i>disant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je dis</i> <i>tu dis</i> <i>elle dit</i>	<i>nous disons</i> <i>vous dites</i> <i>ils disent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je disais</i>	
Future	<i>je dirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je dirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je dise</i> <i>tu dises</i> <i>on dise</i>	<i>nous disions</i> <i>vous disiez</i> <i>elles disent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je dis</i> <i>tu dis</i> <i>il dit</i>	<i>nous dûmes</i> <i>vous dîtes</i> <i>elles dirent</i>
Imperative	<i>dis, disons, dites</i>	

***dormir*, "to sleep"**

Past Participle	<i>dormi</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai dormi,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>dormant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je dors</i> <i>tu dors</i> <i>elle dort</i>	<i>nous dormons</i> <i>vous dormez</i> <i>ils dorment</i>
Imperfect	<i>je dormais</i>	
Future	<i>je dormirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je dormirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je dorme</i> <i>tu dormes</i> <i>on dorme</i>	<i>nous dormions</i> <i>vous dormiez</i> <i>elles dorment</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je dormis</i> <i>tu dormis</i> <i>il dormit</i>	<i>nous dormîmes</i> <i>vous dormîtes</i> <i>elles dormirent</i>
Imperative	<i>dors, dormons, dormez</i>	

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***écrire*, "to write" (*décrire*, to describe)**

Past Participle	<i>écrit</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai écrit,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>écrivant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>j'écris</i> <i>tu écris</i> <i>elle écrit</i>	<i>nous écrivons</i> <i>vous écrivez</i> <i>ils écrivent</i>
Imperfect	<i>j'écrivais</i>	
Future	<i>j'écrirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>j'écrirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>j'écrive</i> <i>tu écrives</i> <i>on écrive</i>	<i>nous écrivions</i> <i>vous écriviez</i> <i>elles écrivent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>j'écrivis</i> <i>tu écrivis</i> <i>il écrivit</i>	<i>nous écrivîmes</i> <i>vous écrivîtes</i> <i>elles écrivirent</i>
Imperative	<i>écris, écrivons, écrivez</i>	

***envoyer, "to send"***

Past Participle	<i>envoyé [Passé composé: j'ai envoyé,...]</i>	
Present Participle	<i>envoyant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>j'envoie tu envoies elle envoie</i>	<i>nous envoyons vous envoyez ils envoient</i>
Imperfect	<i>j'envoyais</i>	
Future	<i>j'enverrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>j'enverrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>j'envoie tu envoies on envoie</i>	<i>nous envoyions vous envoyiez elles envoient</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>j'envoyai tu envoyas il envoya</i>	<i>nous envoyâmes vous envoyâtes elles envoyèrent</i>
Imperative	<i>envoie, envoyons, envoyez</i>	

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***être, "to be"***

Past Participle	<i>été [Passé composé: j'ai été,...]</i>	
Present Participle	<i>étant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je suis tu es elle est</i>	<i>nous sommes vous êtes ils sont</i>
Imperfect	<i>j'étais</i>	
Future	<i>je serai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je serais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je sois tu sois on soit</i>	<i>nous soyons vous soyez elles soient</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je fus tu fus il fut</i>	<i>nous fûmes vous fûtes elles furent</i>
Imperative	<i>sois, soyons, soyez</i>	

***faire*, "to do"**

Past Participle	<i>fait</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : j'ai fait,...]	
Present Participle	<i>faisant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je fais</i>	<i>nous <del>faisons</del></i>
	<i>tu fais</i>	<i>vous faites</i>
	<i>elle fait</i>	<i>ils font</i>
Imperfect	<i>je faisais</i>	
Future	<i>je ferai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je ferais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je fasse</i>	<i>nous fassions</i>
	<i>tu fasses</i>	<i>vous fassiez</i>
	<i>on fasse</i>	<i>elles fassent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je fis</i>	<i>nous fîmes</i>
	<i>tu fis</i>	<i>vous fîtes</i>
	<i>il fit</i>	<i>elles firent</i>
Imperative	<i>fais, faisons, faites</i>	

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***falloir*, "to be necessary" (impersonal verb; it has only 3rd person singular forms)**

Past Participle	<i>fallu</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : il a fallu,...]
no Present Participle	
Present Indicative	<i>il faut</i>
Imperfect	<i>il fallait</i>
Future	<i>il faudra</i>
Conditional	<i>il faudrait</i>
Present Subjunctive	<i>il faille</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>il fallut</i>
no Imperative forms	

***lire*, "to read"**

Past Participle	<i>lu</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : <i>j'ai lu,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>lisant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je lis</i> <i>tu lis</i> <i>elle lit</i>	<i>nous lisons</i> <i>vous lisez</i> <i>ils lisent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je lisais</i>	
Future	<i>je lirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je lirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je lise</i> <i>tu lises</i> <i>on lise</i>	<i>nous lisions</i> <i>vous lisiez</i> <i>elles lisent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je lus</i> <i>tu lus</i> <i>il lut</i>	<i>nous lûmes</i> <i>vous lûtes</i> <i>elles lurent</i>
Imperative	<i>lis, lisons, lisez</i>	

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***mettre*, "to put, place, set" (*permettre*, "to permit"; *promettre*, "to promise")**

Past Participle	<i>mis</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : <i>j'ai mis,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>mettant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je mets</i> <i>tu mets</i> <i>elle met</i>	<i>nous mettons</i> <i>vous mettez</i> <i>ils mettent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je mettais</i>	
Future	<i>je mettrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je mettrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je mette</i> <i>tu mettes</i> <i>on mette</i>	<i>nous mettions</i> <i>vous mettiez</i> <i>elles mettent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je mis</i> <i>tu mis</i> <i>il mit</i>	<i>nous mîmes</i> <i>vous mîtes</i> <i>elles mirent</i>
Imperative	<i>mets, mettons, mettez</i>	

***mourir*, "to die"**

Past Participle	<i>mort</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : <i>je suis mort(e),...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>mourant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je meurs</i> <i>tu meurs</i> <i>elle meurt</i>	<i>nous mourons</i> <i>vous mourez</i> <i>ils meurent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je mourais</i>	
Future	<i>je mourrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je mourrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je meure</i> <i>tu meures</i> <i>on meure</i>	<i>nous mourions</i> <i>vous mouriez</i> <i>elles meurent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je mourus</i> <i>tu mourus</i> <i>il mourut</i>	<i>nous mourûmes</i> <i>vous mourûtes</i> <i>elles moururent</i>
Imperative	<i>meurs, mourons, mourez</i>	

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***naître*, "to be born"**

Past Participle	<i>né</i> [ <i>Passé composé</i> : <i>je suis né(e),...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>naissant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je nais</i> <i>tu nais</i> <i>elle naît</i>	<i>nous naissons</i> <i>vous naissez</i> <i>ils naissent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je naissais</i>	
Future	<i>je naîtrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je naîtrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je naisse</i> <i>tu naisses</i> <i>on naisse</i>	<i>nous naissions</i> <i>vous naissiez</i> <i>elles naissent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je naquis</i> <i>tu naquis</i> <i>il naquit</i>	<i>nous naquîmes</i> <i>vous naquîtes</i> <i>elles naquirent</i>
Imperative	<i>nais, naissons, naissez</i>	



**ouvrir, "to open"** (*couvrir, "to cover;" découvrir, "to discover;" and offrir, "to offer, give"*)

Past Participle	<i>ouvert</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai ouvert,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>ouvrant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>j'ouvre</i> <i>tu ouvres</i> <i>elle ouvre</i>	<i>nous ouvrons</i> <i>vous ouvrez</i> <i>ils ouvrent</i>
Imperfect	<i>j'ouvrais</i>	
Future	<i>j'ouvrirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>j'ouvrirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>j'ouvre</i> <i>tu ouvres</i> <i>on ouvre</i>	<i>nous ouvrions</i> <i>vous ouvriez</i> <i>elles ouvrent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>j'ouvris</i> <i>tu ouvris</i> <i>il ouvrit</i>	<i>nous ouvrîmes</i> <i>vous ouvrîtes</i> <i>elles ouvrèrent</i>
Imperative	<i>ouvres, ouvrons, ouvrez</i>	

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**partir, "to leave, to depart (from)"**

Past Participle	<i>parti</i> [ <i>Passé composé: je suis parti(e)...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>partant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je pars</i> <i>tu pars</i> <i>elle part</i>	<i>nous partons</i> <i>vous partez</i> <i>ils partent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je partais</i>	
Future	<i>je partirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je partirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je parte</i> <i>tu partes</i> <i>il parte</i>	<i>nous partions</i> <i>vous partiez</i> <i>elles partent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je partis</i> <i>tu partis</i> <i>elle partit</i>	<i>nous partîmes</i> <i>vous partîtes</i> <i>ils partirent</i>
Imperative	<i>pars, partons, partez</i>	

***plaire*, "to please, to like"**

Past Participle	<i>plu</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai plu,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>plaisant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je plais</i> <i>tu plais</i> <i>elle plaît</i>	<i>nous plaisons</i> <i>vous plaisez</i> <i>ils plaisent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je plaisais</i>	
Future	<i>je plairai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je plairais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je plaise</i> <i>tu plaises</i> <i>on plaise</i>	<i>nous plaisions</i> <i>vous plaisiez</i> <i>elles plaisent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je plus</i> <i>tu pluus</i> <i>il plut</i>	<i>nous plûmes</i> <i>vous plûtes</i> <i>elles plurent</i>
Imperative	<i>plais, plaisons, plaisez</i>	

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***pleuvoir*, "to rain" (impersonal verb; it has only 3rd person singular forms)**

Past Participle	<i>plu</i> [ <i>Passé composé: il a plu,...</i> ]
Present Participle	<i>pleuvant</i>
Present Indicative	<i>il pleut</i>
Imperfect	<i>il pleuvait</i>
Future	<i>il pleuvra</i>
Conditional	<i>il pleuvrait</i>
Present Subjunctive	<i>il pleuve</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>il plut</i>
Imperative: No imperative form.	

***pouvoir, "to be able"***

Past Participle	<i>pu</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai pu,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>pouvant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je peux</i> <i>tu peux</i> <i>elle peut</i>	<i>nous pouvons</i> <i>vous pouvez</i> <i>ils peuvent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je pouvais</i>	
Future	<i>je pourrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je pourrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je puisse</i> <i>tu puisses</i> <i>on puisse</i>	<i>nous puissions</i> <i>vous puissiez</i> <i>elles puissent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je pus</i> <i>tu pus</i> <i>il put</i>	<i>nous pûmes</i> <i>vous pûtes</i> <i>elles purent</i>
Imperative	No imperative form	

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***prendre, "to take"* (*comprendre, "to understand;" apprendre, "to learn;" surprendre, "to surprise"*)**

Past Participle	<i>pris</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai pris,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>prenant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je prends</i> <i>tu prends</i> <i>elle prend</i>	<i>nous prenons</i> <i>vous prenez</i> <i>ils prennent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je prenais</i>	
Future	<i>je prendrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je prendrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je prenne</i> <i>tu prennes</i> <i>on prenne</i>	<i>nous prenions</i> <i>vous preniez</i> <i>elles prennent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je pris</i> <i>tu pris</i> <i>il prit</i>	<i>nous prîmes</i> <i>vous prîtes</i> <i>elles prirent</i>
Imperative	<i>prends, prenons, prenez</i>	

**recevoir, "to receive"**

Past Participle	<i>reçu [Passé composé: j'ai reçu,...]</i>	
Present Participle	<i>recevant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je reçois tu reçois on reçoit</i>	<i>nous recevons vous recevez elles reçoivent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je recevais,...</i>	
Future	<i>je recevrai,...</i>	
Conditional	<i>je recevrais,...</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je reçoive tu reçoives elle reçoive</i>	<i>nous recevions vous receviez ils reçoivent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je reçus tu reçus il reçut</i>	<i>nous reçûmes vous reçûtes elles reçurent</i>
Imperative	<i>reçois, recevons, recevez</i>	

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**rire, "to laugh"**

Past Participle	<i>ri [Passé composé: j'ai ri,...]</i>	
Present Participle	<i>riant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je ris tu ris elle rit</i>	<i>nous rions vous riez ils rient</i>
Imperfect	<i>je riais</i>	
Future	<i>je rirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je rirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je rie tu ries on rie</i>	<i>nous riions vous rieiez elles rient</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je ris tu ris il rit</i>	<i>nous rîmes vous rîtes elles rirent</i>
Imperative	<i>ris, rions, riez</i>	

**savoir, "to know"**

Past Participle	<i>su [Passé composé: j'ai su,...]</i>	
Present Participle	<i>sachant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je sais tu sais elle sait</i>	<i>nous savons vous savez ils savent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je savais</i>	
Future	<i>je saurai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je saurais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je sache tu saches on sache</i>	<i>nous sachions vous sachiez elles sachent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je sus tu sus il sut</i>	<i>nous sûmes vous sûtes elles surent</i>
Imperative	<i>saches, sachons, sachez</i>	

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**servir, "to serve"**

Past Participle	<i>servi [Passé composé: j'ai servi,...]</i>	
Present Participle	<i>servant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je sers tu sers elle sert</i>	<i>nous servons vous servez ils servent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je servais</i>	
Future	<i>je servirai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je servirais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je serve tu serves on serve</i>	<i>nous servions vous serviez elles servent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je servis tu servis il servit</i>	<i>nous servîmes vous servîtes elles servirent</i>
Imperative	<i>sers, servons, servez</i>	

***sortir*, “to go out (from), to go out (with), to leave”**

Past Participle	<i>sorti</i> [ <i>Passé composé: je suis sorti(e),...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>sortant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je sors</i> <i>tu sors</i> <i>elle sort</i>	<i>nous sortons</i> <i>vous sortez</i> <i>ils sortent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je sortais,...</i>	
Future	<i>je sortirai,...</i>	
Conditional	<i>je sortirais,...</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je sorte</i> <i>tu sortes</i> <i>on sorte</i>	<i>nous sortions</i> <i>vous sortiez</i> <i>elles sortent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je sortis</i> <i>tu sortis</i> <i>elle sortit</i>	<i>nous sortîmes</i> <i>vous sortîtes</i> <i>ils sortirent</i>
Imperative	<i>sors, sortons, sortez</i>	

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***suivre*, “to follow, to take (a course)” (*poursuivre*, “to pursue”)**

Past Participle	<i>suivi</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai suivi,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>suivant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je suis</i> <i>tu suis</i> <i>elle suit</i>	<i>nous suivons</i> <i>vous suivez</i> <i>ils suivent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je suivais</i>	
Future	<i>je suivrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je suivrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je suive</i> <i>tu suives</i> <i>on suive</i>	<i>nous suivions</i> <i>vous suiviez</i> <i>elles suivent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je suivis</i> <i>tu suivis</i> <i>il suivit</i>	<i>nous suivîmes</i> <i>vous suivîtes</i> <i>elles suivirent</i>
Imperative	<i>suis, suivons, suivez</i>	

***tenir*, "to hold" (*contenir*, "to contain," *retenir*, "to hold back, to keep")**

Past Participle	<i>tenu</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai tenu,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>tenant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je tiens</i> <i>tu tiens</i> <i>elle tient</i>	<i>nous tenons</i> <i>vous tenez</i> <i>ils tiennent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je tenais</i>	
Future	<i>je tiendrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je tiendrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je tienne</i> <i>tu tiennes</i> <i>on tienne</i>	<i>nous tenions</i> <i>vous teniez</i> <i>elles tiennent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je tins</i> <i>tu tins</i> <i>il tint</i>	<i>nous tîmes</i> <i>vous tîntes</i> <i>elles tinrent</i>
Imperative	<i>tiens, tenons, tenez</i>	

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***valoir*, "to be worth" (principally impersonal, but we give all forms)**

Past Participle	<i>valu</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai valu,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>valant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je vaux</i> <i>tu vaus</i> <i>elle vaut</i>	<i>nous valons</i> <i>vous valez</i> <i>ils valent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je valais</i>	
Future	<i>je vaudrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je vaudrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je vaille</i> <i>tu vailles</i> <i>on vaille</i>	<i>nous valions</i> <i>vous valiez</i> <i>elles valaient</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je valus</i> <i>tu valus</i> <i>il valut</i>	<i>nous valûmes</i> <i>vous valûtes</i> <i>elles valurent</i>
Imperative	<i>vaux, valons, valez</i>	

**venir, "to come"** (*devenir, "to become;" revenir, "to return"*)

Past Participle	<i>venu</i> [ <i>Passé composé: je suis venu(e),...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>venant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je viens</i> <i>tu viens</i> <i>elle vient</i>	<i>nous venons</i> <i>vous venez</i> <i>ils viennent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je venais</i>	
Future	<i>je viendrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je viendrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je vienne</i> <i>tu viennes</i> <i>on vienne</i>	<i>nous venions</i> <i>vous veniez</i> <i>elles viennent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je vins</i> <i>tu vins</i> <i>il vint</i>	<i>nous vîmes</i> <i>vous vîtes</i> <i>elles vinrent</i>
Imperative	<i>viens, venons, venez</i>	

---

**vivre, "to live"** (*survivre, "to survive"*)

Past Participle	<i>vécu</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai vécu,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>vivant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je vis</i> <i>tu vis</i> <i>elle vit</i>	<i>nous vivons</i> <i>vous vivez</i> <i>ils vivent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je vivais</i>	
Future	<i>je vivrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je vivrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je vive</i> <i>tu vives</i> <i>on vive</i>	<i>nous vivions</i> <i>vous viviez</i> <i>elles vivent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je vécus</i> <i>tu vécus</i> <i>il vécut</i>	<i>nous vécûmes</i> <i>vous vécûtes</i> <i>elles vécurent</i>
Imperative	<i>vis, vivons, vivez</i>	



**voir, "to see"**

Past Participle	<i>vu</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai vu,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>voyant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je vois</i> <i>tu vois</i> <i>elle voit</i>	<i>nous voyons</i> <i>vous voyez</i> <i>ils voient</i>
Imperfect	<i>je voyais</i>	
Future	<i>je verrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je verrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je voie</i> <i>tu voies</i> <i>on voie</i>	<i>nous voyions</i> <i>vous voyiez</i> <i>elles voient</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je vis</i> <i>tu vis</i> <i>il vit</i>	<i>nous vîmes</i> <i>vous vîtes</i> <i>elles virent</i>
Imperative	<i>vois, voyons, voyez</i>	

---

**vouloir, "to want"**

Past Participle	<i>voulu</i> [ <i>Passé composé: j'ai voulu,...</i> ]	
Present Participle	<i>voulant</i>	
Present Indicative	<i>je veux</i> <i>tu veux</i> <i>elle veut</i>	<i>nous voulons</i> <i>vous voulez</i> <i>ils veulent</i>
Imperfect	<i>je voulais</i>	
Future	<i>je voudrai</i>	
Conditional	<i>je voudrais</i>	
Present Subjunctive	<i>je veuille</i> <i>tu veuilles</i> <i>on veuille</i>	<i>nous voulions</i> <i>vous vouliez</i> <i>elles veulent</i>
Past Definite ( <i>Passé simple</i> )	<i>je voulus</i> <i>tu voulus</i> <i>il voulut</i>	<i>nous voulûmes</i> <i>vous voulûtes</i> <i>elles voulurent</i>
Imperative	<i>veuilles, veuillons, veuillez</i>	

## APPENDIX II: Pronunciation

### Brief Overview

In this appendix, we give the alphabet as it should be recited aloud; a list of the individual sounds, explained and illustrated; discussion and examples of the stress pattern and of intonation patterns; and an explanation of particular spelling conventions used in French to make the written language reflect more closely the spoken language.

All of the pronunciation examples, including the alphabet, the stress and intonation patterns, and individual sounds, are recorded on the pronunciation cassette.

### 1. The alphabet in French

The alphabet is recited (and used for alphabetical ordering) in the same order as in English. We give the letters of the alphabet, followed by a phonetic representation of how that letter is pronounced. You do not have to learn the phonetic alphabet: it is there simply to guide you as you listen to the cassette recording of the alphabet and remind you that the letters are not pronounced in the same way as they are in English.

<b>a</b> /a/	<b>h</b> /a <sup>h</sup> /	<b>o</b> /o/	<b>u</b> /y/
<b>b</b> /be/	<b>i</b> /i/	<b>p</b> /pe/	<b>v</b> /ve/
<b>c</b> /se/	<b>j</b> /ʒi/	<b>q</b> /ky/	<b>w</b> /dubløve/
<b>d</b> /de/	<b>k</b> /ka/	<b>r</b> /εR/	<b>x</b> /iks/
<b>e</b> /e <sup>1</sup> /	<b>l</b> /εl/	<b>s</b> /εs/	<b>y</b> /igrɛk/
<b>f</b> /ɛf/	<b>m</b> /εm/	<b>t</b> /te/	<b>z</b> /zɛd/
<b>g</b> /ʒe/	<b>n</b> /εn/		

---

<sup>1</sup>Some native speakers of French say /ə /, that is, the "mute -e" sound; others say /e/, the sound of an acute e.

## 2. The Stress Pattern in French

Stress refers to the extra force given to a syllable in a word or a word-group. We hear it usually as a somewhat louder, but it is actually a combination of increased amplitude (louder), increased length (of the vowel nucleus of the syllable), and higher pitch. You need not focus on how stress is described; just listen to the native speakers on the cassette and imitate their stress pattern. It is important to stress French words and word-groups properly. It is perhaps even more important than the proper pronunciation of individual sounds.

In French, the stress always falls at the end of a word uttered in isolation, and then at the end of a complete thought-unit,<sup>1</sup> which may be a phrase within a sentence or an entire sentence. In the following examples, the stressed syllable is double-underlined.

1. avoir crayon stylo
2. poser répéter livre<sup>2</sup>
3. content fatiguée malade
4. Elle est contente. Etes-vous malade?
5. les enfants mes étudiants<sup>3</sup>
6. votre voisin sept éléphants
7. J'ai trois enfants.
8. Voilà la porte de la salle de classe.
9. Voici le livre du professeur.
10. Posez la même question à votre voisine.
11. Non, ce n'est pas un médecin, c'est un avocat.
12. Son chapeau est sur la table, mademoiselle.

---

<sup>1</sup>This is called a *groupe rythmique*, and the phenomenon is significant because it explains partially why learners of French have trouble separating out individual words: in fact, individual words group together to form a unit, marked by the final stress.

<sup>2</sup>Note that the mute *-e* cannot receive the stress, so in this case the stress falls on the "first" syllable. The same rule applies for all words that end in a mute *-e*, unless it is a feminine ending attached to a full vowel, as in *fatiguée*, in which case the stress is of course on the last syllable.

<sup>3</sup>Note that *-diants* is one syllable: the letter *i* represents a semi-vowel, and is not a full separate vowel.

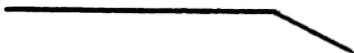
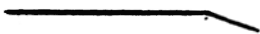

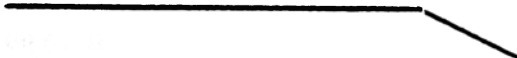

### 3. The Intonation Patterns in French

Intonation is the variation of pitch over an entire phrase or sentence (which, of course, can be just one word long). It is extremely important in signalling the overall intent of an utterance: as a statement, a question (either "yes/no" or "info-requesting"), or a command.

Sentences may contain a sequence of patterns within them, as we will illustrate at the end of this section. Also note, as you listen and repeat, that the stress pattern on individual words or word-groups is maintained within the intonation patterns. We continue to double-underline stressed syllables, and we indicate the intonation pattern with a solid line above the sentence.

The intonation patterns in French are similar, but not identical, to those in English for the same types of sentences.

Statements start with medium pitch (relative for each speaker, of course) and end with a slightly falling intonation.

1. *Le livre est sur la table.*  

2. *Elle est malade.*  

3. *Hélène va partir demain.*  

4. *Je regarde la télévision très souvent.*  

5. *L'étudiant est derrière le bureau.*  


"Yes/No" questions start at a slightly higher pitch and then rise noticeably at the end.



6. *Etes-vous malade?*



7. *Tu comprends la question?*



8. *C'est une étudiante intelligente, n'est-ce pas?*



9. *Est-ce que votre professeur est sympa?*

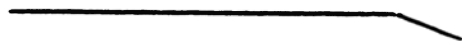


10. *Avez-vous vu le match de football?*

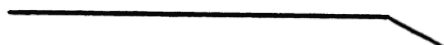
Information-requesting questions (WH-questions) start on a relatively high pitch on the interrogative word or phrase, with a slight rise sometimes at the end of that unit, then a pattern similar to that of a statement, falling slightly at the end of the sentence.



11. *Qui va parler au professeur?*



12. *Pourquoi étudiez-vous le français?*



13. *Qu'est-ce que vous faites ce soir?*

---

14. *Quand est-ce que les étudiants vont arriver?*

---

15. *Où sont mes clés?*

#### 4. *Liaison*

The term *liaison*, or "linking," refers to the way a silent final consonant is pronounced as the initial sound of a following word that, in isolation, begins with a vowel sound. This "carrying-over" occurs in normal speech even when the final consonant would be pronounced if the word was not followed by another word: in that case it is called *enchaînement*. It is important for you to develop the habit of stringing words together in this way if you want to have a near natural pronunciation of French. Just as we remarked about stress and intonation, this "chaining" may be even more important than the proper pronunciation of individual sounds.

If you continue your study of French beyond the intermediate level, you will have to learn the rules for when *liaison* occurs and when it does not. There are obligatory links, optional ones, and some that are forbidden. At the elementary and intermediate level, you need only acquire the habit of making the clearly obligatory *liaisons* and avoid the clearly forbidden ones.

*Liaison* regularly occurs within units:

##### a. Within a noun phrase

16. un enfant

17. cet etudiant

18. un grand hôtel<sup>1</sup>

19. mon petit ami

20. deux hommes

21. mes amis

22. des enfants

23. des petits enfants

---

<sup>1</sup>The -d of *grand* is carried over to *hôtel* as a t.

b. Between a subject pronoun and its verb, whether inverted or in declarative word order.

24. vous avez

28. ils ont

25. ils aiment

29. ont-ils

26. aiment-ils

30. comprend-il<sup>1</sup>

27. elles arrivent

31. va-t-il<sup>2</sup>

*Liaison* does not occur:

a. When the next word begins with an aspirate h. Note: In some dictionaries, words that begin with an aspirate h have an asterisk in front of them; in the Harper-Collins-Robert, the pronunciation given in brackets is preceded by an apostrophe.

32. les héros

BUT les héroïnes

33. ces Hollandais

34. nous haïssons

b. Between the word et and any word that follows it.

35. J'ai acheté un stylo et un crayon.

We repeat: there are much more complex and complete rules for obligatory and forbidden *liaison*. If you follow the guidelines above and remember to make *liaisons* when a word sequence obviously ties together, you'll be correct most of the time.

---

<sup>1</sup>Note that the *-d* sounds like a *-t*.

<sup>2</sup>As you see, the linking of verb plus subject pronoun is so strongly felt that an extra -t- is inserted in some cases to note the proper pronunciation (and avoid a two-vowel sequence that is not appropriate in French).

## 5. The Consonants

a. Voiced stops. These are similar to the English set, *b, d, g*.

36. battre / c'est si bon / la table

37. dans / son adresse / elle est grande

38. grand / regardez-moi / une jolie bague

b. Voiceless stops. These are also similar to the English set, except (very important), they are not regularly aspirated whereas they are aspirated in initial position in English.

39. pauvre / un peu de vin / Stop!

40. tout / il a trop d'argent / une grande fête

41. comment / un crayon / un grand lac

c. Voiced fricatives. Two of these (the *z*-sound and the *v*-sound) are similar to the corresponding English sounds. The last one (43) is rare in English (most native speakers of English use it in "garage," "pleasure," or "azure").

42. zéro / vous avez raison / le jazz

43. yous / nous ayons trois enfants / dans la caye

44. Jean / Bonjour, Gigi / dans le garage

d. Voiceless fricatives. Again, the first two are similar to the corresponding sounds in English; the last one (46) is also common in English, but note that we spell it sh while the French spell it ch. Obviously, our ch, which represents an affricate (stop sound followed by fricative sound) is not the same sound.

45. sous / ils sont ici / sans cesse

46. fenêtre / une affaire / une griffe

47. chanter / il va l'acheter / elle cherche



c. Nasals. French has always had two nasals like our m and n, plus one that we do not use much (49). Now, because of the influence of many borrowed American words, a fourth one (50) is considered by some to be part of the French inventory of consonant sounds (the sound in words that end in -ing).

- 48. mon / l'amour / une belle dame
- 49. non / cette année / elle est bonne
- 50. (never in initial position) / les oignons / en Espagne
- 51. (neither in initial nor medial position) / le footing

d. Liquids. French has two liquids, one somewhat like English (the l), one quite different, the ʁ.

- 52. long / nous allons / la salle
- 53. ʁoute / il cheʁche / faiʁe

e. Semiconsonants (or semivowels). The first two are similar to their English counterparts, although obviously not always represented by the same spelling combinations. The third one (55) is like the second one (54), except more "tense" (the lips are more tense).

- 54. yeux / voyage / jeune fille
- 55. œui / voœisin / (never in final position)
- 56. hœrit / elle est sœisse / (never in final position)

## 6. The Vowels

Be particularly careful to imitate the clean, sharp pronunciation of the vowel sounds. For example, the sound of e in (57) may seem to be like our sound for ay in "bay," but it is not. The French sound has no following semivowel; it is not a diphthong.

a. Front unrounded vowels are pronounced with the tongue raised toward the front and with lips unrounded, or "spread." The mouth opens further from (57) to (58) to (59).

57. histoire / imiter / Gigi

58. étoile / j'ui trois enfants / il fait

59. être / une chaise / une fête / faire

b. Back rounded vowels are pronounced with the back of the tongue raised toward the rear of the mouth and with lips rounded. The mouth opens further from (60) to (61) to (62).

60. ou / vous êtes fou / la joue

61. haut / quelque chose / de l'eau

62. octobre / une pomme / votre stylo

c. The central low vowel is pronounced with the tongue fairly low and flat and the lips neither spread nor rounded, just open and perhaps slightly rounded in appearance. The mouth is wide open.

63. à / vous avez / une banane

d. The mixed vowels have lip-rounding like back vowels, but are front vowels, with the tongue raised toward the front. They correspond in position more or less to the front unrounded vowels in (a.).

64. en / j'ai lu / sur

65. peu / heureux / les yeux

66. peur / heureux / ils sont jeunes

e. The schwa or mute -e is like the English vowel sound in "the." It is a central vowel, close to the a sound, but with the mouth further closed and the lips slightly nearer to a rounded position.

67. le / petit / afin que vous compreniez

f. The three nasal vowels that are still regularly used in French<sup>1</sup> are more or less equivalent in position and liprounding to the oral vowels in 58, 60, and 62.

68. imbécile / un grand homme / très bien

69. on / il faut compter / c'est si bon

70. en / mon enfant / la chambre

## 7. Spelling Conventions and Some Helpful Hints

a. The cedilla (*cédille*), a small commalike tail attached below the letter c, indicates that that consonant is pronounced as an s-sound. In most cases, the reason this diacritic is used is to keep the c in spelling but maintain a "soft" pronunciation that corresponds to the sound in related words in which the c is followed by an e or an i. (Recall that the vowels *a*, *o*, *u* are "hard vowels" and the vowels *e*, *i* are "soft vowels" in both English and French.

Examples: garçon, placer, nous plaçons

b. An -e- is inserted after g to maintain the soft, fricative pronunciation of that consonant, again (as for the cedilla) to maintain a pronunciation that corresponds to the sound in related words.

Example: manger, mangeons

c. Pronounce all vowels except the schwa (mute -e) sharply and clearly. Never reduce them to the schwa sound (as in English "the") and never diphthongize them by adding a semivowel like *w* or *y*.

d. Do not pronounce an -n or -m when it follows a vowel that it has caused to become a nasal vowel. There are exceptions to this rule, for example when the nasal consonant is doubled, as in *ennui*, but at this point you should focus on not pronouncing the nasal consonant, which is the natural tendency of a student who speaks English. *Compter* and *conter* are pronounced exactly the same: no *m*, no *n* (and no *p*).

e. Never pronounce the *t* of the conjunction *et*. Never, not even when it looks like there should be *liaison*.

---

<sup>1</sup>There is a fourth nasal vowel, used still by many speakers for the written forms *-un*, *-um* as in the indefinite article *un* and the word *parfum*. Others pronounce these words the same as the *-in*, *-im*, *-ien*, *-ain*, *-aim* forms (68).

f. The fricative sound similar to English "sh" is always and only spelled ch, as in *changer*. Never pronounce sequences of *s* plus an *i* or *t* plus an *i* as an "sh" sound. Mistakes are commonly made with words like *monsieur*, *nation*, *question*.

g. The *-er* verbs deserve some special attention:

(1) In the imperative second person singular, the *-s* is dropped, even on irregular *-er* verbs. It is added back on if the verb is involved in *liaison*.

**Va chez ta tante! --> Vas-y!**

(2) Those which have a *c* or *g* preceding the *-er* of the infinitive form regularly indicate the soft sound throughout the conjugation by adding a cedilla or inserting an *-e-* (see a. and b. above).

(3) Verbs whose infinitive form is e or é plus consonant plus *-er* undergo certain orthographic changes in those forms that end in mute *-e*. These changes reflect the fact that the original e, é before the consonant is now pronounced as an open *e*. In most cases, the original e, é is simply changed to è. In others, the consonant after the e, é is doubled. The following examples are intended only to illustrate this wordy explanation: it's best to learn the forms as they occur, and to use your dictionary when you are not sure.

<b>se lever</b>	<b><i>je me lève</i></b>	<b><i>vous vous levez</i></b>
<b>préférer</b>	<b><i>elle préfère</i></b>	<b><i>nous préférons</i></b>
<b>geler</b>	<b><i>il gèle</i></b>	<b><i>vous gelez</i></b>
<b>jeter</b>	<b><i>tu jettes</i></b>	<b><i>ils jetaient</i></b>
<b>s'appeler</b>	<b><i>je m'appelle</i></b>	<b><i>vous vous appelez</i></b>

## APPENDIX III: Charts

### A. PERSONAL PRONOUNS AT A GLANCE

#### FORMS

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Direct Object</u>	<u>Indirect Object</u>	<u>Reflexive</u>	<u>Disjunctive</u>
<i>je</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>moi</i>
<i>tu</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>toi</i>
<i>il</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>lui</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>lui</i>
<i>elle</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>lui</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>elle</i>
<i>on</i>	<i>(le)</i>	<i>(lui)</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>soi</i>
<i>nous</i>	<i>nous</i>	<i>nous</i>	<i>nous</i>	<i>nous</i>
<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>
<i>ils</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>leur</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>eux</i>
<i>elles</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>leur</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>elles</i>

Note that the reflexive pronoun may function either as an indirect or direct object (or may have no identifiable syntactic function).

#### ORDER

Conjunctive object pronouns (the middle three columns) precede the verb of which they are the object, except in the affirmative imperative, when they follow that verb (and *me, te* take on their disjunctive forms *moi, toi*).

Disjunctive pronouns stand alone, or follow a preposition, or follow the verb *être* (*C'est moi*).

The conjunctive object pronouns also precede the adverbial pronouns *y, en*, as shown in the following summary table.

(SUBJECT)	(ne)	<i>me</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>lui</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>en</i>	(VERB)	(pas)
		<i>te</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>leur</i>				
		<i>se</i>	<i>les</i>					
		<i>nous</i>						
		<i>vous</i>						
		<i>se</i>						

## B. THE "ETRE" VERBS

The so-called "*être*" verbs are the verbs that take *être* as the auxiliary in forming compound tenses, such as the *passé composé*. See Section 6.2.1-b of the Reference Grammar.

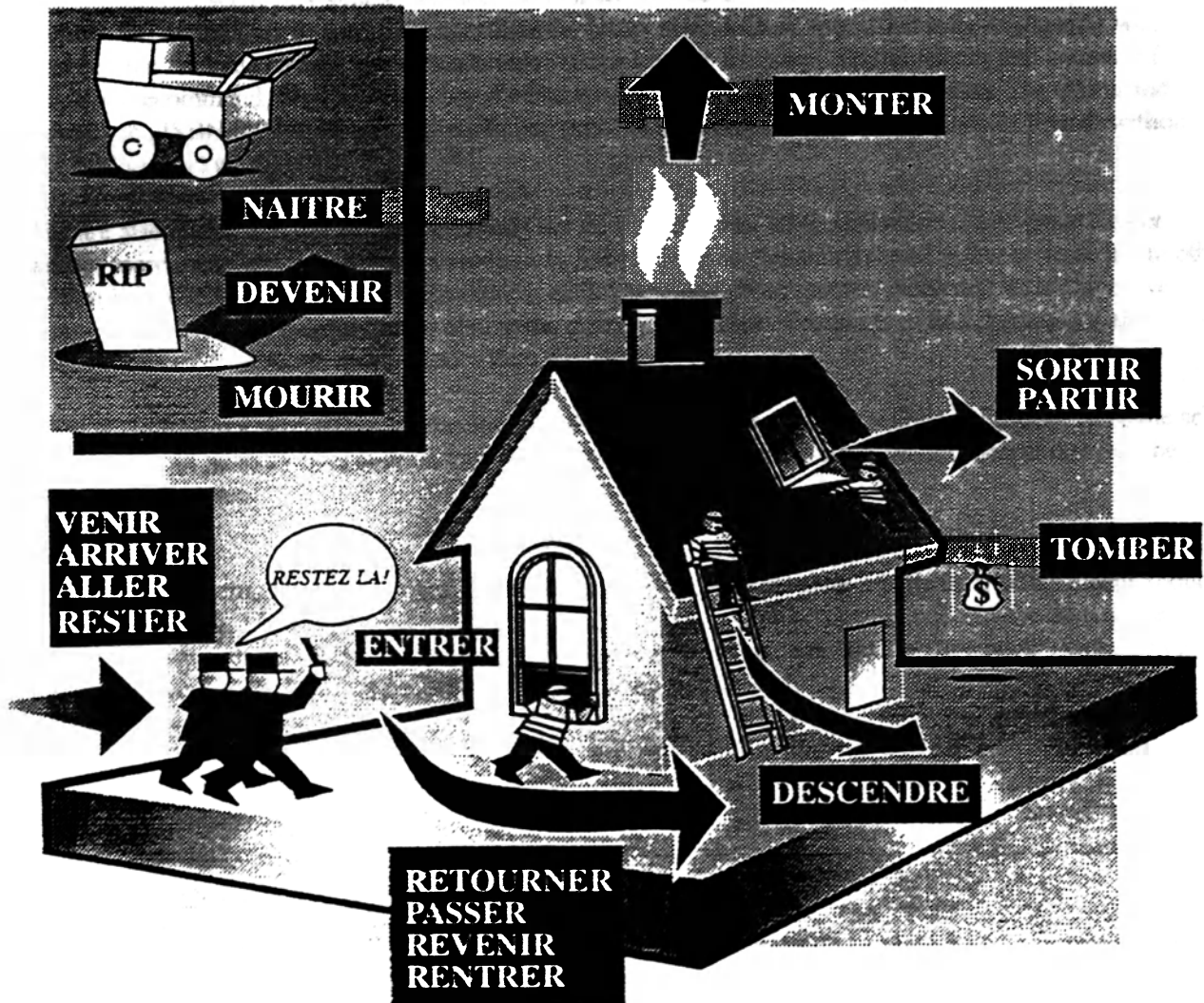
The Harper-Collins-Robert Dictionary indicates explicitly when a verb is an "*être*" verb, for example the entry for *sortir* includes: "1 vi (*avec aux être*)" and, by the way, notes later on: "2 vt (*avec aux avoir*)," reminding you it may be used transitively, but in that case takes *avoir* as the auxiliary in compound tenses.

One way of remembering which verbs take *être* is to use the mnemonic, MR/MRS VAN DER TRAPP. As you see the initial letters correspond to this list of *être* verbs:

Monter	Mourir	Venir	Descendre	Tomber
Rentrer	Retourner	Aller	(devenir)	Rester
Sortir	<u>Naître</u>	<u>Entrer</u>	<u>Arriver</u>	Partir
		Revenir		Passer

Another favorite system for remembering the *être* verbs is to visualize a house, or a shoe house, with people going in, out, down, up, etc. Our version of the well-known visual aid is on the following page.

## *The House of Etre*



## APPENDIX IV: Glossary of Grammatical Terms

Whenever a term that we think may be new or overly technical is used in this reference grammar for the first time, we define it and give examples. However, during the two years that we used the original version of the text, many students suggested that it would be helpful to be able to check the definitions of terms when they are used without an example or definition (for example, later in the grammar, after they have already been introduced). Thus we have added the following set of definitions. It is a short list: if students and instructors call for more definitions, we'll add some in the next revision....

We apologize to those who already have a good grounding in English grammar, as we know some of the statements will seem very simple (so much so that we may be accused of "talking down"), but please note that we are responding to specific suggestions for terms to be defined, terms that refer to concepts we frankly feel college students should already understand (from English courses). The popularity and success of a book we recommend, *English Grammar for Students of French* (by Jacqueline Morton, The Olivia and Hill Press, Inc., ISBN 0-934034-00-1), is sufficient proof that students do begin their study of French without the background we expect.

We are also aware that our explanations may not do the trick, that other explanations may seem clearer and/or more complete; we encourage students to follow up on explanations found below by referring to other grammar books and asking their instructors specific questions about specific problems. In addition, we suggest that it will be helpful to turn also to the index and/or table of contents to find discussions and illustrations of the concept in question within the text.

NOTE: In this glossary, all our explanations and (almost) all our examples will be in English, since the sole purpose of the glossary is to provide the students with definitions and examples of concepts that may be unfamiliar to them.

### Adjective

A word that modifies (that is, describes, delimits, somehow gives a more detailed statement about) a noun. In "the large trunk," "large" modifies "trunk." We use the term not only for descriptive words, but also for terms that identify or specify the object, like "my" in "my book" (possessive adjective), or "this" in "this book" (demonstrative adjective).

### Adverb

A word that modifies a verb, or an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs may describe ("slowly"), or they may note relative importance ("very"). Examples: "He walks slowly." "He walks very slowly." "The sky is extremely blue today."

### Auxiliary

Back in the old days, in some "grammar" schools, auxiliary verbs were known as "helping verbs." In English, we use auxiliary verbs for many different kinds of verb forms, "is swimming," "does care," "can help." Modal auxiliaries ("can" is an example) give an added meaning to the verb that they precede. The important auxiliaries in French are *être* and *avoir*: they are used to form the compound tenses with the past participle of the main verb.



## Clause

This term is used by grammarians to distinguish among various kinds of sentence-like constructions. All clauses include a verb plus its complement (a predicate), and many include a subject. The simplest way to think of a clause is as a sentence within a sentence. It may be coordinate: two clauses together, both independent "John went to the movies and Mary went to a concert," or it may be subordinate: a clause that is dependent on another (usually "tied" to it by a word like "that" (*que*)) "John said that Mary went to a concert." [The whole sentence stands alone, is independent, but "that Mary went to a concert" is a subordinate clause that is the direct object of "said."]

## Compound (as in "Compound Past," "Compound Relative")

This term simply refers to the fact that the construction in question has more than one part (usually two). A "compound past" tense, for example, is one that uses an auxiliary plus a past participle ('has eaten' in English; *a mangé* in French).

## Conditional

We use this adjective in the terms, "conditional tense or mood" and in "conditional sentences." It refers to the fact that the particular tense forms are used in conditional sentences, which state that something will occur as a condition on some other event or situation. "If John comes, Mary will be unhappy," is an example of a conditional sentence but not of a conditional verb form; "If John had come, Mary would have been unhappy," is an example of a conditional sentence with a conditional tense form ("would have been").

## Conjunction

A word that is used to connect two constructions, such as two noun phrases ("the little car and the blue bunny." It may be a coordinating conjunction ("and") or it may be a subordinating conjunction ("because," as in "He bought it because he liked it").

## Determiner / *déterminant*

This is a cover term for all of the words (sets of words) that regularly occur at the beginning of noun phrases. In a sense, they "determine" the noun phrase. The most frequent and most obvious determiners are the definite and indefinite articles. When you hear or see the definite article "the," in English, you know that there is going to be a noun soon afterwards, as in "the (green) monster." In French, determiners include the definite, indefinite and partitive articles, and the possessive, demonstrative and interrogative adjectives.

## Direct object / *complément d'objet direct*

When a verb takes its noun phrase complement directly, that is, with no preposition introducing the noun phrase, the noun phrase is a direct object. In "I love the boy next door," the boy next door is a noun phrase that is the direct object complement of love, whereas in "She talks to the boy next door," the boy next door is the object of the preposition to and the entire phrase to the boy next door is the indirect object complement of talks. In "He plays ball with the boy next door," the one-word noun phrase, ball, is the direct object of plays, whereas with the boy next door is a prepositional phrase modifying plays, and the boy next door is the object of the preposition with.

## Idiomatic (Idiom)

An "idiomatic" expression is one that cannot be translated directly and still retain (nearly) the same meaning. Of course, no translation is perfect, but non-idiomatic expressions can be translated, even

word-for-word, and, although they may sound awkward, will be understandable. Idiomatic expressions require a completely different construction or set of words. "He kicked the bucket," is an idiomatic expression. We say that French expressions like "*Il a faim*" ("He's hungry") are idiomatic because they do not express the notion in the same way that we express it in English.

### Impersonal

A term used with "verb" as in "impersonal verbs." It refers to the fact that there is no "personal" subject of the verb, just a word that cannot be directly connected to a person or an identifiable object. "It's raining" is an impersonal construction in English, just as "*Il pleut*" is in French. It's important to distinguish the "*il*" of that expression from the "*il*" of an expression like "*Il est content*," where it refers to a specific person who was previously named, or "*Il est grand*," which might refer, for example to a large bridge (*pont* is masculine, so the personal pronoun that refers to it is also masculine, *il*).

### Infinitive

This refers to the initial or basic form of a verb. The definition can be complex, but for our purposes, it's best to think of it as the dictionary entry, the form with an *-r* at the end (or just before the end for *-re* verbs): *aller, être, finir, prendre, vouloir*, etc.

### Liaison

Same word in English and French. Loosely, it refers to the linking of a final consonant in one word to an initial vowel in the next word, thus causing that consonant to be pronounced. However, to understand the phenomenon properly and completely, one needs to know the following:

1. When such linking takes place involving a final consonant that is already regularly pronounced, it is not called *liaison*, but rather *enchaînement*.
2. *Liaison* only takes place between two words when they are part of the same syntagma (phonological unit, breath phrase, thought phrase).

There are obligatory *liaisons*, optional *liaisons*, and contexts in which *liaison* is not allowed. For these and other details, one should consult a French phonetics text.

### Noun Phrase

This term refers to a set of words (one or more) that form a single unit around a noun. The noun is the "head" of the most commonly occurring noun phrase. We usually use the term when referring to the subject or complement (direct or indirect object) of a verb. In the sentence, "The green monster ate the delicious berries," for example, "the green monster" and "the delicious berries" are both noun phrases, the first one is the subject of "ate" and the second one the direct object. By using the term "noun phrase," rather than just "noun," we can include a large variety of constructions, all of which work in more or less the same way in sentences. A "pronoun," thus, is a noun phrase, even though it is not a noun and consists of only one word. At the same time, a sentence (a full clause, with subject, verb, and object) can be a noun phrase, as, for example, in "John said that Mary will arrive tomorrow at 8 a.m." In that sentence, the clause "that Mary will arrive at 8 a.m." is a noun phrase, functioning as the direct object of "said."

### Preposition, Prepositional Phrase

A preposition is defined by its function: it introduces a prepositional phrase which, in turn, serves an

adverbial function, telling us when, how, where, why something happened (e.g. “on the table,” “in the morning,” “with my Swiss Army knife”). There are not very many prepositions, so one can simply learn the list and memorize what each word means.

## **Pronoun**

A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun (pro-noun). More precisely, it replaces a noun phrase. The noun that it refers to (usually, but not necessarily, something that has been mentioned recently in an ongoing conversation) is its antecedent. Consider the following short dialogue: “Have you met John’s aunt?” “No, is she in town?” “John’s aunt” is a noun phrase and “she” refers to that noun phrase. The person that “she” refers to is John’s aunt. The antecedent of “she” is the noun phrase “John’s aunt.”

A subject pronoun, like “I” is an efficient way of avoiding the use of proper names constantly in conversations. Just consider what it would be like to keep referring to yourself by your full name (and using a third-person verb form along with it) instead of saying, “I,” and equivalent problems when talking to someone or about someone.

## **Relative Clause**

This term refers to clauses that “relate” something about the word to which their introductory pronoun refers. In the sentence, “I saw a man who danced with his wife,” the relative clause is “who danced with his wife,” and the relative pronoun, “who,” refers to “a man.” The clause tells us something about that man.

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