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LEVEL
1



French

Introduction



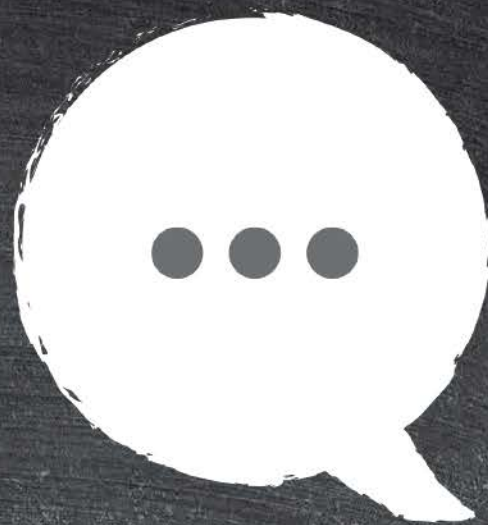
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LESSON NOTES

Basic Bootcamp S1 #1

Self Introduction and Basic Greetings in Formal French

CONTENTS

- 2 French
- 2 English
- 2 Vocabulary
- 2 Sample Sentences
- 3 Grammar
- 6 Cultural Insight

1

FRENCH

1. Réceptionniste: Bonjour, Madame. Je m'appelle Maxime.
2. Mme Lefebvre: Enchantée, Monsieur. Je m'appelle Madame Lefebvre Camille.
3. Réceptionniste: Enchanté Madame.

ENGLISH

1. Receptionist: Hello, madam. I'm Maxime.
2. Mrs. Lefebvre: Nice to meet you, sir. I'm Mrs. Camille Lefebvre.
3. Receptionist: Nice to meet you, Madam.

VOCABULARY

French	English	Class	Gender
Enchanté(e).	Pleased to meet you.	adjective	Enchantée (feminine)
je m'appelle	My name is	phrase	
bonjour	hello	noun	masculine
madame	Mrs	noun	

SAMPLE SENTENCES

Elle est enchantée de vous voir. "She is pleased to see you."	Il est enchanté de vous rencontrer. "He is pleased to meet you."
---	--

Je m'appelle Nicolas. "My name is Nicolas."	Bonjour Monsieur. "Hello, sir."
Bonjour Madame. "Hello, ma'am."	Bonjour Madame. "Hello, ma'am."

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson is Self-Introduction and Basic Greetings in Formal French
Bonjour, Madame.
"Hello, Ma'am."

Bienvenu(e) ("Welcome") to the French language basics. Introducing oneself is inevitable in any situation and is rather easy! Let's start with the word *bonjour*!

***Bonjour* ("Hello")**

For a more classical and frequent greeting, use *bonjour*, meaning "hello." Its literal meaning is "good day."

You can use *bonjour* anytime during the day in any circumstances. If you are speaking to a friend, an elderly person, or an unknown person in an informal or formal situation, use *bonjour*. It is the safest and most respectable way of greeting a person while in France or another French-speaking country.

If the evening is falling and night is soon to come, use *bonsoir*, meaning "good evening." Like *bonjour*, *bonsoir* is the most common way to greet someone in a safe manner. The only difference is that you can use *bonsoir* for farewells as well at the end of the day.

Note that a title can follow both *bonjour* and *bonsoir* to be a bit more proper, as with *bienvenu*.

For Example:

Daytime

1. *Bonjour monsieur.*
"Hello, sir."

2. *Bonjour madame.*
"Hello, ma'am."

Evening

1. *Bonsoir monsieur.*
"Hello, sir." or "Good evening, sir."
2. *Bonsoir madame.*
"Hello, ma'am."
"Good evening, ma'am."

Greeting During the Day

French	French Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Bonjour</i>	Bon-juhrr	"Hello"
<i>Bonjour monsieur</i>	Bon-juhrr muh-si-hoe	"Hello, sir"
<i>Bonjour madame</i>	Bon-juhrr ma-dam	"Hello, ma'am"

Greeting or Farewell in the Evening or at Night

French	French Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Bonsoir</i>	Bon-su-ahrr	"Hello/goodbye"
<i>Bonsoir monsieur</i>	Bon-su-ahrr Muh-si-hoe	"Hello/goodbye sir"
<i>Bonsoir madame</i>	Bon-su-ahrr Ma-dam	"Hello/goodbye ma'am"

Stating a Name

After you're formally greeted in your hotel, someone will certainly ask you about your identity.

In many other situations, social or otherwise, to get to know someone or introduce yourself, you will ask or hear the most frequent question: "What is your name?"

To answer it, use:

1. the personal pronoun *je*, meaning "I" in English, and
2. the verb *s'appeler* conjugated at the correct form

Conjugating the Verb *s'appeler* ("to be called")

The verb *s'appeler* means "to be called" and we translate it with the verb "to be" in English when stating a name, as shown in the dialogue translation. The infinitive verb *s'appeler* ends with the letters *-er*, telling us it is:

1. a regular verb and
2. a verb from the first verb group

Its particularity is the presence at its infinitive form of the letter *-s* followed by an apostrophe. This tells us that this verb (as others with the same feature) is a "reflexive verb," which is also called in French *verbes pronominaux*.

The letter *-s* apostrophe is the reflexive part of the verb. Its function is to refer the information following the verb *s'appeler*-in other words, a name, back to the subject of the sentence.

When conjugating a reflexive verb, you should follow two steps. You need to change the letter *-s* apostrophe and the verb form according to the subject of the sentence, and therefore, the personal pronoun you use.

Changing the Reflexive Part of the Verb *s'appeler*

In the sentence *Je m'appelle Maxime*, the personal pronoun is *je*, which belongs to the first person singular. As the verb *s'appeler* is a "reflexive verb" or *verbe pronominal*, the letter *-s* needs to change to the letter *-m* followed by the apostrophe.

You will have *m'appeler*.

Be aware that you only change the letter *-m* if the information following the verb *s'appeler* belongs to the person speaking it. If not, if you hear *je t'appelle Laurent*, it would mean "I call you Laurent" (instead of Mrs. Dubois, for example). In other words, the name stated needs to be the one of the person stating it, as in *Je m'appelle Madame Lefebvre Camille*. "I'm Mrs. Camille Lefebvre."

Changing the Ending of the Verb *s'appeler*

To change the ending of the verb form *m'appeler* previously mentioned, eliminate the letters *-er*. You'll end up with: ***m'appel***.

Then, to have the correct spelling for this verb, remember to add an extra letter *-l* to all the forms except for the first and second person plural. You'll have now: *m'appell*.

Finally, as for any verb ending in *-er* at the infinitive form, add the ending *-e* corresponding to the first person singular. You will have the final conjugated form: ***m'appelle***.

Of course, to get the final sentence, add in front of it the personal pronoun *je* and after it your name: *Je m'appelle*.

French	"English"
<i>Je m'appelle Marie.</i>	"My name is Mary."
<i>Je m'appelle Madame Dupont.</i>	"My name is Mrs. Dupont."
<i>Je m'appelle Madame Dupont Marie.</i>	"My name is Mrs. Mary Dupont."

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Most and Least Popular Given First Names

For boys, according to the French magazine *Femme Actuelle*, first names sounding foreign are in regression. They used to be popular, possibly because the names of characters appearing in Hollywood's broadcasted soap operas are dubbed in French. The least popular are Liam and Aaron, as well as Matthieu and Jean, two biblical first names. Another one losing popularity is Loïc, which is short for Alexandre or Alex.

However, the most popular first names in 2008 and 2009, for both boys and girls, will be short ones such as Tom, Zoé, or the traditional Paul and Marie. Another trend is first names ending in the letter *-o* for boys, such as Enzo, Hugo, Léo, Théo, or Mathéo, and *-a* for girls, such as Emma, Clara, and Léa, which are the three most popular names. Some other ever-classic first names are Alexandre, Raphaël, and Gabriel for boys and Marie, Inès, and Camille for girls.

A very popular book is published every mid-September for parents-to-be called *L'Officiel des Prénoms* (*Official First Names*). It is the yearly reference for first names, listing twelve thousand of them with their etymologies and discussing trends in names.

LESSON NOTES

Basic Bootcamp S1 #2

Basic French Simple Phrases With Verb être (to be)

CONTENTS

- Dialogue - Informal French
 - Main
 - English
- Dialogue - Formal French
 - Main
- Vocabulary
- Sample sentences
- Grammar

#2

DIALOGUE - INFORMAL FRENCH

MAIN

1. Patricia : Bonjour, je suis Patricia. Je suis belge.
2. Lionel : Bonjour, je suis Lionel. Je suis américain.

ENGLISH

1. Patricia : Hello, I am Patricia. I am Belgian.
2. Lionel : Hello, I am Lionel. I am American.

DIALOGUE - FORMAL FRENCH

MAIN

1. Patricia : Bonjour. Je m'appelle Patricia. Je suis française.
2. Lionel : Bonjour. Je m'appelle Lionel. Je suis luxembourgeois.

VOCABULARY

French	English	Class	Gender
je / j'	I	personal pronoun	
suis	am	conjugated verb	
belge	Belgian	adjective	both
américain/e	American	adjective	male/female

SAMPLE SENTENCES

Je vais bien. "I am well."	Je suis dans le jardin. "I am in the yard."
Je suis pour l'équipe rouge. "I'm for the red team."	Je suis né en juin. "I was born in June."
Je mange des moules-frites dans un restaurant belge. "I am eating mussels with fries in a Belgian restaurant."	Tu sais, je suis américain ! "You know, I'm American!"

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Basic French Simple Phrases With the Verb *être* ("to be")

Je suis belge.

"I am Belgian."

Stating who you are and where you are from is a standard conversation starter anywhere you might be in your native country or a foreign one.

While in France or another French-speaking country, you should use the verb *être* to state your nationality and describe your personality, and use *s'appeler* to say your name, as this verb is more commonly used for that purpose. The verb *être* is the equivalent of the verb "to be" in English. This is one of the most common French verbs used to describe states, feelings, location, identity, origin, and much more. To use it properly, you must incorporate it in a phrase.

Understanding the Construction of a Simple Phrase

A - Its word order

To build a simple phrase, you need to use three elements.

1. The subject, which is a person, a thing, or a place performing the action or receiving it.
2. The verb, which is the action of the sentence.
3. The object, which is also called the complement.

In French, the word order of a simple phrase is always subject, verb, then complement.

B - Subject and Verbs

For example, in the sentences below, the subjects and verbs are highlighted.

French	"English"	Subject	Verb
1 - Marie mange une pomme.	"Marie eats an apple."	Marie	mange
2 - La ville grandit avec rapidité.	"The city grows with rapidity."	ville	grandit
3 - L'arbre est tombé par terre.	"The tree has fallen on the floor."	arbre	est tombé

1. In the first sentence, Marie is performing the action of eating. *Marie* is the subject and *mange* ("eats") is the verb.
2. In the second sentence, the city receives the action of growing. *Ville* ("the city") is the subject, and the verb is *grandit* ("grows"), which is the action of the phrase.
3. In the last sentence, the tree is victim of its weight and fell. Therefore, *arbre*, meaning "tree," is the subject of the verb *est tombé*, which means "has fallen."

C - Complement

The object is appropriately called the complement in French and indicates the object of the verb or a circumstance, as in the examples below.

French	"English"	Complement
1 - Marie mange une pomme.	"Marie eats an apple."	une pomme
2 - La ville grandit avec rapidité.	"The city grows with rapidity."	avec rapidité
3 - L'arbre est tombé par terre.	"The tree has fallen on the floor."	par terre

The complement can designate some thing, such as the apple in the first sentence; a way the action is happening or done, as in the second example; or a place, as in the third sentence.

Note: With the verb *être*, the complement is in fact called an "attribute," or *un attribut* in French.

The Verb *être* in a Simple Phrase

A - Word order

To build a sentence with the verb *être*, you must follow the word order of a simple sentence, which consists of:

Subject + verb *être* + attribut.

L'attribut or "complement" in English is mainly associated with the verb *être* and describes

1. a state of the subject as in

French	"English"
<i>Je suis triste.</i>	"I'm sad."
<i>Je suis fatigué.</i>	"I'm tired."
<i>Je suis excité.</i>	"I'm excited."
<i>Je suis en bonne santé.</i>	"I'm in good health."

2. a quality or nature of the subject

1. *Je suis français.*
"I'm French."

L'attribut can be an adjective, such as *triste* ("sad") or *français* ("French"), as in the examples above.

It can also be many other words, such as:

3. a noun to tell about:

Noun Type	French	"English"
a profession	<i>Je suis étudiant.</i>	"I am a student."
a place	<i>Je suis au centre-ville.</i> <i>Je suis au travail.</i>	"I am downtown." "I am at work."
a trait	<i>Je suis un clown.</i>	"I am a clown."
a quality	<i>Je suis une experte.</i>	"I am an expert."

Note: Some other verbs have *un attribut*, including the verb *s'appeler*, such as in the dialogue phrase *Je m'appelle Patricia* ("I'm Patricia.").

B - Conjugation of *être*

The verb *être* is irregular; however, it is very common and used extremely frequently in the French language. We use it not only to state information about a thing or person, but also in other tenses. For this reason, mastering it is important, as it will affect your French further in your studies.

To talk of nationality about yourselves or someone else, use first the appropriate noun and verb form:

Talking...	French	"English"
About yourself	<i>je suis</i>	"I am"
To your interlocutor	<i>tu es</i>	"you are"
About a man	<i>il est</i>	"he is"
About a woman	<i>elle est</i>	"she is"
About you and someone else	<i>nous sommes</i>	"we are"
About a person formally or a group of people	<i>vous êtes</i>	"you are"
About men or men and women	<i>ils sont</i>	"they are"
About women	<i>elles sont</i>	"they are"

Tell About Your Nationality/Origin

Then add any of the appropriate nationalities, which you will find in the table below:

"English"	<i>French Masculine</i>	<i>French Feminine</i>
"French"	<i>français</i>	<i>française</i>
"American"	<i>américain</i>	<i>américaine</i>
"British"	<i>anglais</i>	<i>anglaise</i>
"Australian"	<i>australien</i>	<i>australienne</i>
"Indian"	<i>indien</i>	<i>indienne</i>
"Belgian"	<i>belge</i>	<i>belge</i>
"Spanish"	<i>espagnol</i>	<i>espagnole</i>
"Portuguese"	<i>portugais</i>	<i>portugaise</i>
"Brazilian"	<i>brésilien</i>	<i>brésilienne</i>
"Swiss"	<i>suisse</i>	<i>suisse</i>
"German"	<i>allemand</i>	<i>allemande</i>
"Moroccan"	<i>marocain</i>	<i>marocaine</i>
"Italian"	<i>italien</i>	<i>italienne</i>
"Mexican"	<i>mexicain</i>	<i>mexicaine</i>
"Cuban"	<i>cubain</i>	<i>cubaine</i>
"Canada"	<i>canadien</i>	<i>canadienne</i>
"Russian"	<i>russe</i>	<i>russe</i>
"Japanese"	<i>japonais</i>	<i>japonaise</i>
"Chinese"	<i>chinois</i>	<i>chinoise</i>
"Korean"	<i>coréen</i>	<i>coréenne</i>

For example, if you want to say that your friend Bob is German, you would say either

1. *Bob est allemand.*
"Bob is German."
2. *Il est allemand.*
"He is German."

LESSON NOTES

Basic Bootcamp S1 #3

Useful Phrases for Learning French

CONTENTS

- Dialogue - French
 - Main
 - English
- Vocabulary
- Sample sentences
- Grammar
- Cultural insight

#3

DIALOGUE - FRENCH

MAIN

1. A: Madame, comment vous dites a fork en français ?
2. B: Une fourchette.
3. A: Vous pouvez répéter ? Lentement, s'il vous plaît.
4. B: U-ne four-chette.
5. A: Vous pouvez le noter, s'il vous plaît?

ENGLISH

1. A: Madam, how do you say "a fork" in French?
2. B: "Une fourchette."
3. A: Can you repeat? Slowly, please.
4. B: "U-ne four-chette."
5. A: Please write it down.

VOCABULARY

French	English	Class	Gender
comment	how	adverb	
une fourchette	a fork	noun	female
s'il vous plaît	please (formal)	expression	
vous pouvez	you can (formal)	verb (second person plural of <i>pouvoir</i>)	
noter	to write down, to note	verb	
le (pronoun)	it, him	pronoun	masculine

SAMPLE SENTENCES

Comment dites-vous.... how do you say...	Comment utilisez vous ça ? How do you use this?
Combien d'années es-tu allé à l'école ? How many years did you go to school?	Comment est-ce que tu fais pour y aller? How do you get there?

comment est-ce que	Comment tu t'appelles ?
how do	"What is your name?"
Tu as une serviette en papier et une fourchette ?	Vous pouvez me donner un café, s'il vous plaît ?
"Do you have a paper napkin and a fork?"	"Can you give me a coffee, please?"
Vous pouvez écouter des chansons en français. "You can listen to French songs."	Les notes de Gabriel ce trimestre scolaire étaient assez bonnes. "Gabriel's grade for his school trimester were quite good."
L'arbre est beau. Jean le regarde. "The tree is beautiful. Jean is looking at it."	

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Useful Phrases for Learning French.

Madame, comment vous dites a fork en français ?

"Madam, how do you say 'a fork' in French?"

While learning a language, you should always use it whenever possible. This will allow you to engage yourself and acquire the correct habits right away while being immersed as much as possible in the language you are learning.

To immerse yourself in French from day one, you should learn some basic phrases so you can use them immediately. Getting in the correct habit of using standard phrases, their correct pronunciation, and their usage will greatly affect your French studies later on. Getting the right habits right away will help you avoid repeating mistakes and avoid picking up bad habits that are difficult to get rid of once you're anchored in your routine while using French.

How can you learn French while using French? In several ways, which we'll show you below.

When trying to acquire new vocabulary, a recurrent question from everyone from newbie to advanced levels is:

1. *Comment vous dites...en français ?*

"How do you say...in French?"

This question is intended for a person you might not know well or one you wish to show respect to or to keep at a distance. By using the personal pronoun *vous*, the question is part of the formal French language register. We use *vous* here as a formal "you" addressing a single person. *Vous* can also refer to a group of people.

2. *Comment tu dis...en français ?*

"How do you say...in French?"

By replacing *vous* (the formal "you") with *tu* (the informal "you"), the question becomes informal, and you should only use it with people you know and are familiar with: your family, friends, or people you feel comfortable with. No rules are set, you just have to feel out the situation.

3. *Comment on dit...en français ?*

"How do you say...in French?"

When using the personal pronoun *on*, the question becomes colloquial French, a language register called "familiar French" that we use daily among the people we know well. In this context, we use the pronoun *on* to refer to "people" in general.

We can also use *on* when the speaker refers to himself and other person(s). In other words, it means "we."

In all three versions, we use the verb *dire* ("to say") conjugated at "the present tense," called in French *le présent de l'indicatif*.

Language Focus

After asking how to say a word, you might be curious about how to spell it. In this case, choose one of the following questions according to the situation you are in:

Situation	French	"English"
Asking for a specific word:	<i>Comment s'épèle ... ?</i>	"How do you spell...?"
	<i>Comment s'écrit ... ?</i>	"How do you write...?"
The word was mentioned previously	<i>Comment ça s'épèle ?</i>	"How do you spell it?"
	<i>Comment ça s'écrit ?</i>	"How do you write it?"

Vous pouvez répéter? Lentement, s'il vous plaît.

"Can you repeat? Slowly, please."

After asking how to say a word, you may have difficulty understanding it. We are here to rescue you with another practical phrase that asks for your interlocutor to repeat what he or she just said. Here are several ways you can ask that question, depending on the formality required:

1. *Vous pouvez répéter ?*

"Can you repeat?"

To make your request more pleasant, we'll suggest adding the magic words *s'il vous plaît*. You can also combine the two elements and make one question using

2. *Vous pouvez répéter lentement, s'il vous plaît ?*

"Can you repeat slowly, please?"

or even to emphasize your request to slow the speed, add the word *plus*, as in

3. *Vous pouvez répéter plus lentement, s'il vous plaît ?*

"Can you repeat more slowly, please?"

In these three options, the personal pronoun *vous* tells us the question is in formal French. The following element of the question is the conjugated auxiliary verb *pouvez* from the infinitive verb *pouvoir*, followed by the verb *répéter*, meaning "to repeat," to ask in a polite way to repeat the word.

4. *Tu peux répéter ?*

"Can you repeat?"

By using *tu*, the informal "you," we address the other person in an informal way. We can modify this sentence, much like the ones above, with the following formulations:

5. *Tu peux répéter lentement, s'il te plaît ?*

"Can you repeat slowly, please?"

6. *Tu peux répéter plus lentement, s'il te plaît ?*

"Can you repeat more slowly, please?"

Language Tip

Note that when two verbs follow each other in a question or statement, the second one is always at the infinitive form.

For Example:

1. *Vous pouvez répéter ?*

"Can you repeat?"

2. *Tu peux répéter ?*

"Can you repeat?"

Veillez le notez.

"Write it down."

OR

Vous pouvez le noter?

"Can you write it down?"

To memorize a word, you should review it a minimum of seven times. In other words, when you discover a new word, you need to use it seven times.

You could reuse it in a vocabulary exercise, mention it in a conversation, write it in a letter or a sentence, look for it while reading a text, or try any other uses you might imagine. The more you think of it, the better the chance you'll memorize it at a faster pace.

People often suggest that you write down a new word to help you record it in your gray matter. Some people prefer to speak it, while others are more visual. Find the best method for you.

For Example:

1. *Veillez le noter.*

"Please write it down."

Follow that advice to the letter. In this polite but direct request, the verb *vouloir* is conjugated at the imperative form. Because the verb form *veillez* is conjugated at the second person plural corresponding to the personal pronoun *vous*, this request is formulated in formal and polite French.

The word *le* replaces the word we previously gave you in French, which is *une fourchette*. Finally, the infinitive verb *noter* means "to take note."

You can also say *Vous pouvez le noter ?* This means "Can you write it down?"

CULTURAL INSIGHT

How to Address Your French Teacher

When in a classroom, adult students usually refer to their teacher using *monsieur* for a man, meaning "sir," or *madame* for a woman, which is the equivalent of the English "Mrs." If the teacher prefers that you call him or her something else, the teacher will certainly introduce herself or himself the first day and let you know how to address him or her. For example, if the teacher is unmarried, she may ask you to call her *mademoiselle*. The professor may also ask you to call him by his or her first name if the setting, group, or conditions may allow it, such as a French course taken during vacation time or an exchange program, for example, when the atmosphere is usually more relaxed.

For younger students, such as children in primary or secondary schools, pupils refer to their teacher as *maitre* for male instructors or *maitresse* for female teachers, which is a common practice in all schools of France.

LESSON NOTES

Basic Bootcamp S1 #4

Counting 1-20

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#4

FRENCH

1. Agnès: Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf, dix.
2. Someone: Onze, douze, treize, quatorze, quinze, seize.
3. Agnès: dix-sept, dix-huit, dix-neuf, vingt!

ENGLISH

1. Agnès: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.
2. Agnès: Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen.
3. Agnès: seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty!

VOCABULARY

French	English	Class	Gender
huit	eight	noun	masculine
neuf	nine	noun	masculine
treize	thirteen	noun	masculine
quatre	four	noun	masculine
sept	seven	noun	masculine
trois	three	noun	masculine
un	one	noun	masculine
cinq	five	noun	masculine
six	six	noun	masculine
deux	two	noun	masculine
dix	ten	noun	masculine

onze	eleven	noun	masculine
douze	twelve	noun	masculine
quatorze	fourteen	noun	masculine
quinze	fifteen	noun	masculine
seize	sixteen	noun	masculine
dix-sept	seventeen	noun	masculine
dix-huit	eighteen	noun	masculine
dix-neuf	nineteen	noun	masculine
vingt	twenty	noun	masculine

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>Il est huit heures, c'est l'heure de partir au travail.</p> <p>"It is eight o'clock; it is time to go to work."</p>	<p>Allez dans la salle numéro neuf.</p> <p>"Go to room number nine."</p>
<p>Vendredi treize est considéré néfaste.</p> <p>"Friday the 13th is considered dangerous."</p>	<p>Quatre euros pour une baguette? C'est cher!</p> <p>"Four euros for a baguette? That's expensive!"</p>
<p>La gourmandise est un des sept péchés capitaux.</p> <p>"Gluttony is one of the seven sins."</p>	<p>Il a trois ans.</p> <p>"He is three years old."</p>
<p>J'ai un euro.</p> <p>"I have one euro."</p>	<p>J'ai cinq voitures !</p> <p>"I have five cars!"</p>
<p>Je voudrais six croissants.</p> <p>"I'd like six croissants."</p>	<p>Il y a six dés dans le jeu du Yahtzee.</p> <p>"There are six dice in the Yahtzee game."</p>

J'ai deux frères.

"I have two brothers."

J'ai dix ans.

"I am ten."

Ça fait dix euros. C'est notre offre de la semaine !

"It costs ten euros. It is our offer of the week!"

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Counting

Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf, dix.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten."

Numbers surround our daily lives. They help us function and run our lives. The applications of numbers today are as various as where we find them. In France, we use the ten-digit system with the cardinal numbers below.

From Zero to Nine

Number	French
0	<i>zéro</i>
1	<i>un</i>
2	<i>deux</i>
3	<i>trois</i>
4	<i>quatre</i>
5	<i>cinq</i>
6	<i>six</i>
7	<i>sept</i>
8	<i>huit</i>

From Ten to Nineteen

Now that you know the numbers from one to ten in French, it is time to provide you with additional tips!

Once you master the numbers from one to ten, you will use some of them in the series below. However, be aware this series of numbers is quite particular, as most numbers don't follow a pattern. Consult the hints described below to make your first experience counting from ten to nineteen easier!

Number	French
10	<i>dix</i>
11	<i>onze</i>
12	<i>douze</i>
13	<i>treize</i>
14	<i>quatorze</i>
15	<i>quinze</i>
16	<i>seize</i>
17	<i>dix-sept</i>
18	<i>dix-huit</i>
19	<i>dix-neuf</i>

As you can see by looking at the numbers in bold in the table above, when counting from ten to sixteen, no recurrent pattern appears. This is why learning French numbers may seem overwhelming at first.

But we can facilitate learning the numbers if we break down the series of numbers into two groups.

1. From eleven to sixteen

These numbers have no common denominator and no real logic. What's the secret to

mastering them? Well, just learn them...

2. Ten and from seventeen to nineteen

These numbers have something in common, which will help you memorize them. They all contain the word *dix*, meaning "ten," making their memorization easy so long as you properly learned the numbers from zero to nine!

So to remember how to say a number from seventeen to nineteen, use *dix* ("ten") and add the French word for the second digit. Let's say you want to say the number eighteen. Take the word *dix* and add the French word for eight, *huit*. You'll have *dix + huit*, which is properly written as *dix* hyphen *huit* (*dix-huit*).

LESSON NOTES

Basic Bootcamp S1 #5

Counting from 20-100

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- 2 English
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#5

FRENCH

1. A: Vingt, trente, quarante, cinquante, soixante, soixante-dix, quatre-vingt, quatre-vingt-dix, cent!

ENGLISH

1. A: Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, hundred!

VOCABULARY

French	English	Class	Gender
quatre-vingt-dix	ninety	adjective	
cent	hundred	noun	
trente	thirty		
soixante-dix	seventy	adjective	
quarante	forty		
quatre-vingt	eighty		
vingt	twenty	noun	masculine
soixante	sixty	adjective	
cinquante	fifty	adjective	

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>Cent kilomètres, c'est loin pour aller à une soirée.</p> <p>"One hundred kilometers is far to go for a party."</p>	<p>Il y a cinquante bougies sur le gâteau.</p> <p>"There are fifty candles on the cake."</p>
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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Counting From Twenty to One Hundred

Vingt, trente, quarante, cinquante, soixante, soixante-dix, quatre-vingt, quatre-vingt-dix, cent !

"Twenty, twenty-five, fifty, sixty-two, seventy-six, eighty-four, one hundred!"

By combining the ten digits from zero to nine, we can write many other numbers, such as twenty-three or fifty-two, for example. Then we must say each of these numbers, and that's where it becomes a bit more complicated in French. However, we'll share some tips and tricks so you'll have the easiest time possible memorizing them!

To learn, pronounce, and count in French from twenty to one hundred, follow the method presented to you below to avoid headaches and painful memorization! We've designed this strategy to make counting in French easy by first introducing you to the series of numbers by tens.

Numbers by Tens

First, refer to the table below for each series of ten to know how to pronounce the first digit of a two or more digit number.

Make sure to refer to the Language Note below to learn the particularities of the numbers seventy, eighty, and ninety and find out why they are in bold.

Number	French
"twenty" (20)	<i>vingt</i>
"thirty" (30)	<i>trente</i>
"forty" (40)	<i>quarante</i>
"fifty" (50)	<i>cinquante</i>
"sixty" (60)	<i>soixante</i>
"seventy" (70)	<i>soixante-dix</i>
"eighty" (80)	<i>quatre-vingt</i>
"ninety" (90)	<i>quatre-vingt-dix</i>
"one hundred" (100)	<i>cent</i>

Language Note

You've probably noticed the numbers seventy, eighty, and ninety in bold. This is to grab your attention on how we say them in French. They will probably seem quite weird and difficult to your foreign prospective.

However, if you remember the tips below, they will help you memorize these three difficult numbers.

For the number seventy:

1. 70 is equal to $60 + 10$
2. 60 is *soixante* in French, and 10 is *dix*
3. Therefore, 70 in French is *soixante-dix*

For the number eighty:

1. 80 is equal to 4×20
2. 4 is *quatre* in French, and 20 is *vingt*
3. So 80 in French is *quatre-vingt*

For the number ninety:

1. 90 is equal to $4 \times 20 + 10$
2. 4 in French is *quatre*, 20 is *vingt*, and 10 is *dix*
3. So 90 in French is *quatre-vingt-dix*

For all these numbers and the ones that are composed with more than one word that are under one hundred, make sure to not forget the hyphens between the written numbers.

From Twenty to Sixty

Once you know how to say the first digit of any number of two or more digits, observe the table below with the series of numbers from twenty to sixty. These series are much easier, as each

series of ten (from twenty to twenty-nine, from thirty to thirty-nine, etc...until sixty to sixty-nine) follows the exact same pattern when counting by ones.

Make sure to consult the Language Note to understand why the numbers ending in one are in bold in the table below.

Numbers	French
20	<i>vingt</i>
21	<i>vingt-et-un</i>
22	<i>vingt-deux</i>
30	<i>trente</i>
31	<i>trente-et-un</i>
32	<i>trente-deux</i>
40	<i>quarante</i>
50	<i>cinquante</i>
60	<i>soixante</i>

So let's recap. What you should know is that in French, we begin saying each series of numbers in the twenties and everything from the thirties through the sixties by saying their first digit.

For example, let's look at the number twenty-seven. First, we say the number "twenty," *vingt* in French, and then the last digit, "seven," or *sept* in French, as you would in English. You'll have twenty-seven, *vingt-sept*. Don't forget the hyphen when writing the numbers on a check, for example.

For all the other numbers from twenty to sixty, the pattern is identical. So to say thirty-three, as you may during a consultation with a doctor, you'd say *trente* ("thirty"), and then *trois* ("three"), and end up with *trente-trois* ("thirty-three"). If you wanted to say forty-six when telling someone's age, you'd say *quarante* ("forty"), followed by *six* ("six"), which would be *quarante-six* as in *quarante-six ans* ("forty-six years old").

Language Note

Note that there is one slight but consistent modification with the numbers ending in one. For twenty-one, thirty-one, forty-one, etc. up to sixty-one, make sure to add the word *et*, meaning

"and," between the digits. For example, for forty-one, it is *quarante et un*, appearing without hyphens on French checks as *quarante-et-un euros*. If the amount is 41.61 euros, it would be *quarante-et-un euros et soixante-et-un centimes d'euros*.

From Seventy to Seventy-Nine

Even if this series seems to be *un casse-tête chinois* or in English, "a brain teaser," there is a trick to it. It is similar to the one we explain in the Language Note above under the first point, Numbers by Tens.

Numbers	French
70	<i>soixante-dix</i>
71	<i>soixante-et-onze</i>
72	<i>soixante-douze</i>
73	<i>soixante-treize</i>
74	<i>soixante-quatorze</i>
75	<i>soixante-quinze</i>
76	<i>soixante-seize</i>
77	<i>soixante-dix-sept</i>
78	<i>soixante-dix-huit</i>
79	<i>soixante-dix-neuf</i>

As you know, the number seventy is broken down into *soixante* ("sixty") and *dix* ("ten") ending up with *soixante-dix* ("seventy"). Logically, you surely already have guessed what the pattern is. For any number between seventy-two and seventy-nine, take *soixante* ("sixty") and add the difference between the number you want to say and sixty.

For example, for seventy-two, take *soixante* ("sixty") and add the difference between seventy-two minus sixty, leaving twelve. Therefore, in French, the number seventy-two is *soixante-douze* to refer to the postal code of a department. To say seventy-three, take *soixante* ("sixty") and add it to seventy-three minus sixty, which is equal to thirteen. Thus, to say the number seventy-three, you would say *soixante-treize* in French, which you could say to refer the year a person is born, for example.

Language Note

In this series of numbers from seventy to seventy-nine, the number seventy-one has also the slight modification as the numbers ending in one below seventy with the word *et* and the hyphen.

Make sure to remember how to say or write seventy-one: use sixty and follow it with the difference between seventy-one and sixty, leaving eleven. So write *soixante*, the word *et*, and then *onze*.

From Eighty to Eighty-Nine

These numbers are quite similar in their composition to the series above that describes the numbers in the seventies. To say a number between eighty-two and eighty-nine, follow the same principles and strategies as for the numbers from seventy to seventy-nine.

Numbers	French
80	<i>quatre-vingt</i>
81	<i>quatre-vingt-un</i>
82	<i>quatre-vingt-deux</i>
83	<i>quatre-vingt-trois</i>
84	<i>quatre-vingt-quatre</i>
85	<i>quatre-vingt-cinq</i>
86	<i>quatre-vingt-six</i>
87	<i>quatre-vingt-sept</i>
88	<i>quatre-vingt-huit</i>
89	<i>quatre-vingt-neuf</i>

Instead of using sixty as a point of reference as for the numbers in the seventies series above, use the number eighty, which in French is the combination of four multiplied by twenty or in a simpler way, *quatre-vingt* ($4 \times 20 = 80$). Then add the difference between the number you need and eighty.

For example, if you need to verify the cost of an exquisite menu at eighty-nine euros, take *quatre-vingt* ("eighty"), and add the difference between eighty-nine minus eighty, which is

equal to *neuf* ("nine"). You'll end up with *quatre-vingt-neuf* ("eighty-nine"), and you can ask, *Est-ce que le menu est à quatre-vingt-neuf euros?* ("Is the menu at eighty-nine euros?")

From Ninety to One Hundred

With this last series of numbers, the overall logic is the same as the previous ones.

Numbers	French
90	<i>quatre-vingt-dix</i>
91	<i>quatre-vingt-onze</i>
92	<i>quatre-vingt-douze</i>
93	<i>quatre-vingt-treize</i>
94	<i>quatre-vingt-quatorze</i>
95	<i>quatre-vingt-quinze</i>
96	<i>quatre-vingt-seize</i>
97	<i>quatre-vingt-dix-sept</i>
98	<i>quatre-vingt-dix-huit</i>
99	<i>quatre-vingt-dix-neuf</i>

For the numbers from ninety-one to ninety-nine, take the number *quatre-vingt* ("eighty"), and follow that number with the difference between the number you are searching for and eighty.

For example, if you are talking about a distance of ninety-five kilometers, say *quatre-vingt* ("eighty"), and follow it with the difference of ninety-five minus eighty, which is *quinze* ("fifteen"). You would then say *quatre-vingt* ("eighty"), *quinze* ("fifteen"), and of course, in the context of the distance, you would say *C'est à quatre-vingt-quinze kilomètres* ("It is at ninety-five kilometers.").

Spelling Focus: Eighty-One and Ninety-One

Note that for the numbers eighty-one and ninety-one, we don't use the word *et*, and we do use a hyphen between all the numbers as in:

1. "81" - *quatre* hyphen *vingt* hyphen *un*, which is *quatre-vingt-un*
2. "91" - *quatre* hyphen *vingt* hyphen *onze*, which is *quatre-vingt-onze*

Spelling Focus: Twenty and One Hundred

Note that when spelling the two words *cent*, meaning "one hundred," and *vingt*, meaning "twenty," we do not make them plural. We apply the plural mark, the letter -s, only when either *vingt* or *cent* have in front of them a number multiplying itself AND another number does not follow it.

So to have either *cent* ("one hundred") and *vingt* ("twenty") at the plural form, you must have:

1. A number in front of it multiplying *vingt* ("twenty") or *cent* ("one hundred") **AND**
2. No number following either *vingt* ("twenty") or *cent* ("one hundred")

For Example:

1. "80", *quatre-vingts* (4 x 20)
2. "200", *deux cents* (2 x 200)

If we don't satisfy the second condition, we do not use the mark of the plural with the letter -s.

For Example:

1. "82", *quatre-vingt-deux*
2. "202", *deux cent deux* or *deux-cent-deux* (according to the 1990 French spelling reform)

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Reform of the French Numbering System

In 1990, the French reformed how they spell numbers to simplify the system. The reform allows us to simply just add hyphens to all the compound numbers under one hundred.

So we would write the numbers twenty-one or ninety-one, for example, as *vingt-et-un* ("twenty-one") and *quatre-vingt-et-onze* ("ninety-one").

A person's age will probably determine which method he or she prefers, either because of habit or because the person may not be aware of this simplification of writing numbers in French if he or she finished school before 1990.

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #1

History of The French Language and Top 5 Reasons to Learn French

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson is the History of French and the Top Five Reasons to Learn French

Background of the French Language

French comes from the Romance language family of the Indo-European languages, which is divided into various groupings. French is a Romance language because it descends from Latin, the language of the ancient Romans.

Historians have traced the earliest development of the French language to just after the Neolithic period (considered to be the last part of the Stone Age) and to three groups of people:

1. The *Ligures* (located in Provence, a region on the Mediterranean coast, and the northeastern part of Italy),
2. The *Ibères* (from the Languedoc region located in southern France near Spain),
3. The *Aquitains* (from the southwestern region of France).

Each group left some traces in modern French as suffixes in names of places, such as *-ax*, *-ox*, and *-us*, which were inherited from the *Ligures*.

Before the Romans invaded the actual French territory, France was known as *La Gaule*. Numerous tribes speaking *le Gaulois* ("Gaulish") composed of Celtic dialects probably close to *le Breton* (still spoken today in the region of *La Bretagne* or Brittany located in western France), inhabited *La Gaule*. Some traces of Gaulish influence are still present in the French spoken today; for example, the Gauls' ancient way of counting people by twenty. In modern French, we still have *quatre-vingt* ("80"), but there was once also *six-vingt* ("120") and *quinze-vingt* ("300").

Once the Romans conquered the Gauls in the second and first century B.C., vulgar Latin (which the common people spoke, as opposed to literary Latin, which the upper classes spoke) rapidly dominated. Its success was due to:

1. its resemblance to Gaulish,
2. its social prestige, because Latin was considered the language of civilization,
3. its use in the government and in schools open to Gaulish people,
4. its use in the army to recruit the recently invaded inhabitants,

5. its use for communication in business.

In the fifth century A.D., the Franks, a group of Germanic tribes from the Northern Sea and the region near the Rhine River, began their invasion of Gaul, but they too were Romanized (as the Gaulish people) by accepting the Roman Empire. Even though they were sometimes at war, the Germanic tribes also traded and established military alliances and cultural exchanges. With their decline, the Franks became more and more important by melting into the Romano-Gallic population that would later carry their name, *Les Francs*.

With this multicultural population of the Gauls, Romans, and Franks, the language diverged into:

1. the language of *Oïl*, a mix of Latin and the Franks' language, *le Francique*, north of the Loire River,
2. the language of *Oc*, close to Latin, spoken south of the river (Bourgogne, Savoie, Dauphiné),
3. in the middle, a mix of the previous two languages, the Franco-Provençal.

Although modern French inherited several hundred words of Celtic origin and several hundred more of Germanic origin, it owes its structure and the greater part of its vocabulary to Latin.

The Root of Today's French Language

People have spoken French for more than twenty-two hundred years. One important document proving its early existence is the *Les Serments de Strasbourg**, dated from 842.

From the ninth century, a common language, *le Francien*, appeared necessary for trade and commerce in what is today *Île de France*, the region where Paris is located (called *Lutèce* under the Roman Empire). It was the place to meet to exchange goods; a place where people speaking different dialects from the other regions could only understand each other through a common language evolved from the common forms of the various dialects.

Le Francien spread and rapidly gained prestige, as it was the language of the king. King Hugues Capet** in 987 was the first king who couldn't understand Germanic (the original language of the Franks, *Les Francs*) and spoke *Le Francien*. Therefore, as a prestigious language, it was also used in literature and commerce.

To sum up, today's "academically correct" French comes from common forms of the different dialects and its usage in the judicial circle and in the king's court. Therefore, only a small group of people developed what became modern French.

* *Les serments de Strasbourg* is an alliance between Charles le Chauve and Louis le Germanique, the two grandsons of Charlemagne, King of the Franks from 768 to 814, against

the threat of a third grandson, Lothair I, the oldest son of Louis le Pieux ("Louis the Pious," born in 795, died in 855), the sole heir to Charlemagne's throne.

**Hugues Capet (born in 940, died in 996) was Duke of the Franks (960-987) and became King of the Franks (987-996). He is part of the *Capétien* dynasty.

About France

French in France and its Surrounding Francophone Neighbors

In its infancy, the French language was called *le Francilien*. It was born in Paris in the ninth century and spread successfully all over Europe through poems and literature, telling the adventures and loves of heroes. These stories were known as Romances after the French language, which became in modern French the word *roman* meaning "novel" and in English the word "romantic."

From around the time of Louis XIV (born in 1638, died in 1715) to the beginning of the twentieth century, European and European-influenced countries viewed French as the language of international communication.

Because French has been spoken for more than two thousand years, has spread across its border, and has become popular within many countries, today it is spoken all over the world—mainly in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, and Monaco.

Number of Native French Speakers

Strictly speaking, the number of people speaking French all over the world as a native language is about seventy-two million, including the ones in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, and Monaco.

However, from a broader viewpoint, the overall number of native French speakers in the world is more than double that.

French is also spoken in several different places in the world, such as Francophone countries where French is the official or one of the official languages or where the native population speaks French. Until 2007, this number was believed to be 109 million; in 2007, a study from the International Organization of the French Speaking Countries indicated there are more than two hundred million native French speakers, of which seventy-two million are partial native French speakers.

Where Is French Spoken?

Countries Where Mainly French Is Spoken

French is now the main language spoken in France, of course, and its overseas departments or territories (such as Guadeloupe, French Guyana, Martinique, Mayotte, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Reunion Island, Saint Barthelemy Island, Saint Martin Island, and the Saint Pierre and Miquelon Islands). In the following countries, French is the only official language:

1. North America: Québec (a Canadian province)

- 2 Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Congo, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Guinée-Conakry
3. Europe: Monaco

Other French-Speaking Countries

There are many other French-speaking countries, which are divided into two groups.

The countries that list one of their official languages as French are:

1. in Europe: Belgium, Luxembourg, and Switzerland,
2. in Africa: Cameroon, Central Africa, Chad, Comoro Islands, Djibouti, Maurice Island, Rwanda, Seychelle Islands,
3. in America: Canada,
4. in the Caribbean Islands: Haiti.

And the countries where the population is partially speaking French but French isn't an official language are:

1. in Africa: Algeria, Equatorial Guyana, Madagascar, Maroc, Tunisia,
2. in America: Louisiana in the United States,
3. in Asia, Cambodia.

Language Differences in French

French spoken outside France has some variations. From one country to another, you'll hear regional flavors. The differences are mainly in pronunciation, with various accents from slight to heavy, as well as in the vocabulary used, where some words and expressions are common in some countries and not in others.

The differences are mainly due to France's colonial past. France's first colonial era lasted from the early 1600s to the mid-1700s and involved the colonization of parts of America, India, and West Africa. The second era lasted from 1830 to the 1920s, involving both France and Belgium, and involved the colonization of parts of Africa and the Middle and Far East.

You'll find the highest concentration of French speakers in the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia), although you'll also find many speakers in Africa as well as in the Indian Ocean.

In Canada, the French language differences in its pronunciation, including *infin* for *enfant* meaning "child," *p'tsi* for *p'tit* (spoken contraction of *petit*, meaning "small"), and *dziue* for *dieu*, meaning "God." There are also some three hundred thousand French speakers in Louisiana (which French settlers named for Louis XIV) who speak one of two dialects-colonial French (in New Orleans and the plantations along the Mississippi) and Cajun (whose speakers are the descendants of the first French settlers in Canada, called Acadians).

Why is it Important?

So why should you learn French? Even though English is now the dominant language of business, diplomacy, and international affairs, French still retains its role as an international language of communication in many ways. The top reasons to learn are...

- 1.** It is an official language in most of the major international organizations, such as the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, and UNESCO.
- 2.** It is, along with English, one of the two languages spoken on every continent.
- 3.** It is also the ninth most-spoken language in the world.
- 4.** It was often used in scholarly texts (for example, Jacques Cartier's geographical writings, and Nostradamus's astronomical writings were written in French).
- 5.** It allows access to a rich culture, history, and literary tradition.

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #2

The French Writing System

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2 Grammar

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson is the French Writing System

The French writing system uses the Latin or Roman alphabet of the Roman Empire, just like English, plus five diacritics¹ (the circumflex accent, acute accent, grave accent, cedilla, and dieresis²) and two ligatures (æ, œ) as its writing system. The accent marks mainly create phonetics for words, while the ligatures æ and œ are obligatory contractions of ae and oe in certain French words (as in *sœur*, meaning "sister").

Origin of the French Writing System

Its first version (close to Latin) appears in writing in 842 A.D. in the Strasbourg Oaths, which formed alliances between two descendants of Charlemagne against their third brother to rule the inherited Empire divided among the three.

Then the French writing system evolved with the languages of the various invaders, including *la langue d'oïl* (dialects of the Frankish Kingdom and Norse) and *la langue d'oc* (dialects of south and southwestern France), with both *oïl* and *oc* meaning "yes."

The ancient origin of the Latin alphabet itself can be traced to the Cumæ form of the Greek alphabet, from which a variety of other alphabets evolved to be used in the Italic languages.³

Knowing that French...

- uses the Latin alphabet, which is a major part of international communication since it is one of the most widely used alphabets; six of the twelve international languages of the world-French, Spanish, German, English, Italian, and Portuguese-use the Latin alphabet
- has many common vocabulary roots with romance languages (Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Romanian, etc.)

...will help you survive with limited knowledge of these languages in many parts of the world, such as Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking countries as well as Italy, and the many other countries where French is widely spoken or is the official language.

The French Alphabet

The word "alphabet" refers to a writing system that has characters (graphemes) for representing both consonant and vowel sounds (phonemes). Ideally, each letter represents one speech sound (grapheme-phoneme correspondence), which practically is not always the case.

The current French alphabet consists of five vowels and twenty-one consonants, and thus it has twenty-six characters. It also uses accent marks, also called diacritics,¹ that create phonetic, semantic, or etymological meanings for words.

We form French words by combining letters into syllables and syllables into words.

To form syllables, we use the thirty-seven phonemes, which are divided into nineteen vowels and eighteen consonants, and more than 130 graphemes.

A phoneme corresponds to a unit of sound, and a grapheme is the written code of this sound. In French, there are many graphemes for one sound. For example, the graphemes -en, -an, -em, -am, -aon, -aen have an identical sound.

You can also add prefixes or suffixes (a group of determined letters) to a word to form new words: we place a prefix before the word and a suffix after a word. For example, to create opposites of some words, which are called antonyms, add *dé-*; when we add *dé-* to *brancher* ("to connect" or "plug in"), it becomes *débrancher* ("to disconnect" or "unplug").

If you know the French writing system and are familiar with the Latin alphabet, you will better understand its applications in the romance languages still spoken today. This will allow you to evaluate the spelling of any single one and better understand how romance languages function.

Therefore, you will also be able to learn in an easier and more efficient way an additional language, such as, for example, one of the most popular languages today for business or communication throughout the globe-Spanish.

The French Alphabet - L'alphabet français

A a	B b	C c	D d	E e	F f	G g	H h	I i	J j	K k	L l	M m
[ɑ]	[be]	[se]	[de]	[ə]	[ɛf]	[ʒe]	[a]	[i]	[ʒi]	[ka]	[ɛl]	[ɛm]
N n	O o	P p	Q q	R r	S s	T t	U u	V v	W w	X x	Y y	Z z
[ɛn]	[o]	[pe]	[ky]	[ɛR]	[ɛs]	[te]	[y]	[ve]	[du bləv e]	[iks]	[igR ɛk]	[zɛ d]

Birth of Accents

It was also during the sixteenth century that accents began to appear. With the invention of the printing press, printers looked for ways to eliminate ambiguity and redundant letters. The solution to these problems was the use of accents and other markings. For example, in 1530, the French introduced the cedilla as a means of making it clear that the c was soft before a, o, and u (up till then, printers had used -ce-, -ss-, -ch- or just -c-).

¹ Diacritic: small sign added to a letter to alter its pronunciation or to distinguish between similar words.

² Dieresis: pronunciation of two adjacent vowels in two separate syllables, as in the word "cooperate" (with the syllables "co" and "operate").

³ Italic languages: a subfamily of the Indo-European languages including the Romance languages (Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Romanian, Latin, etc.).

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #3

Painless French Grammar

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Painless French Basic Grammar

I hate grammar! Have you ever heard or said this statement? But what is grammar, and what is it for? French grammar has the reputation of being boring and complicated. However, with the right approach, it can be simpler and clearer than you think.

After this basic introduction to French grammar, everything is going to be much clearer and your apprehension will fly away! To make this a reality, let's see how and why grammar can be a useful tool to improve your French!

What is Grammar For?

Grammar is for a language what an engine is for a car. Grammar is the mechanics of a language. We use it to form and structure sentences to communicate clearly and efficiently. Without assembling the mechanical parts of an engine correctly, your car won't function properly. The same concept is true of languages. With improper word construction or word order, a language becomes gibberish and is worthless.

French and English Grammar

Just as an engine helps a car move, mastering basic grammar helps you express yourself and communicate your ideas clearly. The more you know about the engine parts, the more you can improve your engine's capacity. Similarly, the more you know about grammar, the better your French will become! Let's start with the basics.

I. The Verb

Just like English, French is an SVO language: subject-verb-object.

The subject is the person performing the action. The verb expresses an action or state. The object is what is involved in the performance of the action.

For Example:

Sentence

Subject

Verb

Object

French	<i>j'écris un e-mail.</i>	<i>J'</i>	<i>écris</i>	<i>un e-mail</i>
---------------	---------------------------	-----------	--------------	------------------

English	"I write an e-mail."	"I"	"write"	"an e-mail"
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In French, most often we form or conjugate a verb following the same basic rules as in English.

The French classify verbs in three groups. The first two include regular verbs, and the last includes irregular ones.

The first verb group includes all the verbs with infinitives ending in *-er*. The second verb group includes verbs with infinitives ending in *-ir* and present participles ending in *-issant*. The third group includes all the other verbs.

To know who does what and when in French or in English, the verb changes forms according to the following:

- Who does the action with **the person**:

As in English, there are six persons: three singular ("I," "you," "he/she") and three plural ("we," "you," "they"). The additional difficulty in French is that the verb form varies more than in English. Each verb form changes according to each person, but in English, the verb form is generally the same for all persons except the third person singular.

- When the action is done with **the tense**:

In both French and English, the event takes place either in the past, present, or future using various tenses. Be aware that in French we use the word *temps* for both concepts of chronological time (as mentioned previously, present, past, and future) and tenses, such as the present simple, for example.

The easy part is that each major English tense has its equivalent tense in French. However,

when going into more detail about the French language, you will notice that some French tenses don't have an equivalent tense in English. However, they exist for a reason and particular use, such as *le passé simple*, a tense we only use when describing past actions.

- The attitude of speakers with **the mode** :

The good news is that each mode in the French language has a counterpart in English. The four most frequently used modes in French are the indicative, imperative, subjunctive, and conditional.

Is the speaker expressing a fact, an order, a desire, or a polite request?

For Example:

Asking someone to open the window can be:

French

"English"

A straightforward request using the indicative with *ouvrir*, as in:

Vous ouvrez la porte, s'il vous plaît?

"Open the door please?"

An order using the imperative with *ouvrir*, as in:

Ouvrez la fenêtre !

"Open the window!"

A desire with the subjunctive of *ouvrir*, as in:

Je voudrais que vous ouvriez la fenêtre.

"I'd like you to open the window."

A polite request with the conditional of *pouvoir*, as in:

Pourriez-vous ouvrir la fenêtre ?

"Could you open the window, please?"

II. Indicative Tenses

We use the indicative tenses most widely in everyday speaking French and they are necessary to comfortably function while in France. You could even sound like a native using them, if your accent did not betray you.

A. We use *le présent de l'indicatif*:

Use	French Example	"English"
For true information-This tense describes an action that is always true:	<i>La terre tourne autour du soleil.</i>	"The earth revolves around the sun."
For actions in progress:*	<i>Je mange une pomme.</i>	"I eat an apple."
For recent past or just completed actions:**	<i>Je rentre de Tahiti.</i>	"I just came back from Tahiti."
For an imminent action: (or use <i>être sur le point de.</i>)	<i>Je pars dans cinq minutes.</i> <i>Je suis sur le point de partir.</i>	"I leave in five minutes." "I'm just going to leave."

*For actions in progress, you can also use the expression *en train de* + infinitive in the present progressive tense.

For Example:

1. *Je suis en train de manger.*
"I'm eating."

******Or you can use *venir de* + infinitive.

For Example:

1. *Je viens de rentrer de Tahiti.*
"I have just returned from Tahiti."

B. We use *le future proche*: to describe an action that will happen soon.

For Example:

1. *Je vais prendre un cours de français*
"I'm going to take a French course."

With an indication of a time, the time frame might be more or less longer.

For Example:

1. *Je vais prendre un cours de français dans trois mois.*
"I'm going to take a French course in three months."

C. We use *le futur simple*: for future projects.

For Example:

1. *Nous irons chez toi les prochaines vacances.*
"We will come to your home next vacation."

D. We use *le passé composé*: to describe completed actions in the past.

For Example:

1. *Il a plu pendant une heure.*
"It rained for an hour."

E. We use *l'imparfait*: for actions in progress in the past without a precise time limit.

For Example:

1. *Il pleuvait beaucoup.*
"It rained a lot."

F. We use *le plus-que-parfait*: to express that an action happened before another event in the past-it is the past of the past.

For Example:

1. *Il m'a rapporté les livres que je lui avais prêtés.*
"He brought back the books that I lent him."

Most of the tenses are easy to use and have an equivalent tense in English. The only two that cause confusion to many learners are the two past tenses, *le passé composé* and *l'imparfait*.

III. Other Tenses

The other tenses the French language uses are:

A. *l'impératif* to give orders

B. *le conditionnel présent et passé*, which we use as the future of the past

For Example:

1. *Hier, il a dit (passé composé)*
2. *Qu'il viendrait (conditionnel présent with a future time frame context) demain.*

We also use *le conditionnel* to express civility. Its English equivalent is the polite form "would" or "could," such as expressing a desire with the translation "would like," an advice with the translation "should," a probability or suggestion with the translation "could," or an uncertainty with the translation "may" or "might."

C. *le subjonctif présent et passé*:

These are the tenses of the subjunctive where the interpretation of the fact is more important than the fact itself.

For Example:

1. *Il faut que je parte à l'heure.*
"I must leave on time."

IV. Conjugation or Verb Form Tenses

Once you know which tense to use in context of your sentence, it's time to conjugate the verb. This is not an easy task in French. It seems complex, but you can do it efficiently with the correct method and following basic instructions while using the right tool.

A. Conjugating Verbs

First, you need to identify the right tense according to the

- time indicated by the context (past, present, or future),
- the intention of the speaker, if any, to choose the correct mode . If the speaker is uncertain about a past fact, use *le conditionnel passé*,
- whether the action is related to another one or not. For example, use *le passé composé* if an action interrupts another one in the past.

Then find the subject of the verb. It will tell you at which person (first, *je* ("I") or *nous* ("we")); second, *tu* ("you") or *vous* ("you"); or third, *il* ("he"), *elle* ("she"), or *on* (singular "we"); or *ils* (masculine "they") or *elles* (feminine "they")) you need to form the verb.

Next, take *le radical* ("the stem") of the verb, or in other words, the verb part that doesn't change, and add *la terminaison* ("the ending") according to the tense and subject you previously determined.

B. Tips for Conjugating Regular Verbs

To make this task easier, know that for the regular verbs, we form almost all conjugations from the indicative present, the infinitive, and the present participle.

C. Tips for Conjugating Irregular Verbs

For the third verb group, some patterns exist.

For l'imparfait: Take the stem from the first person plural of the indicative present and add the corresponding person ending of *l'imparfait* to the stem:

For Example:

1. *Boire* ("to drink"): *Nous buvons* (stem: *buv* + ending: *-ons*), *il buvait*. ("I drank")

For le subjonctif présent: Take the stem from the third person plural of the indicative present and add the corresponding person ending to the stem, except for the first and second person plural.

For Example:

1. *Boire* ("to drink"): *ils boivent* (stem: *boiv* + ending: *-ent*), *que je boive*.

For the first and second person plural, the subjunctive has the same form as *l'imparfait*.

For le futur de l'indicatif: Take the infinitive stem and add the appropriate ending for the future.

For Example:

1. *Boire* ("to drink") *boi -re* add the *-r* (characteristic of the future), *je boirai* ("I will drink")

V. Subject-Verb Agreement

The verb always agrees with the subject, as in English. However, you might find yourself in a tricky situation. When the subject refers to a collectivity of people or things, the verb usually takes a singular form.

For Example:

1. *La foule va et vient*.
"The crowd goes and comes."

However, if a plural noun follows the collectivity of people or things, the verb can take either the singular or plural form.

For Example:

1. *Un groupe d'homme d'affaire arrive/arrivent demain*.
"A group of businessmen arrive tomorrow."

VI. Articles

The generic term for any word in front of the noun is a determiner. Determiners give information about a noun. Determiners include articles as well as possessive adjectives, such as *mon* ("my," either masculine or feminine), *ma* ("my," feminine), etc., and demonstrative adjectives, such as *ce* ("this," "that," masculine) or *cette* ("this," "that," feminine), and some others, to name just a few.

There are many different kinds of articles. They are often the cause of headaches for learners of all levels simply because their uses can be confusing, especially for the indefinite and definite ones, as some of their usage overlaps. Moreover, some are equal in form but different in use. The following overview will help you get a good understanding of how they function.

Articles are classified as follows:

A. Definite article: *le, la, l', les.*

We use definite articles to refer to a category of things or people, as in *les hommes* ("men"), *les animaux* ("animals"), *la science* ("science"), etc., or to speak of specific things individually or as a group, as in *l'homme au coin de la rue* ("the man at the street corner") or *les enfants de Jeanne* ("Jeanne's children").

B. Indefinite article: *un, une, des.*

We use indefinite articles to indicate something or someone in general and not identified.*

For Example:

1. *Un chat est sur le toit.*
"A cat is on the roof."

In this case, we don't know anything about the cat except for its location! We also use indefinite articles when we mention something for the first time.

For Example:

1. *C'est une maison agréable. C'est la maison des Dubois.*
"It's a nice house. It's the Dubois' house."

*Be aware you might be confused when referring to a category of people or things. When this category is defined by a quality (as an adjective would), use an indefinite article. For

example, we would say *Il y a des gens généreux* ("There are some generous people") instead of *Il y a les gens généreux*.

C. Partitive article: *du, de la, de l', des*.

We use partitive articles to express an idea of a non-specific quantity.

For Example:

1. *Tu peux acheter du lait?*
"Can you buy some milk?"

In this phrase, we refer to a certain quantity of milk without knowing how much. Is it a gallon, a carton, a small bottle? We also use them in a different context as well when speaking of feelings and personality traits, always referring to a certain quantity.

For Example:

1. *Il a de la peine et du courage.*
Literally, "He has some sadness and some courage," better translated as "He is sad and has some courage."

No one can possess the whole sadness or courage of the world!

D. Contracted article: *du, de la, de l', des*

It is often difficult to distinguish between contracted and partitive articles in sentences, as they are identical in form. However, their uses are different.

We use contracted articles in two ways. One is with verbs followed by the preposition *de*, as in *parler de* ("speak of"), *arriver de* ("to arrive from") or *avoir peur de* ("to be scared of").

We can also use them to complete a noun, as in *l'ordinateur de l'étudiant* ("the student's computer") or *la femme du Boulanger* ("the baker's wife").

E. Absence of article or *article zero*

This French grammar rule is also a hard one to master. The solution? Practice, practice, practice. In some cases, it's evident when not to use an article, and other times, it is more challenging. Articles usually should be absent:

- 1.) after the preposition *de* when referring to quantities, as in *un paquet de cigarettes* ("a

pack of cigarettes"); characteristics, as in *des chaussures de sport* ("sport shoes"); material, as in *des chaussures de cuir* ("leather shoes"), and origins with feminine nouns of countries and regions, as in *Je viens de Belgique* ("I come from Belgium.")

2.) after the preposition *à* to refer to a quality, as in *un train à grande vitesse* ("a rapid train"); a characteristic, as in *une robe à fleurs* ("a flowery dress"); or a use, as in *un verre à vin* ("a wine glass").

3.) with the prepositions *sans* and *avec* and the expressions of coordination *et* and *ou* and in some other cases.

VII. Nouns and Gender

Nouns designate a person, a thing, an animal, or a concept. No fuss there. The difficulty is that nouns have gender, whereas they don't in English. However, be reassured, the following tips will demystify the genders to help you out.

A. Les noms masculins

Countries:

Almost all countries are masculine except for the ones ending with the letter *-e*. The exceptions are *le Mexique*, *le Zaïre*, *le Cambodge*, and *le Mozambique*. Some countries don't have any articles, such as *Cuba*, *Chypre*, *Israël*, *Malte*, and *Singapour*.

Other nouns:

Most nouns are masculine when ending with the following:

Ending	French	"English"
<i>-age</i> (except <i>la plage</i> , <i>une image</i> , <i>la page</i>)	<i>le fromage</i>	"the cheese"
<i>-al</i>	<i>un animal</i>	"an animal"

-ier	<i>le pommier</i>	"the apple tree"
-isme	<i>le socialisme</i>	"socialism"
-ment	<i>le gouvernement</i>	"government"
-oir	<i>le couloir</i>	"the corridor"

B. Les noms féminins

Nouns with the following endings are almost always feminine:

Ending	French	"English"
-ance, -ence (except <i>le silence</i>)	<i>la confiance</i> <i>la patience</i>	"confidence" "patience"
-ée (except <i>le lycée, le musée</i>)	<i>la pensée</i>	"the thought"
-eur (except <i>le bonheur, le malheur</i>)	<i>la chaleur</i>	"the heat"

-ie	<i>la philosophie</i>	"philosophy"
-ion, -sion, -tion, -xion	<i>la passion</i> <i>la réflexion</i>	"passion" "thinking"
-té	<i>la beauté</i>	"beauty"
-ure	<i>la courbature</i>	"ache"

VIII. Pronouns

Pronouns are words that replace a noun to avoid repetition. Their forms vary, and we choose them according to their number (singular or plural), gender, and function (Is the pronoun the subject of the verb, the object?). Some are easy to recognize, as they exist in English too, but others are specific to the French language. The most common ones are:

A. *Les pronoms personnels* (*ou pronoms personnels sujets*), including *je* ("I"), *tu* ("you"), *il* ("he"), *elle* ("she"), etc.

B. *Les pronoms toniques*, which we use to reinforce the subject.

For Example:

1. *Moi, je suis français.*
"Me, I'm French."

We also use them after some prepositions, such as *à, pour, de, par*, etc.

For Example:

1. *Ce cadeau c'est pour toi.*
"This gift is for you."

C. Les pronoms des verbes pronominaux. We use these pronouns with verbs that indicate the action is done on the subject itself...

For Example:

1. *Il se rase.*
"He shaves."

...or the subjects act upon each other. In this case, the subject of the sentence is plural.

For Example:

1. *Ils se regardent dans les yeux.*
"They look at each other in the eyes."

D. Les pronoms compléments replace the object of a sentence.

For Example:

1. *Il la regarde.*
"He watches her/it."

E. Les pronoms démonstratifs replace a demonstrative adjective (*cette, cet, ces*, etc.) followed by a noun.

F. Les pronoms possessifs replace a possessive adjective (*mon, ma, tes*, etc.) followed by a noun.

G. Les pronoms interrogatifs ask information about a noun in question (*Quel est ton chanteur préféré ?*)

IX. Invariable Words

Some words never change according to gender or number. They are prepositions and adverbs.

Prepositions are words, such as *à, de, en, par*, with various translations according to their context or a group of words, such as *à partir de* ("from") or *au-dessus de* ("above"). Each one has many usages we won't present here due to their complexity. However, what is important for you to know is that they don't agree with the noun and therefore don't change in their spelling, even though they introduce a noun, a pronoun (replacing a noun), an adjective, or a verb.

Adverbs are words that slightly changing the meaning of a verb...

For Example:

1. **Adverb:**
Il parle fort.
"He speaks loudly."

2. **Adjective:**
Il fait très froid.
"It is very cold."

3. **Adverb:**
Il est vraiment très gentil.
"He is really very kind."

...and never change as they are invariable.

LESSON NOTES

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French Pronunciation Made EASY

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is French Pronunciation

French is the language and sound of love! Many people state that French always sounds romantic, no matter what is said! Even swearing in French seems sweet to foreign ears. So let's get going so you can become the perfect parrot and pronounce French in no time.

In French, there are twenty-six letters (the alphabet), thirty-seven speech sounds, and 130 graphemes. Graphemes are the different spellings of each sound found in French.

For example, take a look at the *-en* sound in the word *vent*, meaning "wind." We can also write the *-en* sound as *-em*, as in *emporter* ("to bring"), or as *-an*, as in *ange* ("angel"). Therefore, we can write one sound in different ways.

With thirty-seven speech sounds, French has some sounds that are similar or identical to English sounds and others that are completely foreign. That's when the majority of learners get discouraged! However, by listening and practicing these sounds to learn the differences between them and how they are spelled in French, it will get easier and easier.

We can separate the speech sounds into two categories:

1. Nineteen vowels
2. Eighteen consonants

The Nineteen Vowel Sounds

The French vowel sounds are divided as follows:

I. *Voyelles orales* ("oral vowels")

1. *Voyelles antérieures* ("front vowels")
2. *Voyelles centrales* ("central vowels")
3. *Voyelles postérieures* ("back vowels")

II. *Voyelles nasales* ("nasal vowels")

III. *Semi-voyelles* ("half vowels")

Quite some barbarian words! Yes, we emit some of our sounds from our noses or throats and not only from our mouths. You'll use muscles you never knew you had! While learning

French, you're discovering your own anatomy!

I. Voyelles orales ("Oral Vowels")

A. Voyelles antérieures ("Front Vowels")

We call these types of sounds "front vowels" because you produce them by placing your tongue more or less far ahead in your mouth.

For example, try to pronounce the letter -é, producing an anterior vowel, and the letters -ou, producing a posterior vowel. Notice the placement of your tongue in your mouth. While producing the sound -é first followed by the sound -ou, you should observe your tongue going from the front toward the back of your mouth.

Here is a list of the anterior vowels in French:

Phonetic Symbol	English Pronunciation	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in red)
[i]	[i] as feet		stylo ("pen")
			île ("island")
			maïs ("corn")
[é]	[ay] as in May	regarder ("to look")	parlez ("talk")
			piéd ("feet")
			messieurs ("sir")
			poignée ("handful")
[è]	[eh] as in paint		(volontiers "certainly")
			chienne* ("female dog")
			merci ("thank you")
			jouet ("toy")
			mais ("but")
			maître ("master")
			payer ("to pay")

			<i>treize</i> ("thirteen")
			<i>être</i> ("to be")
			<i>Noël</i> ("Christmas")
			<i>volley</i> ("volleyball")
[a]	[a] as in apple	<i>sac</i> ("bag")	<i>à</i> ("at, to"), <i>femme</i> ("woman")

B. Voyelles centrales ("Central Vowels")

To properly pronounce this type of sound, place the tongue in the middle of your mouth.

Phonetic Symbol	English Pronunciation	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in red)
[u]	[u] as in pure	<i>lune</i> ("moon")	<i>sûr</i> ("pen") <i>eu</i> ("had") (<i>avoir</i> at the <i>passé composé</i> tense)
[e]	[uh] as in duh	<i>je</i> ("I")	-
[E]	[œ] as in sun	<i>feu</i> ("fire")	<i>noeud</i> ("knot") <i>jeûne</i> ("young")
[F]	[œu] as in flower	<i>fleur</i> ("flower")	<i>coeur</i> ("heart") <i>club</i> ("club")

C. Voyelles postérieures ("Back Vowels")

To produce this type of sound, place your tongue in the back of your mouth.

Phonetic Symbol	English Pronunciation	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in red)
[U]	[ou] as in tourist	<i>poule</i> ("hen")	<i>où</i> ("where")

gôûter
("to taste")

football
("football")

août
("august")

[o]

[o] as in orange

vélo ("bike")

landau ("stroller")

bateau
("boat")

drôle
("funny")

[O]

[um] as in drum

pomme ("apple")

album
("album")

alcool
("alcohol")

capharnaüm
("shambles")

[A]

[a] as in cat

pâte ("pasta")

II. *Voyelles nasales* ("Nasal Vowels")

As these sounds are specific to French, they are hard to reproduce in a written form. We produce them orally using the air passage through the nose and lowering the soft palate while the air goes through the mouth.

Phonetic Symbol	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in red)
[D]	<i>un</i> ("a"/"an"/"one")	<i>parfum</i> ("perfume")
[C]	<i>lapin</i> ("rabbit")	<i>chien</i> ("dog")
		<i>pain</i> ("bread")

		<i>peinture</i> ("paint")
		<i>daim</i> ("deer")
		<i>imparfait</i> ("imperfect")
		<i>syndicat</i> ("trade union")
		<i>sympa</i> ("kind")
[B]	<i>gant</i> ("glove")	<i>jambe</i> ("leg")
		<i>empereur</i> ("emperor")
		<i>Caen</i> (French city)
		<i>paon</i> ("peacock")
[I]	<i>ballon</i> ("ball")	<i>ombre</i> ("shadow")
		<i>punch</i> ("punch")

Language Tip

To listen to these sounds or any others, go to the learning center and find a word with the grapheme that corresponds to the phonetic symbol you'd like to practice.

III. *Semi-voyelles* ("Half Vowels")

Half-vowels are also called *semi-consonnes* ("half consonants"). They are specific to the French language only and are sounds between vowels and consonants. For example, the pronunciation of the letter -y in *yeux* ("eyes") is a *semi-voyelle*, as it would be pronounced as [zii-heo]. The same is true of the letters -oi pronounced in English [woa], as in *poisson* ("fish").

Phonetic Symbol	English Pronunciation	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in red)
[J]	[i-hae] as in yarn	<i>piéd</i> ("foot")	<i>crayon</i> ("pencil")
			<i>soleil</i> ("sun")
			<i>paille</i> ("hay")
			<i>hyène</i> ("pen")
			<i>païen</i> ("pagan")
[V]	[hu-i] as in quick	<i>huit</i> ("eight")	<i>sueur</i> ("sweat")
			<i>suave</i> ("pen")
			<i>ennuyeux</i> ("boring")
[w]	[woa] as in chihuhua	<i>doigt</i> ("finger")	<i>ouate</i> ("pen")
			<i>wallon</i> ("pen")
			<i>équateur</i> ("equator")
			<i>moelle</i> ("pen")
			<i>poêle</i> ("pan")
			<i>croît</i> ("pen")

The Eighteen Consonant Sounds

They are divided as follows:

1. *Occlusives* ("blocked consonants")
2. *Fricative* ("sibilant")
3. *Vibrante* ("vibrant")

I. Occlusives ("Blocked Consonants")

We produce this consonant sound by blocking the air through the mouth and pharynx, followed by a sudden release. These sounds are much easier to reproduce as they are very similar to the English consonants.

Phonetic Symbol	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in red)
[p]	<i>pile</i> ("battery")	<i>appartement</i> ("apartment")
[b]	<i>bol</i> ("bowl")	<i>abbaye</i> ("abbey")
[m]	<i>mur</i> ("wall")	<i>flamme</i> ("flame")
[t]	<i>table</i> ("table")	<i>datte</i> ("date")
[d]	<i>dé</i> ("dice")	<i>addition</i> ("addition")
[n]	<i>noeud</i> ("knot")	<i>anniversaire</i> ("birthday")
[G]	<i>ligne</i> ("line")	<i>manière</i> ("way")

[k]	c adeau ("gift")	qualit� ("quality")
		kepi ("cap")
		accord ("agreement")
		orchestra ("orchestra")
		ticket ("ticket")
		coq ("rooster")
[g]	g �teau ("cake")	bagu� ("ring")
		aggraver ("to aggravate")
		second ("second")
		ghetto ("ghetto")
[N]	parking ("parking lot")	

II. Fricative ("Sibilant")

We produce these consonants by forcing air through a narrow channel made by placing two small parts of the mouth (teeth, tongue, glottis, etc.) close together.

Phonetic Symbol	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in red)
[f]	fl �te ("flute")	phare ("headlight")
		affaire ("matter")

[v]	valise ("suitcase")	wagon ("wagon")
[s]	soleil ("sun")	poisson ("fish")
		citron ("lemon")
		garçon ("boy")
		démocratie ("democracy")
		science ("science")
		asthma ("asthma")
		six ("six")
[z]	maison ("house")	zoo ("zoo")
		deuxième ("second")
		blizzard ("blizzard")
[H]	chat ("cat")	short ("short")
		schéma ("diagram")
		fasciste ("fascist")
[j]	jupe ("skirt")	girafe ("giraffe")

III. Vibrante ("Vibrant")

We produce this consonant by one of various vibrations caused by pressured air created by one mouth organ (the tip of the tongue, uvula, etc.) that we suddenly release.

Phonetic Symbol	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in red)
[l]	<i>lampe</i> ("lamp")	<i>elle</i> ("she")
[R]	<i>roue</i> ("wheel")	<i>beurre</i> ("butter")

Pronunciation Tip

To pronounce the letter *-r* in French, reproduce the sound of an angry growling dog. Harden the rolling *-gr* sound (as in the word "growling") and produce it repeatedly on the back of your mouth near the top of your throat, and you should be set to reproduce a nice French sound!

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #5

Top 5 Most Common Phrases

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Five Most Common French Phrases

To survive in a foreign place where people speak a language other than yours, you'll need to know the emergency phrases to function, satisfy your basic needs, or save your skin in emergency situations!

France is no different! When you attempt to speak French to natives in France and demonstrate that you are making an effort to adapt, you'll facilitate communication with the inhabitants of France.

Not only will using the five phrases in this lesson and following our tips help you break the ice, but it will also allow you to *commencer du bon pied* ("start on the right foot") and establish a friendly and respectful exchange!

Phrase One: *Ça va? Ça va.* ("How are you? I'm fine.")

After greeting and saying hello to someone, you will need to ask how she or he is. It's a matter of politeness.

The Question and Statement With *ça and va*:

While in France you'll often hear these two sounds [sa-va], which are part of the phrase *Ça va ?*, meaning "How are you?"

Be aware though, these two tiny words can be either a question or a statement.

To differentiate between the two, you need to listen to the speaker's intonation. When the intonation rises, it will be a question: *Ça va ?* ("How are you?") When the intonation is slightly falling or constant, it will be a statement: *ça va* ("I'm fine.").

We only use *ça va?* and *ça va.* in familiar or informal settings. For example, you could say it when speaking to your French colleague you've spent time with outside of work that you've become comfortable with or simply with longtime friends.

Language Expansion

Alternative Questions for *Ça va ?* ("How are you?")

Standard French:

<i>French</i>	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Comment ça va ?</i>	[ko-man-sa-va]	"How are you?"
<i>Ça va comment ?</i>	[sa-va-ko-man]	"How are you?"

Alternative Answers for *Ça va*. "I'm fine."

Standard French:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Ça va bien.</i>	[sa-va-bihan]	"I'm fine."
<i>Ça va très bien.</i>	[sa-va-tray-bihan]	"I'm very well."
<i>Ça va mal.</i>	[sa-va-mal]	"I'm not good."

Phrase Two: *S'il vous plaît*. ("Please.")

This phrase is a must for anyone who has *de la galanterie* ("some courtesy").

The original meaning of *S'il vous plaît* was not only to be polite but also to ask whomever you are speaking to whether he or she would be pleased to do a favor for you, such as answering a question or passing the salt at the table.

Formal "please": *S'il vous plaît*

You've guessed it: we use *s'il vous plaît* [see-vooh-play] in French in formal situations or with people you are addressing using *vous* (the formal "you"). It simply means "please" in English.

Informal "please": *S'il te plaît*

If you'd like to say "please" with close friends, colleagues, in a relaxed context, or in short with people you talk to by using the informal personal pronoun *tu*, use *s'il te plaît* [seel-tuh-play].

Language Expansion

Often after you use *s'il te plaît* or *s'il vous plaît* comes the time to thank the person who helped you. To do so, just say "thank you" with the word *merci* [mer-si].

Even better, show your appreciation and break the old routine by using an alternative *merci* by saying:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Merci beaucoup.</i>	[mer-see-bo-cu]	"Thank you very much/so much."
<i>Merci mille fois.</i>	[mer-see-mil-fuwa]	"Thank you a thousand times."

Phrase Three: *Excusez-moi* ("Excuse Me")

Nobody is perfect. Are you? If not, you probably hope to be. As many of us aren't, we do make mistakes from time to time. Doing so often requires us to apologize or express that we are sorry.

Formal "Excuse me": *Excusez-moi*

To express these feelings in formal situations or with higher-ranked colleagues, use the short phrase *excusez-moi*, pronounced [ex-scyuuz-eh mwah], meaning "excuse me," "I'm sorry," or simply "sorry."

Informal "Excuse me": *Excuse-moi*

If you are among people in a relaxed atmosphere or an informal context, use *excuse-moi* [ex-scyuuz mwah] ("excuse me").

Phrase Four: *Aidez-moi* ("Help Me")

You never know what will happen from one day to the next. Some days are predictable, and others may require fast action on your part to solve an emergency. In that case, you may need to ask for help.

To get assistance, just say *Aidez-moi!* [ay-day mwah], meaning "help me." If you are not in such a hurry or an urgent situation and just would like to ask a stranger for help to find your way, for example, add the expression we saw earlier *s'il vous plaît* ("please") and end up with the polite and formal phrase *Aidez-moi, s'il vous plaît* ("Help me, please.").

Language Expansion

If you are in an urgent situation and want to catch the attention of people around you, say first *Aidez-moi!* ("Help me!"), then express your need for a doctor by adding after *Aidez-moi!* the phrase *J'ai besoin d'un docteur*. You'll have the phrase *Aidez-moi! J'ai besoin d'un docteur* [ay-day mwah jeh boe-zuhin doen doc-tour] ("Help me! I need a doctor.").

Phrase Five: *Je ne sais pas*. ("I don't know")

While walking in a French city, park, or castle, someone might ask you one of the following questions: "Where are the restrooms?" or "Where is the entrance?" More likely than not, since you are also unfamiliar with the place you are visiting, you won't have the answer.

A useful way to respond in French when you don't know something is to say *Je ne sais pas* [juh nuh sy pa] ("I don't know.").

Language Expansion

To give an explanation and offer a reason for the cause of your ignorance, you can always say *Je ne parle pas bien le français* [juh nuh parl pa bi-han luh fran-say], meaning "I don't speak French well."

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #6

Top 5 Things To Know About France

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is a Quiz on the Five Things You Need to Know About France

What do you know about France?

Test your knowledge! Through this mini-test, you will build your basic knowledge of France by quizzing yourself on five areas about France:

1. Geography
2. Pop culture
3. Travel
4. Economics
5. Facts about strikes

1. Geography

France's most common nickname is *l'hexagone*, which refers to its geographical shape. People also refer to France as *metropolitain* France (implying that its overseas territories are not included in the context of the phrase). France has many regions divided in *départements* with a large variety of landscapes.

How many regions and regional parks are there in France?

- A: Thirty-four regions and nineteen regional parks
- B: Forty-five regions and twenty-six regional parks
- C: Twenty-six regions and forty-five regional parks

France's Regions

France has twenty-six regions. Twenty-one of them are located in the continental part of metropolitan France. The other five are located overseas: one, *Corse*, on the island of Corsica, and four other regions and territories spread through almost all the other continents.

The twenty-six regions are divided into one hundred *départements*, and each is numbered. The French use these numbers for postal codes and vehicle number plates. A well-known French car ride game while traveling to a vacation destination is to guess from the car plates their provenance!

France's Parks

France possesses forty-five natural parks (with one located in *Guyane* and another in *Martinique*) and seven national parks. The regional parks represent:

1. Twelve percent of the French territory, providing the landscape diversity encountered in France and its overseas territories
2. 3,690 communes
3. More than seven million hectares
4. More than three million inhabitants

2. French Pop Culture Question

France, and especially Paris, is a center for culture and entertainment, such as fashion and music. One characteristic of new pop music trends is *le tube de l'été* ("a summer hit"). *Le tube de l'été* is a featured song played in the summer during the vacation period.

Below you'll see three major players in French culture and the French entertainment industry. One is a famous singer, the next an actor, and finally a sports star.

Try to match the name with the person.

A: Benjamin Siksou 1: Sport star

B: Gad Elmaleh 2: Singer

C: Laure Manaudou 3: Actor

Laure Manaudou is a French swimming star. She broke world records for the four hundred meter freestyle (short course). She also won the gold medal in the women's four hundred meter freestyle at the 2004 Athens Olympics. It was France's first gold medal ever in women's swimming, and the first swimming gold medal a French athlete had won since 1952. In the 2008 Summer Olympics, Manaudou was unable to recapture her form from the previous Olympics and didn't win the gold medals she aimed for.

Benjamin Siksou became popular during the television show "Star Academy" in 2008, where he proved his singing talent in blues-folk style with a jazz-soul influence. He plays the guitar and has also appeared in a few movies, including *Largo Winch* (2007), *Largo Winch 2* (2009), and *15 et demi* ("15 and a half years old").

Gad Elmaleh is a Moroccan-French comedian and actor. His first movie was *Salut cousin!* by Merzak Allouache. He later appeared in *L'homme est une femme comme les autres* and *Train*

de Vie. He became popular after the success of his second one-man comedy routine, *La Vie Normale*, and the film *La Vérité si je mens! 2* (2000).

3. French Travel Question

More than two-thirds of the French people go on vacation at least once a year, and the country is one of the most popular destinations for international tourism in the world.

What is the most popular destination in France?

A: *Le Var*, located in the southeast of France

B: *L'Auvergne*, the region of old volcanoes, is located in the middle of France

C: *Le Nord-Pas-de-Calais*, with its flat landscape, is located in northern France

Le Var is a region and a popular destination for its climate and Mediterranean landscape. It is the region of the sun and vacations, and it is a place where many French people camp or acquire their second residence for the summer vacation. Even *Sempé*, a humoristic French cartoonist, makes fun of it. The *Le Var* region's specialty is *le rosé de provence*, a chilled rosé wine enjoyed before lunch or dinner on a sunny patio.

4. French Economy Question

The French economy is well known for its rank in the world. In 2008, France was the fifth world power economically after the United States, Japan, China, and Germany. It takes the fifth worldwide position for its exportation and the sixth place for its importation.

What are the most important economic sectors in France?

A: Service sector

B: Primary sector (agriculture)

C: Secondary sector (industry)

The active French population is mainly employed in the service sector, with a rate of seventy-two percent. Industry takes second place with twenty-four percent, and the agricultural sector is the least popular with only four percent in 1999, according to *l'INSEE*, the French national statistical institution.

As France is the most-visited country in the world with over seventy-five million visitors a year, tourism is a significant contributor to the French economy.

5. French Society Question

It's commonly said that France and the French people are always on strike!

Are French people always on strike, and is striking a French characteristic?

A: Yes

B: No

C: I'm not sure

Well, yes they are! But not as much as we think.

When classifying countries by the number of working days lost due to strikes from 1993 to 2002, we can see that France is in the middle of the class, with countries such as Australia, Ireland, and Norway. Spain, Canada, and Iceland are the countries with the highest rate of lost work days (Source: ONS).

Over the years, French people have been striking less and less. The number of non-working days has significantly decreased over the years. This is because French people who work in the private sector are rarely on strike.

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #7

Top 5 French Foods

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Top Five French Foods.

French gastronomy is renowned all over the planet. Eating in France is an *art de vivre*.

Given how tough it was to pick only the five top French foods, we chose to extend our list to six must-try French dishes.

French Cuisine Basics

French people pride themselves for their variety of foods available often only in France, such as certain cheeses. Most people are already familiar with bleu cheese, rare steak, wine, and champagne. But there is much more to French cuisine.

French people like their meals made with fresh, high-quality ingredients. Fine flavors and their combinations are the basics of any French meal.

Here are the three main categories of dishes you will encounter when traveling to France:

Regional Dishes

They are plentiful, various, and numerous, as regional dishes outnumber the regions of France themselves. Often one or two specialties characterize each French region.

They are always comforting, appetizing, and rarely made to meet the strict requirements of a tight diet. If you're in a restaurant, always ask for the regional dish and make sure to ask what it is made of so you are not disappointed.

***Pistou*, a Southern Provençal Dish**

This pasta soup contains various vegetables, such as green beans, white beans, red beans, potatoes, leeks, tomatoes, celery, and zucchini. Add a little basil, garlic, parmesan, gruyere, and olive oil, and you're all set!

***Andouille de Vire* and Potatoes**

Andouille ("pork sausage") from Normandy is smoked with oak or beech and served with potatoes. It is processed according to strict rules of manufacturing to maintain its original flavor.

Popular Dishes

Popular dishes are those you'll usually find in every restaurant. They were once regional dishes and spread over time all over the country.

Nowadays, kids' favorite main course is often a steak topped with pepper gravy and French

fries, which is often offered on the kids' menu in restaurants.

Les bouchées a la reine

They are small flaky pastries filled with a mixture of bone marrow, poultry, and mushrooms in a creamy, white gravy with white wine. It is a classic!

La blanquette de veau

Veal is popular for its fine flavor and tender texture. *La blanquette* is a stew with white sauce. We can also prepare other meats *en blanquette*. *La blanquette de veau* is cooked in vegetable stock made of aromatic herbs and vegetables. The French then use the vegetables as a side dish. The cook then thickens the liquid stock with flour, butter, cream and sometimes egg yolks. The French commonly serve mushrooms, rice, pasta, or potatoes with this hot dish.

Seasonal Dishes

Seasonal dishes are countless.

Foie gras

Foie gras is a delicacy that people enjoy at the end-of-the-year festivities. You can spread this duck or goose liver fine mousse on a piece of toast with beef jelly made of *madère* wine.

Beignet

Beignet, or "doughnuts" in English, are traditionally served in February for Carnival. They are deep-fried dough that come either plain or stuffed with marmalade or apple sauce. The French also serve other versions as appetizers with fillings, such as zucchini and shrimp.

Table Etiquette

Bon appétit is a phrase you should always use before starting your meal when sitting at the French table.

Here are some tips to help you in your quest to adapt to French culture and habits:

1. Keep your hands on the table and your wrists at the edge of the table.
2. Tear bread in pieces before eating it.
3. Ask for water. The French do not serve it automatically. Be aware that ice is always served sparingly.
4. For the cheese platter, make sure to mimic the previous guest's cut. Cutting cheeses in an improper way is usually not appreciated.
5. Almost no one has coffee with dessert. Request it usually after you've eaten the complete meal.

Top Five Foods for the Brave

And our top five foods for the brave are....

Number five...steak tartare

Number four...veal's head

Number three...*boudin*

Number two...snails

Number one...frog's legs

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #8

Top 5 Things You Need To Know About French Society

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Top Five Things You Need To Know About French Society.

1. The Major City and Its Unique Identity

Paris: *La Ville-Lumière* ("The City of Lights")

General Facts

Paris, the world-famous capital of France, has many nicknames. One of them is *La Ville-Lumière* or "City of Lights," which refers to the eighteenth century's Enlightenment in France.

Another nickname is *Paname* and is slang. It comes from the Panama hat, which was very fashionable in Paris in the early twentieth century. Today, people still call Paris *Paname*.

The city of Paris (intra-muros) counts 2,167,994 inhabitants. The *metropolitain* area (intra-muros and surroundings) has twelve million inhabitants and is one of the most populated metropolitan areas in Europe.

Today, the Parisian urban area is Europe's biggest city economy, and it ranks fifth in the world's list of cities.

The Unique City of Paris

Paris is a city that has a unique identity. Here is why.

Each major French city has its buzzing downtown area with shopping areas and restaurants in the old part of the city.

Although Paris follows this general rule, it also has an additional *je ne sais quoi* that you won't find in other French cities. First, Paris is laid out like an agglomeration of small villages. The capital is divided in twenty *arrondissements* or "districts," and each has its own local celebrations, its own bistros and cafés, as well as its own city hall. Walking from one neighborhood to another can feel like crossing borders between Morocco and India (assuming these two countries actually had borders!).

Paris's rich history of artistic, intellectual, and political movements is still lively today. An illustration of this past and present artistic and political productivity is, among others, the Montparnasse neighborhood from the 1950s to the late 1960s. Located on the left bank of the river Seine, Montparnasse was the place where numerous artists, moviemakers, and intellectuals coming from all over Europe gathered during that time. French people tend to romanticize these times and dream about the idea of Jean-Paul Sartre drinking coffee with Simone de Beauvoir while discussing political affairs and working on their next book. But...these times are over (and the rents are too high for artists!). The cultural and artistic core of the city moved (and is probably still moving as we speak) to the right bank of the river, in *Marais* and *Châtelet*.

Sometimes, Paris's radiance leads Parisians to set themselves apart from the rest of France. This is also due to a long history of Paris being the political, cultural, and commercial core of the country. Decentralization (public funds and political responsibilities given to the regions as opposed to the capital only) only started in the early twentieth century.

2. Family Life

The second thing you should know about French society is that French people value their personal lives, and for them, doing nothing isn't a cause of guilt.

French families value their time together, sometimes prioritizing it over their work. This time shared with families or friends translates into a habit of using long meals as a time to socialize. A French family has at least two sit-down meals a day, most often in the morning and in the evening.

French people value their personal lives in different ways too; French families usually take time off twice a year to go on vacation together. This is possible because kids have two weeks of vacation every six weeks. Active adults get usually five weeks of vacation time. They spend plenty of time on leisure.

French people don't often mix work life and family life. There is a distinct separation between the two. A co-worker can become a person's friend when the person invites him or her to do so. But co-workers rarely spend personal time together. However, work habits tend to change with the new generation, and people hang out outside of work more.

3. Work Culture

France's economy is ranked fifth in the world and is strong in the industrial sectors. France's leading industries are telecommunications (including communication satellites), aerospace and defense, shipbuilding (naval and specialist ships), pharmaceuticals, construction and civil engineering, chemicals, and automobile production.

Some well-known companies in France are:

1. France Telecom for communications
2. Total for the oil industry
3. Airbus for aeronautics
4. PSA Peugeot Citroen for the car industry

Remember, we mentioned that Paris is the center of all matters in France? Well, this was one aspect of centralism.

Work culture in France is also based on centralism. In this case, it translates to most companies having their decisions made by a few or by just one person. Hierarchy is very strong and

respect is due to the head of the company. But that's without taking into account the French revolutionary spirit. (Who never experienced a strike while visiting France?) Fighting for your rights is essential in France.

France's work culture is also based on individualism. In fact, French people have a very hard time with teamwork and are not very efficient with meetings (meetings can easily last three hours when it comes to making a group decision about which coffee brand should be in the vending machine...). It is probably due to the French desire to be unique and not to be assimilated into a group.

4. Political System

France has a democratic political system where the President is the head of the State and the Prime Minister is the head of the government. People vote for the President in a universal suffrage election. Today's French political system is fairly recent in origin: the Fifth Republic was introduced in 1958 and provides substantial power to the President.

The political scene is mainly represented by two parties:

1. The UMP, *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* ("Union for a Popular Movement"), which represents the right wing
2. The PS, *Parti Socialiste* ("Socialist Party"), which represents the left wing

The left wing is known to be more attached to what is called the French *modèle social* ("Social Model") than the right wing. The Social Model includes free or affordable *services publics* ("public services"), including health care, education, high compensation for unemployed people, and minimum income for all.

5. The French "Acquired Benefits" ...

French people are attached to these "acquired benefits." What are those?

They are social benefits (a set retirement age and a set retirement public fund, universal health care, high quality public education for all, and other benefits if you work for the government) that have always (at least that's how French people feel) been offered to citizens. Ever since the end of WWII, presidents who tried to reform this strong system of benefits have been confronted with countrywide demonstrations. Powerful French unions have prevented every government from freely reforming this system. This is the French way to prevent the government from abusing its citizens.

However, with the French society changing and its economy weakened, times are changing. Nicolas Sarkozy (elected in 2007) is the first President who has tried to reform these social systems. The idea is to save money by decreasing the public expenses. French people have been reacting promptly by demonstrating and marching in the streets.

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #9

Top 5 Dates During the Calendar Year

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Top Five Important Dates During the Calendar Year.

France has eleven *jours fériés* or "holidays." On those days, schools, government institutions, banks, and most companies are officially closed, and most employees get the day off. Here are the French holidays:

1. January 1: *Le Nouvel An* ("New Year's Day")
2. April: *Pâques* ("Easter")
3. May 1: *La Fête du Travail* ("Labor Day")
4. May: *Jeudi de l'Ascension* ("Ascension Day"), forty days after Easter
5. May 8: *Le 8 mai*, the celebration of the World War II victory in 1945
6. May/June: *Lundi de Pentecôte* ("Pentecost"), fifty days after Easter—It is also the day to celebrate solidarity with the elderly
7. July 14: *Le 14 juillet* (national holiday celebrating the French Revolution of 1789)
8. August 15: *L'Assomption* ("Assumption"), celebrates the Virgin Mary
9. November 1: *La Toussaint*, (All Saints' Day), is a time when the French commemorate and remember the deceased
10. November 11: *Le 11 novembre* (celebrates the World War I armistice in 1918)
11. December 25: *Noël* ("Christmas")

Now here are the most popular celebrations in France:

1. The fifth most important day in France is Christmas.

France, although a secular country, is traditionally Catholic. Christmas is celebrated by a majority of people. December 25 is called *Le jour de Noël* ("Christmas Day"). It celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, who is also known as Jesus de Nazareth. The twenty-fifth day of December was chosen as a substitute for the pagan festivities celebrating the Sun and the increasing days.

The French celebrate Christmas in many ways. First, most French families will symbolize the

birth of Jesus by building the nativity scene usually under or near the Christmas tree. Each character is traditionally made of clay, and they are called *les santons de Provence*.

Families begin to celebrate this holiday on December 24. This ritual takes place in the evening with a meal prepared for the occasion where the French serve *foie gras*, seafood, and a *bûche de Noël* (iced cake in the shape of a log). The evening meal is then followed by the popular *messe de minuit* ("the midnight mass").

On December 25, French families gather again for Christmas Day and serve another elaborate Christmas meal for lunch. Many families open their gifts on Christmas Eve, the evening of December 24, to avoid the impatience of the youngest ones.

2. The fourth most important day in France is New Year's Eve.

This day takes place on December 31 and is one of the most apparent holidays in the public eye as restaurants offer a multitude of various meals and entertainment for the occasion. It's a time of renewal and hope to start the new year. It is called either *Le Réveillon du Nouvel An* or *Le Réveillon de la Saint-Sylvestre*.

Nowadays, the tradition is to gather with friends for a festive dinner. The French always serve Champagne along with *foie gras*. The French spend the night in cocktail gowns and suits either at a friend's house or in a restaurant with an orchestra or band playing to encourage guests to dance. The meal is often served with a three- or four-course dinner with plenty of wine. Champagne is traditionally served after the stroke of midnight. At this moment, couples and friends wish "Happy New Year" (*Bonne Année !*) to each other while giving their best wishes for the new year. In Paris, people gather on the *avenue des Champs-Élysées* with Champagne in hand...this is quite a moving moment as people talk to each other, which they never do otherwise.

Another tradition for New Year's Eve is to give *les étrennes*: kids receive small presents and employees get bonuses.

At eight o'clock in the evening on January 1, the French President sends his *vœux présidentiels* or "presidential vows" to the French people from the *palais de l'Élysée*, his official residence.

3. The third most important day in France is Mother's day.

Even though Mother's Day isn't a non-working day, it has become a highly celebrated day in French families. *La Fête des Mères* ("Mother's Day") is celebrated on the last Sunday of May in France.

The Greeks originated this holiday by celebrating the goddess Rhea, the mother of all gods, each spring. In ancient Rome in the fifth century before Christ, the pagan custom was to celebrate Matralia, the festivity honoring women and mothers.

In 1886, Napoleon made Mother's Day an official French holiday. However, this celebration did not become popular until after World War II in 1945, when the French observed the flow of messages American soldiers sent to their mothers. At that time, Mother's Day was already

established as a holiday in the United States.

Before *la Fête des Mères*, children usually prepare a gift in school to give to their moms, such as a card, a poem, a bean necklace, and the like.

Another traditional gift is flowers. The idea is also to relieve the mother from her usual chores. To do so, children prepare lunch under the dad's supervision or, more frequently, the family goes out for a dinner.

4. The second most important day in France is Music Day.

Also called *la Fête de la Musique*, this day is a music festival organized all over the streets of France on June 21. Musician Joel Cohen, who worked in 1976 at *France Musique*, a public French radio station, originated this holiday. He suggested a music celebration every year for the summer solstice. The idea grew and the French Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, adopted it as a holiday in 1981, and the first celebration took place a year later.

Many look forward to this day, since any amateur or professional music performer can show his or her talent in the streets of all cities and villages in France. The goal of this day is to promote music. Free concerts take place everywhere, whether they are randomly improvised by high school students or more officially organized by cities.

On that day, you cannot avoid hearing music. Businesses such as restaurants and bars offer free concerts in their establishments. Cities plan concerts all day long and offer their equipment, making sure to include all types of music. You may also find individuals or amateur bands on street corners or squares. Music Day is one of the most friendly celebrations in France. Many other countries have adopted it over the years.

5. The most important day in France is July 14.

This day is the French national holiday. It represents *la Fête de la Fédération*, the federation party that was held on the first anniversary of the seizure of the Bastille during the French Revolution.

Before the French Revolution, France was divided into three estates: the clergy, the nobility, and the common people. Each estate could voice its collective opinion to the King running the nation. In 1789, a time of drastic political and social change, the deputies representing the common people separated from the church and the nobility to form a National Assembly. The monarchy obviously remained deaf to the people's claims. The unheard angry people of Paris marched to the Bastille, which was at that time a jail for political dissidents and a warehouse for weaponry, armed themselves, and released the prisoners. Later in 1880, the French chose that day as their national symbol of the republic, and the French have celebrated this holiday since then on July 14.

This day is, of course, a paid holiday. During this important day, the most representative event is the military parade in Paris on the Champs Élysées. After the military parade, another important ritual is *L'Allocution Présidentielle du 14 Juillet*: the French president gives a speech on French television for the national holiday to express his political views on recent events. Afterward, politicians and official guests are invited to the *Garden Party de l'Élysée du 14 juillet*.

The Elysee Palace is the official residence of the French president. In 2008, the July 14 Garden Party hosted the newly freed Franco-Colombian politician Ingrid Bétancourt. The last and probably most entertaining custom on the French national holiday is the fireworks. They are done in small cities on the evening of July 13, with bigger ones on the July 14.

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #10

Top 5 Things You Need to Know About Pop Culture in France

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Top Five Things to Know About Pop Culture in France

France has some trends that seem to not exist in other countries.

For example, you'll hear the hit song on almost all the French radio stations. Seasonal summer TV shows invite the star of the moment, who will sing the summer hit live.

Some game shows are very specific to France. For example, *La Carte au Trésor* ("The Treasure Map") is a gigantic treasure hunt all over France broadcast on TV. Also, *Fort Boyard* is a game show that takes place in a fortress on an island where participants are put to severe tests fighting fake gladiators and answering puzzles.

Obviously France can't avoid the influence of American culture, but French pop culture also maintains its French identity...

We collected five pop culture items that make French people proud (or not) of being French.

Number Five Pop Culture Must-Know: Popular Sports Figures

Even though France doesn't dominate the Olympics, it doesn't mean some of our sport stars are behind the rest of the world!

French sports stars cannot be counted by the thousands, but they are extremely talented. Some popular sports are:

Soccer

Zinedine Zidane is surely one of the most talented soccer players in the world, and the French, even those who are not interested in sports, cherish him.

Tennis

Amélie Mauresmo won two major tennis competitions, the Australian Open and Wimbledon, in 2006. She is known for her powerful one-handed backhand and her strong net play.

Skiing

France has provided some world-famous skiers, such as Jean-Claude Killy, who was a triple champion in the 1960s, or most recently French alpine skier Julien Lizerouz, who was World Champion of the 2001 Super-Giant Slalom and won silver medals in the Super Combined and the Slalom at the 2009 Alpine Skiing World Championships in Val d'Isère.

Sailing

A few famous sailors are French. Michel Desjoyeaux is one of the world's most successful solo sailors, as he is the only person to win the Vendée Globe race twice, in 2000 and 2008. Isabelle Autissier was the first woman to complete a solo sail around the world in 1991.

With that short introduction to sports and sports stars in France, our number five pop culture

sport icon in France is its representation with the color blue and the rooster. They are both symbols of French sports. They first appeared on the football shirt in 1909. Later, in 1920, the French Olympic delegation chose the rooster for its mascot as well.

Number Four Pop Culture Must-Know: Popular Music

A few musical French styles dominate in France.

The most popular pop singers among teens and young adults are the winners of the *Nouvelle Star* (the French equivalent of *American Idol*).

France counts many pop singers whose music is usually text-oriented with few musical arrangements. Among them are Jean-Jacques Goldman (1990s), Pascal Obispo (2000 to today), and Carla Bruni...you've probably heard of her, but maybe not as a singer. She is known for her soft voice and her guitar. Recently, Emmanuelle Dumas arrived on the music scene as either a vibrant, rock 'n' roll or sexy, yet discreet young woman who changes according to the song's mood.

Another musical movement is the French music from the French Caribbean islands, and is called Zouk Music. Along with Yannick Noah (a former tennis player!) and the bands Kassav' and Soma, the Zouk music star today is Madhya Customs with his most famous single *Elles demandent*.

Musicals are also all the rage in France. For several years now their popularity has grown, first with *Notre Dame de Paris* then with *Le Petit Prince* adapted from the novel by Saint Exupéry and also *Roméo et Juliette*, and now with *Mozart, L'Opéra Rock*.

Number Three Pop Culture Must-Know: Popular French Men and Women Abroad

Apart from the past renowned artists, such as painter Claude Monet, the composer Claude Debussy, the scientists Pierre and Marie Curie, and designer Pierre Cardin, France still offers a few worldwide famous artists today. If you like clubbing, you've probably heard about the house DJ Laurent Garnier, or the author/composer/producer Bob Sinclar, who often performs as a DJ in New York and Tokyo. Finally, the electro band Daft Punk is famous for its spectacular shows.

Another French international icon is Manu Tchaou. This French singer has always been involved in politics. He was raised in both Spanish and French-Parisian culture, and he sings in French, Spanish, and English. He's loved for his activism and multicultural music.

Not only does France have music exports, but it also counts internationally renowned movie stars. After Sophie Marceau's international performances in the James Bond movie *The World Is Not Enough* and in *Braveheart*, other actresses followed in her footsteps and marched to Hollywood. They include Audrey Tautou in *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* (also known as *Amélie*) and Marion Cotillard in *La Vie en Rose*.

French culture is alive and radiates abroad!

Number Two Pop Culture Must-Know: France's Movie Industry

Again and again, the French media and movie theaters are filled with foreign movies, especially American ones.

However, over the last few decades, French cinema has become successful (within France's borders at least!). Producers, distributors, moviemakers, actors, and, most importantly...the audience all are keeping up with the national and international movie market.

How is that possible? France is such a small country!

Well, French cinema, ever since *La Nouvelle Vague* ("The New Wave") in the 1960s, has tried to maintain the idea that making movies is an art. The idea that the same person should write, direct, and edit a movie [called *auteur* ("author")] is very important to French people. In France, you ask who MADE a movie before you ask who IS IN the movie.

French people are usually reluctant to consider films as part of an industry. The French *exception culturelle* is a good example of the French perspective on the movie industry: what *exception culturelle* basically means is that public funds are very much involved in the movie making and production process. To give you an example, the money made on movie ticket sales is partly given to public institutions. Those institutions (such as the CNC, which stands for *Centre National de la Cinématographie* ("National Center of Cinematography")) are then able, along with government grants, to fund unknown moviemakers, to help small producers, and to boost the alternative movie scene. This way, small movie productions can compete with mainstream productions.

Public funds are considered essential to ensure that films remain independent from the demands of the market.

Number One Pop Culture Must-Know: Popular Television in France

France, like many other countries, is not an exception regarding the influx of many successful American TV series. Some American series dubbed in French that teens and young adults regularly follow are *Desperate Housewives*, *Dexter*, and *Grey's Anatomy*. But France also has its very own (and oh so French!) TV productions...let's take a look at some of them...

One of the recent successful French TV shows is *Plus Belle la Vie* ("More Beautiful Life"). It is playing every weekday in prime time and is watched by 5.3 million people. Four seasons and a thousand episodes after it started in 2004, it is still very popular. It portrays the life of people living in a working-class neighborhood (*le quartier du Panier*) in the southern French city Marseille.

Another French show is *La Vie est à Nous* ("Life Is Ours"). It portrays the life of five roommates in their thirties who live in a small pavilion somewhere in the suburbs of a city in France. It intends to depict real issues encountered by this generation: looking for a job, homosexuality, and getting married (or choosing not to get married?). Watching these shows can be very linguistically and culturally enriching.

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #11

Top Tools to Learn French

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The Focus of This Lesson Is the Top Five Useful Tools for Learning French

Learning a language requires commitment, a little time, and the right tools. In this presentation, we'll try to help you get the right tools to learn French. We picked five of them:

The top five tools for learning French are:

1. Tool 1: Manuals and reference books
2. Tool 2: Online dictionaries
3. Tool 3: Spelling and grammar checkers
4. Tool 4: Songs and lyrics
5. Tool 5: A pronunciation tool

Tool One: Resource Books

When exposed to French, you surely will encounter minor or major understanding issues when reading or listening, or you might run into problems when you try to write and speak the language.

To overcome or resolve the issues while listening or writing, you'll find that resource books are excellent tools. There are many resources that address the needs of all levels. We recommend three French publishers who offer resource books for those learning French as a second language. They are:

1. CLE International (www.cle-inter.com/home.html, written in French),
2. Didier (www.didierfle.com, written in French) and
3. Hachette Français Langue Étrangère (www.fle.hachette-livre.fr/ and click on the English link)

Depending on your needs and level, you can find the right tool adapted to your needs.

To do so, find your level from A1 to C2 on the "Common European Framework of Reference," a document that outlines levels, tools, and progression standards in language learning. Here is an excerpt:

Proficient

C2

Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express himself/herself spontaneously, very fluently, and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

User

C1

Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts and recognize implicit meaning. Can express himself/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.

Independent

B2

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

User

B1

Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Basic

A2

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate need.

User

A1

Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Tool Two: Online Dictionaries

Now that you have an idea of your level with the "Common European Framework of Reference" and are stumbling upon words, citations, or expressions you have no clue about, use a dictionary.

Dictionaries are great for checking spelling and gender, and they obviously will help you determine the mysterious meaning of French words...

Many dictionaries are available online. Some are better suited for beginners and others for more advanced ones:

For newbie to advanced learners, we recommend Wordreference.com.

Wordreference.com provides many languages in addition to French as well as translations from English to French and vice versa. This web site also has a French verb conjugator. The best part is the forum. There, you can ask questions about how to translate specific words, phrases, or expressions in different contexts. People are friendly and very helpful.

For intermediate learners to advanced, we recommend Lexilogos.com

Using a French dictionary helps you think as much as possible in French. Lexilogos.com gives you a wealth of resources and choices between various French dictionaries and other spelling and conjugation resources. If you are searching for a definition, you can click on different buttons redirecting you to different dictionaries. Some are more elaborate than others. Try them all or just a few to choose the best one for you.

Tool Three: Spelling and Grammar Checker *Le bon Patron*

When producing French either orally or in writing, use a spell check and a grammar check to check for any errors.

The tool you'll find at <http://bonpatron.com/> is convenient to invite and motivate you in doing research about your mistakes in French. Once you have typed in your text and verified it with the button *Vérifier le texte*, notes will appear in French on suggested corrections. If you are a beginner and unfamiliar with the term used, refer to a grammar resource book. If you are a more advanced French learner, you can research more in depth about the cause of your errors so you will have a better understanding of them.

The inconvenience is that the text you can verify is limited to three thousand characters, or about five hundred words. But let's be realistic, this is a great freebie with a word limit that's quite large! And if five hundred words is still not enough, you can always break down your text and perform several verifications.

The main point is that university researchers and professors created this program, making its use reliable and accurate. Note that the accuracy varies depending upon how you word your text and how precisely you express your ideas.

Tool Four: Folk Songs and Lyrics/Starting Point + Setting Aside Thirty Minutes a Day to Practice

You must practice to improve your French. A fun and common way to practice is to use songs. They provide pronunciation, listening, and reading drills all at once. The end result is fun - you get to sing karaoke style in French!

To be effective, your choice of songs is critical. You must find the right starting point to

determine the right songs suited to your language level profile.

If you're a newbie or beginner, we recommend you start with French folk songs or ballads. Check Carla Bruni's repertoire or other French singers such as Jean-Jacques Goldman, Daniel Balavoine, Patricia Kaas (also singing in English and German), Vanessa Paradis, Batlik, Stephan Eicher (also singing in English and German), and more recently Bénabar, and many others. You can also purchase compilations of a variety of French songs of the preceding years, which will give you a clue on what the trends were during the past twelve months.

Listen first to a sample of the song for its rhythm and overall pronunciation. It will give you an idea about how challenging the song might be. If the song is too slow and with little variety in words and phrases, it may get boring. If it is too fast and pronounced unclearly, it may get too difficult.

Once you have chosen the right song, listen to its entire version while reading the lyrics. Then work on the comprehension and words themselves, and research the words as well as the expressions unknown to you with the dictionaries indicated in the second tool.

Tool Five: Pronunciation Tool

Finally, while being exposed to new French words both written or oral, you might have a hard time learning how to pronounce them. Here is a great tool to improve your pronunciation skills:

Go to the free web site <http://www.research.att.com/~ttsweb/tts/demo.php>. Make sure to read the usage policy and just follow these three easy steps:

1. First choose either the masculine voice (Alain) or the feminine voice (Juliette) for French.
2. Then enter the word or phrase you want to learn how to pronounce in the box.
3. Finally click either on the button "speak" to hear the word or phrase or click on the "download" button to listen and save the audio file of the word or phrase you added in the text box.

All levels of foreign French speakers will find this program helpful and fun to use. The voices use a standard French accent, excluding any regional accents. This tool overall gives you a really decent pronunciation of French and will surely help you improve your pronunciation and be understood in France and other French-speaking countries!

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #12

Top 5 Mistakes to Avoid When Speaking French

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The Focus of This Lesson Is Top Five Mistakes Not to Make When Speaking

Making mistakes when speaking French occurs quite often. No matter what your level is, it is hard to be able to think and speak at the same time. When you improve in French, you'll get rid of the most basic mistakes, but you will still make some. Making mistakes is part of the learning process.

So don't feel alone or embarrassed. Making errors is normal and helps you get better if you are motivated. Rather, try to be aware of the ones you make the most often and work on a couple of them. Trying to correct them all when speaking is impossible! So be sure to take it one step at a time.

Mistake One: Gender Agreement

Gender agreement errors are very common. The main reason for it is the lack of knowledge of or incorrect assumptions about the noun's gender.

To avoid this mistake, you can do two things.

1. If your interlocutor and the situation allow it, consult a handy, pocket-size French dictionary that you can carry with you everywhere you go.

Advance in Your French Learning Tip

Buy several dictionaries and put one in your purse, in your car, on your bike, or in your favorite jacket. That way, you won't have to remember to take it with you, as it already is in one of your belongings.

2. Follow the general rule on the feminine and masculine endings for nouns.

a) Masculine Suffixes

Masculine nouns end with the following suffixes: *-isme*, *-age*, *-ment*.

For Example:

French	"English"
<i>un téléchargement</i>	"a download"
<i>un changement</i>	"a change"
<i>un apprentissage</i>	"an apprenticeship"

Also, all words ending with a consonant are usually masculine.

Some Exceptions:

French	"English"
<i>l'optimisme</i>	"optimism"
<i>un million</i>	"a million"
<i>un camion</i>	"a truck"
<i>un avion</i>	"a plane"
<i>un lycée</i>	"a high school"
<i>un musée</i>	"a museum"
<i>un traité</i>	"a treaty"
<i>un comité</i>	"a committee"
<i>un incendie</i>	"a fire"

b) Feminine Suffixes

Feminine nouns end with the following suffixes: *-sse, -oire, -ion, -ée, -ique, -té, -ie.*

For Example:

French	"English"
<i>une manifestation</i>	"a manifestation"
<i>la liberté</i>	"freedom"
<i>une arrivée</i>	"an arrival"
<i>une sortie</i>	"an exit"
<i>une victoire</i>	"a victory"

Some Exceptions:

French	"English"
<i>une jument</i>	"a mare"

<i>une image</i>	"an image"
<i>une plage</i>	"a beach"
<i>une cage</i>	"a cage"
<i>une page</i>	"a page"
<i>une nage</i>	"a swim"
<i>la rage</i>	"rabies"
<i>un pion</i>	"a pawn"

Mistake Two: Use of *être* and *avoir*

The use of *être* and *avoir* is quite challenging while speaking or otherwise. First, the most frequent mistake is using the wrong verb in certain expressions, such as when giving your age or when talking about your hunger or thirst when socializing among French-speaking people.

The use of *être* and *avoir* can be confusing because of how we use their English counterparts.

For example, English speakers would say "I am sixty years old" using the verb "to be." In French, to give the same information, we use the verb *avoir*, meaning "to have," as in *J'ai 60 ans*.

The same is true to express hunger or thirst. We use the verb "to be" in English, such as in "I am hungry and thirsty." In French, we use *avoir* ("to have"), as in *J'ai faim et soif*.

Mistake Three: Subject-Verb Agreement

Conjugation is a part of the French language that can cause great difficulty. People often make mistakes when forming or conjugating the verb in a sentence.

These mistakes are often due to lack of attention or faulty grammar analysis; people often fail to know the proper conjugation or fail to conjugate the verb to the proper subject or number.

To remedy the first cause of the subject-verb agreement mistake, it is critical to look at the verb and search for its subject. Train yourself to do it while speaking. Such an exercise is demanding. The sad truth is, you will have to confront your conjugation charts at some point in your learning process...but trying to pay attention to the pronouns and their related verbs in your sentence will help you become more familiar with agreement.

Try to think of which personal pronoun is leading the verb:

Is it *je* ("I"), first singular person?

Or is it *il* ("he")/*elle* ("she")/*on* ("we"), informal - third singular person?

Or is it *ils/elles* ("they"), third plural person etc.?

Then try to think of which tense you should use. Each tense in French has its rule for agreement.

But again, the best way to finally master your conjugations is...a book of French conjugations!

Mastering conjugations in French is difficult to do since the conjugations are so varied. To make this task easier, first consult a book. Then use a French conjugator from the Internet.

We suggest this sequence because looking the conjugations up in a book instead of getting an automated response from a site is a little more labor intensive. It requires more critical thinking, and it is well-known that the more effort you produce to reach a certain result, the better you will memorize the conjugation.

Mistake Four: Conditional Instead of Simple Future

Another problem with verbs and their conjugations is choosing the correct tense. One common mistake is distinguishing whether a speaker is using *le futur de l'indicatif* ("simple future") or *le présent du conditionnel* ("conditional present").

These two tenses are very similar in their spelling and pronunciation but completely different in their meaning.

Le futur de l'indicatif and *le présent du conditionnel* both are constructed using the infinitive verb, making their distinction difficult. Their endings are also tricky, as they appear to be similar but are not identical.

When speaking, the only persons who are affected are the first, second and second person plural. Compare the slight differences between these two sets of verbs.

French	"English"	Construction
<i>nous parlerons</i>	"we will speak"	<i>futur de l'indicatif</i> ("simple future")
<i>nous parlerions</i>	"we would speak"	<i>le présent du conditionnel</i> ("conditional present")

French	"English"	Construction
<i>vous parlerez</i>	"you will speak"	<i>futur de l'indicatif</i> ("simple future")

<i>vous parleriez</i>	"you would speak"	<i>le présent du conditionnel</i> ("conditional present")
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As you can observe, the only difference orally is the pronunciation of the letter *-i* at the conditional present. People often mistakenly omit this *-i* sound while speaking. To avoid such error, take into consideration what you are talking about. Make sure to pronounce the letter *-i* if you are speaking of an uncertain situation or probability.

For the other pronouns either at *futur de l'indicatif* ("simple future") or the *le présent du conditionnel* ("conditional present"), the pronunciation is either identical or completely different. For the first person singular, it is identical.

For Example:

French	"English"	Construction
<i>Je parlerai</i>	"I will speak"	<i>futur de l'indicatif</i> ("simple future")
<i>Je parlerais</i>	"I would speak"	<i>le présent du conditionnel</i> ("conditional present")

For the rest of the pronouns, it is completely different.

For Example:

French	"English"	Construction
<i>tu parleras</i>	"you will speak"	<i>futur de l'indicatif</i> ("simple future")
<i>tu parlerais</i>	"you would speak"	<i>le présent du conditionnel</i> ("conditional present")
<i>elle parlera</i>	"she will speak"	<i>futur de l'indicatif</i> ("simple future")
<i>elle parlerait</i>	"she would speak"	<i>le présent du conditionnel</i> ("conditional present")
<i>ils parleront</i>	"they will speak"	<i>futur de l'indicatif</i> ("simple future")

The context of the speech will definitely help you figure out which tense the speaker is using. And if you still have a doubt, just ask. French people are happy to help and so proud of the tricks of their language!

Mistake Five: *Imparfait* vs. *Passé composé*

This error is extremely common. In English, we can translate both these tenses with the simple past. In French, each has a very specific function, and they are not interchangeable. Therefore, the concept of usage may be a difficult one for you to acquire.

However, practicing and knowing the main usages for both tenses can help you choose between the two.

The main function of the *passé composé* is to describe events that started AND ended in the past. Also use the *passé composé* when the action is interrupting another action (still in the past, of course!).

The main usage of the *imparfait* is to describe actions in the past without a precise time frame. Think of what you're talking about in the past: could you portray it in a still picture? There you go! Use the *imparfait*. It also expresses a habit. And finally, use it when describing someone's emotional state or health in the past.

Now...here is another tip. Think about the still picture we just mentioned. In this still picture, let's say there is a landscape, the sky is blue, and everything is quiet. As we said above, we need the *imparfait* to describe this picture (don't forget, this will be a description in the PAST!). Let's go ahead and start the description.

Le ciel était bleu, tout était calme. ("The sky was blue, everything was quiet.") Everything in your still picture is quiet; everything is at the *imparfait*. But...all of a sudden, lightning strikes in the sky. The lightning interrupts the still motion, and along with it, the *passé composé*!! Let's see how it looks:

Le ciel était bleu, tout était calme, quand tout à coup, un éclair a déchiré le ciel. ("The sky was blue; everything was quiet, when all of a sudden lightning struck in the sky.")

The second action (lightning) interrupts the first action (quietness and tranquility). The first action is at the *imparfait* and the second action is at the *passé composé*.

To train yourself, ask a native or an advanced learner of French to assist you in talking in the past while using both tenses. Choose a subject involving speaking in the past tense, such as a childhood memory or a strange event you recently experienced. While you are speaking, ask the person listening to catch your errors in using the two tenses. Then exchange roles.

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #13

Top 5 Phrases Your Teacher Will Never Teach You!

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Top Five Phrases Your Teacher Will Never Teach You

French has three main registers of language:

1. Familiar/vulgar
2. Neutral
3. Formal/literary

Instructors teach both the neutral and formal/literary registers in school. French teachers usually avoid the familiar register, despite the fact that the French people use it about half of the time, especially in relaxed, casual situations.

We don't want to keep you away from true French! Therefore, we picked five casual/familiar phrases that you probably wouldn't encounter in a regular French textbook. Since it's hard for a non-native speaker to measure the level of familiarity of a language, we give you the level of casualness in parentheses for each of the phrases. Read them as follows:

Casual: You can use the expression in any relaxed setting with people you feel comfortable around. It's always funny to hear casual French in a non-native's mouth!

Familiar: Avoid using it with strangers, but it's fine to use among friends.

Enjoy!

Phrase One (casual):

On se fait une bouffe avec un bon petit pinard? ("How about having dinner with a nice wine?")

The French widely use this expression among friends and family. You won't be able to miss either the noun *la bouffe* or the verb *bouffer* while in France, especially considering that eating is a huge part of the French culture.

La bouffe means "food" or "meal," depending on the context. In the phrase above, it can refer to "lunch" or "dinner," depending on the time of the day the suggestion is made. You can also use *bouffer*, which is obviously the verb meaning "to eat."

Originally, before the twelfth century, the French used the verb *bouffer*, and therefore its derivative, the noun *la bouffe*, to indicate the fact of puffing out one's cheeks. Later, in the

1200s, the French used it to describe someone who was emotionally distressed with a face exploding with anger. At this time, the term was considered to be informal French. During the first half of the sixteenth century, the French used the term when someone would excessively fill his mouth and cheeks with food, which easily shows you the link to how the French use the word *bouffer* today.

Language Expansion:

The French also used the word *bouffoir*, which shares its root with *bouffer* and *la bouffe*, to designate a bellow butcher used in the nineteenth century to blow air under the skin of butchered animals to make their skins easier to remove.

Note that the slang word *pinard* means a "cheap wine of lower quality."

Phrase Two (familiar):

Ne m'arnaque pas ! ("Don't rip me off")

Often, while visiting places frequented by tourists, whether all over the world or in France, you may get ripped off. You may buy articles or souvenirs at a high price that you could have gotten cheaper elsewhere. To avoid this misadventure, make sure to say *Ne m'arnaque pas* ("Don't rip me off!"). You can also use it as a strong statement to open a negotiation in flea markets, where this practice is common. You can use a softer intonation to make this statement less assertive.

The verb *arnaquer* ("to rip off") derives from the slang *harnacher*, meaning "to entertain with the intention of swindling." Then the word lost its first letter, *h-*, in the nineteenth century, and the French used the word to mean "to cheat." In 1900, the spelling of this word evolved to its present form, but its definition shifted to mean "fixing a game."

You will certainly hear the phrase *C'est l'arnaque* ("It's a rip-off") in many mouths in France, too.

Phrase Three (casual):

Je suis à la dèche. ("I'm broke.")

It has surely happened to most of us at some point.

Être à la dèche means "to be broke."

In the early 1800s, the French used this phrase to designate the fact of losing at games. Shortly after, it meant "destitution." It probably came from the word *déchet*, meaning "waste," "scrap," or "garbage." Later on, in the nineteenth century, the adjective *décheux*, *décheuse* appeared to point out a person without money.

Language Expansion:

In a dictionary dating to 1935, the verb *décher*, which is obsolete today, was recorded. It was used to refer to money, in particular finding coins. Today, the frequently used verb *dénicher* means "to find."

Phrase Four (casual):
***J'ai pigé* ("I understood")**

The verb *piger* is slang for "to understand."

The French usually use it in its past form, *j'ai pigé*, and it means "I understood," "I have understood," or even "I got it."

You will also find it in its present form in the phrase *Je pige que dalle* ("I don't understand anything"), *que dalle* being slang for "nothing" or "anything."

You will hear it when someone suddenly understands something he or she didn't understand before.

In the early 1800s, the usage of the transitive verb *piger* was "to know." Half a century later, the definition slightly changed to "to know something," the meaning of which turned later into "to understand."

Here are some examples of its usage:

French	"English"
<i>J'ai pigé.</i>	"I understood."
<i>J'ai pigé ton problème.</i>	"I understood your problem."
<i>Je pige rien./Je pige que dalle.</i>	"I don't understand anything."/ "I understand nothing."

Phrase Five (familiar):
***Je me casse !* ("I'm leaving!")**

The verb (se) *casser* primarily means "to break." It is also used nowadays in many idiomatic expressions, such as *casser la voix*, meaning "to break one's voice by excessive use," or in informal French, *casser la croute* ("to eat"), *casser les pieds* ("to annoy"), *se casser la tête* ("to experience difficulty solving an issue"), or *casser les os* ("to fight," "to beat someone").

The verb *se casser* used in *Je me casse !* ("I'm leaving!") originated in the twelfth century with *quasser*, meaning "to break bones." Later came the expression *casser la tête de quelqu'un*,

which means "to break someone's head," which is still in use today.

The phrase *se casser la jambe*, which the French used in 1835 to mean "to escape," later got shortened to *se casser*, this lesson's phrase, meaning "to leave."

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #14

Top 5 Most Useful Phrases for Learning French

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Top Five Most Useful Phrases for Learning French.

Here are a few useful phrases if you just started learning French and find yourself immersed in French at a party, or in France, or even if you are just running into some French person on the street who is asking for directions. French people are everywhere, so be prepared to throw out some basic phrases that will help you manage a basic conversation.

Phrase One:

***Je ne comprends pas.* ("I don't understand.")**

Most likely, you will find yourself stuck in the middle of an all-in-French conversation. This scenario is inevitable. To express to French friends that you need a little help, state that you don't understand.

Be assured that even your teachers and tutors do not know everything. They aren't encyclopedias. So stating that you don't know is a positive first step in learning and getting over your fear of making mistakes. It is that simple. Not knowing is the first step of learning.

In the phrase *Je ne comprends pas*, we use the irregular verb *comprendre* from the third verb group, meaning "to understand," with the negative form *ne pas*. We place the first element, *ne*, before the verb, and we place *pas* after the verb.

Language Expansion:

With that said, you have now picked up how to form the negative form in French with *ne* + verb + *pas*. You can also use it to say "I don't know" with *Je ne sais pas*.

Phrase Two:

***Vous pouvez répéter lentement, s'il vous plaît ?* ("Can you repeat slowly, please?")**

Once you've made your point clear that what has been said is incomprehensible to you, you can give yourself another chance to practice your listening. To do so, ask the person to repeat slowly with *Vous pouvez répétez lentement, s'il vous plaît ?* ("Can you repeat slowly, please?") If the speed is not the issue, just omit the adverb *lentement* and simply ask *Vous pouvez répéter, s'il vous plaît ?* ("Can you repeat, please?")

Vous pouvez is the formal "Can you" and is followed by the infinitive verb *répéter*, meaning "to repeat." *Lentement* means "slowly." Finally, you have the polite expression *s'il vous plaît*, meaning "please."

If you are talking to a friend, you can use the informal version of this phrase by saying *Tu peux répéter, s'il te plaît?*

Phrase Three:

Qu'est-ce que...veut dire ? ("What does...mean?")

After you asked the speaker to repeat and you still didn't get the idea, another phrase can assist you. It is the question asking what a certain word means said in your own language. Use either one of the two common ways to formulate the question "What does...mean?":

Qu'est-ce que (your word) veut dire ?

Qu'est-ce que (your word) signifie ?

Note that both questions use the element *Qu'est-ce que*, meaning "what."

The verb form *veut dire* comes from the infinitive *vouloir dire* and *signifie* from its infinitive *signifier*. Both mean "to mean."

Language Expansion:

If your interlocutor just mentioned the word, sign, or symbol you need a translation for, you can use *Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire ?* "What does **it/this** mean?"

Phrase Four:

Comment vous dites...en français ? ("How do you say...in French?")

Now it's your turn to talk, and there's something you'd like to say but you don't know the word in French. In that situation, use the question *Comment vous dites (your word) en français ?* ("How do you say (your word) in French?")

In the featured question *Comment vous dites ... en français ?*, the irregular verb *dire* means "to say." In this question, note the use of *vous*, the formal "you," referring to one person.

Remember that *vous* ("you") is also the second person plural, even though when we used it as the formal "you," it is singular.

Therefore, *vous* can either refer to one single individual (formal "you") or several people (plural "you").

Phrase Five:

Aidez-moi, s'il vous plaît. ("Help me, please.")

Now that you went through all the possible statements and questions, it is time to ask for help. This phrase is extremely versatile as you can use it in all possible situations when you need some assistance.

Aidez-moi, s'il vous plait ("Help me, please") is a straightforward request for help. You can use it when you have an issue using an automatic device, such as an ATM or a ticket dispenser for a parking place or a seat on a train, bus, tram, and the like.

You'll also find this phrase useful in case of an emergency or if you need medical assistance.

Since this request is an order, we conjugate the regular verb *aider* at the imperative form. The verb form *aidez* tells us that your message is addressed to one person in the formal way or to several people because the verb ends in *-ez* (mark of the second person plural).

Note that the verb form *aidez* is followed by *un trait d'union* ("a hyphen") and the word *moi*. The word *moi* means "me," and therefore *aidez-moi* means "help me."

LESSON NOTES

All About S1 #15

Top 5 Basic French Phrases

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Top Five Phrases from the FrenchPod101 Team.

We are presenting some additional phrases here because of their practical use (phrases 1 and 2), their frequently requested meaning or translation (phrases 3 and 4), their frequent use in France (phrase 5), and their cultural aspects (phrases 1, 3, and 4).

Phrase One:

***À vos/tes souhaits* ("Bless you")**

This phrase is a classical request from learners of French. They want to know how to say "Bless you" when a person sneezes.

Use *À vos souhaits* to address an unknown person or someone in a formal situation.

Use *À tes souhaits* to address a friend or someone in an informal context.

So, don't make any reference to religion in France when someone sneezes, save that for when you're swearing (but that's another subject that would require a whole lesson)!

Phrase Two:

***À point* ("medium well")**

The expression *à point* refers to meat and how it is cooked. French people have a tendency to order it more on the raw or rare side than well done.

When in a restaurant in France, be assured that the waiter will ask how you want your steak with *Vous voulez votre steak comment ?* ("How you would like your steak?") or *Vous souhaitez quelle cuisson ?* which literally means "Which roasting would you like?"

In order to state how you'd like your meat, use either:

<i>French</i>	"English"
<i>Bien cuit</i>	"well done" (French natives almost never order beef this way)
<i>À point :</i>	"medium well"
<i>Saignant</i>	"medium rare" (most French people order their meat cooked this way)

Phrase Three:

Prenons du bon temps ! Laissez les bons temps rouler! ("Let the good times roll!")

People often ask about the festive phrase *Laissez les bons temps rouler!* ("Let the good times roll!") due to its usage in Louisiana. However, the French version is only used in Cajun French and not in France.

The equivalent expressions would be in informal French *Éclatons-nous*, literally "Let's have fun!" or *Que la fête commence !*, which word for word means "Let the party begin!"

Use the first phrase in colloquial or informal French, *Éclatons-nous*, among friends in any entertaining event. The identical expression in standard, everyday French is *Profitons-en* ("Let's enjoy it"), implying that whatever was enjoyed was previously mentioned.

Phrase Four:

Mon chou ("My cabbage"), ***mon lapin***, ***mon poussin***, ***ma poule***, ***ma puce***, ***mon coeur***

Since French is the language of romance, many people ask about French phrases and vocabulary used when expressing love to someone. Many French couples give each other sweet nicknames to call each other.

Mon chou ("my cabbage" or "my puff") is a common term of affection used toward either men or women. Another frequent term is *mon coeur*, literally "my heart," which the French use to refer to both boys and girls.

Some of these nicknames are used only toward one gender. For example, you will only see a person saying *mon lapin* ("my rabbit") or *mon poussin* ("my chick") to a man, never a woman. If you want to express affection toward a woman and only a woman (or girl), use in that case *ma poule* ("my hen") or *ma puce* ("my flea"). Remember we can use all these affectionate expressions with either adults or children.

Phrase Five:

C'est bien/bon. ("It's okay.")

The French use these two short sentences all the time and in every possible context. Grammatically speaking, *bon* ("good") is an adjective describing someone or something and *bien* ("well") is an adverb detailing how things are done.

Using *bien* and *bon* is more complicated.

C'est bon ("it's okay/good") can refer to tasting or smelling a delicious meal or drink. We can also use *c'est bon* to tell someone that his work was good or that a task is complete ("I'm done").

Finally, you can use *c'est bon* (!) when you are tired of someone picking at you or making fun of you and you want him/her to stop. Your intonation will then sound more annoyed.

We use *c'est bien* ("It's okay/good") when referring to how well things are done. For example, you will say *C'est bien* when implying *C'est bien fait* ("It is well done"). Anytime you can say *C'est bien peint/écrit/pensé* ! etc. ("It's well painted/written/thought," etc.), then use *C'est bien*.

LESSON NOTES

Pronunciation S1 #1

French Vowels

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- 2 Vocabulary
- 2 Grammar

1

VOCABULARY

French	English
toi, huit	you, eight
pin, pan, pont	pine, pan, bridge
riz, pâte, rat	rice, pasta, rat
peine, debout, lier	sorrow, up, to tie
clair, petit, écoute	fair, small, listen
met, mais	dish, but
refaire, zèbre, crier	to redo, zebra, to yell
trait, très	line, very
lait, les	milk, the

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is French Vowel Sounds.

French is spoken fluently by 128 million French speakers (as a native or adopted language). Use it regularly so you start on the right foot and can understand and be understood. Learning the French sounds will help you to become sensitized to the language's different sounds and better master its pronunciation.

Be aware though, this pronunciation guide is for standard French - the one you'll hear on the radio or television. When traveling in France, you'll hear many different accents and vocabulary words used specifically in the region you are in.

For example, you may hear in the Eastern region of France *un cornet* instead of *un sachet* to refer to a plastic bag in stores and supermarkets. Previously, the French only used the word *cornet* to refer to small, cone-shaped paper containers that hold French fries, grilled chestnuts, or sweets. The usage of the word became more generic with time, and now it refers to a plastic or paper bag of any shape.

In French, twenty-six letters form the alphabet and give rise to thirty-seven speech sounds. Among these sounds, there are two main categories:

1. Nineteen vowel sounds
2. Eighteen consonant sounds

Today, we will look at the nineteen vowel sounds in detail with many simple examples and pronunciation practice exercises. They are divided into three groups as follows:

1. *Voyelles orales* ("oral vowels") with three subgroups:

1. *Voyelles antérieures* ("front vowels")
2. *Voyelles centrales* ("central vowels")
3. *Voyelles postérieures* ("back vowels")

2. *Voyelles nasales* ("nasal vowels")

3. *Semi-voyelles* ("half vowels")

The Nineteen Vowel Sounds

For now, of course, all this is still a mystery. However, the different kinds of vowel denominations have a purpose! They are called oral, front, central, back, nasal, and half vowels for the position of the tongue, the uvula, and the lips when pronouncing them.

For example, when pronouncing the letter /i/ right after pronouncing the letter /u/, you'll notice your tongue slide from the front (the tip of your tongue should touch your front incisor) to the back of your mouth (now your tongue should be placed further back).

Pronunciation Practice: Feel for the movement of your lips.

Pronounce several times in a row the letters /i/, /u/, and /a/. Observe yourself in a mirror and notice how your lips are moving.

You should see your lips stretch from side to side when saying the letter /i/ as if you are saying "cheese" when posing for a picture. Then your lips should form a tight o-shape toward the front as if you're giving a loved one a kiss on the forehead. Finally, when saying the last letter, your lips are shaped as a huge oval and your mouth is wide open.

I. *Voyelles orales* ("Oral Vowels")

They are vowels we pronounce by air going through the mouth area and where the tongue, uvula, and lips will have a certain position. There are twelve oral vowels, which we classify in three categories according to their pronunciation.

a. *Voyelles antérieures* ("Front Vowels")

Voyelles antérieures are characterized by the placement of the tongue toward the front of the mouth. For example, try to pronounce the letter -è as in prey, producing an anterior vowel, and the letter -o as in orange, producing a posterior vowel. Notice the placement of your

tongue in your mouth.

While producing the front vowel sound -é first followed by the sound -ou, you should observe your tongue moving from the front toward the back of your mouth. Here is the list of the anterior vowels in French:

Phonetic Symbol	English Pronunciation	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in bold)
[i]	[i] as feet		<i>stylo</i> ("pen"), <i>île</i> ("island"), <i>maïs</i> ("corn")
[e]	[ay] as in May	<i>regarder</i> ("to look")	<i>parlez</i> ("talk"), <i>pied</i> ("feet"), <i>messieurs</i> ("sir"), <i>poignée</i> ("handful"), <i>volontiers</i> ("certainly")
[ɛ]	[eh] as in paint	<i>elle</i> ("she")	<i>chienne*</i> ("female dog"), <i>merci</i> ("thank you"), <i>jouet</i> ("toy"), <i>mais</i> ("but"), <i>maître</i> ("master"), <i>payer</i> ("to pay"), <i>treize</i> ("thirteen"), <i>être</i> ("to be"), <i>Noël</i> ("Christmas"), <i>volley</i> ("volleyball")
[a]	[a] as in apple	<i>sac</i> ("bag")	<i>à</i> ("at," "to"), <i>femme</i> ("woman")

Pronunciation Practice: Pronouncing and Telling the Difference Between Sounds.

Pronounce these pairs and tell whether their sounds are identical or not:

1. *met* [may]/*mais* [meh]
2. *lait* [lay]/*les* [leh]
3. *trait* [tray]/*très* [tray]

The first pair is different, the second is different, the third is identical. All these vowel sounds are either the [è] or [é].

b. *Voyelles centrales* ("Central Vowels")

To pronounce properly the *voyelles centrales*, place your tongue in the middle area of your mouth. These sounds are very similar to the ear and may be difficult to distinguish, even for a native speaker of French. Their main difference while pronouncing them is the opening gap of the mouth, creating a more or less open sound.

For example, a wide-open sound would be the pronunciation of the letter -a, and a closed one is the pronunciation of the letter -i.

Phonetic Symbol	English Pronunciation	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in bold)
[y]	[u] as in pure	<i>lune</i> ("moon")	<i>sûr</i> ("sure"), eu ("had") (<i>avoir</i> at the <i>passé composé</i> tense)
[ø]*	[uh] as in duh	<i>je</i> ("I")	-
[ø]*	[oe] as in sun	<i>feu</i> ("fire")	<i>noeud</i> ("knot"), <i>jeûne</i> ("fasting")
[œ]*	[oeu] as in flower	<i>fleur</i> ("flower")	<i>coeur</i> ("heart"), <i>club</i> ("club")

*Note

The nasal sounds in *je*, *feu* and *fleur* are almost identical. For now, do not worry if you pronounce them in the same manner. It won't alter the comprehension while conversing in French. Most native French speakers would not distinguish the difference between them either if asked.

Pronunciation Practice: Identifying a Central Vowel.

Say several times the letter -u and syllable -ou. Which one is a central vowel?

The first one is central and the second is posterior. When pronouncing the second one, you should notice the tip of your tongue slightly traveling toward the back of your mouth.

Practice the pronunciation of the following vowels:

1. *refaire* [r-uh-fer] / *zèbre* [zaybr] / *crier* [kri-ay]
2. *clair* [kler] / *petit* [puh-ti] / *écoute* [eh-ku-t]

3. *peine* [pe-n] / *debout* [duh-bu] / *liez* [li-eh]

c. *Voyelles postérieures* ("Back Vowels")

To produce this type of sound, place your tongue in the back of your mouth. In other words, position the larger part of your tongue (the back part) toward the back of the mouth cavity.

Phonetic Symbol	English Pronunciation	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in bold)
[u]	[ou] as in tourist	<i>poule</i> ("hen")	où ("where"), <i>goûter</i> ("tate"), <i>football</i> ("football"), <i>août</i> ("august")
[o]	[o] as in orange	<i>vélo</i> ("bike")	<i>landau</i> ("stroller"), <i>bateau</i> ("boat"), <i>drôle</i> ("funny")
[ɔ]	[um] as in drum	<i>pomme</i> ("apple")	<i>album</i> ("album"), <i>alcool</i> ("alcohol"), <i>capharnaüm</i> ("shambles")
[a]	[a] as in cat	<i>pâte</i> ("pasta")	

Pronunciation Practice: Telling the Difference Between Anterior and Posterior Vowels.

Repeat these words several times: *riz*, *pâte*, *rat*. What happens?

You should slide the widest part of your tongue from the back to the front and to the back again of your mouth.

Note that we pronounce the letter -a in the word *pâte* differently than the letter -a in *patte*.

The former is a longer -a sound we pronounce with the air passing through the back part of the mouth cavity in conjunction with the throat.

The latter is a shorter sound we pronounce with the front of the mouth's cavity.

II. *Voyelles nasales* ("Nasal Vowels")

These vowels are specific to French as the passage of the air goes mainly through the nose. For foreign ears, they may seem very strange at first, as the air vibrates mainly through the nose

and produces a twangy sound.

Phonetic Symbol	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in bold)
[ɛ̃]*	<i>un</i> * ("a"/"an"/"one")	<i>parfum</i> ("perfume")
[ɛ̃]*	<i>lapin</i> * ("rabbit")	<i>chien</i> ("dog"), <i>pain</i> ("bread"), <i>peinture</i> ("paint"), <i>daim</i> ("deer"), <i>imparfait</i> ("imperfect"), <i>syndicat</i> ("trade union"), <i>sympa</i> ("kind")
[â]	<i>gant</i> ("glove")	<i>jambe</i> ("leg"), <i>empereur</i> ("emperor"), <i>paon</i> ("peacock"), <i>Caen</i> (French city)
[ô]	<i>ballon</i> ("ball")	<i>ombre</i> ("shadow"), <i>punch</i> ("punch")

*Note

The nasal sounds in *un* and *lapin* are almost identical. For now, do not worry if you pronounce them in the same manner. It won't alter the comprehension while conversing in French. Most native French speakers would not distinguish the difference between them either.

Pronunciation Practice: Pronouncing the Nasal Vowels.

Listen to the audio for the words *pin*, *pan*, and *pont* in the vocabulary section and repeat them several times.

III. Semi-voyelles ("Half Vowels")

Semi-voyelles are also called *semi-consonnes* ("half consonants"). They are unique sounds between vowels and consonants that occur when two vowels follow each other in one syllable of a word, such as in *balayer*, meaning "to sweep" (example of the phonetic sound symbol [J]). Another example is the pronunciation of the letters *-oi*, which are pronounced in English [woə], as in the French word *poisson* ("fish").

Phonetic Symbol	English Pronunciation	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in red)
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[J]	[i-hae] as in yarn	<i>piéd</i> ("foot")	<i>crayon</i> ("pencil"), <i>soleil</i> ("sun"), <i>paille</i> ("hay"), <i>hyène</i> ("pen"), <i>païen</i> ("pagan")
[V]	[hu-i] as in quick	<i>huit</i> ("eight")	<i>sueur</i> ("sweat"), <i>suave</i> ("pen"), <i>ennuyeux</i> ("boring")
[w]	[woa] as in chihuahua	<i>doigt</i> ("finger")	

Pronunciation Practice: Differentiate the [V] and [w] Sounds.

Repeat several times: *toi* [t-wha]/ *huit* [u-iit]

Which one has the dominant sound -u?

Toi has the [w] as in "wha" in the word "what." The word *huit* has the sound [V] with the dominant -u sound.

Pronunciation Practice: Practice All the Half-Vowel Sounds.

Repeat and practice all the half vowels in this sentence:

1. *Le soleil luit pour Louis en juin.*
"The sun shines for Louis in June."

Can you recognize the three half-vowel sounds in this sentence?

Le soleil [J] *luit* [V] *pour Louis* [w] *en juin* [V].

LESSON NOTES

Pronunciation S1 #2

French Consonants

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- 2 Vocabulary
- 2 Grammar

2

VOCABULARY

French	English
marche, charge, jumeaux	walk, load, twins
banc, vent	bench, wind
ligne, digne, gant, gamme	line, worthy, glove, range
ligne, signal, guerre, fugue	line, signal, war, runaway

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is French Consonant Sounds.

Some of the French consonants are particularly challenging to produce for foreigners. A common example is the pronunciation of the letter /r/, as it is a guttural sound that is specific to French. People have often imitated this sound and made fun of the sound in movies.

In order to re-establish all the respect that the letter -r deserves, as well as to teach you all the other French consonant sounds, we've put together a very helpful consonant sound pronunciation guide.

As you may already know, the French alphabet is composed of twenty-six letters that—through 130 graphemes (the various or unique spellings of a sound in writing)—depict thirty-seven speech sounds, twenty-three of which are consonant sounds.

Today, we will look at the eighteen main consonant sounds that are used the most. They are divided as follows:

1. *Occlusives* ("blocked consonants")
2. *Fricatives* ("sibilant")
3. *Vibrantes* ("vibrant")

The Eighteen main Consonant Sounds

1. *Occlusives* ("blocked consonants")

We produce this consonant sound by blocking the air through the mouth and pharynx with a sudden release. These sounds are much easier for us to reproduce than the r sound, for example, as they are very similar to the English consonants. You'll certainly find it easy to

pronounce words that start with the letter *-m*, such as "mother" or its French translation, *mère*.

French Phonetic Symbol	French Keyword	Similar to English	Other French Grapheme (in red)
[p]	<i>parmi</i> ("among")	pad	<i>appartement</i> ("apartment") ("apartment")
[b]	<i>barbe</i> ("beard")	bad	<i>abbaye</i> ("abbaye")
[m]	<i>mer</i> ("sea")	man	<i>flamme</i> ("flame")
[t]	<i>tête</i> ("head")	tea	<i>date</i> ("date")
[d]	<i>domino</i> ("domino")	doll	<i>addition</i> ("addition")
[n]	<i>non</i> ("no")	name	<i>anniversaire</i> ("birthday")
[ʁ]	<i>vigne</i> ("vineyard")	knee	<i>manière</i> ("way")
[k]	<i>crêpe</i> ("crêpe")	car	<i>qualité</i> ("quality"), <i>kepi</i> ("cap"), <i>accord</i> ("agreement"), <i>orchestre</i> ("orchestra"), <i>ticket</i> ("ticket"), <i>coq</i> ("rooster")

[g]	<i>gamin</i> (familiar) ("kid")	goal	<i>bague</i> ("ring"), <i>aggraver</i> ("to aggravate"), second ("second"), ghetto ("ghetto")
[N]	<i>parking</i> ("parking lot")	setting	

Pronunciation Practice: [ʃ] and [g]

Listen to the audio for the words: *ligne*, *signal*, *guerre*, *fugue*.

Which one has the sound [g]?

Repeat several times : *ligne* ("line"), *digne* ("worthy"), *gant* ("glove"), *gamme* ("range")

2. Fricative ("sibilant consonant")

We produce these consonant sounds by forcing air through a narrow opening by placing two parts of the mouth together, such as by the closing the teeth tightly when pronouncing the double -ss grapheme found in *laisser* ("to leave [something]"). We represent this grapheme with the phonetic symbol [s]. Keep both your upper and lower incisors are closed, as if you're trying to produce a hissing sound like a snake.

French Phonetic Symbol	French Keyword	Similar to English	Other French Grapheme (in red)
[f]	<i>ferme</i> ("farm")	foal	<i>phare</i> ("headlight"), <i>affaire</i> ("matter")
[v]	<i>vent</i> ("wind")	value	<i>wagon</i> ("wagon")

[s]	<i>sol</i> ("ground")	sun	<i>poisson</i> ("fish"), <i>citron</i> ("lemon"), <i>garçon</i> ("boy"), <i>démocratie</i> ("democracy"), <i>science</i> ("science"), <i>asthme</i> ("asthma"), <i>six</i> ("six")
[z]	<i>maison</i> ("house")	zebra	<i>zoo</i> ("zoo"), <i>deuxième</i> ("second"), <i>blizzard</i> ("blizzard")
[ʃ]	<i>chat</i> ("cat")	sheet	<i>short</i> ("short"), <i>schéma</i> ("diagram"), <i>fasciste</i> ("fascist")
[ʒ]	<i>jupe</i> ("skirt")	jet	<i>girafe</i> ("giraffe")

Pronunciation Practice: [s] and [z]

For Example:

1. *Je suis passé au zoo où le zèbre zélé sent les roses.*
"I passed through the zoo where the enthusiastic zebra smells the roses."

Pronunciation Practice: [b] and [v]

Say and repeat the pair: *banc* ("bench")/*vent* ("wind"). Which has the sound [v] as in victory?

For Example:

1. *Valerie va boire un bon vin blanc avec Boris dans un bar vendredi.*
"Valerie is going to go drink a good white wine in a bar on Friday."

Pronunciation Practice: [ʃ] and [ʒ]

Say and repeat: *marche* ("walk"), *charge* ("load"), *jumeaux* ("twins"). Which word has the sound [ʃ] as in sheet?

For Example:

1. *Le chat marche sur la jolie plage avec en bouche une chaussette jaune.*
"The cat walks on the pretty beach with a yellow sock in his mouth."

3. Vibrante ("Vibrant")

We produce this consonant by one or various vibrations we cause by building up pressured air in one of our mouth organs (the tip of the tongue, uvula, etc.) that we suddenly release.

Phonetic Symbol	Keyword	Other Grapheme (in red)
[l]	<i>lampe</i> ("lamp")	<i>elle</i> ("she")
[R]	<i>roue</i> ("wheel")	<i>beurre</i> ("butter")

The French /r/ is a fricative produced when air "rubs" against the back of the throat. The result is a sound similar to a light clearing of the throat.

Pronunciation Practice: Most Challenging Consonant Sounds ([v], [z], [ʃ] , [ʒ], [r])

Pronounce this phrase: *La vache au bal qui rit joyeusement est zen.* ("The cow at the dance who laughs is cool.")

Reading and Pronunciation Tip

Grapheme- Phonetic Symbol	Examples	Comparison to English	Reading Tip
c [s]	<i>ces céréales, ce, ici</i>	c grapheme pronounced as in the letter -s in "sold"	The letter -c in front of the letters <i>a, o,</i> or <i>u</i> in French is pronounced as a <i>k</i> sound as in "code" in English
ç [s]	<i>ça, garçon, commençons, reçoive, reçu</i>	ç grapheme pronounced as an -s	If no <i>cétille</i> accent appears under the letter -c and in front of <i>a, o,</i> or <i>u,</i> the letter <i>c</i> is pronounced [k] as in "code" in English
ch [ʃ]	<i>chien, chat, cher, chemise</i>	ch grapheme is pronounced as in "shore"	
g - (hard) [g]	<i>garçon, gourmet, de Gaulle, guerre, Guillaume, Guy</i>	In the <i>ga, go,</i> and <i>gu</i> graphemes, we pronounce the letter - <i>g</i> as in "gas."	The letter <i>g</i> in front of the letters <i>a, o,</i> or <i>u</i> is pronounced as a hard <i>g.</i>
g - (soft) [ʒ]	<i>mangeons, voyageons, Georges, Givenchy, Peugeot</i>	<i>ge</i> and <i>gi</i> graphemes are pronounced as in "jeans"	The letter <i>g</i> in front of the letters <i>e</i> and <i>i</i> is pronounced as a soft <i>g.</i>
gn [ɲ]	<i>cognac, montagne, signe, dignité, répugnant</i>	gn grapheme is similar to the sound "kn" in "knew"	
h [silent]	<i>hôtel, homme</i>	<i>h</i> is silent	
j [ʒ]	<i>je, Jacques, Jérémy, juste</i>	this letter is pronounced as in "jam"	
qu [k]	<i>quand, quartier, que, tranquille, séquence</i>	qu grapheme is pronounced as in "kilo"	

s - [s]	<i>sympa, poisson, dessert</i>	this letter is pronounced as in "Sam"
s - [z]	<i>rose, chose, poison, désert</i>	this letter is pronounced as in "zoo"
th [t]	<i>théâtre, mathématiques, bibliothèque</i>	th grapheme is pronounced as in "tell"
t [s]	<i>démocratie, nation, portion</i>	ti grapheme is pronounced as in "seem"

- In this lesson we talked about the eighteen main, most common consonant sounds in French!

Keep in mind that there are twenty-three consonant sounds in total. If you want to acquire a more extensive knowledge of French pronunciation, including all twenty-three consonant sounds, this Video Series is for you: <http://www.frenchpod101.com/2014/09/26/ultimate-french-pronunciation-guide-1-introduction-to-perfect-french-pronunciation/>

LESSON NOTES

Pronunciation S1 #3

Accents, Silent Letters, and Final Letters

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is French Pronunciation: The Accents and Silent Letters.

Certain vowel sounds are specific to the French language, and their pronunciation may be a challenge. However, this guide will help you in their pronunciation by comparing similar sounds existing in English.

Sounds and Their Corresponding Written Accents (è, é)

The letter [é] is much like the vowel sound in "day" or "hay." It is written in various ways in French, as illustrated in the table below:

Sound	Where You Can Find It	Example
é	nouns, adjectives, etc.	<i>école</i>
er	end of an infinitive verb	<i>chanter</i>
ez	second person plural verb ending	<i>vous chantez</i>
ez	end of a word	<i>nez</i>
e (ss)	start of a word	<i>essence</i>
ed	end of a word	<i>piéd</i>
e(ff)	start of a word	<i>effort</i>

We pronounce the letters [è, ê] as in the vowel sound of "pet."

Sound	Where You Can Find It	Example
è	nouns, adjectives, etc.	<i>mère</i>
e	before a consonant	<i>mer, elle, avec</i>
ê	nouns, adjectives, etc.	<i>pêche</i>
ei	nouns, adjectives, etc.	<i>reine</i>

<i>et</i>	end of a word	<i>carnet</i>
<i>ai</i>	nouns, adjectives, etc.	<i>raisin</i>
<i>âi</i>	nouns, adjectives, etc.	<i>maître</i>

Practice 1

Classify these words into the sound *é* or *è*:

French	"English"
<i>fer</i>	"iron"
<i>pelle</i>	"shovel"
<i>palet</i>	"puck"
<i>écrivez</i>	"write"
<i>vrai</i>	"true"
<i>essentiel</i>	"essential"
<i>jardiner</i>	"to garden"
<i>hêtre</i>	"beech tree"
<i>reine</i>	"queen"

Silent Letters: Silent and Aspired *h* and Silent *e*

In French, there are two kinds of pronunciations of the letter *h*-. However, the letter *h*- doesn't represent any sound, but we refer to it as either the aspired *h*- or silent *h*-. The reason is essentially etymological. Some words that start with an *h*- are of Latin origin and others come from Germanic languages. There are no rules to classify them in specific groups of words, aside from their etymological origins. Only practicing your French listening and speaking skills will help you figure them out when you encounter them.

Silent *h*

In French, we do not pronounce the silent *h-*. The silent *h-* is the first letter of words from the Latin or Greek language. The letter *h-* in these words doesn't have any impact on their pronunciation, and that is why in oral speech we consider these words to begin with vowels.

For example, we pronounce a linking sound between a word starting with a silent letter and the last letter of the preceding word, as in the letter *-n* from the word *un* ("a") and the silent *h-* of *hameçon* ("hook") in *un hameçon* ("a hook"), which is pronounced [huh-nam-sohn].

Another example is with the phrase *nous habitons* [nou-za-bi-ton], meaning "we leave," where we pronounce the letter *-s* from *nous* with the silent letter *h-* and the sound of the word *habitons* ("live").

Other Examples:

French	"English"
<i>habileté</i>	"skill"
<i>habiller</i>	"to dress"
<i>habituer</i>	"to get somebody used to something"
<i>haleine</i>	"breath"
<i>hebdomadaire</i>	"weekly"
<i>harmonie</i>	"harmony"
<i>héberger</i>	"to accomodate"
<i>hémisphère</i>	"hemisphere"
<i>héritage</i>	"heritage"
<i>héréditaire</i>	"hereditary"
<i>héroïne</i>	"female hero"
<i>hésiter</i>	"to hesitate"
<i>hippopotame</i>	"hippopotamus"
<i>homme</i>	"man"
<i>honnête</i>	"honesty"

<i>honneur</i>	"honor"
<i>hôtel</i>	"hotel"
<i>hôpital</i>	"hospital"
<i>horizon</i>	"horizon"

Language Focus: Why Do We Shorten the Articles *le* and *la* Before the Silent *h*?

Because the silent *h*- is considered as nonexistent and words that begin with it behave as if they start with a vowel, when using a definite article, choose the abbreviated *l'* when referring to something in general, as in *l'homme*, meaning "the man."

Aspired *h*

We use the aspirated *h* in words originating in Germanic languages, even though there isn't any aspiration in its pronunciation. It is in reality a disjunctive sound, as if you would pause between the words. This is why we don't use the linking sound between the last letter of a word and the following word starting with an aspirated *h*-, but rather we insert a very short pause, as with *les hamacs* ("the hammocks"), pronounced [le-amak], not [lezamak].

Other Examples:

French	"English"
<i>haïr</i>	"to hate"
<i>hall</i>	"hall"
<i>hamburger</i>	"hamburger"
<i>hanche</i>	"hip"
<i>handicap</i>	"handicap"
<i>hangar</i>	"warehouse"
<i>hanter</i>	"to haunt"
<i>haricot</i>	"bean"

<i>harpe</i>	"harp"
<i>hasard</i>	"by chance"
<i>haut</i>	"high"
<i>héros (but not héroïne)</i>	"hero" (but not female heroines)
<i>hibou</i>	"owl"
<i>hiérarchie</i>	"hierarchy"
<i>hippie</i>	"hippie"
<i>hobby</i>	"hobby"
<i>homard</i>	"lobster"
<i>honte</i>	"shame"
<i>huit</i>	"eight"
<i>hurler</i>	"to scream"

Language Focus: Why Do We Use the Articles *le* or *la* With the Aspired *h*-?

You cannot shorten the article in front of words that start with an aspired *h*-, as we pronounce these words as two separate words. Instead, use the definite article *le* ("the") or *la* ("the"); therefore, with indefinite articles, these words behave as if they start with a consonant, as in *la honte* ("the shame").

Silent -e

The silent -e is almost** always spelled with the letter -e without any accent, and we can pronounce it as in *verrai* ("I'll see") or drop it as in *quelle* ("which," "what").

Note also that the requirement to pronounce or not pronounce the silent -e also depends on the emphasis the speaker wishes to express. For example, someone can say *Je TE le dis* ("I tell **you**.") or *JE te le dit* ("I tell you"), and the language register.

The silent -e is more commonly pronounced in formal French than informal French, in which speech is faster and less articulate. For example, you may hear in informal speech, *Je t'l'dis* ("I tell you.") where the speaker does not pronounce all of the letter -e sounds because

he or she is speaking very rapidly.

**Except for the verb *faire* when its conjugation has two syllables: *nous faisons, en faisant, je faisais*, etc.

Language Focus: The Different Pronunciations of the Written Unaccented -e. The unaccented -e is not always a silent -e; some unaccented -e's are pronounced with the -é sound or the -è sound when placed in front of double consonant*, as in *tennis* ("tennis"), or in front of two articulately pronounced consonants, as in *restaurant* ("restaurant"). These pronunciations may vary from region to region, but that won't affect comprehension.

*When the double consonant is a double -s preceding the letter -e, we pronounce this letter as the letter -e from the alphabet. It is also the case when the letter -e is part of the prefix *re-*, as in *repartir* ("to leave again").

For Example:

é Sound

French	"English"
<i>festival</i>	"festival"
<i>dessert</i>	"dessert"
<i>effectif</i>	"effective, real"

è Sound

French	"English"
<i>presse</i>	"written media"
<i>tellement</i>	"so much"
<i>spectacle</i>	"show"

Deciding Whether to Pronounce the Silent e

In most words or phrases ending in -e, the final -e is silent and is always dropped. For example, we drop it when the silent -e precedes a vowel, as in *une autre ami*, pronounced [hʁn otr ami], or precedes a consonant, as in *elle joue* ("she plays").

Some exceptions are the pronunciation of the silent -e, whether required or optional, in:

A.) One-syllable words:

1. *ce* ("this")
2. *de* ("of")
3. *je* ("I")
4. *le* ("it")
5. *me* ("myself")
6. *ne* (part of the negation form)
7. *que* ("that")
8. *se* [reflexive element of the verb, as in *se maquiller* ("to put make up on")]
9. *te* ("you")

It is required when a word starting with a silent *h*- follows it, as in the aspirated *h*- in *ce homard* ("this lobster").

It is optional when a word starting with a consonant follows it, as in informal fast speech, as with *Je n'suis pas là* ("I'm not here."), which you can encounter in comics, for example. In formal French, it should be *Je ne suis pas là* ("I'm not here.").

B.) A phrase or word when the silent *e* is placed in the first syllable, as in *Levez-vous à six heures* ("Wake up at six o'clock a.m.").

C.) A phrase or word when the silent *e* is not in the first or last syllable and is preceded by one or more consonant sounds, as in *Je regardez ce film* ("I watch this movie") or *l'appartement* ("the apartment").

Practice 2

What are the silent letters in:

French

Je mange le petit-déjeuner avec ma fille.

"English"

"I eat breakfast with my daughter."

<i>Estelle arrive à la gare avec sa valise.</i>	"Estelle arrives in the train station with her luggage."
<i>Le photographe admire l'image.</i>	"The photographer admires the picture."
<i>L'artiste regarde son modèle.</i>	"The artist looks at his model."
<i>Ce que l'ivresse apporte c'est une mauvaise santé.</i>	"What alcohol intoxication brings is bad health."

Practice 3

What are the thirteen letters not pronounced in these phrases?

French	"English"
<i>Je suis français.</i>	"I'm French."
<i>Tu comprends ?</i>	"Do you understand?"
<i>Elle parle bien anglais.</i>	"She speaks English well."
<i>Quelle est ta nationalité ?</i>	"What is your nationality?"
<i>Il s'appelle François et toi ?</i>	"He is François, and you?"

Language Expansion: When Not to Pronounce Final Letters

As a rule of thumb, do not pronounce final letters. However, keep in mind that we pronounce the letters *b* as in *club* ("club"), *c* as in *toc* ("tap"), *f* as in *bref* ("brief," "in short"), *k* as in *anorak* ("waterproof vest"), *l* as in *fil* ("thread"), *q* as in *cinq* ("five"), and *r* as in *car* ("because") when they fall at the end of a word.

The other French consonants are usually silent at the end of a word, with some exceptions, as with many proper names or words borrowed from other languages or when linking words are mandatory, as in *les oranges* ("the oranges"), pronounced [lezoranj], or *ils ont* ("they have") [ilzon].

Solution Practice 1

é Sound

French	"English"
<i>écrire</i>	"write"
<i>jardiner</i>	"to garden"
<i>essentiel</i>	"essential"
<i>participez</i>	"to participate"

è Sound:

French	"English"
<i>pelle</i>	"shovel"
<i>palet</i>	"puck"
<i>vrai</i>	"true"
<i>hêtre</i>	"beech tree"
<i>reine</i>	"queen"

Solution Practice 2

French
<i>Je mange le petit-déjeuner avec ma fille.</i>
<i>Estelle arrive à la gare avec sa valise.</i>
<i>Le photographe admire l'image.</i>
<i>L'artiste regarde son modèle.</i>
<i>Ce que l'ivresse apporte c'est une mauvaise santé.</i>

Solution Practice 3

French

Je suis français.

Tu comprends ?

Elle parle bien anglais.

Quelle est ta nationalité ?

Il s'appelle François et toi ?

LESSON NOTES

Pronunciation S1 #4

Liaisons

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Mandatory, Optional, and Forbidden Linking Sounds Between Two Words.

When speaking and reading French, you may have noticed that sometimes the French pronounce two words together as one. This process is called in French *une liaison*, or "a linking word." Some are mandatory, some forbidden, and others optional, and we form them by pronouncing the last letter of a word with the first letter of the following word. However, the pronunciation of this last letter may change according to the phrase.

First, we are going to look at the pronunciation of the final letter of the first word, followed by the mandatory, forbidden, and optional linking sounds.

When pronouncing a linking sound, blend the last letter of a word with the first letter of the following word, as in *vous vous appelez* ("you are + name"), pronounced [vuvuzapeley], linking the last letter -s to the second *vous* and the first letter of the verb form *appelez* with a z sound.

With this example, you will notice that the last letter of the word *vous* ("you") is pronounced as a -z when followed by a word starting with a vowel. This is true even though the letter -s in *vous* is not pronounced when the pronoun *vous* ("you") stands alone or is followed by a word starting with a consonant.

La liaison ("linking sound") - Linking a Consonant with a Vowel and its Pronunciation

When making a liaison ("linking sound") among two words, we pronounce some final consonants as they would be pronounced when reciting the alphabet and others in a different way as shown previously.

The letters -s, -x, -z, -t, -d, -n and -m, are normally silent at the end of a word. We pronounce them when the next word begins with a vowel or an -h.

Language Focus:

Words Starting with the Letter -h and Their Linking Sound Rules

Remember that the words starting with a silent -h, as well as those of Latin origin, act as words starting with vowels. Therefore, when the last letter of a word is either -s, -x, -z, -t, -d, -n, or -m, we pronounce the sounds when followed by a word that begins with a silent -h.

The words starting with an aspirated -h, usually of Germanic origin or taken from another language, as in *un hall* ("a hall") from English, act as if they begin with a consonant and the liaison ("linking sound") between words does not occur.

a) Linking sound of the final letters -s, -x, and -z:

We pronounce these letters as a -z when blending two words together.

Examples:

1. *deux amis* - "two friends"
2. *les enfants* - "the children"
3. *plus important* - "more important"
4. *chez un copain* - "at a friend's place"

b) Linking sound of final letters -t and -d:

When we pronounce these letters in conjunction with a word starting with a vowel or a silent -h, they are pronounced as a -t sound. Note that you may hear this -t sound pronounced more or less softly when the final letter is a -d, depending on the language register used (informal or formal), the rapidity of speech, and regional accents.

Examples:

1. *grand homme* - "great man"
2. *Est-il...* - "is he"
3. *Elles sont en retard.* - "They are late."

c) Linking sound of final letters -n and -m:

Their pronunciations are identical as if you would spell a word containing these letters in French.

Examples:

1. *un an* - "a year"
2. *un homme* - "a man"

Now that you know how to pronounce the final letters, you need to be aware that some linking sounds are mandatory, forbidden, or optional.

Linking Sounds Between Consecutive Words (liaison)

1. Mandatory Linking Sounds

A. Link a determiner* and a noun or a determiner, an adjective, and a noun.

* A determiner can be an article, a demonstrative adjective, a possessive adjective, and the like.

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>un enfant</i>	[unenfen]	"a kid"
<i>mon ancien ami</i>	[unansihuh ami]	"my former friend"
<i>un petit ami</i>	[hu petitami]	"a boyfriend"

B. Link a personal pronoun and a verb or vice versa.

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>ils ont</i>	[ilzohn]	"they have"
<i>aiment-ils</i>	[emtil]	"do they like?"
<i>vous êtes</i>	[vuzet]	"you are"

C. Link short adverbs, compound nouns, and expressions.

Examples of Short Adverbs:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>bien amusé</i>	[bihanamusey]	"a lot of fun"
<i>trop occupé</i>	[tropokupe]	"too busy?"
<i>très intéressant</i>	[trezinteresshan]	"very interesting"

Exceptions:

French	"English"
---------------	------------------

<i>pas encore</i>	"not yet" (optional)
<i>trop exigeant</i>	"too demanding "
<i>vers elles</i>	"toward them "

Examples of Expressions:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>petit à petit</i>	[petitapeti]	"little by little"
<i>de temps en temps</i>	[duh temsentem]	"from time to time"
<i>tout à l'heure</i>	[tutalhoer]	"in the next hour"

Examples of Compound Nouns:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>avant-hier</i>	[avantier]	"the day before yesterday"
<i>les Etat-Unis</i>	[lezatatzuni]	"the United States"
<i>un sous-entendu</i>	[susentendu]	"overtone," "undercurrent"

2. Forbidden Linking Sounds

You will never link sounds in these grammatical structures:

A. Never link words starting with an aspirated *h-*, *y-*, or *w-*.

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>la haie</i>	[la hey]	"hedge"
<i>le hockey</i>	[le hokay]	"hockey"
<i>le yaourt</i>	[lə ja uR(t)]	"yogurt"

<i>le yoga</i>	[le yoga]	"yoga"
<i>les week-ends</i>	[le wi kend]	"weekend"
<i>les watt</i>	[le wat]	watts

Exception:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>les yeux</i>	[le zjø]	"eyes"

B. Never link words following *et* ("and").

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>et eux</i>	[hey heu]	"and them"
<i>et Anne</i>	[hey an]	"and Anne"
<i>et une maison</i>	[hey un mayson]	"and a house"

C. Never link words following a singular noun.

For Example:

French
<i>un soldat anglais</i>
<i>un enfant intelligent</i>
<i>Son nez est énorme.</i>

D. Never link words after a proper noun.

For Example:

French
<i>Jean a dit</i>

E. Never link words after *quand* ("when") with a subject-verb inversion or after *comment* ("how") or *combien* ("how much").

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Quand a-t-il dit qu'il vient ?</i>	[ken atil di kil vien]	"When did he say he would come?"
<i>Comment ont-elles pris la nouvelle ?</i>	[komen ontel pri la nuvel]	"How did they take the news?"
<i>Combien il y en a ?</i>	[kombihen il hi en ha]	"How many are there?"

Exceptions:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Comment allez-vous ?</i>	[komentale vu]	"How are you?"
<i>Quand est-ce que...</i>	[kes se khu]	"What..."

F. Never link words after compound nouns and some expressions.

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>des salles à manger</i>	[desal a manjey]	"dining rooms"
<i>des arcs-en-ciel</i>	[de zark ensiel]	"rainbows"
<i>nez à nez</i>	[ne a ne]	"nose to nose"

G. Never link words preceding the numbers *onze* ("eleven") and *huit* ("eight") or the word *oui* ("yes").

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
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<i>le onze mai</i>	[le onz may]	"the eleventh of may"
<i>les huit jours</i>	[ley ui jur]	"the eight days"
<i>mais oui !</i>	[may ui]	"but yes"

Practice

Are the linking sounds mandatory or forbidden?

French

"English"

Vous avez le téléphone ?

"Do you have a phone?"

Ce sont des études difficiles.

"They are difficult lessons."

Il part avec sa copine.

"He leaves with his girlfriend."

Il a été très étonné de voir ça !

"He was surprised to see this!"

C'est vraiment ennuyeux !

"It is really boring."

Elle aime les oranges.

"She likes oranges."

Ils envoient.

"They send."

Elle écrit une lettre à Lili.

"She writes a letter."

Nathalie passe un examen.

"Natalie passes an exam."

Elle téléphone à ses amis.

"She calls her friends."

3. Facultative Linking Sounds

We most often pronounce these linking sounds in formal situations. When we're in informal situations, we almost always can skip them.

A. Usually pronounce a linking sound after plural nouns.

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>les femmes actives</i>	[ley famsactiv]	"active women"
<i>des inventions originales</i>	[dey z invensihonsorijinal]	"original inventions"
<i>des familles américaines</i>	[dey famizameriken]	"American families"

B. Usually pronounce a linking sound after verbs.

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Il fait un gâteau.</i>	[il fet hugato]	"He is making a cake."
<i>Vous prenez un café ?</i>	[vu prenehuh cafe]	"Do you take a coffee?"
<i>Je suis informaticienne.</i>	[je suhisinformatisien]	"I am a computer technician."

C. Usually pronounce a linking sound after a conjunction.

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>mais enfin</i>	[me zan fen]	"but no"
<i>puis on</i>	[ouhizon]	"then we"

Exceptions: Never link words after *et* ("and") or *et alors* ("and then").

D. Usually pronounce a linking sound after an adverb and after prepositions of more than one syllable:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>complètement aventureux</i>	[kompleytementaventureu]	"completely adventurous"
<i>assez aimable</i>	[assezeymable]	"polite enough"
<i>après être aller</i>	[aprezeytrale]	"to be gone"

E. Usually pronounce a linking sound after the verb *être* ("to be").

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Il est important.</i>	[il hetinportan]	"It is important."
<i>C'est un ami.</i>	[cethuhnami]	"It is a friend."
<i>Nous sommes entrés.</i>	[nusom zentrey]	"We entered."

LESSON NOTES

Pronunciation S1 #5

French Rhythm

CONTENTS

2 Grammar

#5

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Rhythmic Groups and Linking Words and Phrases in French Pronunciation.

Speaking French involves adding intonation and rhythm to speech to give it some life.

Listening to someone speaking in the same rhythm and without any intonation rising or falling feels boring and lifeless. Without rhythm and intonation, language does not express emotions or intentions.

Both the English and French languages possess a rhythm and stress, but each language applies them differently.

Rhythm and Rhythmic Groups of the French Language

When speaking a phrase in French, we stress only the final syllable and our intonation falls. This may seem very monotone, as in English, each individual word keeps its stressed syllables. However, when a French speaker varies the usage of rhythm in the language, it can translate into a different meaning for the same phrase depending on the speaker's intention. For example, we can pronounce the phrase *La belle ferme le voile* with two different rhythm patterns and cause it to have two distinct meanings.

Let's say we want to mean that a farm hides a beautiful tree or landscape. When we say *La belle ferme le voile* ("The beautiful farm hides it."), we would stress the noun *ferme* by saying the word for a longer time frame than the other words, and we would raise our intonation. At the same time, we would also pronounce the noun *voile* for a longer time, but we would allow our intonation to fall.

However, if we wanted to say that "the woman closes the veil" with *la belle* ("the beautiful one") and the conjugated verb *ferme* ("close"), the words to stress are *belle* with a rising intonation and *voile* with a falling intonation.

Rhythmic Group

In longer phrases than subject/verb/object phrases, we divide the sentence in different parts corresponding to rhythmic groups. This means that each part of the sentence has its own rhythmic pattern. For example, the sentence *Roger et Annie, deux amis d'enfance, voyagent en Italie demain* ("Roger and Annie, two childhood friends, travel in Italy tomorrow.") is divided as follows: *Roger et Annie, // deux amis d'enfance, // voyagent en Italie demain*. In each division (or rhythmic group), we stress the final syllable of each word and the intonation rises, except for that of the last rhythmic group.

Language Tip: Adding Rhythm to Your French and Identifying It

When speaking French as a newbie, just stress the last syllable of your sentence while marking the falling intonation.

When listening to French at a higher level, you will instinctively perceive the speaker's intention. Try to listen to the stressed syllables, and if you are not sure of what the person meant, just ask for an explanation.

Linking Words in a Phrase

When you listen to someone speak French while you read along, you've probably noticed that French pronunciation doesn't match what you see written. One reason for this is the way words are linked together one after the other with *la liaison* or "linking sounds," which we saw in Pronunciation Lesson #4.

Another reason is that in spoken French, we pronounce words in phrases without any pauses; rather, we link them together. This process is called in French *l'enchaînement*, or in English, "word linking." We make some links between vowel sounds and others between consonant and vowel sounds.

Word Linking Between Vowel Sounds

When a word ends with a vowel and the following word also starts with a vowel, both vowels form two syllables, and we do not add a pause.

For example, with the phrase *Tu as un vélo* ("You have a bike."), you'd say the whole phrase as if it were one word without any pause: you'd say [tuhahuhveylo] and not [tu ha huh veylo].

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Ça y est !</i>	[sahihey]	"That's it!"
<i>J'ai une amie anglaise.</i>	[jhayhunamihøengles]	"I have an English friend."
<i>Il a écrit un récit étrange.</i>	[ilaheykrihuhreysiheytrøenj]	"He wrote a strange story."
<i>Il a été un peu étonné.</i>	[ilaheyteyhuhphuhheytoney]	"He was a little astonished."
<i>Elle a étudié et a appris à étudier.</i>	[elhaheytudhiheyheyhaprihaheydudihay]	"She studied and learned how to study."

Word Linking Between a Consonant and a Vowel Sound

In spoken French, we pronounce the last consonant of a word with the initial vowel of the following word. The last consonant of the first word becomes the first letter of the second word, as in *Il arrive* ("he arrives") pronounced [ilhariv]. We link the consonant to the vowel to form a syllable.

When we link words, the only consonant that changes pronunciation is [f], and it is pronounced as the letter *v* in two cases:

1. When saying that the time is "nine o'clock": *neuf heures* [neuvhhoer]
2. When saying that a person is "nine years old": *neuf ans* [neuvhan]

For Example:

French	Pronunciation	"English"
<i>Il habite à Paris.</i>	[ilhabita pari]	"He lives in Paris."
<i>Cette île est petite.</i>	[setilheypoetit]	"It is a small island."
<i>Quel âge as-tu ?</i>	[kelajatu]	"How old are you?"
<i>Hélène entre avec une amie.</i>	[heylenoentravekhunami]	"Helen comes in with a friend."
<i>Quelle est votre activité préférée ?</i>	[kelheyvotractivitheyprefere y]	"What is your favorite activity?"
<i>La table en plastique est blanche.</i>	[latablheyblanch]	"The plastic table is white."
<i>Moi j'offre un vase à fleurs à cette amie.</i>	[moahjofrhunvazafloeraseta mi]	"Me, I offer a flower vase to this friend."



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