French Grammar and Usage
French Grammar and Usage

Second edition

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Glossary of key grammatical terms

Items in bold in the definitions are also defined in the glossary.

**adjective** - a class of words which **modify** nouns. Adjectives appear adjacent to nouns or separated from them by verbs like être, devenir, rester: e.g. *un PETIT problème* 'a small problem'; *une boîte CARRÉE* 'a square box'; *Cette robe est CHÈRE* 'This dress is expensive'.

**adverb** - a class of words which **modify** words, **phrases** and sentences: e.g. *Tout est si clair* 'Everything is so clear'; *Je fume MODÉRÉMENT* 'I smoke moderately'; *JUSTE avant le départ du train* 'Just before the train leaves'; *SOUDAIN, j'ai entendu un bruit* 'Suddenly I heard a noise'.

**adverbial** - a word or phrase which can function as an adverb, although it also has other functions: e.g. *parler BAS* 'to talk quietly' (*bas* = an **adjective**); *Je lui rends visite DE TEMPS EN TEMPS* 'I visit her from time to time' (*de temps en temps* = a **prepositional phrase**); *Elle travaille LE MATIN* 'She works in the mornings' (*le matin* = a **noun phrase**).

**affirmative sentence** - a sentence which is not a negative: e.g. *Elle parle* 'She is speaking'; *Parle-t-elle? 'Is she speaking?'; *Parle! 'Speak!'* (as opposed to the negative sentences: *Elle ne parle pas, Ne parle-t-elle pas? Ne parle pas!*)

**agreement** - a form the **verb** must take to be compatible with a given **subject**: e.g. *NOUS mangeons* 'We're eating'/*Vous mangez* 'You're eating'. A form a **determiner** and an **adjective** must take to be compatible with a given **noun**: e.g. *UN BON REPAS* 'A good meal'/*UNE BONNE BIÈRE* 'A good beer'. A form a **past participle** must take to be compatible with a preceding **direct object**: e.g. *le coffre? Je L'AI OUVERT* 'The car boot? I've opened it'; *La porte? Je L'AI OUVRÉE* 'The door? I've opened it'; and so on.

**article** - definite article = *le, la, les*; indefinite article = *un, une, des*. The 'partitive' article - *du, de la, des* - indicates that a **noun** refers to something which is part of a larger mass: e.g. *du gâteau* 'some (of the) cake'; *des abeilles* 'some bees'.

**auxiliary verb** - the verbs avoir or être which accompany a **past participle** in compound **tenses** or the **passive**: e.g. *Elle A mangé* 'She has eaten'; *Le vélo A ÉTÉ réparé* 'The bike has been repaired'.

**cardinal number** - a number in the series *un* (1), *deux* (2), *trois* (3), etc.

**clause** - a string of words which contains just one **verb phrase** and a **subject** (whether overt or implied): e.g. *ELLE PART* 'She's leaving' - one clause; *DEPUIS JANVIER LES PRIX ONT AUGMENTÉ* 'Since January, prices have gone up' - one clause; *IL EST HEUREUX/PARCE QU'IL EST RICHE* 'He is happy because he is rich' - two clauses; *ELLE EST PRÊTÉE/A PARTIR* 'She is ready to leave' - two clauses
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(in à partir the subject is implied: She is ready, and she will leave); LES CIR-
CONSTANCES AIDANT/LE PARTI GAGNERA CES ÉLECTIONS 'If the conditions are right,
the party will win this election' - two clauses; IL DIT/QU’ON CROIT/QU’ELLE VA
PARTIR 'He says that they think that she will leave' - three clauses. Also see
coordinate clause, relative clause, subordinate clause.

comparative - a way of modifying adjectives and adverbs to draw a com-
parison between one entity and another: Il veut acheter une PLUS GRANDE/une
MOINS GRANDE/une AUSSI GRANDE voiture 'He wants to buy a bigger car/a car
which is not as big/a car which is just as big'; Cette voiture-ci roule PLUS
VITE/MOINS VITE/AUSSI VITE QUE l’autre 'This car goes faster/slower/as quickly
as the other one'.

complement - any phrase which follows a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, to
form an expression with a cohesive meaning: e.g. un appartement À
LOUER 'a flat to let'; Ils se réunissent LE DIMANCHE AU STADE 'They meet on Sundays at
the stadium'; Pierre est difficile À VIVRE 'Pierre is difficult to live with'.

coordinate clause - a clause linked to another by et, ou, mais: e.g. Il est riche ET
il est heureux 'He is rich and he is happy'.

declarative sentence - a sentence which makes a statement (as opposed to a
question or an imperative).

demonstrative - demonstrative determiner = ce, cette, ces; demonstrative pro-
noun = celui, celle, ceux, celles.

determiner - an article (un, une/le, la, les/des, etc.), demonstrative determi-
ner (ce, cette, etc.) or possessive determiner (mon, ma/ton, ta, etc.) which modi-
ifies a noun.

direct object - see object.

directly transitive verb - see transitive verb.

ditransitive verb - see transitive verb.

finite verb - a verb which is marked for tense and agreement, as opposed to
non-finite forms like the infinitive, imperative, participles: e.g. Je PARLE 'I’m
speaking'; J’AI PARLÉ T spoke'; Je SAIS parler français T can speak French'.

formal French - in this grammar ‘formal French' refers to a style used by speak-
ers of standard educated French when they are paying particular attention
to the form of what they are saying or writing. It is a style usually approp-
riate when someone is speaking in an official capacity (lectures, sermons,
speeches, etc.), or writing in learned, academic or literary style. Features of
formal French which are absent from informal French include: the use of
the simple past tense (Il SORTIT 'He went out'), the use of the past anterior
tense (Aussitôt qu’il FUT SORTI ... 'As soon as he had gone out ... '), reten-
tion of ne in ne . . . pas.

gender - a division of nouns into two classes: masculine and feminine. The
distinction shows up mainly in determiners (le versus la, ce versus cette, mon
versus ma, etc.), in pronouns (il versus elle) and in the agreement of adjecti-
ves with nouns (beau versus belle). Gender distinctions are grammatical and
need not correspond to sex distinctions in the real world (although they
mostly do): e.g. médecin 'doctor' is masculine, but can refer to men or
women; personne 'person' is feminine but can refer to men or women.

gerund - see participle.
imperative - a form of the verb used to give orders, express encouragement or give advice: e.g. ASSEYEZ-VOUS! 'Sit down!'; ALLEZ! 'Come on!'; FAIS attention'. 'Watch out!'
impersonal - refers to a pronoun (usually a subject pronoun) which does not refer to any person, place, thing, idea etc. il, ce, cela, ça can be impersonal pronouns in French: e.g. IL est temps de partir 'It's time to leave'; ÇA me fait peur d'y aller la nuit 'It scares me to go there at night'.
indictative - the set of forms of the verb which are not subjunctive, imperative, infinitive or participial.
indirect object - see object.
indirectly transitive verb - see transitive verb.
infinite - a form of the verb which ends in -er, -ir, -re, -oir, and corresponds to English 'to': AIMER 'to like', FINIR 'to finish', VENDRE 'to sell', RECEVOIR 'to receive'.
informal French - in this grammar 'informal French' refers to a style used by speakers of standard educated French in contexts of relaxed, spontaneous communication when they are interacting with friends, colleagues, family, etc. Features of informal French include: the non-use of the simple past or past anterior tenses, and the regular omission of ne from ne ... pas.
intransitive verb - a verb which has no direct object: e.g. La neige TOMBAIT 'Snow was falling'.
modify, to - to add to the meaning of a noun, verb, adjective, etc. by adding another word or phrase to it: e.g. manteau, UN manteau, UN manteau GRIS; oiseau, UN oiseau, UN oiseau QUI CHANTE; parle, IL parle, IL parle LENTEMENT; grand, si grand, ELLE EST SI grande.
negator - one of the elements aucun, jamais, ni, nul, pas, personne, plus, rien which can create negative expressions (see Chapter 16).
noun - a class of words which refers to people, places, things, ideas, and so on; it is usually preceded by a determiner: e.g. un AMI; la FRANCE; une BIÈRE; le BONHEUR.
noun phrase - the phrase consisting of a noun alone, or a noun and the elements which modify it. Each of the following is a noun phrase: PIERRE, LE SOLEIL, UN CHER AMI 'a dear friend', UNE BIÈRE BIEN FROIDE 'a really cold beer', CHACUN DE MES AMIS LES PLUS CHERS 'each of my dearest friends'.
number - a grammatical distinction between nouns or pronouns which are singular and those which are plural. Number distinctions need not correspond to real singular and plural distinctions in the world, and can differ between English and French (although mostly the grammatical and real-world distinctions coincide): e.g. 'hair' (singular) versus cheveux (plural); 'trousers' (plural) versus pantalon (singular). See also cardinal number and ordinal number.
object - a direct object is the noun phrase or pronoun affected directly by the action described by the verb: e.g. Il a pris LE TRAIN 'He took the train'; 17 L'a pris 'He took it'. An indirect object is the noun phrase or pronoun affected indirectly by the action described by the verb. In French, indirect object noun phrases are always introduced by à: e.g. 17 a envoyé un cadeau À SA MÈRE 'He sent a present to his mother'. An object of a preposition is any noun phrase
which follows a preposition, including indirect objects introduced by à: e.g. 
dans LE HALL 'in the hall', à côté DU RESTAURANT 'beside the restaurant', à SA MÈRE 'to his mother'.

object of a preposition - see object.

ordinal number - a number in the series premier (1er), deuxième (2e), troisième (3e), etc.

parenthetical expression - an aside made by a speaker to indicate a reservation he/she has about what is being said. It is the equivalent of putting something in brackets ('parentheses'): e.g. Pierre, SEMBLE-T-IL, a gagné le prix 'Pierre, it seems, won the prize'. Parentheticals are kinds of adverbial.

participle - past participles are forms of the verb which occur with avoir or être: e.g. J'ai MANGÉ 'I've eaten'; Elle est PARTIE 'She has left'. Present participles end in -ant and correspond to English verbs ending in -ing: e.g. disparaissant 'disappearing', attendant 'waiting'. Gerunds are present participles preceded by en: en disparaissant 'while disappearing; by disappearing', en attendant 'while waiting; by waiting'.

passive - a form of a normally transitive verb where the direct object becomes the subject and the verb is turned into an être + past participle construction: e.g. Il a réparé le vélo 'He repaired the bike'; LE VÉLO A ÉTÉ RÉPARÉ 'The bike has been repaired'.

past participle - see participle.

person - the three categories into which noun phrases or pronouns can be divided depending on whether they refer to the person(s) speaking (je, me, moi, nous - first person), the person(s) being spoken to (tu, te, toi, vous - second person), or the person(s) or thing(s) being talked about (il, elle, lui, ils, etc. - third person). Pronouns take different forms in the first, second and third person, and finite verbs change their form to agree with the person of the subject (e.g. je parle, nous parlons, vous parlez, etc.).

personal pronoun - a first person, second person or third person pronoun which stands for a noun phrase mentioned or implied elsewhere in a text or discourse. Personal pronouns contrast with impersonal pronouns which do not refer to other noun phrases. Personal pronouns are pronouns like je, me, moi, nous; tu, te, toi, vous; il, elle, lui, ils, etc. They take their name from the fact that they can be classified as first, second or third person, and do not necessarily refer to people; e.g. elle is a personal pronoun, but it refers to the inanimate émission in: ELLE est intéressante, cette émission 'That programme's interesting'.

phrase - any string of words which gives rise to an expression with a cohesive meaning: e.g. MON ONCLE JACQUES 'my uncle Jacques' (noun phrase); Pierre MARCHE LENTEMENT 'Pierre walks slowly' (verb phrase), etc.

possessive - possessive determiner - mon, ma, ton, votre, etc.; possessive pronoun = le mien, la mienne, le tien, le vôtre, etc.

preposition - words like à, de, dans, en, sur, etc., which are followed by noun phrases and indicate the direction, location, orientation, etc., of an entity.

prepositional phrase - a phrase consisting of a preposition and its complement. The following are all prepositional phrases: À MIDI 'at noon'; À CHAQUE VIRAGE 'at every bend'; AU CHEVET DE MA MÈRE 'at my mother's bedside'.

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present participle - see participle.

pronoun - a form which is used in place of a noun phrase when that phrase is already known from the context: e.g. je, tu, nous, le, la, leur, etc. Pronouns have different forms depending on whether they are subjects, direct objects, indirect objects or objects of a preposition.

proper noun - names like Marie-Paule, le Canada, are proper nouns.

quantifier - a determiner-like expression which measures or quantifies a noun or noun phrase: e.g. BEAUCOUP D’argent 'a lot of money'; LA PLUPART DES spectateurs 'most of the spectators'; TOUS les jours 'every day'.

question (direct versus indirect) - a direct question is addressed directly to the hearer or reader: e.g. VIENS-TU? 'Are you coming?'. An indirect question reports the asking of a question: e.g. Il a demandé si TU VENAIS 'He asked if you were coming').

reciprocal - a type of sentence where either the direct object, the indirect object or the object of a preposition refers to the same person, thing, idea, etc., as a plural subject, and the sentence is interpreted so that the subjects are doing things to each other: e.g. Les boxeurs SE sont blessés 'The boxers injured each other'; Les participants SE sont posé des questions 'The participants asked each other questions'; Les manifestants ont lutté LES UNS CONTRE LES AUTRES 'The demonstrators fought with each other'.

reflexive - a type of sentence where either the direct object, the indirect object or the object of a preposition refers to the same person, thing, idea, etc., as the subject: e.g. Je ME lave 'I am washing (myself)'; Elle SE cache la vérité 'She hides the truth from herself; Elle parle CONTRE ELLE-MÊME 'She is speaking against herself.

relative clause - a clause which modifies a noun phrase or a pronoun: e.g. // y avait deux hommes QUI SORTAIENT DU BAR 'There were two men who were coming out of the bar'; C'est lui QUI ME L'A DONNÉ 'He is the one who gave it to me'.

subject - the noun phrase or pronoun in a clause about which the verb and its complement say something. Subjects usually appear in front of the verb: e.g. LE DÎNER est servi 'Dinner is served'; SA FEMME parle lentement 'His wife speaks slowly'; DELPHINE a été battue 'Delphine was beaten'. It can appear after the verb in some constructions. See subject-verb inversion.

subject-verb inversion - subjects normally precede finite verbs in French. But in questions, and after certain adverbs, the subject and the finite verb may change places: e.g. AME-T-IL LE Roquefort? 'Does he like Roquefort cheese?; A peine S'EST-IL ASSIS qu'on lui a demandé de se déplacer 'Hardly had he sat down when someone asked him to move'.

subjunctive - see Chapter 11 for discussion.

subordinate clause - a clause which is part of a larger sentence, and whose meaning is secondary to that of the main clause: e.g. PARCE QU'IL EST RICHE, Pierre est heureux 'Because he is rich, Pierre is happy' - parce qu'il est riche is subordinate to Pierre est heureux; Jean a complètement rénové le grenier DEPUIS QU'IL EST CHEZ NOUS 'Jean has completely renovated the loft since he has been at our house' - depuis qu'il est chez nous is subordinate to jean a complètement rénové le grenier.
superlative - a way of modifying adjectives and adverbs to single out an entity as the best or the worst of its kind: e.g. C'est la route LA PLUS DANGEREUSE/LA MOINS DANGEREUSE de la région 'It's the most dangerous road/least dangerous road in the region'; Cette voiture-là est LA PLUS VITE/LA MOINS VITE 'That car is the fastest/the least fast'.

tense - a form of the verb which indicates the time at which an event took place relative to other events being talked about: e.g. Je PRENDS [present tense] la route par où nous SOMMES VENUS [compound past tense] 'I'm taking the road along which we came'. Tenses have names like present, future, simple past, compound past, etc. - see Chapter 7 for the forms of verbs in different tenses, and Chapter 10 for their uses.

transitive verb - a verb which has a direct object: e.g. Elle mange UNE POMME 'She is eating an apple'. In this grammar we also distinguish directly transitive verbs, which have direct objects, from indirectly transitive verbs which have prepositional complements: e.g. Il parle DE SES PARENTS 'He is talking of his parents', and from ditransitive verbs which have complements consisting of a direct object and a prepositional object: e.g. J'ai envoyé LA LETTRE À MON FRÈRE 'I sent the letter to my brother'.

verb - a class of words which refers to actions, states, events, accomplishments, and so on, and has different forms to indicate tense and agreement: e.g. Elle PARLE 'She is speaking'; L'eau SCINTILLAIT 'The water was sparkling'.

verb phrase - the phrase consisting of a verb alone, or a verb and the elements which modify it (but excluding the subject). Each of the following is a verb phrase: marchait 'was walking'; marchait lentement 'was walking slowly'; a envoyé un cadeau d'anniversaire à sa tante 'sent a birthday present to his aunt'.
I. Nouns

1.1 Types of noun

1.1.1 Abstract versus concrete nouns

Concrete nouns refer to entities with physical attributes which can be seen, heard, touched, etc. Abstract nouns refer to entities without such physical attributes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical concrete nouns</th>
<th>Typical abstract nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bière (f)</td>
<td>beauté (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bonbon (m)</td>
<td>bonheur (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cadeau (m)</td>
<td>bonté (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carte (f)</td>
<td>patience (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disque (m)</td>
<td>mœurs (f pi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>église (f)</td>
<td>savoir (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>livre (m)</td>
<td>silence (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mannequin (m)</td>
<td>soif (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beer</td>
<td>beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet</td>
<td>happiness</td>
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<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>goodness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>card</td>
<td>patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>record</td>
<td>customs, morals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>church</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book</td>
<td>silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fashion) model</td>
<td>thirst</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abstract nouns in French are usually accompanied by a definite article whereas English has no article:

La patience est une qualité qui se fait rare
Patience is a quality which is becoming rare
Je cherche le bonheur
I'm looking for happiness

But when abstract nouns refer to a particular example of 'patience', 'happiness', 'knowledge', and so on (for instance, when they are modified by an adjective), they occur with an indefinite article:

Il a fait preuve cette fois d'une patience appréciable
The patience he showed on this occasion was appreciated
Il s'est alors produit un silence absolu
Absolute silence ensued
Un bonheur en vaut un autre
One kind of happiness is the same as any other

(See Chapter 2 for definite and indefinite articles.)

1.1.2 Mass versus count nouns

Count nouns identify individual entities, and usually have both singular and plural forms. Mass nouns treat the entity or entities they refer to as a single unit, and typically have only a singular form (although some mass nouns only have a plural form):
2 Nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical count nouns</th>
<th>Typical mass nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>une bouteille</td>
<td>de l'air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>des bouteilles</td>
<td>du beurre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un chien</td>
<td>de l'eau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>des chiens</td>
<td>du gâteau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une personne</td>
<td>des gens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>des personnes</td>
<td>du sable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a bottle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mass nouns in French are usually accompanied by the partitive article (see Chapter 2.4) - _du, de V, de la or des_ - in those cases where English has 'some' or no article at all:

Je voudrais _du lait_, s'il vous plaît
_I would like some milk, please_

Il y a _du vin_ dans le placard
_There's wine in the cupboard_

_Personnes and gens_

_personnes_ and _gens_, both of which mean 'people', differ in their uses because _personne_ is a count noun and _gens_ a mass noun. Only _personne_ can be preceded by a number (e.g. _cing_), or the quantifiers _plusieurs_ 'several', _quelques_ 'a few', _un certain nombre de_ 'a certain number of:

Les cinq _personnes_ (NOT *_gens_) qui ont mangé avec nous
_The five people who ate with us_

Plusieurs _personnes_ (NOT *_gens_) sont restées tout l'après-midi
_Several people stayed for the whole afternoon_

By the same token, _gens_ is preferred in contexts where 'people' are treated as a mass:

Les _gens_ (NOT *_personnes_) n'aident pas rester à table trop longtemps
_People don't like to spend too long over a meal_

NB: _gens_ can be preceded by _beaucoup de_ 'many', _peu de_ 'few', _tous les_ 'all the' and _la plupart des_ 'most'.

_Mass nouns used countably_

Some mass nouns can be used countably to refer to specific examples of the substance in question:

les vins de France _the wines of Trance_
les Eaux et Forêts _the Trench Forestry Commission_
les fromages de Normandie _the cheeses of Normandy_
un pain _a loaf of bread_
un petit pain _a bun_

Some count nouns can also be used as mass nouns:

Prenez du _poulet_ _Have some chicken_
Il met _du citron_ dans tout _He puts lemon in everything_

1.1.3 Collective nouns

Collective nouns refer to collections of people or things.
Types of noun

Typical collective nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Phrase</th>
<th>English Phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assistance (f)</td>
<td>audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comité (m)</td>
<td>committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>équipe (f)</td>
<td>team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foule (f)</td>
<td>crowd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gouvernement (m)</td>
<td>government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>linge (m) de maison</td>
<td>household linen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>main-d’œuvre (f)</td>
<td>workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peuple (m)</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaisselle (f)</td>
<td>dishes, crockery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When a collective noun is the subject of a clause, the verb is usually singular. This contrasts with English, where the verb can be either singular or plural:

Le gouvernement a (NOT *ont) décidé d'interdire la publicité pour les cigarettes
The government has/have decided to ban cigarette advertising

L'équipe s'entraîne (NOT *s'entraînent) le jeudi soir
The team trains/train on Thursday evenings

(For more on subject-verb agreement see Chapter 9.1.)

1.1.4 Proper nouns

Proper nouns are names like Marie-Paule, Paris, Toulouse, Le Havre, La Seine, La France, Le Canada.

With persons there is usually no article:

Marie-Paule viendra demain
Marie-Paule will come tomorrow

In some cases an article is inserted in informal speech:

Dis donc, elle était pas fière, la Marie-Paule!
So Marie-Paule must have felt a bit of a fool!

T’aurais vu la tête qu’il faisait, le Jérôme!
You should have seen Jerome’s face!

This conveys a familiar, affectionate attitude towards the individual concerned.

When reference is made to a family, as in 'the Jones family', a plural article is used, but the name itself is not pluralized:

J'ai invité les Martin à venir manger dimanche
I have invited the Martins for Sunday lunch

When a person's title is used, it is normally accompanied by the definite article:

Je vous présente le Professeur Bodin
May I introduce Professor Bodin

chez le Docteur Gleizes

c/o Dr Gleizes (on an envelope or package)

When proper nouns are modified by preceding adjectives, they require a definite article:
4 Nouns

le petit Jules  
le gros Henri

Unlike in English, regions and countries are normally used with a definite article:

J'ai visité la Normandie  
la France d'aujourd'hui  
Nous survolons la Belgique

I visited Normandy
today's France
We're flying over Belgium

(See Chapter 2.2.2 for the use of articles with regions and countries.)

1. 1.5 Use of anannée, jour/journée, matin/matinée, soir/soirée

English has only one word for each of 'morning', 'evening', 'day' and 'year'. French has two, but each are used under different circumstances. It is often said that the -ée forms are used when the activity which takes place during the morning, evening, etc. is highlighted. Compare:

Je travaille chaque matin/soir/jour  
I work every morning/evening/day  
(where the frequency rather than the activity is highlighted)

J'ai travaillé toute la matinée/la soirée/la journée  
I worked all morning/evening/day  
(where the length of work is highlighted)

But there are other cases where the forms have distinct uses which appear to be the result simply of convention:

au début de la matinée/la soirée/la journée  
at the start of the morning/the evening/the day

en fin de matinée/soirée/journée  
at the end of the morning/the evening/the day

par une belle matinée  
on a beautiful morning

tôt le matin  
early in the morning

Un beau matin il est parti  
One fine morning he up and left

tous les jours/matins/ans  
every day/morning/year

l'an 2000  
the year 2000

le jour de l'an  
New Year's Day

le nouvel an  
the New Year

souhaitez la bonne année à qn  
to wish so a Happy New Year

les années 70  
the 70s

l'année précédente/suivante  
the previous/following year

With preceding numbers the forms without -ée are normally used:

Il a cinq ans  
He is five

trois fois par jour  
three times a day

But if an adjective modifies the noun as well this seems to highlight the activity:

trois bonnes années  
three good years

six longues journées  
six long days
12 Gender

Nouns in French are either masculine or feminine. Unfortunately there are no simple rules which non-native speakers can use to predict with complete accuracy the gender of a given noun. However, there are some patterns, either in the form or meaning of nouns, which can normally be used to predict the correct gender with greater than chance accuracy. The reader should remember, however, that these patterns are not comprehensive, and that there are exceptions.

1.2.1 Gender signalled by the final letters of the written forms of nouns

Masculine

Many nouns whose singular written form ends in a consonant are masculine:

- c un franc / a franc (un lac / a lake, le public / the public, etc.)
- d le bord / the edge (le fond / the bottom, le pied / the foot, etc.)
- g un camping / a camp site (un parking / a car park, un shampooing / a shampoo, etc.)
- l un détail / a detail (le travail / work, le soleil / the sun, etc.)
- r le fer / iron (l'hiver / winter, un couloir / a corridor, etc.)
- t le chocolat / chocolate (le climat / the climate, un jouet / a toy, un poulet / a chicken,
  le ciment / cement, un jugement / a judgement, etc.)

Exceptions are typically found with nouns which end in -n, -r, -s, -t, and -x:

- une maison / a house
- une cuiller / a spoon
- la mer / the sea
- une tour / a tower
- une fois / one time
- une dent / a tooth
- une nuit / a night
- une jument / a mare
- une croix / a cross

Nouns ending in -on are usually masculine (un poisson / 'a fish', un sillon / 'a furrow', etc. Although une chanson / 'a song' is an exception). But nouns ending in -aison, -(s)sion, -Hon or -xion are usually feminine:

- une comparaison / a comparison
- une liaison / a liaison
- une maison / a house
- une raison / a reason
- une saison / a season
- une décision / a decision
- la tension / tension, blood pressure
- une vision / a vision
- une émission / a broadcast
- une connexion / a connection

Exception: un bastion / a bastion

Nouns ending in -eur are usually masculine (un ordinateur / 'a computer', le bonheur / 'happiness', etc.), but the following frequently-used nouns are feminine:
Many nouns whose singular written form ends in a vowel (but excluding -e without an acute accent) are masculine, although there are a significant number of exceptions:

- **-ai**,
  - un délai a time limit
  - un essai an attempt (a 'try' in rugby)
  - un emploi a job
  - un roi a king

Exceptions: la foi faith, une loi a law, une paroi a wall

- **-eau**
  - un couteau a knife
  - un marteau a hammer
  - le niveau the level
  - le réseau the network
  - un tableau a picture

Exceptions: l'eau water, la peau skin

- **-i**
  - l'abri shelter
  - un cri a shout
  - un pari a bet
  - un pli a fold
  - un raccourci a short-cut

- **-ou**
  - un bijou a jewel
  - un caillou a pebble
  - un clou a nail
  - un genou a knee
  - le hibou the owl

Feminine

Many nouns whose singular written form ends in -e without an acute accent are feminine:

l'audace daring, la façade the front, the outside, une salade a salad
une baie a bay, la haie the hedge
une douzaine _a dozen_, une fontaine _a fountain_
une ambulance _an ambulance_, une flèche _an arrow_
une thèse _a thesis_, une grève _a strike_, etc.
une araignée _a spider_, une bougie _a candie_, etc.

But there are a large number of exceptions to this rule:

**-isme**
Nouns ending in _-isme_ are masculine: _le romantisme_ 'romanticism', _le tourisme_ 'tourism', _un idiotisme_ 'an idiom (linguistic)', etc.

**-ède, -ège, -eme**
Nouns with these endings are usually masculine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un intermède</td>
<td><em>an interlude</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un cortège</td>
<td><em>a procession</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un piège</td>
<td><em>a trap</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un stratège</td>
<td><em>a strategist</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un poème</td>
<td><em>a poem</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le système</td>
<td><em>the system</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le thème</td>
<td><em>the theme or translation into a foreign language</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_la crème_ 'cream' is an exception (but see 1.2.4).

**-age**
Nouns ending in _-age_ are usually masculine, but there are some notable exceptions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le courage</td>
<td><em>courage</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un garage</td>
<td><em>a garage</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un message</td>
<td><em>a message</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un stage</td>
<td><em>a work placement</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un voyage</td>
<td><em>a journey</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exceptions: _une cage_ _a cage_, _une image_ _a picture_, _une page_ _a page_, _une plage_ _a beach_, _la rage_ _rabies_.

**Other common exceptions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un grade</td>
<td><em>a rank</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un stade</td>
<td><em>a stadium</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un groupe</td>
<td><em>a group</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le monde</td>
<td><em>the world</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le capitaine</td>
<td><em>the captain</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le domaine</td>
<td><em>the area</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le silence</td>
<td><em>silence</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un musée</td>
<td><em>a museum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un lycée</td>
<td><em>a (sixth-form) college</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un trophée</td>
<td><em>a trophy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un génie</td>
<td><em>a genius</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un incendie</td>
<td><em>a fire</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un cimetière</td>
<td><em>a cemetery</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le derrière</td>
<td><em>the backside</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un magazine</td>
<td><em>a magazine</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le platine</td>
<td><em>platinum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un pare-brise</td>
<td><em>a windscreen</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un intervalle</td>
<td><em>an interval</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le rebelle</td>
<td><em>the rebel</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le chèvrefeuille</td>
<td><em>honeysuckle</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 Nouns

un chêne an oak tree
un hêtre a beech tree
un gorille a gorilla
un portefeuille a wallet
un carrosse a carriage
un squelette a skeleton
un renne a reindeer
le mercure mercury
le murmure a murmur
un gramme a gram
un kilogramme a kilogram
un mètre a metre
un kilomètre a kilometre
un litre a litre
un parapluie an umbrella

NB: Most words with the prefix para- are masculine: un parachute 'a parachute', un paratonnerre 'a lightning conductor', le parapente 'paragliding', un paravent 'wind-shield, screen'.

1.2.2 Nouns which refer both to males and to females

Some nouns can refer either to males or to females simply by changing the determiner from masculine to feminine:

un/une adulte an adult
un/une adversaire an adversary
un/une artiste an artist
un/une bibliothécaire a librarian
un/une camarade a comrade
un/une célibataire a bachelor/spinster (an unmarried person)
un/une chimiste a chemist (scientist)
un/une collègue a colleague
un/une compatriote a compatriot
un/une complice an accomplice
un/une concierge a porter
un/une convive a guest
un/une dentiste a dentist
un/une élève a (school) pupil
un/une enfant a child
un/une esclave a slave
un/une fonctionnaire a civil servant
un/une gosse a kid (a word for a child in informal French)
un/une interprète an interpreter
un/une journaliste a journalist
un/une libraire a bookseller
un/une locataire a tenant
un/une malade a person who is ill
un/une partenaire a partner
un/une patriote a patriot
un/une pensionnaire a boarder (as in boarding school)
un/une philosophe a philosopher
un/une photographe a photographer
un/une pianiste a pianist
un/une pique-assiette a sponger
un/une secrétaire a secretary
un/une touriste a tourist
NB: *pupille* meaning 'pupil of the eye' is feminine only. In set expressions such as *pupille de la Nation, pupille de l'Etat* the noun refers to a child whose education is paid for by the state. With this meaning *pupille* may be masculine or feminine according to the sex of the child.

### 1.2.3 Nouns which change form when they refer to males or to females

#### Regular patterns

For words ending in *-i, -é, -u, -l* an *-e* is added in the written form and the pronunciation remains the same:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> ami</td>
<td>a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> amie</td>
<td>an employee (worker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> employé</td>
<td>an employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> employée</td>
<td>a worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> rival</td>
<td>a rival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> rivale</td>
<td>a rival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For words ending in *-d, -t, -ois, -ais, -er, -ier* an *-e* is added and the final consonant, previously not pronounced, is pronounced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> marchand</td>
<td>a trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> marchande</td>
<td>a trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> candidat</td>
<td>a candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> candidate</td>
<td>a candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> avocat</td>
<td>a lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> avocate</td>
<td>a lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> bourgeois</td>
<td>a bourgeoisie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> bourgeoise</td>
<td>a bourgeoisie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> boulanger</td>
<td>a baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> boulangère</td>
<td>a baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> berger</td>
<td>a shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> bergère</td>
<td>a shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> fermier</td>
<td>a farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> fermière</td>
<td>a farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> caissier</td>
<td>a checkout operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> caissière</td>
<td>a checkout operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> romancier</td>
<td>a novelist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> romancière</td>
<td>a novelist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For words ending in *-ien, -on, -an, -in, -ain* in written form *-(n)e* is added and the final vowel, previously pronounced as a nasal vowel, is pronounced as an oral vowel plus *-n*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> chien</td>
<td>a dog/a bitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> chienne</td>
<td>a dog/a bitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> lion</td>
<td>a lion/a lioness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> lionne</td>
<td>a lion/a lioness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> paysan</td>
<td>a farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> paysanne</td>
<td>a farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> gitan</td>
<td>a gypsy (pejorative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> gitane</td>
<td>a gypsy (pejorative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> voisin</td>
<td>a neighbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> voisine</td>
<td>a neighbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> Africain</td>
<td>an African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> Africaine</td>
<td>an African</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some nouns add *-esse*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> âne</td>
<td>a donkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> anesse</td>
<td>a donkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> chanoine</td>
<td>a canon/canoness (religious)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> chanoinesse</td>
<td>a canon/canoness (religious)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> comte</td>
<td>a count/countess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> comtesse</td>
<td>a count/countess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> diable</td>
<td>a devil/she-devil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> diablessé</td>
<td>a devil/she-devil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> drôle</td>
<td>someone a little odd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> drôlessé</td>
<td>someone a little odd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> hôte</td>
<td>a host/hostess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> hôtesse</td>
<td>a host/hostess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> ivrogne</td>
<td>a drunkard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> ivrognesse</td>
<td>a drunkard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> maître</td>
<td>a master/mistress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> maîtresse</td>
<td>a master/mistress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(in the school context)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> ogre</td>
<td>an ogre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> ogresse</td>
<td>an ogre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> pauvre</td>
<td>a poor person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> pauvresse</td>
<td>a poor person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> prêtre</td>
<td>a priest/priestess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> prêtresse</td>
<td>a priest/priestess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> prince</td>
<td>a prince/princess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> princesse</td>
<td>a prince/princess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> Suisse</td>
<td>a Swiss person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> Suissesse</td>
<td>a Swiss person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td><em>un</em> tigre</td>
<td>a tiger/tigress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td><em>une</em> tigresse</td>
<td>a tiger/tigress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nouns ending in -eur which are not derived from a French verb, change -eur to -rice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine (fr.)</th>
<th>Feminine (fr.)</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un ambassadeur</td>
<td>une ambassadrice</td>
<td>an ambassador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un directeur</td>
<td>une directrice</td>
<td>a director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un empereur</td>
<td>une impératrice</td>
<td>an emperor/empress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those ending in -eur which are derived from a French verb change to -euse:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine (fr.)</th>
<th>Feminine (fr.)</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un chanteur</td>
<td>une chanteuse</td>
<td>a singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un menteur</td>
<td>une menteuse</td>
<td>a liar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un voleur</td>
<td>une voleuse</td>
<td>a thief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irregular patterns

In addition to these regular patterns there are a number of masculine/feminine forms where the words are quite different:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine (fr.)</th>
<th>Feminine (fr.)</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un héros</td>
<td>une héroïne</td>
<td>a hero/heroine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un époux</td>
<td>une épouse</td>
<td>a husband/wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un neveu</td>
<td>une nièce</td>
<td>a nephew/niece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un homme</td>
<td>une femme</td>
<td>a man/woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un fils</td>
<td>une fille</td>
<td>a son/daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un garçon</td>
<td>une fille</td>
<td>a boy/girl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.4 Nouns which change meaning when they change gender

Some nouns have different meanings when they are masculine and when they are feminine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine (fr.)</th>
<th>Feminine (fr.)</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un aide</td>
<td>a helper</td>
<td>help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un chèvre</td>
<td>a goat's cheese</td>
<td>a goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un crème</td>
<td>a white coffee</td>
<td>cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le crêpe</td>
<td>crêpe (cloth)</td>
<td>a pancake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un critique</td>
<td>a critic</td>
<td>a criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un espace</td>
<td>a space</td>
<td>a space (in printing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un laque</td>
<td>artwork</td>
<td>a hair lacquer or gloss paint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un livre</td>
<td>a book</td>
<td>une livre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un manche</td>
<td>a handle</td>
<td>une manche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un manœuvre</td>
<td>an unskilled worker</td>
<td>La Manche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un mémoire</td>
<td>a dissertation</td>
<td>a manœuvre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un merci</td>
<td>a thank you</td>
<td>la mémoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un mode</td>
<td>a way of...</td>
<td>la merci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(un mode de vie)</td>
<td>(a way of life)</td>
<td>une mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un moule</td>
<td>a mould</td>
<td>une moule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un pendule</td>
<td>a pendulum</td>
<td>une pendule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le physique</td>
<td>appearance</td>
<td>la physique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un poêle</td>
<td>a stove</td>
<td>une poêle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un poste</td>
<td>a job, TV or radio set balance</td>
<td>la poste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le solde</td>
<td>(in an account)</td>
<td>la solde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un somme</td>
<td>a nap</td>
<td>une somme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un tour</td>
<td>a turn, trick</td>
<td>une tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a sum (of money)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a tower</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender I

(a) **chose** is normally feminine when it means 'thing': *la/une chose*. But the expressions *quelque chose* 'something', *autre chose* 'something else', *peu de chose* 'nothing much', *pas grand-chose* 'not a great deal' are masculine:

Quelque chose est *arrivé*  
*Something happened*

versus

Cette chose est *arrivée*  
*This thing happened*

(b) **gens** 'people' requires immediately preceding adjectives or quantifiers to be feminine, but following adjectives/participles or preceding adjectives/quantifiers separated from **gens** to be masculine:

*Ces vieilles gens* sont **heureux**  
*Those old people are happy*

certaines gens  
some people
tous les gens  
everyone

*Rassurés, les gens qui manifestaient se sont dispersés*  
*Having been reassured, those demonstrating dispersed*

(c) **amour** 'love' is normally masculine singular. It is sometimes, however, feminine plural: **les amours**. When feminine plural it can mean 'amorous adventures' or it can be a more poetic way of referring to **love**.

1.2.5 Nouns which have the same spoken form but two different written forms, with different genders and different meanings

There are some words which, in spoken French, are pronounced in the same way but which have different meanings and different genders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un cal</td>
<td><em>a callus</em></td>
<td>une cale</td>
<td><em>a wedge</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un faîte</td>
<td><em>a summit</em></td>
<td>une fête</td>
<td><em>a party</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le foie</td>
<td><em>the liver</em></td>
<td>la foi</td>
<td><em>the faith</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le maire</td>
<td><em>the mayor</em></td>
<td>la mer</td>
<td><em>the sea</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un pet</td>
<td><em>a fart</em></td>
<td>la paie</td>
<td><em>the pay</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le poids</td>
<td><em>weight</em></td>
<td>la poix</td>
<td>pitch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un rai</td>
<td><em>a ray of light</em></td>
<td>une raie</td>
<td><em>a parting (in hair) or a skate (fish)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le sel</td>
<td><em>salt</em></td>
<td>une selle</td>
<td><em>a saddle</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le sol</td>
<td><em>earth</em></td>
<td>une sole</td>
<td><em>a sole (fish)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un tic</td>
<td><em>a tic (nervous)</em></td>
<td>une tique</td>
<td><em>a tick (insect)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le vice</td>
<td><em>vice (crime)</em></td>
<td>une vis</td>
<td><em>a screw</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.6 Gender of countries, towns, islands, rivers, regions and states

**Countries**

Some countries are masculine, some are feminine. The best generalization is that they are masculine unless they end in -*e*, in which case they are feminine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le Canada</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>la Chine</td>
<td>China</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le Danemark</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>la Finlande</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le Japon</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>la Libye</td>
<td>Libya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le Koweït</td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>la Norvège</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le Liban</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>la Mauritanie</td>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le Maroc</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>la Roumanie</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Nouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le Nigeria</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>la Suisse</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le Portugal</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>la Syrie</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Les Etats-Unis (m pl).

**Exceptions:** le Cambodge 'Cambodia', le Mexique 'Mexico', le Mozambique 'Mozambique', le Zaïre 'Zaire', le Zimbabwe 'Zimbabwe'.

'To' or 'in' a country is either *en* or *au(x)*. *en* is used with countries of feminine gender, and countries of masculine gender beginning with a vowel, *au* is used with countries of masculine gender beginning with a consonant, and *aux* with those countries whose names are plural, whether masculine or feminine (see Chapter 13.2.3 and 13.26.1):

- en Chine au Canada
- en Norvège au Japon
- en Suisse aux Etats-Unis
- en Iran (m)
- en Israël (m)

**Towns**

Towns, in normal usage, are masculine. In formal written French they are sometimes feminine, particularly those which end in 

- Cambridge est plein(e) de touristes en été
  *Cambridge is full of tourists in summer*

Where the name of a town includes a definite article, adjectives and participles must agree with the gender of the article:

- La Baule est située sur le littoral atlantique
  *La Baule is on the Atlantic coast*
- Le Touquet est désert l'hiver
  *Le Touquet is deserted in winter*

**Islands**

Islands are usually feminine:

- la Sardaigne Sardinia
- la Crète Crete
- la Nouvelle-Zélande New Zealand

But *le Groenland* 'Greenland' is an exception.

**Rivers, regions and states**

For rivers, French *départements*, French regions, for states and regions in other countries, the best generalization is that if they end in *-e* they are feminine:

**Rivers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le Rhin</td>
<td>the Rhine</td>
<td>la Sâone</td>
<td>the Sâone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le Tarn</td>
<td>the Tarn</td>
<td>la Seine</td>
<td>the Seine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le Cher</td>
<td>the Cher</td>
<td>la Tamise</td>
<td>the Thames</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exception:** *le Rhône* 'the Rhône'.
Départements
le Calvados la Haute-Garonne
le Gers la Marne
le Jura la Vendée

Exception: le Finistère.

French regions
le Berry la Normandie
le Limousin la Bretagne
le Périgord la Champagne

States and regions in other countries
For example, American states:
le Massachusetts la Louisiane
le Nevada la Californie
le Texas la Floride

Exception: British counties appear mostly to be treated as masculine, even those ending in '-shire':
le Kent
le Perthshire
le Yorkshire

1.2.7 Gender of makes of vehicle and machines
Usually, the gender of makes of vehicle or makes of machines, like cars, lorries, planes, lawnmowers, dishwashers, and so on, is the same as the gender of the general name for the vehicle or machine.

voiture 'car' is feminine, so makes of car are feminine:
une Renault
une Citroën DS
une Nissan Primera

camion 'lorry' is masculine, so makes of lorry are masculine:
un Berliet
un Foden

avion 'plane' is masculine, so types of plane are masculine:
le Concorde
un Boeing 747

cuisinière 'cooker' is feminine, so makes of cooker are feminine:
une Arthur Martin
une Belling

and so on.

1.2.8 Names of ships and restaurants
The names of ships are usually masculine because navire is masculine e.g. Le Normandie. However, smaller vessels may be feminine e.g. La Marie-Joseph
because *la corvette* and *la frégate* are feminine. The names of restaurants also tend to be masculine, because *restaurant* itself is masculine. A restaurant named after a region famed for its excellent produce, such as *la Normandie*, will be called *Le Normandie*.

### 1.2.9 Nouns which are only masculine or only feminine, but can refer both to men and women

Some nouns which have only one gender refer to jobs or professions undertaken both by men and women. The following are all masculine in gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un architecte</td>
<td>an architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un auteur</td>
<td>an author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un chef</td>
<td>a chef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un compositeur</td>
<td>a composer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un forçat</td>
<td>a convict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un ingénieur</td>
<td>an engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un juge</td>
<td>a judge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un magistrat</td>
<td>a magistrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un médecin</td>
<td>a doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un peintre</td>
<td>a painter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un professeur</td>
<td>a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un sculpteur</td>
<td>a sculptor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un témoin</td>
<td>a witness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un vampire</td>
<td>a vampire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When they refer to women, to make it explicit that the reference is to a woman and not a man, *femme* can be added either before or after the noun:

- une femme médecin/un médecin femme
- une femme ingénieur/un ingénieur femme

Alternatively, and more usually, the context can be allowed to determine the sex of the person referred to:

> Elle est médecin dans un grand hôpital à Montréal
> *She is a doctor in a large Montreal hospital*

Some titles are also only masculine, for example *le Maire* 'the Mayor', *le Juge* 'the Judge', *le Notaire* 'the Solicitor', etc. A woman playing this role will be addressed as *Madame le Maire, Madame le Juge*, etc.

This is an area which has given rise to considerable controversy. Whereas a few years ago, the above list would have contained *écrivain* and *avocat* as masculine-only terms, it would seem that *écrivaine* and *avocate* may now be passing into current usage. Canadian French has adopted a number of similar feminine forms not adopted in France.

There are a small number of nouns which are only feminine in gender, but which may refer both to men and women:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>personne</td>
<td>person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recrue</td>
<td>recruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentinelle</td>
<td>sentry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>star/vedette</td>
<td>star <em>(in the entertainment business)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>victime</td>
<td>victim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personne meaning 'person' is feminine: la/une personne, personne in ne

Personne meaning 'nobody' (see Chapter 16.13) is masculine:

Personne n'est venu

Cette personne est venue

Nobody came

That person came

1.2.10 Nouns with genders which English speakers often get wrong
The following nouns are masculine:

- e caractère: character/temperament
- un choix: a choice
- e crime: crime
- ’espace: space
- ’exode: exodus
- m groupe: a group
- un légume: a vegetable
- le manque: lack, lacuna
- le mérite: merit
- un parachute: a parachute
- un parapluie: an umbrella
- le silence: silence

NB: espace is feminine when it means 'a space in printing' (see 1.2.4).

The following nouns are feminine:

- une croix: a cross
- une espèce: a type, kind
- la fin: the end
- une forêt: a forest
- une noix: a nut
- une vis: a screw

1.2.11 Gender of compound nouns
Compound nouns fall into six main types in French, and it is possible to determine broadly the gender of a compound on the basis of the type it belongs to (although with some exceptions).

Adjective + noun compounds
Adjective + noun compounds normally take their gender from the noun. The noun part of the compound is highlighted in the following examples:

- un arc-boutant: a buttress
- un bas-côté: a verge (e.g. of a motorway)
- une basse-cour: a farmyard
- une belle-fille: a daughter-in-law
- un cerf-volant: a kite
- un coffre-fort: a safe
- un grand-parent: a grandparent
- un rond-point: a roundabout

Exception: un rouge-gorge 'a robin'.

Noun + noun compounds
In noun + noun compounds the gender is determined by the more important noun, un camion-citerne 'a tanker (lorry)' is a type of camion 'lorry', so camion is the more important noun, and the compound is masculine, un homme-grenouille 'a frogman' is a type of homme 'man’ (not a type of frog!), so homme is the more important noun, and the compound is masculine. The important nouns are highlighted in the following examples:

- une auto-école: a driving school
- un bateau-mouche: a Parisian tourist boat
- un bateau-citerne: a tanker (ship)
### Nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un camion-citerne</td>
<td>a tanker (lorry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un chou-fleur</td>
<td>a cauliflower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un homme-grenouille</td>
<td>a frogman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un hôtel-Dieu</td>
<td>a hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une idée-force</td>
<td>a central idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un mot-clé</td>
<td>a keyword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un oiseau-mouche</td>
<td>a humming-bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du papier-toilette</td>
<td>toilet paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une pause-café</td>
<td>a coffee break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une porte-fenêtre</td>
<td>a french window</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un timbre-poste</td>
<td>a stamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une voiture-restaurant</td>
<td>a restaurant car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un wagon-lit</td>
<td>a sleeping car</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Adverb + Noun Compounds

In adverb + noun compounds, the compound is usually the same gender as the noun, but there are exceptions:

- une arriere-pensee: a second thought
- l'arrière-plan (m): the background
- une contre-offensive: a counter-offensive
- un demi-tarif: a half-price ticket
- une demi-bouteille: a half bottle
- un hors-bord: a speedboat
- une mini-jupe: a miniskirt
- un haut-parleur: a loudspeaker
- un sans-travail: an unemployed person

**Exceptions:** l'après-guerre (m) 'the post-war period', un en-tête 'a letterhead', le sans-gêne 'the lack of embarrassment'.

### Noun + Prepositional Phrase Compounds

The gender of noun + prepositional phrase compounds is usually that of the first noun:

- un aide-de-camp: an aide-de-camp
- un arc-en-ciel: a rainbow
- un chef d'oeuvre: a masterpiece
- un coup d'ceil: a glance
- un coup de pied: a kick
- un croc-en-jambe: a trip
- une langue-de-chat: a long, flat, finger biscuit
- la main d'oeuvre: the workforce
- un mont-de-piété: a pawnshop
- une pomme de terre: a potato
- un pot-de-vin: a bribe

**Exceptions** to this generalization are: un tête-à-queue 'a spin' (head to tail in a car), un tête-à-tête 'a tête à tête conversation'.

### Verb + Noun Compounds

Verb + noun compounds are usually masculine:

- un abat-jour: a lampshade
- un accroche-cœur: a (kiss) curl
- un appui-tête: a headrest
- des casse-noisettes: nutcrackers
Number 17

Verbal phrase compounds

Compounds constructed from verbal phrases are masculine:

- le manque-à-gagner: lost revenue
- le on-dit: rumour, gossip
- le oui-dire: hearsay
- un m’as-tu-vu: a show-off
- le qu’en dira-t-on: the ‘what might people say’
- un faire-part: an announcement card (weddings, births, funerals)
- un laisser-passer: a pass (document)
- le savoir-faire: know-how

13 Number

All nouns must be either singular or plural. Although many nouns are marked for plural in written French, few differ in singular and plural form in spoken French. Usually, number is marked in the determiner in spoken French (le/la versus les, ce/cette versus ces, mon/ma versus mes, and so on).

1.3 Regular plurals

Regular plurals add -s, which is not pronounced, to the singular noun in written French:

- une loi: law(s)
- un drap: sheet(s)
- une voiture: car(s)
- une remarque: remark(s)
- un chat: cat(s)
- un enfant: child(ren)
- une maison: house(s)
- un chandail: cardigan(s)
- un éventail: fan(s)

(For words ending in -ail which have an irregular plural see 1.3.6.)

1.3.2 Plurals of nouns ending in -s, -x, -z

With these words there is no change between singular and plural:

- un pois: spot(s)
- une croix: cross(es)
18 Nouns

- un nez  
  des nez  
  nose(s)

- un as  
  des as  
  ace(s)

- un prix  
  des prix  
  price(s)

- un corps  
  des corps  
  body(ies)

- un bras  
  des bras  
  arm(s)

NB:

(a) *un os* 'bone': In the singular the final 's' is pronounced. In the plural it is not pronounced: *des os* 'bones'.

(b) *un as* 'ace': The 's' is pronounced in both the singular and the plural.

### 1.3.3 Plurals of nouns ending in -eu, -au, -eau

These nouns form their plural by adding -x:

- un cheveu  
  des cheveux  
  hair(s)

- un tuyau  
  des tuyaux  
  pipe(s)

- un manteau  
  des manteaux  
  coat(s)

- l'eau  
  des eaux  
  water(s)

#### Exceptions:

- un bleu  
  des bleus  
  bruise(s)

- un pneu  
  des pneus  
  tyre(s)

- un landau  
  des landaus  
  pram(s)

### 1.3.4 Plurals of nouns ending in -ou

Nouns ending in -ou form their plural with -s:

- un fou  
  des fous  
  madman/men or jester(s)

- un trou  
  des trous  
  hole(s)

- aère are seven words which form their plural with -x:

- un bijou  
  des bijoux  
  jewel(s)

- un caillou  
  des cailloux  
  stone(s)

- un chou  
  des choux  
  cabbage(s)

- un genou  
  des genoux  
  knee(s)

- un hibou  
  des hiboux  
  owl(s)

- un joujou  
  des joujoux  
  toy(s)

- un pou  
  des poux  
  louse(lice)

### 1.3.5 Plurals of nouns ending in -al

Most nouns ending in -al form their plural as *aux:

- un bocal  
  des bocaux  
  jam jar(s)

- un cheval  
  des chevaux  
  horse(s)

- un idéal  
  des idéaux  
  ideal(s)

- un journal  
  des journaux  
  newspaper(s)

- un mal  
  des maux  
  evil(s)

- un terminal  
  des terminaux  
  terminal(s)

- un val  
  des vaux  
  valley(s)

* (limited to poetic language)

- un bal  
  des bals  
  dance(s)

- un cal  
  des cals  
  callus(es)
1.3.6 Irregular plurals for nouns ending in -ail
Many nouns ending in -ail have a regular plural, e.g. des détails, des Chandails, des éventails, as indicated in 1.3.1, but a number of -ail nouns also make their plural with -aux:

- un bail → des baux (lease(s))
- un corail → des coraux (coral(s))
- un émail → des émaux (enamel(s))
- un soupirail → des soupiraux (window(s))
- le travail → les travaux (work(s))
- un vitrail → des vitraux (stained glass window(s))

1.3.7 Nouns which exist only in plural form

- des affres (f) → agonies
- aux alentours (m) → around
- des annales (f) → annals
- des archives (f) → archives
- des armoiries (f) → (coat of) arms
- des arrérages (m) → arrears
- des arrhes (f) → a deposit
- des bestiaux (m) → animals
- des condoléances (f) → condolences
- des ébats (m) → frolicking
- des entrailles (f) → entrails
- des environs (m) → surroundings
- des fiançailles (f) → engagement
- des fringues (f) (colloquial) → clothes
- des frusques (f) (colloquial) → clothes
- des funérailles (f) → funeral
- des gens → people (for gender see 1.2.4)
- des honoraires (m) → fees
- des intempéries (f) → bad weather
- des mœurs (f) → customs
- des obsèques (f) → funeral
- des vêpres (f) → vespers
- des victuailles (f) → victuals

1.3.8 Nouns with irregular plurals
These are most notably:

- un os → des os (pronounced as 'eau') (bone(s))
- un œil → des yeux (eye(s))
- un ciel → des cieux (sky(ies))
- un œuf → des œufs (pronounced as 'œu') (egg(s))
- un bœuf → des bœufs (pronounced as 'bœu') (bullock(s))
1.3.9 The plural of compound nouns

Adjective + noun compounds

In adjective + noun compounds (see 1.2.11), both elements become plural:

- un arc-boutant → des arcs-boutants
- un bas-côté → des bas-côtés
- une basse-cour → des basses-cours
- une belle-fille → des belles-filles
- un cerf-volant → des cerfs-volants
- un coffre-fort → des coffres-forts
- un grand-parent → des grands-parents
- un rond-point → des ronds-points

NB: un grand-père → des grands-pères
un grand-oncle → des grands-oncles
une grand-mère → des grands-mères or des grand-mères
une grand-tante → des grands-tantes or des grand-tantes

un bonhomme → des bonhommes
BUT un bonjour → des bonsjours

Noun + noun compounds

In noun + noun compounds (see 1.2.11) the norm is for both nouns to become plural:

- un bateau-citerne → des bateaux-citernes
- un bateau-mouche → des bateaux-mouches
- un camion-citerne → des camions-citernes
- un chou-fleur → des choux-fleurs
- un homme-grenouille → des hommes-grenouilles
- une idée-force → des idées-forces
- un mot-clé → des mots-clés
- un oiseau-mouche → des oiseaux-mouches
- une pause-café → des pauses-cafés
- une porte-fenêtre → des portes-fenêtres
- une voiture-restaurant → des voitures-restaurants
- un wagon-lit → des wagons-lits

Exceptions:

- une auto-école → des auto-écoles
- un bain-marie → des bains-marie
- un hôtel-Dieu → des hôtels-Dieu
- un timbre-poste → des timbres-poste

Adverb + noun compounds

In adverb + noun compounds (see 1.2.11), the noun alone becomes plural, (although some remain invariable):

- une arrière-boutique → des arrière-boutiques
- une arrière-pensée → des arrière-pensées
- un arrière-plan → des arrière-plans
- une contre-offensive → des contre-offensives
- une contre-offre → des contre-offres
- une demi-bouteille → des demi-bouteilles
- un demi-tarif → des demi-tarifs
un haut-parleur des haut-parleurs
un hors-bord des hors-bords
une mini-jupe des mini-jupes
un non-lieu des non-lieux
un non-paiement des non-paiements

Exception: un sans-travail, des sans-travail

Noun + prepositional phrase compounds
In noun + prepositional phrase compounds (see 1.2.11) only the first noun becomes plural:

un aide-de-camp des aides-de-camp
un arc-en-ciel des arcs-en-ciel
un chef d’œuvre des chefs d’œuvre
un coup d’œil des coups d’œil
un coup de pied des coups de pied
un croc-en-jambe des crocs-en-jambe
une langue-de-chat des langues-de-chat
la main d’œuvre des mains d’œuvre
un mont-de-piété des monts-de-piété
une pomme de terre des pommes de terre
un pot-de-vin des pots-de-vin

But not all change:

un pot-au-feu des pot-au-feu
un tête-à-queue des tête-à-queue
un tête-à-tête des tête-à-tête

Verb + noun compounds
In verb + noun compounds (see 1.2.11), there are three possibilities:

(i) The form remains invariable whether its singular form contains a noun in the singular or plural. This is the usual pattern:

des abat-jour
des essuie-mains
des gratte-ciel
des ouvre-boîtes
des porte-monnaie

(ii) The second word becomes plural, normally -s or -x. This is the case with:

des accroche-cœurs
des tire-bouchons
des couvre-lits

These would appear to have been assimilated to the one-word versions, such as:

le(s) portemanteau(x) coat peg(s)
le(s) portefeuille(s) wallet(s)

(iii) The first word becomes plural (which is an indication that it is no longer related to any verbal form). This is the case with:

des appuis-tête
des soutiens-gorge
It has to be said that in the area of compound nouns not all 'authorities' agree on the rules and attempts to introduce 'logical' rules appear to have added further confusion to an already confused situation!

**Verbal phrase compounds**

These do not generally have a different plural form:

- des manque-à-gagner
- des on-dit
- des ouï-dire
- des m'as-tu-vu
- des qu'en dira-t-on
- des laisser-passer
- des savoir-faire

### 1.3.10 Number differences between French and English nouns

Some nouns which are singular in English are plural in French, and others are plural in English and singular in French. The following are examples which sometimes cause difficulty for English speakers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English singular</th>
<th>French plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>applause</td>
<td>les applaudissements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darkness</td>
<td>les ténèbres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sb's funeral</td>
<td>les funérailles de qn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hair</td>
<td>les cheveux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td>des informations, des renseignements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>les connaissances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to make progress</td>
<td>faire des progrès</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do research/my research</td>
<td>faire des recherches/mes recherches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**English plural**

- economics
- grapes
  - (grape = un grain de raisin)
- linguistics
- physics
- pyjamas
- shorts
- stairs
- tights
- trousers
- underpants

**French singular**

- l'économie
- du raisin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English singular</th>
<th>French singular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>applause</td>
<td>l'applaudissement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darkness</td>
<td>la ténèbre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sb's funeral</td>
<td>les funérailles de qn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hair</td>
<td>les cheveux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td>des informations, des renseignements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>les connaissances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to make progress</td>
<td>faire des progrès</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do research/my research</td>
<td>faire des recherches/mes recherches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**English**

- economics
- grapes
  - (grape = un grain de raisin)
- linguistics
- physics
- pyjamas
- shorts
- stairs
- tights
- trousers
- underpants

**French singular**

- l'économie
- du raisin

**NB:** Some mass nouns in French can also be used as count nouns more freely than their English equivalents:

- un fruit                        | a piece of fruit
- un pain                         | a loaf of bread (NOT *a bread)
- un raisin                       | a type of grape
2

Determiners

2.1 Articles

TABLE 2.A  Summary table of articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Definite</th>
<th>Indefinite</th>
<th>Partitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>masc</td>
<td>le, l'</td>
<td>un, a</td>
<td>du, de l’ some/no article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fem</td>
<td>la, l'</td>
<td>une, a</td>
<td>de la, de l’ some/no article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plur</td>
<td>les, the</td>
<td>des</td>
<td>some/no article</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.1 Form of the article with adjectives and nouns beginning with a vowel or an h

le and la are shortened to Y, and du and de la become de V if they immediately precede an adjective or noun beginning with a vowel:

- l'univers (m)  the universe
- l'électricité (f)  electricity
- de l'acier (m)  steel
- de l'eau (f)  water
- l'ancien régime (m)  the Ancien Régime

They also behave in the same way when they immediately precede an adjective or noun beginning with a so-called 'silent h' or h muet. This is a written h which has no counterpart in the spoken language:

- l'hiver (m)  winter
- l'histoire (f)  history
- de l'héroïsme (m)  heroism
- de l'herbe (f)  grass
- l'horrible silence (m)  the terrible silence

There is also another set of adjectives and nouns beginning with a written h which do have a counterpart in the spoken language. This is misleadingly called an 'aspirate h' or h aspiré. It is misleading because there is no 'h' sound in spoken French. Rather, words which begin with an 'aspirate h' in written French also happen to block reduction of the article to '/' or de V in spoken French:

- le hibou (m)  the owl
- la haine (f)  hate
24 Determiners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>du hachis (m)</td>
<td>minced beef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de la honte</td>
<td>shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la haute montagne</td>
<td>high up in the mountains</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no easy way to distinguish adjectives and nouns which begin with a silent *h* from those which begin with an aspirate *h*. Some cases are idiosyncratic. For example, *héros* 'hero' does not allow contraction of the article: *le héros*; but *héroïne* 'heroine or heroin' and *héroïsme* 'heroism' do: *l'héroïne*, *l'héroïsme*. Many dictionaries indicate an aspirate *h* by putting [*'] at the beginning of the phonetic transcription of the word. For example:

- hibou ['ibu] (m) owl
- histoire [istwar] (f) story, history

The final consonant of *les* and *des* is pronounced [z] when they immediately precede an adjective or a noun beginning with a vowel or a silent *h*:

- les [z] enfants children
- des [z] amis friends
- des [z] héroïnes heroines

The final *n* of *un* is pronounced when *un* immediately precedes an adjective or noun beginning with a vowel or silent *h*, but not otherwise:

- un [n] hôtel a hotel
- un [n] honnête homme a decent man

NB: Verbs beginning with an *h* in the written language also divide into those which require contraction of *je, me, le, la, ne, etc.*, and those which do not:

- J'habite Londres I live in London
- Je l'héberge I am letting him stay with me

2.2 Typical use of the definite article

(a) One of the uses of the definite article in French is parallel to its use in English: to accompany nouns which are already known from the context:

- Tu as laissé dans le jardin le livre que tu as acheté hier You left the book which you bought yesterday in the garden

A pretty good guide to this usage is: if English uses a definite article, use one in French.

(b) A second use of the definite article in French is to refer to a general class of phenomena, a unique phenomenon or an abstract quality:
Les cochons sont très propres de nature
Pigs are naturally very clean

Les médecins pensent que la rougeole réapparaît
Doctors think that measles is coming back

La jungle est un endroit dangereux
The jungle is a dangerous place

La peur de prendre l'avion le retient en Grande Bretagne
Fear of flying keeps him in Britain

This contrasts with English which more often than not uses no article when a general class or an abstract quality are indicated:

Pigs are quite clean by nature
Fear of flying keeps him in Great Britain

The definite article is obligatory in French in these cases.

2.2.1 Fused forms of the definite article
Definite articles fuse with preceding de or à:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>du (de + le)</td>
<td>de the pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de l'effort</td>
<td>de the effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>des (de + les)</td>
<td>de the spices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aux (à + les)</td>
<td>at the school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such contraction is only possible with articles, however. It is not possible when le, la, les are pronouns (see Chapter 3.2): J'ai essayé de le comprendre T tried to understand it' (NOT *J'ai essayé du comprendre).

An archaic contraction of en les to es is still found in the set phrase: licencié es lettres 'Bachelor of Arts'.

2.2.2 Use of the definite article with names of countries, regions, départements
In French the definite article is normally used with the names of countries, regions and départements, whereas in English it is not:

La France est un très beau pays
France is a very beautiful country

Progressivement, la Champagne est devenue terre de rencontre et de conflits
Over time, Champagne (a French region) became a land of meetings and confrontations

Ramassage de coquillages interdit dans le Calvados
Shellfish fishing banned in Calvados (a French département)

When en 'to/in' or de 'from' are used with feminine countries or regions (or with masculine countries beginning with a vowel: en Irak), the definite article is omitted:

Nous irons en France l'année prochaine
We shall go to France next year

des pommes de Normandie
apples from Normandy
26 Determiners

des vacances en Ille-et-Vilaine

holidays in Ille-et-Vilaine

But with masculine countries, regions and départements, the definite article is retained with à 'to/in', dans 'in' and de 'from':

Les hôtels au Mexique sont d'un très bon niveau

The hotels in Mexico are of a very high standard

J'ai acheté une maison dans le Finistère

7 have bought a house in Finistère

des pommes du Calvados

apples from Calvados

(For the gender of countries see Chapter 1.2.6, and for the use of en, à, dans see Chapter 13.26.1.)

2.2.3 Use of the definite article with names of languages

The names of languages in English start with a capital letter and have no article. The names of languages in French start with a small letter, normally have a definite article and are masculine in gender:

Ici les étudiants étudient le français, l'allemand et l'italien

Here students study French, German and Italian

Le grec possède un alphabet tout à fait différent du nôtre

Greek has an alphabet which is quite different from our own

In the expressions parler français, parler allemand, etc., the name of the language functions more like an adverbial than a noun, so no article is used. But note the following contrast:

Je parle français /Je parle souvent le français /Je parle bien le français

I speak French/I often speak French/I speak French well

When adverbs like souvent, bien are present, français becomes a noun again, requiring the definite article.

2.2.4 Use of the definite article with seasons

Seasons in French are usually accompanied by a definite article, except when they are preceded by en:

L'hiver est une saison de repos pour nous

Winter is a restful season for us

L'été nous réserve parfois des surprises mais à l'automne le temps est toujours plus prévisible

Summer sometimes has some surprises in store for us, but autumn weather is always more predictable

Tout se réveille au printemps

Everything awakes in spring

BUT

en hiver in winter
en été in summer
en automne in autumn

(See also Chapter 13.26.1.)
2.2.5 Use of the definite article with titles

Titles in French prefaced by Monsieur or Madame include the definite article:

- Monsieur le Maire  
  Mr Mayor
- Madame le Maire  
  Madam Mayor
- Monsieur le Président-Directeur-Général  
  Mr Chairman

Such forms of address as: Monsieur le Directeur des Achats 'Mr Purchasing Director', Madame le Directeur du Personnel 'Madam Personnel Director' are frequent in French in writing (e.g. letters) or in very formal speeches, but almost unheard of in English.

The definite article is similarly present in French in greetings or expressions of encouragement like:

- Salut les gars!  
  Hi, guys!
- Allez les bleus!  
  Come on, you blues!
- Au lit, les enfants!  
  Off to bed, kids!

With kings and queens, however, French leaves out an article with numbers where English puts one in:

- François I (François premier)  
  François the first
- Henri III (Henri trois)  
  Henry the third
- Elizabeth I (Elizabeth première)  
  Elizabeth the first
- Elizabeth II (Elizabeth deux)  
  Elizabeth the second

(See also Chapter 6.4.2.)

2.2.6 Use of the definite article with superlatives

In superlatives involving adjectives which follow the noun (see Chapter 4.12.2), it is compulsory to repeat the definite article, which then agrees with the noun:

- Le moment le plus intense de ma vie  
  The most exciting moment of my life
- Les virages les plus dangereux de la région  
  The most dangerous bends in the region

2.2.7 Use of the definite article with quantities

Where English uses 'so much a pound', French refers to tant la livre/le kilo, etc.:

- Les pommes? C'est 4,50 F le kilo  
  Apples? They are 4.50 francs a kilo
- Les bonbons sont à 5,40 F les 100 grammes  
  Sweets are 5.40 francs for a 100 grammes
- Ces chaises sont vendues à 500 F la pièce (or 500 F pièce)  
  These chairs are sold for 500 francs each

2.2.8 Use of the definite article with parts of the body

(a) In simple descriptions of body parts, French uses a definite article where English uses a possessive determiner (e.g. his, my, their):

- Il a les yeux bleus  
  His eyes are blue
- Elle a les cheveux coupés court  
  She has her hair cut short
(b) When people activate parts of their own bodies, French also uses a definite article with the body part:

- Il a plissé les yeux  
- Elle a agité le bras  
- J’ai baissé la tête en y entrant  
- Elle a hoché / secoué la tête

He screwed up his eyes  
She waved  
I lowered my head as I went in  
She nodded/shook her head

(c) When people do things which affect their own bodies, or those of others, the usual construction is a definite article in front of the body part, and a reflexive or indirect object pronoun:

- Je me suis fracturé la jambe  
- Elle s’est fait couper les cheveux  
- Je lui serre la main  
- On lui a coupé la tête  
- Elle lui essuie les yeux avec un mouchoir

I broke my leg  
She had her hair cut  
I shake his hand  
They cut his head off  
She wipes his eyes with a handkerchief

These constructions are also possible with a possessive determiner, as in English, however:

- Je prends sa main  
- Elle caresse mes cheveux  
- J’appuie mes deux mains sur sa poitrine

I take her hand  
She strokes my hair  
I press with both my hands on his chest

(d) When body parts are the subject of a sentence, they usually have a possessive determiner, as in English, rather than a definite article:

- Mon coeur s’est arrêté une fraction de seconde  
- Ma tête me fait mal  
- Ses paupières se sont abaissées  
- Leurs regards se sont croisés

My heart stopped for an instant  
My head hurts  
His eyelids lowered  
Their eyes met

(e) When descriptions of parts of the body or items of clothing are used adverbially, they are accompanied by the definite article:

- l’homme au nez retroussé  
- le comédien au chapeau de paille  
- Il parlait, le sourire aux lèvres

the man with the turned-up nose  
the actor in the straw hat  
He spoke, with a smile

- Elle est partie, les mains dans les poches  
- Il s’est agenouillé, le chapeau à la main  
- Il a avoué son crime, les yeux abaissés

She left with her hands in her pockets  
He knelt down with his hat in his hands  
He confessed his crime, looking down

2.2.9 Singular or plural when a number of individuals have one item each

When reference is made to one body part, one item of clothing, or one more general personal attribute, but two or more people are involved, the entity is usually referred to in the singular:
Typical use of the indefinite article

Nous nous sommes tous les deux cassés le bras
We both broke our arms
Ils ont levé la main droite
They raised their right hands
Les étudiants sont priés d’inscrire leur nom de famille à l’endroit prévu
Students are requested to write their surnames in the space provided
Ils ont tous accroché leur manteau dans l’entrée
They all hung their coats up in the entrance hall
Les jumeaux ont vécu leur vie d’une manière indépendante
The twins lived their lives independently

2.2.10 Use of the definite article to indicate a habitual action
Where English uses 'on + ... day(s)' to indicate a habitual action e.g. 'On Monday(s) I go to the market', French uses the definite article: Je vais faire mon marché le lundi:

Nous allons au cinéma le vendredi soir
We go to the cinema on Friday evenings
Le cours d’histoire a lieu le mercredi
The history lecture is on Wednesdays
Ils viennent ramasser les poubelles le lundi et le jeudi
They come to empty the dustbins on Mondays and Thursdays

2.2.11 Repetition of the definite article
In French the article usually has to be repeated with each noun, whereas in English one use at the beginning of a 'list' is enough:

Je dois ramener chez moi le fer à repasser, la planche à repasser et la corbeille à papiers
I must take home with me the iron, ironing board and waste-paper basket

2.3 Typical use of the indefinite article
(a) One use of the indefinite article is to introduce a new, countable, concrete noun (maison, tableau, livre, voiture, etc.) into the discourse:

Je me suis trouvé une belle maison en Ecosse
I have found myself a lovely house in Scotland
Voulez-vous voir un Picasso?
Do you want to see a Picasso?

(b) Another is to describe a general class of countable, concrete entities:

Normalement une voiture a quatre roues et une moto en a deux
Normally a car has four wheels and a motorbike two
Il s’agit là d’une erreur caractéristique d’un étudiant de première année
That’s an example of a typical error made by a first year student

In this 'generic' use, the indefinite article is usually interchangeable with a plural definite article:

Normalement les voitures ont quatre roues et les motos en ont deux
Il s’agit là d’une erreur caractéristique des étudiants de première année (de + definite article les)
(c) **Abstract nouns** (courage, beauté, réalisme, importance, etc.) are normally accompanied by the definite article (see Chapter 1.1.1). But when they are modified by an adjective they take an indefinite article. Compare:

- **Il admire le courage**  
  *He admires courage*
- **Il a fait preuve d’un courage peu ordinaire**  
  *He showed extraordinary courage*
- **La beauté du paysage nous étonnait**  
  *The beauty of the countryside astonished us*
- **Le paysage était d’une beauté étonnante**  
  *The countryside was astonishingly beautiful*

### 2.3.1 The plural indefinite article *des*

The plural indefinite article *des* refers to an unspecified quantity of entities described by a plural count noun. In English the article is most frequently omitted:

- **Je lui ai offert des roses**  
  *I gave her roses*
- **Les places avaient déjà été réservées par des Américains**  
  *The seats had already been reserved by Americans*
- **Vous me posez des questions impossibles**  
  *You ask me impossible questions*

**NB:** An error often made by English speakers is to omit the article; plural indefinite *des* cannot be omitted in French: NOT *Je lui ai offert roses.*

### 2.3.2 Omission of plural indefinite *des* after the preposition *de*

When the plural indefinite article is preceded by the preposition *de*, it is omitted in French. Compare:

- **Elle a été accusée d’un meurtre particulièrement horrible**  
  *She was accused of a particularly nasty murder*
- **Elle a été accusée de meurtres particulièrement horribles**  
  *(être accusé de + des meurtres horribles)*  
  *She was accused of particularly nasty murders*
- **Avec l’aide d’une amie, elle a fini son projet**  
  *With the help of a friend, she finished her project*
- **Avec l’aide d’amies, elle a fini son projet**  
  *(avec l’aide de + des amies)*  
  *With the help of friends, she finished her project*

Omission of plural indefinite article *des* only occurs after the preposition *de*. With other prepositions it is not omitted:

- **Elle est sortie avec des amies**  
  *She went out with friends*
  
  *des attaques violentes contre des policiers*  
  *violent attacks on policemen*

**Because plural indefinite *des* is omitted after the preposition *de*, this means that**
it is omitted when it is the complement of a number of verbs which are always followed by the preposition *de* (see Chapter 8.4):

\[\text{Il a déjeuné de fruits} \quad \text{His lunch consisted of fruit} \]
\[\text{(versus Il a mangé des fruits)} \]
\[\text{Elle parlait de choses oubliées depuis longtemps} \quad \text{She spoke of things long since forgotten} \]
\[\text{(versus Elle décrivait des choses oubliées depuis longtemps)} \]

Plural indefinite *des* is also omitted after many quantifiers (see Chapter 6.9) or quantifier-like expressions which incorporate the preposition *de*:

\[\text{Il y a un bon nombre de participants au tournoi} \quad \text{There are a good many participants at the tournament} \]
\[\text{Un kilo de cerises, s'il vous plaît} \quad \text{A kilo of cherries, please} \]
\[\text{Beaucoup de personnes ont déjà remarqué ton absence} \quad \text{Many people have already noticed your absence} \]
\[\text{J'ai déjà entendu assez d'excuses de ta part; je n'en accepterai plus} \quad \text{I have heard enough excuses from you; I won't accept any more} \]
\[\text{Où as-tu mis la boîte de sardines?} \quad \text{Where did you put the tin of sardines?} \]

**Exceptions:** *bien des* 'many', *encore des* 'still more':

\[\text{Bien des personnes ont déjà remarqué ton absence} \quad \text{Many people have already noticed your absence} \]
\[\text{J'ai encore des questions à vous poser} \quad \text{I still have more questions to ask you} \]

**2.3.3 Comparing the use of plural indefinite article *des* with preposition *de* + definite article *les***

Compare the use of the plural indefinite article and the plural definite article in similar contexts:

\[\text{Elle mangeait des coquillages} \quad \text{She was eating shellfish} \]
\[\text{Elle mangeait les coquillages qu'elle avait achetés au marché} \quad \text{She was eating the shellfish she had bought in the market} \]

When the highlighted expressions follow the preposition *de*, *des* is deleted (2.3.2), but *de* + *les* becomes *des* (2.2.1):

\[\text{Elle déjeunait de coquillages} \quad \text{She dined on shellfish} \]
\[\text{Elle déjeunait des coquillages qu'elle avait achetés au marché} \quad \text{She dined on the shellfish which she had bought in the market} \]

Thus *des* can be either a plural indefinite article corresponding to English 'some' or no article, or a plural definite article fused with the preposition *de*.

Note the following contrasts with quantifiers:
Beaucoup de personnes (indefinite) trouvent cela difficile  
*Many people find that difficult*

Beaucoup des personnes (definite) à qui nous avons parlé trouvent cela difficile  
*Many of the people to whom we spoke find that difficult*

Un kilo de cerises, s’il vous plaît  
*A kilo of cherries, please*

Un kilo des cerises espagnoles, s’il vous plaît  
*A kilo of the Spanish cherries, please*

### 2.3.4 *d’autres and des autres*

A contrast which English speakers often find difficult is between *d’autres* and *des autres*, *d’autres* 'other(s)' is an indefinite expression which is not accompanied by the plural indefinite article *des:*

Dans son article, elle a présenté d’autres idées (NOT *des autres idées*)  
*In her article, she presented other ideas*

D’autres (NOT *des autres*) auraient agi différemment  
*Others would have acted differently*

J’en ai vu d’autres (NOT *des autres*)  
*I saw others*

*des autres* is only used where *des* is the fused form of preposition *de* and the definite article *les* of *les autres* 'the others':

Elle parlait des autres projets qu’elle dirige  
*She spoke of the other projects she directs*

Je ne me rappelle rien des autres jours de ce mois  
*I remember nothing of the other days of that month*

NB: This is a case where a change appears to be in progress. In spoken French *des autres* is often generalized to all these contexts.

### 2.3.5 The use of de when an adjective precedes the noun

When an adjective precedes the noun, it is customary, at least in written French, to use *de* and not *des:*

Je lui ai offert de jolies roses  
*I gave her pretty roses*

De gros miroirs comme ça, on n’en voit plus beaucoup  
*You don’t see many large mirrors like that any more*

NB: This does not apply when the adjective and the noun are joined in a compound noun or something which is seen as a single unit: *des jeunes gens, des jeunes filles, des petits pois, des petites annonces, des grands magasins, des grands jours.*

### 2.4 The partitive article: *du, de l’, de la, des*

The partitive article *du, de l’, de la, des* is used with mass nouns in French where English uses ‘some’ or no article at all:

Il charriait du bois pour son voisin  
*He carted wood about for his neighbour*
Indefinite and partitive articles after negative forms

Vous auriez dû acheter du lait en même temps
You ought to have bought some milk at the same time

Avec de l'ail ça aurait encore meilleur goût
It would taste even better with garlic!

Il me manque de l'argent
I'm lacking funds

The partitive article is also used with abstract nouns like courage, beauté, patience, silence when these qualities are attributed to people or things:

Il faut avoir de la patience avec les enfants
You must be patient with children

Elle a de l'intelligence à revendre
She is really intelligent

Vos enfants ont de la malice
Your children are mischievous

When a partitive article follows the preposition de it is deleted, just as plural indefinite des is deleted (see 2.3.2):

beaucoup de bois  a lot of wood
une bouteille de lait  a bottle of milk
une tête d'ail  a bulb of garlic
J'ai besoin d'argent  I need money

1A.1 Use of faire + partitive: faire du/de la
Many constructions exist with faire + noun, introduced by the partitive:

Faire du sport  To take part in sport
Faire du basket  To play basketball
Faire du piano  To play the piano
Faire de la politique  To go in for politics
Faire du bien (à quelqu'un)  To do good (to somebody)
Faire du mal (à quelqu'un)  To do harm (to somebody)

2.5 Use of indefinite and partitive articles after the negative forms ne ... pas, ne ... jamais, ne ... plus, ne ... guère

After ne ... pas, ne ... jamais, ne ... plus, ne ... guère, any indefinite article (un, une, des) or partitive article (du, de V, de la, des) accompanying a direct object normally becomes de:

Elle n'a pas écrit de lettre
She didn't write a letter

Nous ne vendons pas de chaussettes
We don't sell socks

Elle ne porte jamais de casque
She never wears a helmet

Pourquoi ne peut-on jamais acheter de vêtements d'hiver au printemps?
Why can you never buy winter clothes in spring?

Je n'ai plus de crayon
I don't have a pencil any more
Determiners

Il n'a plus de médicaments
He doesn't have any more medication

Il n'y a guère de visiteurs
There are hardly any visitors

There are three cases where this does not apply:

(a) when a contrast is made between a negative and a positive direct object:

Je ne veux pas des chaussettes mais des chaussures
I don't want socks, but shoes

Je n'ai pas un cours de grammaire mais un cours d'histoire
I haven't got a grammar class but a history class

(b) after the verb être:

Ce n'est pas un oiseau
It isn't a bird

(c) when the meaning is 'not a (single) one' rather than 'not a':

On n'entendait pas un bruit dehors
We couldn't hear a single noise outside

2.6 Omission of the article

There are a number of cases where no article is used in French.

2.6.1 Omission of the article in compound nouns linked by à

In compound nouns linked by à, there is usually no article in front of the second noun:

- une brosse à dents  a toothbrush
- un couteau à pain  a bread knife
- une corbeille à papier  a waste-paper basket
- une cuillère à café  a tea (coffee) spoon
- une planche à roulettes  a skateboard
- une planche à voile  a sailboard
- une tasse à café  a coffee cup
- une tasse à thé  a tea cup
- un verre à vin  a wine glass
- un verre à pied  a stemmed glass

2.6.2 Omission of the article in noun constructions linked by de

The article is frequently omitted before the second noun in noun + noun constructions linked by de, where the second noun functions like an adjective (and is often translated into English as an adjective):

- une ambassade de France  a French embassy
- une carte de visite  a visiting card
- une carte de France  a map of France
- un billet de bus  a bus ticket
- un arrêt de bus  a bus stop
- un tableau d'affichage  a notice board
- une question d'argent  a question of money
- une affaire de coeur  a matter of the heart
- un problème de liquidité  a cash-flow problem
- une salle de classe  a classroom
Omission of the article

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une salle de bains  a bathroom
une agence de voyages  a travel agent/agency
un verre de vin  a glass of wine
une tasse de thé  a cup of tea
une tasse de café  a cup of coffee

But note that when the second noun is modified (by an adjective or a clause, for example) it becomes definite, and a definite article appears:

une carte de la France métropolitaine
a map of mainland France

Il va être question de l'argent que je t'ai prêté
There'll be a discussion about the money I lent you

un arrêt du bus no 25
a stop for the number 25 bus

2.6.3 Omission of the article in participle + noun constructions linked by de

The article is omitted after de in participle + noun constructions where the participle functions as an adjective:

couvert de boue  covered with mud
rempli de rancune  filled with rancour
dépourvu de sens  lacking any meaning
comblé de bonheur  overwhelmed with happiness
entouré d'imbéciles  surrounded by idiots

2.6.4 Omission of the article after sans, avec, en, sur, sous, par, ni ... ni

The article is frequently omitted when a noun alone follows sans, avec, en, sur, sous, par, or two nouns alone appear in the expression ni . . . ni:

sans arrêt  continuously
sans difficulté  without difficulty
sans délai  without delay
sans sucre  without sugar
sans manche  with no handle
avec patience  with patience
avec difficulté  with difficulty
en colère  angry
en guerre  at war
en réparation  being repaired
en théorie  in theory
en marbre  in marble
sur commande  by order
sous verre  under glass
sous pression  under pressure
deux fois par semaine  twice a week
par pitié  out of pity
Il ne portait ni chapeau  He was wearing neither a hat
ni cravate  nor a tie

(For ne ... ni. . . ni see Chapter 16.14.)
Determiners

But if the noun is modified (for example by an adjective) the article is not omitted:

- sans la moindre difficulté: without the least difficulty
- sans même le plus petit retard: without even the slightest delay
- avec une patience admirable: with admirable patience
- sous la pression du gouvernement: under pressure from the government

NB: *en* cannot normally co-occur with an article. When an article is required, the preposition changes to *dans*:

- en théorie BUT dans la théorie d'Einstein: *in theory* in Einstein's theory
- en pratique BUT dans la pratique: *in practice*

2.6.5 Omission of the article in set phrases and verbal constructions

- avoir besoin (de): to need
- avoir envie (de): to desire
- avoir peur: to be afraid
- avoir raison: to be right
- chercher noise (à): to try and pick a quarrel (with)
- demander pardon: to ask for forgiveness
- donner congé (à): to sack
- faire attention: to pay attention
- garder rancune (à): to bear a grudge (against)
- prendre fait et cause (pour): to defend
- rendre justice (à): to be fair (to)
- rendre service: to help
- tenir parole: to keep one's word

2.6.6 Omission of the article with nouns in apposition

When proper nouns are juxtaposed with common nouns which identify them, the common nouns are said to be in apposition. In such cases the article is usually omitted:

- Versailles, palais de Louis XIV et son entourage
  *Versailles, the palace of Louis XIV and his court*
- Juliette Lagrange, concierge, cherchait un nouveau poste
  *Juliette Lagrange, caretaker, was looking for a new job*
- Chantai, fille de dentiste, a annoncé son mariage avec Jean-Michel, fils de médecin
  *Chantai, a dentist's daughter, has announced her marriage to Jean-Michel, a doctor's son*
- Le Bergerac, vin de qualité, est vendu dans toute l'Europe
  *Bergerac, a quality wine, is sold throughout Europe*

But when the common noun is modified, for example by an adjective, the article is not omitted:

- Chantai, la fille ainée du dentiste, . . .
- Versailles, le célèbre palais de Louis XIV . . .
2.6.7 Omission of the article with nouns following the verbs être, demeurer, devenir, élire, nommer, rester

When a noun alone follows the verbs être 'be', demeurer 'stay', devenir 'become', élire 'elect', nommer 'appoint', rester 'stay', the article is omitted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sa mère est ingénieur</td>
<td>Her mother is an engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il est devenu architecte très tôt</td>
<td>He became an architect early on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle est restée maire de la commune</td>
<td>She remained mayor of the village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On l’a élu président</td>
<td>He was elected president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre a été nommé Directeur des Achats</td>
<td>Pierre was appointed Purchasing Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But when the noun is modified, for example by an adjective, the article is not omitted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depuis, il est devenu un architecte innovateur</td>
<td>Since then, he has become an innovatory architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre a été nommé le premier Directeur des Achats</td>
<td>Pierre was appointed as the first Purchasing Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6.8 Omission of the article in lists

In lists of nouns the article is frequently omitted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hommes, femmes et enfants sont tous invités à la fête</td>
<td>Men, women and children are all invited to the party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’ai acheté pommes de terre, tomates, courgettes, prune et navets chez le même marchand de primeurs</td>
<td>I bought potatoes, tomatoes, courgettes, plums and turnips at the same greengrocer’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Either all the articles are omitted (as in these examples) or they are all included (see 2.2.11).

2.7 Demonstrative determiners

TABLE 2.B Summary table of demonstrative determiners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proximate</th>
<th>Non-proximate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>masc</td>
<td>ce, cet</td>
<td>ce, cet ... ci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>this, that</td>
<td>this ... (here)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ce, cet ... là</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>that ... (here)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fern</td>
<td>cette</td>
<td>cette ... ci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>this, that</td>
<td>this ... (here)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cet ... là</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>that ... (here)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plur</td>
<td>ces</td>
<td>ces ... ci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>these, those</td>
<td>these ... (here)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ces ... là</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>those ... (there)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Masculine cet appears only when the demonstrative determiner immediately precedes a noun or adjective beginning with a vowel or a 'silent h' (h muet) (see 2.1.1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cet enfant</td>
<td>this child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cet ancien marin</td>
<td>that ex-sailor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cet héroïsme</td>
<td>that heroism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Determiners

2.7.1 Typical use of demonstrative determiners

Demonstrative determiners imply a contrast between the entity referred to by the noun they accompany and other entities of a similar type:

Cette voiture a fait le tour du monde
This car has been around the world

(The car referred to is implicitly contrasted with other cars which haven't been around the world.)

A cet instant, la porte s'est brusquement refermée derrière eux
At that moment the door suddenly closed behind them

(The moment referred to is implicitly contrasted with other moments when the door didn't close.)

Note that ce, cet/cette translate both 'this' and 'that', ces translates both 'these' and 'those'. The form -ci can be added to the noun accompanied by ce, etc., to stress proximity in space or time. Proximity in English is part of the meaning of 'this', but it can also be emphasized by stressing 'this' or sometimes by adding 'here' after the noun:

Cette voiture-ci a fait le tour du monde
This car here has been around the world

Ce mois-ci je ne peux pas vous payer
This month I can't pay you

The form là can be added to the noun accompanied by ce, etc., to stress non-proximity in space or time. Non-proximity in English is part of the meaning of 'that', but it can also be emphasized by stressing 'that' or sometimes by adding 'there' after the noun:

Cette année-là nous ne sommes pas allés à la mer
That year we did not go to the sea

Ce matin-là, je m'étais réveillé très tard
That morning I had woken up very late

-ci and -là are necessary if a comparison is made between 'this X' and 'that X':

Est-ce que vous préférez cette voiture-ci ou cette voiture-là?
Do you prefer this car or that car?
2.8 Possessive determiners

TABLE 2.C Summary table of possessive determiners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First person</th>
<th>masc</th>
<th>mon</th>
<th>my</th>
<th>notre</th>
<th>our</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fem</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>my</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plur</td>
<td>mes</td>
<td>my</td>
<td></td>
<td>nos</td>
<td>our</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second person</th>
<th>masc</th>
<th>ton</th>
<th>your</th>
<th>votre</th>
<th>your</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fem</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>your</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plur</td>
<td>tes</td>
<td>your</td>
<td></td>
<td>vos</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third person</th>
<th>masc</th>
<th>son</th>
<th>his, her, its</th>
<th>leur</th>
<th>his, her, its</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fem</td>
<td>sa</td>
<td>his, her, its</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plur</td>
<td>ses</td>
<td>his, her, its</td>
<td>leurs</td>
<td>their</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possessive determiners agree in gender and number with the nouns they precede:

Elle a levé son verre  
Il a rempli sa tasse  
Il a cassé ses lunettes

She raised her (or his) glass  
He filled his (or her) cup  
He broke his (or her) glasses

The feminine singular forms ma, ta, sa become mon, ton, son when they immediately precede a noun or adjective beginning with a vowel or 'silent h' (h muet) (see 2.1.1):

ma classe my class BUT mon école my school
sa permission her permission BUT son approbation her approval
ta hardiesse your audacity BUT ton hésitation your hesitation

The determiners votre, vos can both be used to refer to more than one possessor:

Messieurs et mesdames, votre table est prête
Ladies and gentlemen, your table is ready

and as a polite form:

Suivez-moi, monsieur, votre table est prête
Follow me, sir, your table is ready

(For the use of the definite article rather than possessive determiners with parts of the body see 2.2.8.)

(For the use of a singular determiner when a single item is possessed by more than one person see 2.2.9.)
3. Personal and impersonal pronouns

3.1 Subject pronouns

**TABLE 3.A Summary table of subject pronouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person</td>
<td>je, I</td>
<td>nous, we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person</td>
<td>tu, you</td>
<td>vous, you (pl.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person</td>
<td>il, elle, on</td>
<td>ils, elles, they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masculine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-specific</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>ce, cela, ça</td>
<td>it, that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impersonal</td>
<td>il, ce, cela, ça</td>
<td>it, that, there</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.1 Position of subject pronouns

In declarative sentences, subject pronouns normally appear immediately before the verb which carries the tense:

- Nous voulons voir le directeur
- We want to see the manager
- Tu comprends vite
- You catch on quick
- Elle a servi le vin chambré
- She served the wine at room temperature

They can only be separated from this verb by the *ne* of negation, and by other pre-verbal pronouns:

- Elle ne prend pas de café
- She's not having any coffee
- Tu Tas mangé
- You ate it
Unlike in English, subject pronouns cannot normally be separated from the verb by adverbials or parenthetical expressions:

NOT  
\[ \text{Je souvent dîne avec Laura} \]
\[ I\text{ often dine with Laura} \]

NOT  
\[ \text{Il, paraît-il, ne prend pas de café} \]
\[ He, it seems, isn’t having coffee \]

versus the grammatical  
\[ \text{Je dîne souvent avec Laura, Il ne prend pas de café, paraît-il.} \]

In direct questions involving inversion (see Chapter 14.2.3), subject pronouns appear immediately after the verb which carries the tense:

Sait-il nager?  
Can he swim?
Est-elle arrivée?  
Has she arrived?
Ont-ils mangé?  
Have they eaten?

(For the formation of direct questions, see Chapter 14.2.)

When subject pronouns follow the verb in this way nothing else can intervene:

Ne le croyez-vous pas?  
Don’t you believe it?
Ne le lui avez-vous pas donné?  
Didn’t you give it to him?
Dînent-ils souvent ensemble?  
Do they often dine together?

3.1.2 The use of vous and tu

\textit{vous} can have two functions: to address more than one person, and as a polite form of address to one person when there is a certain ‘social distance’ between the speaker and the addressee, \textit{tu} is used only to address one person when there is no social distance between speaker and addressee.

In its plural use, \textit{vous} refers simply to more than one addressee, whether social intimates or not:

\textit{Vous voulez aller au match dimanche?}
\textit{Do you want to go to the match this Sunday?} 
(e.g. several friends discussing where to go)

\textit{Vous allez me refaire ce devoir}
\textit{You lot are going to have to do this homework again} 
(e.g. a teacher talking to a class)

When one person is being addressed it is difficult to give hard and fast rules about when to use \textit{tu} and when to use the polite \textit{vous}. Generally, one can say that the non-native speaker would be well advised to use \textit{vous} from the outset, and to allow the native speaker to take the initiative about any change to \textit{tu}. The following table (Table 3.B) illustrates some uses of \textit{tu} and polite \textit{vous}, but it is not possible to give an exhaustive list of such usage. Individual speakers may vary in their own preferences for use of \textit{tu} or polite \textit{vous}, and that
usage may vary regionally (for example, it is often said that *tu* is used more readily in the south of France than it is in the north).

**TABLE 3.B Examples of the use of *tu* and polite *vous***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Typical usage by two speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult strangers meeting for the first time in formal contexts: e.g. business meetings, interviews, dealing with state administration and services.</td>
<td>Both use <em>vous</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults meeting in informal contexts: e.g. neighbours, socializing, shopping.</td>
<td>Initially both use <em>vous</em>, but with continued contact it is likely that they will change to <em>tu</em>, especially with young adults (under 40).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional superior and inferior</td>
<td>Generally both use <em>vous</em>, but in some organizations the inferior may use <em>vous</em> and the superior <em>tu</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional equals</td>
<td>Both use <em>tu</em>, but older speakers (50-ish or over) may use <em>vous</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate family</td>
<td>Both use <em>tu</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant relatives: e.g. second cousins, great aunts/uncles, etc.</td>
<td>Both use <em>tu</em>, but there is a tendency to use <em>vous</em> when older family members are involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Typically <em>tu</em> but older speakers (50-ish or over) may use <em>vous</em>. This does not necessarily indicate less warmth in the friendship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults to young children</td>
<td>Adults use <em>tu</em> to young children up to early adolescence. When very young they will respond with <em>tu</em>, but as they grow older they are expected to learn when and where <em>vous</em> is required of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and pupils</td>
<td>Teachers typically use <em>tu</em> to children under 14 and <em>vous</em> to older pupils, but some teachers continue to use <em>tu</em>, either to express power over their pupils, or solidarity with them. The younger the teacher, the greater the likelihood that <em>tu</em> will be used. Pupils typically use <em>vous</em> to teachers, occasionally <em>tu</em>. Under tens are rarely expected to say <em>vous</em> to their teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Both use <em>tu</em> from the first meeting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1.3 'Marked' use of tu

Certain social sub-groups have their own internal norms for the use of tu and polite vous. For example, in sports teams, in left-wing political parties, and in trade unions, tu is the generalized form of address.

There are also a number of contexts where the expected use of polite vous between speakers is not met, and the actual pronoun form used is tu. For example, a stranger approaching you in the street and using the tu form, where normally vous is expected, may create the impression of an unwanted degree of intimacy; or it may indicate arrogance or contempt. Other examples of such 'marked' use are:

In street altercations, e.g. between motorists. The effect produced is one of insult.

Police interrogating suspects use the tu form, but suspects are expected to reciprocate with the vous form. The effect produced is one of domination.

As a special case of the use of tu, Protestants have always addressed God with the tu form, but Catholics have only done so since 1967; before that 'He' was addressed with the vous form.

3.1.4 Use of ils and elles

The third person pronouns il/ils and elle/elles normally refer to people and things (both concrete and abstract) and the choice of which one to use is usually determined by the grammatical person, gender and number of the noun referred to:

Qu'est-ce qu'il fait, le facteur? Il est en retard
What's the postman up to? He's late

Il est intéressant, ce livre
That book's interesting

Où est la directrice? Elle est en réunion
Where's the headmistress? She's in a meeting

Elle est intéressante, cette émission
That programme's interesting

Il n'y a plus d'abricots. Ils sont finis
There are no more apricots. They're finished

Elles sont dangereuses, ces falaises
These cliffs are dangerous

3.1.5 Grammatical and real gender

With a handful of nouns, the real gender (sex) of the person referred to may determine the choice of third person pronouns il/ils or elle/elles. For example, victime, recrue, sentinelle are grammatically feminine nouns, but not all 'victims', 'recruits' or 'sentries' are necessarily female: mannequin, recteur, conseiller municipal are grammatically masculine nouns, but not all 'models', 'university Vice-Chancellors' or 'town councillors' are necessarily male. In such cases the real gender of the person referred to normally determines the choice of il/ils or elle/elles:

Nous avons fait une nouvelle recrue. Il va se joindre à nous ce soir
We have gained a new recruit. He will join us this evening
C'est une femme qui a été nommée recteur de l'université. Elle n'a que 42 ans
A woman has been appointed as Vice-Chancellor of the university. She is only 42

3.1.6 Grammatical and real number
With grammatically singular nouns that refer to more than one person or thing, the choice of pronoun is normally singular *il* or *elle*:

Quant au gouvernement, il ne prendra jamais les mesures qui s'imposent
As for the government, they will never take the necessary steps

Le comité va-t-il élire un nouveau président?
Will the committee elect a new chairperson?

En ce qui concerne l'équipe française, on peut dire qu'elle est en grande forme en ce moment
As for the French team, they are currently on top form

For collective nouns see Chapter 1.1.3.

3.1.7 Pronouns referring to groups of mixed gender
When a group (of people or things) of mixed gender is referred to, *Us* is the pronoun used. Compare:

Le directeur, son frère et son neveu? Ils sont tous les trois démissionnaires
The director, his brother and his nephew? All three are resigning

Louise, sa fille et sa petite-fille étaient dans la voiture. Elles sont toutes les trois mortes dans l'accident
Louise, her daughter and her granddaughter were in the car. All three died in the accident

with:

Louise, sa fille et son petit-fils étaient dans la voiture. Ils sont tous les trois morts dans l'accident
Louise, her daughter and her grandson were in the car. All three died in the accident

3.1.8 ils with arbitrary reference
Plural *Us* may be used to refer to an indefinite or arbitrary group of people:

Ils ont encore augmenté le prix de l'essence
They have put the price of petrol up again

Ils disent qu'il va y avoir de l'orage
They say that there will be a storm

Comment votent-ils par ici?
How do they vote around here?

3.1.9 Coordination of subject pronouns
When clauses containing unstressed subject pronouns are coordinated by *et*, *ou* or *ne ... ni*, the second pronoun may be deleted:

Elle se réveille et (elle) regarde l'horloge
She wakes up and looks at the clock

Je ne lis ni (je) n'écris à présent
I am neither reading nor "writing at the moment

When the verb is accompanied by auxiliary *avoir* or *être*, if the subject pronoun is deleted, the auxiliary must be too:
3.1.10 Use of on

on can refer to a person or people whose identity is not really known:

On dit que la première année de mariage est la plus difficile
_People say that the first year of marriage is the most difficult_

C’est une région où l’on continue de mourir davantage de maladies de cœur que du cancer
_In an area where more people continue to die from heart disease than from cancer_

On n’en fabrique plus
_They don’t make them any more_

On m’a volé tout mon argent
_Someone stole all my money_

3.1.11 on as an alternative to the English passive

A construction with on can often be used where a passive is used in English:

On croyait la crise du logement définitivement réglée
_The housing shortage was definitely thought to be over_

On ne soupçonne guère le véritable rôle économique joué par les enfants
_The real economic role that children play is thoroughly underestimated_

On sait qu’il a eu des démêlés avec la police, mais on ne sait pas pourquoi
_It is well known that he was once in trouble with the police, but it is not known why_

(For the passive see Chapter 8.6.)

3.1.12 on as an equivalent for English 'you'

on can sometimes be used where English uses 'you' and French could use vous or tu:

Est-il vrai qu’on distingue un Américain d’un Français à cent mètres?
_Is it true you can tell an American from a Frenchman at a hundred metres?_

Avec le moteur devant, on est au moins protégé
_With the engine at the front you are at least protected_

Comment savoir si on est doué pour la musique si l’on n’a jamais essayé?
_How do you know whether you have a talent for music if you’ve never tried it?_

3.1.13 on as an equivalent for nous

on can often be used as a synonym for nous:

On avait d’abord tenté l’opération inverse
_We had at first taken the opposite tack_

On sait à quelles extrémités peuvent arriver certaines personnes
_We know to what extremes some people can go_

On s’y est habitué depuis longtemps
_We have been used to it for a long time_

The use of on instead of nous is very frequent in informal spoken French:

Pourquoi on rentre pas à la maison?
_Why don’t we go home?_
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On avait chanté la Marseillaise, tu te souviens pas?
*We sang the Marseillaise, don't you remember?*

On y va?
*Shall we go?*

NB: When *on* refers to more than one person, many writers make any adjective or past participle which should indicate agreement show plural agreement. Not all native speakers agree with this. Teachers, for instance, require the masculine singular agreement to be observed.

On est tous très fatigués
*We are all very tired*

Après on est tous allés dans une boîte de nuit
*Afterwards we all went to a night-club*

3.1.14 Use of *l'on*

*l'on* is sometimes used in French for *on* when it follows a word ending in a vowel (like *et, ou, qui, que, si, etc*). This is a feature of written, rather than spoken, French:

Comment savoir si *l'on* ne demande pas?
*How can you know if you don't ask?*

Il faut savoir choisir l'homme avec qui *l'on* s'engage pour la vie
*You have to be careful choosing the man to whom you will commit your life*

The use of /' is not obligatory, however.

3.1.15 Use of *ce, cela, ça* as neutral pronouns

When *ce, cela* and *ça* are used as neutral pronouns they normally refer to events, actions, states or general classes of people or things:

Vous viendrez dîner ce soir. C'est prévu.
*Come to dinner this evening. It's all taken care of*

(c' referring to 'coming to dinner')

L'élection d'un nouveau président aura lieu en mars. Ce sera l'occasion pour le pays de s'exprimer
*The election of a new president takes place in March. The country will be able to have its say*

(ce referring to 'the election of a president')

L'extérieur, ce n'est rien. Il faudrait voir l'intérieur
*The outside is nothing. You should see the inside*

(ce referring to the 'state of the outside')

NB: *il* cannot usually be used to refer to events, actions, states or general classes.

While *ce* is normally used with *être* (see also 3.1.23), *cela* and *ça* are used with other verbs:

Partez à l'étranger. Cela vous fera du bien
*Travel abroad. It will do you good*

(cela referring to 'travelling abroad')

Ils y sont allés un peu fort. Cela risque de faire du bruit
*They went a bit far. It is likely to cause a stir*

(cela referring to 'having gone a bit far')
J'essayais pas d'être premier. Ça m'intéressait pas.
I wasn't trying to come first. It didn't interest me.
(ça referring to coming first)

cela tends to be used in written French, or for emphasizing the subject in spoken French; ça is widely used as the unstressed subject in the spoken language.

Written French:

Plus de la moitié de la population adulte d'aujourd'hui a étudié le latin à l'école. Cela montre bien le décalage entre les formations scolaires et les activités professionnelles
More than half of today's adults studied Latin at school. This clearly shows the gap that exists between school education and professional activity

3 millions de Français ne savent pas lire. Cela incite à poser des questions sur l'efficacité du système éducatif
3 million French people cannot read. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the educational system

Spoken French:

Elle est heureuse. Ça se voit
She's happy. You can tell just from looking at her

Ça lui servira de leçon
That'll teach him

3.1.16 Comparing neutral ce, cela, ça with personal Welle, il/ils, elle/elles

il/ils and elle/elles refer to people and things (both concrete and abstract), ce, cela, ça refer to events, actions, states or general classes of phenomena.

Compare:

C'est bon, le vin
Wine is good
(refers to wine in general)

Il est bon, le vin
The wine is good
(refers to a specific example of wine)

C'est lourd, cette valise
This suitcase is heavy
(implies that it is heavy to carry)

Elle est lourde, cette valise
This suitcase is heavy
(refers to the object itself)

J'adore m'occuper des enfants. C'est si câlin à cet âge-là
I love looking after children. They're so cuddly when they're that age
(ce referring to small children in general)

J'adore m'occuper de tes enfants. Ils sont si câlins
I love looking after your children. They're so cuddly
(referring to specific small children)

In informal spoken French many speakers use ça where il/ils, elle/elles are used in more formal spoken and written French:
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J'ai astiqué mes casserole. Regardez comme ça brille!
*I gave my pans a scrub. Look how shiny they are!*
Les pintades, ça couche souvent dehors
*Guinea-fowl often sleep outside*
Tu sais, ces gens-là, ça boit
*You know, those people, they like their drink*

NB: Because this usage is regarded as a feature of informal spoken French, the foreign learner should avoid using it in the written language.

3.1.17 Use of *il, ce, cela* and *ça* as impersonal pronouns

The clearest use of impersonal subject pronouns is with verbs where *il, ce, cela* and *ça* simply mark the subject position without referring to someone or something elsewhere in the conversation or text:

- *Il pleut*       *It's raining*
- *Il neige*      *It's snowing*
- *Il fait du vent* *It's windy*

C'est difficile de le joindre au téléphone
*It's difficult to reach him by phone*
C'est dommage qu'elle ne soit pas venue
*It's a pity that she didn't come*
Cela inquiète ma mère de les savoir dehors par ce temps
*It worries my mother to know that they are out in this weather*
Ça m'étonne qu'elle n'ait rien dit
*It amazes me that she said nothing*

In these cases *il, ce, cela, ça* express very little meaning (indeed, in some languages impersonal constructions are characterized by the absence of a subject, for example Spanish *Llueve* ‘(it) is raining’). This impersonal use of *il, ce, cela, ça* in French corresponds to the impersonal use of 'it', and sometimes "there' in English.

3.1.18 Impersonal subject restricted to *il*

Some impersonal verbs and verbal expressions always take impersonal subject *il* (and NOT *ce, cela* or *ça*):

Expressions of clock time do:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quelle heure est-il?</td>
<td><em>What time is it?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il est 6 heures</td>
<td><em>It's 6 o'clock</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il est midi</td>
<td><em>It's noon</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As do the related time expressions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Il est temps de, que ...</td>
<td><em>It's time to, that ...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il est tard</td>
<td><em>It's late</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Certain frequently occurring constructions also take impersonal *il*:

Il y a (quelqu'un, deux hommes à la porte)
*There is/are (somebody, two men at the door)*
Il est question de (lui interdire l'accès aux enfants)
There's talk of (stopping her seeing the children)
Il s'agit de (refaire les fondations)
It's a question of (rebuilding the foundations)
Il faut (se lever tôt le matin)
You've got to (get up early in the morning)
Il reste (des phénomènes qu'il est difficile de catégoriser)
There remain (phenomena which it is difficult to classify)
Il convient (de faire le point)
If is advisable (to take stock)
Il vaut mieux (rester chez vous)
It's better (for you to stay at home)

NB: Il s'agit de is a frequently-used impersonal construction which learners often misuse because one way of translating it into English can be as 'X is about Y', e.g. Il s'agit dans ce roman d'une jeune fille 'This novel is about a girl'. Il s'agit de can never have a personal subject, however:

NOT *Ce roman s'agit d'une jeune fille

By contrast, the verb agir 'to act' must have a personal subject:

Pierre agit de façon bizarre
Pierre is acting in a strange way
Il agit en ami
He is acting as a friend

(For impersonal verbs see also Chapter 8.8.)

3.1.19 Il/ça or ça with impersonal verbs
Some impersonal verbs and verbal expressions have il as subject in written French, but il or ça may occur in spoken French; ça is used in informal styles.

Some weather verbs behave in this way:

Il pleut, ça pleut It's raining
Il neige, ça neige It's snowing
Il gèle, ça gèle It's freezing
Il limine, ça bruine It's drizzling

Constructions not listed under 3.1.18 also behave in this way:

Il/ça se peut que la carte soit démagnétisée Perhaps the card has lost its magnetism
Il/ça n'empêche pas qu'elle ait raison That doesn't stop her from being right
Il/ça suffit de voir ce qui se passe You only have to see what's happening

3.1.20 Il/ça alternating with clauses or infinitives as subjects
Some impersonal verbs allow both il (or ça in informal spoken French) and a clause or infinitive as a subject:
SO Personal and impersonal pronouns

Il convient à ma mère que les Durand habitent à côté or
Que les Durand habitent à côté convient à ma mère
It suits my mother to have the Durands living next door

Ça me fait peur d’y aller la nuit or
D’y aller la nuit me fait peur
I am afraid to go there at night

Others:

Il/ça déplaît à Olivier de/que . . .
It displeases Oliver to/that . . .

Il/ça fait mal à Arnaud de/que . . .
It hurts Arnaud to/that . . .

Il/ça fait plaisir à Céline de/que . . .
It gives Céline pleasure to/that . . .

Il/ça va à Romain de/que . . .
It suits Romain to/that . . .

Il/ça arrive à Béatrice de/que . . .
It sometimes happens to Béatrice that . . .

Verbs of this type which have direct objects, as opposed to indirect objects introduced by à, always take the impersonal subject cela (or ça in informal spoken French) and NOT il:

Cela/ça amuse Pierre qu'elle fasse de la planche à voile or
Qu'elle fasse de la planche à voile amuse Pierre
It amuses Pierre that she goes wind-surfing

Cela/ça ennuie Georges de devoir recommencer or
De devoir recommencer ennuie Georges
George finds it annoying to have to start again

Cela/ça attriste Antoine de/que . . .
... saddens ...

Cela/ça effraye Véronique de/que . . .
... frightens ...

Cela/ça énerve Joël de/que . . .
... annoys ...

Cela/ça épuise Fabien de/que . . .
... exhausts ...

Cela/ça étonne Jérôme de/que . . .
... astonishes ...

Cela/ça fatigue Charlotte de/que . . .
... tires ...

Cela/ça gêne Violette de/que . . .
... embarrasses ...

Cela/ça inquiète Maud de/que . . .
... worries ...

Cela/ça intéresse Rachel de/que . . .
... interests ...

Cela/ça irrite Sophie de/que . . .
... irritates ...

3.1.21 ils ça alternating with noun phrase subjects

A handful of common verbs alternate between an impersonal construction with il (or ça in informal spoken French) and a personal construction with a noun phrase subject:

Il semble que Pierre soit passé lundi or
Pierre semble être passé lundi
It seems that Pierre came round on Monday

Il apparaît que vous êtes le dindon de la farce or
Vous apparaîsez comme étant le dindon de la farce
It seems that you have been made a fool of
Subject pronouns 51

Il s'est avéré que Sophie était consciencieuse or
Sophie s'est avérée consciencieuse
It turned out that Sophie was conscientious

3.1.22 Choosing between *il est* and *c'est*

*il est* versus *c'est* with reference to professions, nationality or social status

There are two ways of indicating a person’s profession, nationality or social status: *il/ils* and *elle/elles* are used with the verbs *être, devenir, rester* and a noun without an article:

- *il est* médecin
  - *He is a doctor*

- *Elle est devenue professeur*
  - *She became a teacher*

- *Elles sont avocates*
  - *They are lawyers*

- *Elle est toujours restée femme au foyer*
  - *She always was a housewife*

- *Ils restent hollandais, bien qu'ils aient quitté les Pays-Bas il y a 20 ans*
  - *They remain Dutch, although they left the Netherlands 20 years ago*

*ce* is used when the noun is preceded by a determiner (*un, une, le, la, etc.*):

- *C'est un Russe*
  - *He's a Russian*

- *C'est un avocat*
  - *He's a lawyer*

When the noun is modified, a determiner is required and therefore *ce* (not *il/elle*) must be used:

- *C'est un médecin connu*
  - *He's a famous doctor*

- *C'est un boxeur professionnel*
  - *He's a professional boxer*

- *C'est une avocate qui connaît le droit anglais*
  - *She's a lawyer who knows English law*

- *C'est un professeur de Toulouse*
  - *He's a teacher from Toulouse*

*il est* versus *c'est* in more general contexts

When *être* is followed by anything other than an adjective, *ce* is the pronoun to use, NOT *il*:

- *C'est un plaisir* (NOT *il est un plaisir*)
  - *It's a pleasure*

- *C'est Marie* (NOT *il, *elle est Marie*)
  - *It's Marie*

- *C'était en été* (NOT *il était en été*)
  - *It was in summer*

- *Ce sera pour elle* (NOT *il sera pour elle*)
  - *It'll be for her*

*il est* versus *c'est* when *être* is followed by an adjective alone

When *être* is followed by an adjective alone, both *il* and *ce* are possible but there is a difference in meaning. In these examples, *il* is personal but *ce* is impersonal or neutral:

- *Il est stupide*
  - *will normally mean He is stupid*

- *C'est stupide*
  - *will normally mean That's silly*

- *Il est curieux*
  - *will normally mean He's inquisitive*

- *C'est curieux*
  - *will normally mean That's odd*
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Il est incroyable will normally mean He's amazing
C'est incroyable will normally mean That's unbelievable

*il est* versus *c'est* when *être* is followed by adjective + clause or infinitive

But when *être* is followed by an adjective which is itself followed by a clause or infinitive, both *il* and *ce* are possible and both are then used in an impersonal sense:

- Il/c'est difficile de formuler une politique
  *It's difficult to formulate a policy*
- Il/c'est intéressant d'observer les passants
  *It's interesting to watch the passers-by*
- Il/c'est impossible d'ouvrir ces huîtres
  *It's impossible to open these oysters*

Some grammars will sometimes claim that *il est* is the only form to use in these constructions, but *c'est* is widely used in all spoken styles of French, and is often also found in these constructions in the written language.

Other common adjectives which behave in this way are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agréable</td>
<td>fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bon</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commode</td>
<td>convenient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dangereux</td>
<td>dangerous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficile</td>
<td>difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>étrange</td>
<td>odd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>évident</td>
<td>obvious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facile</td>
<td>easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td>important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impossible</td>
<td>impossible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insupportable</td>
<td>intolerable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>intéressant</td>
<td>interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inutile</td>
<td>useless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mauvais</td>
<td>bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nécessaire</td>
<td>necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pénible</td>
<td>tiresome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>périlleux</td>
<td>perilous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possible</td>
<td>possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peu probable</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utile</td>
<td>useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vrai</td>
<td>true</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: In the impersonal constructions illustrated above, the preposition which links the adjective to the following infinitive is always *de*.

(For discussion of adjective + infinitive constructions see Chapter 12.7.)

*il versus ce* used with *être* + adjective + à

In the examples immediately above, *il* and *ce* are impersonal. They are used like 'it' and 'there' in English without reference to anything else in the conversation or text; in these cases the adjective is linked to the infinitive by the preposition *de*. But *il* can also be used as a personal pronoun, and *ce* as a neutral pronoun in similar constructions when the preposition linking the adjective and the infinitive is *à*:

- Leur politique est difficile à accepter
  *(Leur politique), elle est difficile à accepter*
- Ce document est intéressant à analyser
  *(Ce document), il est intéressant à analyser*
Here *il, elle* and *ce* refer to something mentioned elsewhere in the conversation or text (in this case *leur politique, ce document*).

(For more on these constructions see Chapter 12.7.)

### 3.1.23 *ce, and compound forms of être*

*ce* can be used with various compound forms of *être*, like *ce doit être*, *ce peut être*, *c'a été*:

- Ce pourrait être un facteur important
  - *It could be an important factor*
- Ce doit être Marianne
  - *It must be Marianne*
- C'aurait été trop
  - *It would have been too much*

When the phrase following *être* in this construction is plural, some grammars suggest that the verb should be in the third person plural form:

- Ce sont mes amis
  - *It’s my friends*
- Ce devraient être eux/elles
  - *It should be them*

But many speakers use *c'est* etc. in these cases:

- C'est mes amis
- Ce doit être eux/elles

When first or second person plural pronouns *nous* or *vous* follow *être* in these constructions, the verb is always singular:

- C'est vous, c'est nous
  - *It’s you, it’s us*

### 3.2 Object pronouns

**Correctly identifying the direct and indirect objects in English and French**

Many of the problems which learners have with pronouns are not caused by a failure to know what the pronouns are, but by a failure to recognize which pronoun French requires in a particular structure. This is especially true of indirect object pronouns. The structure of English and French verbs, even when they have similar meanings, is not necessarily the same: in a given sentence it is **essential** to know whether the object is direct or indirect in relation to the French verb and NOT the English verb.

Thus, in the English sentence 'They advised Stéphane to leave', 'Stéphane' is the **direct object** of 'advised', and with a pronoun the sentence becomes 'They advised **him** to leave'. But in the French equivalent - *Ils ont conseillé à Stéphane de partir* - *Stéphane is the indirect object of conseiller*. **With a pronoun**

the French sentence becomes:

*Ils lui ont conseillé de partir*

For a full list of verbs which behave differently with respect to objects in English and French see Chapter 8.
### TABLE 3.C Summary table of object pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct and indirect</td>
<td>me (to) me-</td>
<td>nous (to) us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct and indirect</td>
<td>te (to) you</td>
<td>vous (to) you plural or polite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masculine</td>
<td>le him, it</td>
<td>les them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>la her, it</td>
<td>les them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>le it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masculine</td>
<td>lui to him, to it</td>
<td>leur to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>lui to her, to it</td>
<td>leur to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct and indirect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflexive, reciprocal,</td>
<td>se (to) oneself</td>
<td>se (to) themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benefactive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3.D y and en

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Stands in the place of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>a phrase introduced by à, en, dans, sur e.g. à Paris, en ville, dans sa chambre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en</td>
<td>a phrase which begins with de e.g. de son idée</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2.1 Direct object and indirect object pronouns: differences between English and French

The following common French verbs take *indirect object pronouns*; learners often treat them as if they required direct object pronouns, perhaps because their English equivalents take direct objects:

- Sa sœur **lui** a appris à parler espagnol
  *His sister taught him to speak Spanish*
  (apprendre à qn à faire qc)
- Luc leur a conseillé de se taire
  *Luc advised them to be quiet*
  (conseiller à qn de faire qc)
Sa mère lui défendait de fumer à la maison  
*Her mother used to forbid her to smoke at home*

(défendre à qn de faire qc)

Le film lui a (dé)plu  
*He (dis)liked the film*

((dé)plaire à qn)

Elle lui manque  
*He misses her*

(manquer à qn)

There are several verb constructions which tend to give rise to this problem, each slightly different.

Verbs followed by: ... à quelqu’un:

... lui a téléphoné  
*phoned him*

... lui a survécu  
*outlived her*

... lui a (dés)obéi  
*(dis)obeyed her*

... lui a nui  
*disadvantaged him*

... lui ressemble  
*looks like him*

Verbs followed by: ... quelque chose à quelqu’un:

... lui a passé le sel  
*passed her the salt*

... lui a permis du repos  
*allowed him some rest*

... lui a promis une lettre  
*promised her a letter*

... lui a reproché son attitude  
*criticized her attitude*

... lui a enseigné le chant  
*taught him to sing*

... lui a donné un cadeau  
*gave her a present*

... lui a envoyé un colis  
*sent her a package*

... lui a offert un whisky  
*offered her a whisky*

Verbs followed by: ... à quelqu’un de faire quelque chose:

lui a ordonné de signer  
*ordered him to sign*

lui a dit de se taire  
*told him to shut up*

lui a demandé de partir  
*. asked him to leave*

lui a permis de l’acheter  
*allowed her to buy it*

The following common French verbs take **direct objects**; learners often treat them as if they required indirect objects, perhaps because of a confusion over the status of à (or sometimes de) which these verbs require when they are followed by an infinitive:

Je l’ai aidé à changer la roue  
*I helped him to change the wheel*

Le professeur l’avait encouragé à participer  
*The teacher had encouraged him to take part*

Je les ai persuadés de venir  
*I persuaded them to come*

Others:

l’a contraint à rester  
*. forced him to stay*

l’a dissuadée  
*. dissuaded her*

l’a empêché de courir  
*. stopped him from running*

l’a forcée à rester  
*. forced her to stay*
3.2.2 Position of direct and indirect object pronouns

Direct and indirect object pronouns are closely linked with the verb to which they are most closely related in declarative, negative and interrogative sentences.

When the verb is a **main verb** they appear immediately before it:

- L'Etat me paye  
  *The state pays me*
- Les gens ne me remarquent pas  
  *People don't notice me*
- Elle le croit  
  *She believes it*
- A son âge, vous ne la referez pas  
  *You won't change her, at her age*
- Il lui a soufflé quelques mots  
  *He whispered a few words to her*
- Tu me donnes une idée  
  *You've given me an idea*
- Ça leur apprendra à mentir  
  *That will teach them to lie*

When the verb is accompanied by the **auxiliary** verbs avoir or être, direct and indirect object pronouns appear immediately before the auxiliary:

- Il m'a vu  
  *He saw me*
- M'a-t-il vu?  
  *Did he see me?*
- Vous ne les avez pas goûtés?  
  *Didn't you taste them?*
- Il lui avait proposé un voyage  
  *He had suggested a trip to her*
- Je vous suis très reconnaissant  
  *I am very grateful to you*
- Il leur a raconté beaucoup d'histoires passionnantes  
  *He told them a lot of fascinating stories*
- Nous l'avons déjà traduite, cette lettre  
  *We have already translated this letter*

**NB:** The past participle agrees with a preceding direct object in these cases, but not with the indirect object.

(For the agreement of the past participle: see Chapter 9.2 and 9.3.)

Note also that pronouns ending in -e (me, te, se, le) and -a (la) are shortened to the consonant alone before verbs beginning with a vowel: *elle m'aide, je t'ai déjà remercié, je te l'ai dit,* etc.

3.2.3 Position of object pronouns with infinitives

When the verb governing a direct or indirect object pronoun is an infinitive (including a compound infinitive made up of an auxiliary verb and a past participle), direct and indirect objects usually come in front of the infinitive:

- On peut toujours lui téléphoner  
  *He can always be reached by phone*
- Il pourra te voir demain  
  *He will be able to see you tomorrow*
- Nous irons leur raconter l'histoire demain  
  *We will go and tell them what happened tomorrow*
Il pourrait bien l’avoir dit
He may well have said that

NB: When à or de followed by le or les come before the infinitive, these forms do NOT combine to form au, du, aux, des: je suis obligé de les aider.

3.2.4 Position of object pronouns with faire, laisser, envoyer or verbs of perception + infinitive
Where the infinitive has faire, laisser, envoyer or perception verbs like voir, regarder, entendre, sentir in front of it, direct and indirect object pronouns appear before this other verb if they are understood as the subject of the infinitive:

Je la voyais venir
(who is coming? ‘she’ is, therefore la is the understood subject of venir)
I saw her coming

Sa mère lui a fait manger du potage
(who ate the soup? ‘she’ did, therefore lui is the understood subject of manger)
Her mother made her eat some soup

Elle m’a laissé pleurer
(who cried? T did, therefore me is the understood subject of pleurer)
She let me cry

Note that the understood subject of the infinitive is realized as an indirect object if the infinitive has a direct object, but as a direct object if it does not. Compare:

Sa mère lui a fait manger du potage/Sa mère le lui a fait manger
(du potage is the direct object of manger)
Her mother made her eat some soup/Her mother made her eat it

Sa mère l’a fait manger
(manger has no direct object)
Her mother made her eat

If the direct or indirect object is understood as the object of the infinitive, it normally also comes before the other verb (although some native speakers may allow it to be placed directly in front of the infinitive):

Je l’ai envoyé chercher (le is the understood object of chercher)
I sent (someone) to look for him

Je l’ai entendu dire (le is the understood object of dire)
I have heard it said

Elle le fit remplacer (le is the understood object of remplacer)
She had it replaced

For the ordering of more than one pronoun with these constructions, see 3.2.32.

3.2.5 Position of object pronouns with imperatives
In affirmative imperatives direct and indirect object pronouns come immediately after the verb which governs them, and the pronouns me, te become the stressed forms moi, toi:

Prends-les! Take them!
Suivez-nous! Follow us!
Arrêtez-les! Stop them!
Ecoutez-moi! Listen to me!
Tais-toi! Shut up!

BUT in negative imperatives direct and indirect object pronouns precede the verb:

Ne les suivez pas! Don't follow them!
Ne la mangez pas! Don't eat it!
Ne me faites pas rire! Don't make me laugh!

(See also Chapter 11.5 on imperatives.)

3.2.6 Position of object pronouns with voici and voilà
Direct object pronouns may appear before voici and voilà:

Nous voici Here we are
Les voilà There they are

3.2.7 Ambiguity of reference of lui and leur
Because the indirect object pronouns lui, leur can refer both to masculine and to feminine nouns they are inherently ambiguous:

Je lui ai indiqué le chemin
showed him or her the way

Pierre leur a parlé
Pierre spoke to them (either male or female or mixed)

This ambiguity can be resolved if one wishes, however, by copying the pronoun with a stressed pronoun and a preposition:

Je lui ai indiqué le chemin à elle
Je lui ai indiqué le chemin à lui

Pierre leur a parlé à elles
Pierre leur a parlé à eux

3.2.8 Use of the neutral pronoun le

le, in addition to its function as a third person singular pronoun referring to masculine nouns, may also have a 'neutral' function when it refers to states, general ideas or whole propositions:

Pour que nous vous remboursions vos frais de déplacement, il faut présenter des justificatifs, si vous le pouvez (le refers to 'justifying the expenditure')
For us to be able to pay your travelling expenses, you must prove you have spent the money, if you can

Vous n'êtes plus président, je le sais (le refers to 'no longer being the president')
You are no longer the president, I know

Je le répète: tu ne travailles pas assez (le refers to 'you're not doing enough work')
I'll say it again: you're not doing enough work

In this usage neutral le is the object counterpart of the neutral subjects ce, cela, ça (see 3.1.15).

3.2.9 Use of neutral le where no equivalent exists in English

Sometimes neutral le is required in French where English normally has no object pronoun at all, typically where the verb être + adjective/identifying expression are involved:
N'ayez pas peur! J'étais en colère, mais je ne le suis plus
(le refers to 'being angry')
Don't be frightened! I was angry, but I'm not any more

Est-ce qu'elle est prête? Elle le sera dans un instant
(le refers to 'being ready')
Is she ready? She will be in a moment

Moi, je n'étais pas étonné, mais Myriam l'a été
(le refers to 'being surprised')
I wasn't surprised, but Myriam was

3.2.10 Wrong use of neutral le in phrases where 'it' occurs in English
The English constructions 'find it difficult to', 'consider it easy to', 'reckon it possible that', and similar cases, have French counterparts in which le must not appear. The verbs usually involved are croire, penser, trouver, juger, estimer, considérer.

Je trouve difficile de me faire des amis
I find it difficult to make friends

NOT *Je le trouve difficile de me faire des amis
Il considère important que tous ses amis soient prévenus
He considers it important that all his friends be notified

NOT *Il le considère important que tous ses amis soient prévenus

The le is absent in these cases because the construction is impersonal, and, while English requires 'it', French requires an absence of pronoun. Where the construction is personal (that is, where a person or thing is referred to), le, la, or les are required:

Je trouve ce livre difficile à comprendre
I find this book difficult to understand

Je le trouve difficile à comprendre
(le refers to 'the book')

J'ai trouvé le soliste impossible à écouter
I found I couldn't bear to listen to the soloist

Je l'ai trouvé impossible à écouter
(le refers to 'the soloist')

(For more on this construction see Chapter 12.7.)

3.2.1 Optional use of neutral le
Neutral le is optional in the following environments:
(a) With the verbs croire, penser, dire, vouloir, savoir when these are used as stock conversational responses to questions or statements by other people:

Ils sont heureux? Oui, je (le) pense
Are they happy? Yes, I think so

Est-ce que vous viendrez ce soir? Non, je ne (le) crois pas
Will you come this evening? No, I don’t think so

Elle revient directement de Londres. Oui, je (le) sais
She has come straight back from London. Yes, I know
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(b) In the second clause of a comparison (where the particle ne is also optional). Both are typical of formal written French:

Il est autre que je (ne) (le) croyais
He is different from what I expected

Un abonnement est moins cher que vous (ne) (le) pensez
A subscription costs less than you think

A son âge, il faut admettre que Maurice est plus naïf qu'il (ne) devrait (l')être
When you realize how old he is, you have to admit that Maurice is more naïve than he should be

3.2.12 Reflexive use of me, te, se, nous, vous

Where me, te, se, nous, vous refer to the subject of the verb to which they are attached, they are being used reflexively. This use can correspond to English 'my-, your-, him-, her-, it-, oneself; our-, your-, themselves':

Michel adore se regarder dans les vitrines
Michel loves looking at himself in shop windows

Je me connais
I know myself

Vous vous critiquez trop
You are too critical of yourselves

(See also Chapter 8.7.1.)

3.2.13 Reciprocal se and cases of potential ambiguity

When the subject is third person plural, se may also be interpreted as a 'reciprocal' pronoun, corresponding to English 'each other'. In some cases se is therefore ambiguous, having a 'reflexive' or 'reciprocal' interpretation, and the meaning may depend on the context:

Les deux écrivains s'admirent depuis 20 ans
The two writers have admired each other for 20 years

is most likely to be:

The two writers have admired each other for 20 years

but could possibly be:

The two writers have (each) admired themselves for 20 years

Les deux amis se connaissent bien
The two friends know themselves or each other well

(See also Chapter 8.7.5.)

3.2.14 Benefactive me, te, se, nous, vous

me, te, se, nous, vous may also be used to indicate that the subject 'benefits' from some action. This use, known as the 'benefactive', can often be paraphrased in English by 'for him-, her-, it-, oneself/themselves, etc.:

Josée s'est acheté un nouvel ordinateur
Josée bought herself a new computer
Object pronouns

Jacques s'est commandé une bière
*Jacques ordered himself a beer*

J'ai hâte de rentrer et de me verser un Martini
*I can't wait to get home and pour myself a Martini*

Etienne et Madeleine se sont offert un baptême de l'air
*Etienne and Madeleine treated themselves to a first flight*

3.2.15 *se* as an alternative to an English passive

*se* may be used with a verb as an alternative to an English passive:

Un collant se lave en deux minutes
*A pair of tights can be washed in two minutes*

Le Gamay se boit frais
*Gamay (light red wine) is best drunk chilled*

L'uni se vend bien cet hiver
*Plain colours are selling well this winter*

This usage is restricted to special circumstances. The sentence must describe a state of affairs and not an action and the verb must not suggest through its tense that the action takes place in a limited time span.

(See also Chapter 8.7.6.)

3.2.16 *me, te, se, nous, vous* as part of certain verbs but with no specific meaning

*me, te, se, nous, vous* also normally accompany some verbs without any detectable reflexive, reciprocal or benefactive meaning:

Robert s'est évanoui
*Robert fainted*

Elle se souvient de son arrière-grand-père
*She remembers her great-grandfather*

La foule s'est éloignée
*The crowd moved away*

(For a list of common pronominal verbs in which *se* has no detectable reflexive, reciprocal or benefactive meaning, see Chapter 8.7.3.)

3.2.17 Emphasizing *me, te, se, nous, vous* by adding a pronoun + *même*

The reflexive and benefactive interpretations of *me, te, se, nous, vous* can be emphasized by the addition of one of the expressions *moi-même, toi-même, lui-même, elle-même, soi-même, eux-mêmes, elles-mêmes*, etc.:

Connais-toi, *toi-même*
*Know thyself*

Elle est grande maintenant: elle s'habille *elle-même*
*She's a big girl now, she dresses herself*

Puisque personne d'autre ne le fait, Suzette s'admirer *elle-même!*
*Since no-one else does so, Suzette admires herself!*

De nos jours, malheureusement, il faut se soigner *soi-même*
*Nozvadays, unfortunately, you have to be your own doctor*
3.2.18 Emphasizing the reciprocal use of se by adding l’un l’autre

The reciprocal interpretation of se can be made explicit by the addition of one of the phrases l’un(e) l’autre, l’un(e) à l’autre, les un(e)s les autres, les un(e)s aux autres, all with the meaning 'each other', 'one another'.

l’un(e) l’autre or l’un(e) à l’autre are used when the subject refers to just two people or things:

Les deux boxeurs se regardaient fixement l’un l’autre
   The two boxers were staring at each other

Mes deux sœurs se copient l’une l’autre
   My two sisters copy one another

les un(e)s les autres and les un(e)s aux autres are used when the subject refers to more than two people or things:

Les équipiers se connaissent depuis longtemps les uns les autres
   The team members have known each other for a long time

Les enfants se sont donné des petits cadeaux les uns aux autres
   The children gave each other small presents

3.2.19 Constructions which do not allow indirect object pronouns

A small set of verbs and adjectives in French look as if they take indirect objects because they are followed by the preposition à, but in fact they do not allow preceding me, te, se, nous, vous, lui, leur, and require stressed pronouns to follow à:

Il pense à Jean           Il pense à lui (NOT *Il lui pense)
   He is thinking of John   He is thinking of him

Il fait allusion à Marie   Il fait allusion à elle (NOT *Il lui fait allusion)
   He is referring to Marie

Elle aura affaire à Henri   Elle aura affaire à lui (NOT *Elle lui aura affaire)
   She will have to deal with Henri   She will have to deal with him

Ce sac est à Julien       Ce sac est à lui (NOT *Ce sac lui est)
   This bag is julien

The explanation for this behaviour seems to be that à can have two functions: to introduce indirect objects, and as an ordinary preposition. In the above examples, À is a preposition. Since lui, leur can only correspond to indirect objects lui, leur are not possible in these cases - only stressed pronouns can be used (see 3.3).

Other common verbs followed by à which behave similarly are:

en appeler à                 appeal to
   faire appel à              appeal to
   avoir recours à           have recourse to
   recourir à                have recourse to
   faire attention à         pay attention to
   faire allusion à          allude to
   s’habituer à              get used to
   revenir à                 come back to
Object pronouns

réver à  
dream of
songer à  
think of
tenir à  
be fond of
venir à  
come to

The set of verbs which behave in this way is quite small. We have listed most of them here.

When the phrase introduced by à in these cases refers to things, rather than people, pre-verbal y may replace it. (See 3.2.21 and 3.2.23.)

Verbs like these can be made reflexive or reciprocal by adding the appropriate forms lui(-même), elle(-même), etc., or l'un l'autre, etc.:

Il pense à lui(-même)
He is thinking of himself

Elles auront affaire les unes aux autres
They will have to deal with each other

3.2.20 Indirect object pronouns used in possessive constructions with body parts

The indirect object pronouns are used in a possessive construction in French with 'body parts' where English would use possessive determiners (like 'my', 'your', 'his', 'her', etc.):

On lui a cassé le bras
They broke his arm

Elle s'était coupé le doigt
She had cut her finger

La sueur me coulait dans le dos
Sweat was running down my back

However, the indirect object construction is not possible with verbs which do not describe actions:

Elle lui lave le visage
She is washing his face

BUT NOT:  
*Rather:

*Elle lui aime le visage
She likes his face

Elle aime son visage

This construction is also normally impossible with non-body-parts. However, it can be found in some regional varieties of French:

Elle lui a cassé le magnétoscope
She broke his video recorder

(See also Chapter 2.2.8 and 8.7.2.)

3.2.21 Use of y

y usually plays the same role in sentences as phrases which follow the verb and are introduced by prepositions like à, en, dans, sur, sous, etc.:
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Je vais à Paris demain J'y vais demain
I'm going to Paris tomorrow I'm going there tomorrow
Elle vit dans une grande maison Elle y vit
She lives in a large house She lives there
Il a écrit son nom sur le cahier Il y a écrit son nom
He wrote his name on the book He wrote his name there

Although y can generally replace any phrase of this type, both concrete and abstract (as in the examples below), it is usually restricted to non-animate entities:

Je pense souvent à la retraite
I often think about retirement
J'y pense souvent
Elle est fidèle à ses principes
She is faithful to her principles
Elle y est fidèle
Nous sommes entrés dans le débat
We joined in the debate
Nous y sommes entrés

3.2.22 Non-specific use of y
In a number of common constructions, y is used without a very specific meaning being attached to it:

Pensez-y! Think about it!
Je n'y suis pour rien It's nothing to do with me
J'y suis, j'y reste Here I am and here I stay
Il y a ... There is ... there are ...

3.2.23 Use of y in constructions where à does not introduce an indirect object
y is normally used to refer to non-human objects which occur with verbs like penser à where à does not introduce an indirect object (see 3.2.19):

Je pense à la guerre I'm thinking of the war
With a pronoun:
J'y pense I'm thinking of it
Je tiens à mes idées I'm sticking to my ideas
J'y tiens I'm sticking to them
Je ferai très attention à vos affaires I'll look after your belongings very carefully
J'y ferai très attention I'll look after them carefully

y can also be found on rare occasions referring to people with such verbs: j'y pense 'I'm thinking of him'.

3.2.24 Use of en
en is the pronoun used to replace phrases introduced by de which follow the verb. Where these include a noun, en can refer to both human and non-human nouns:
In spoken French, where people are referred to, it is quite likely that a stressed pronoun following *de* will be used instead (see 3.3.3):

Mémère s’occupe d’eux  
Christine est fière de lui

**NB:** An exception to the generalization that *en* can replace phrases introduced by *de* is those verbs, such as *permettre, défendre* and *interdire*, with a construction using ... à quelqu’un de faire quelque chose. The infinitive clause is treated as a direct object:

Elle a permis à Jean-Marie d’emprunter sa voiture  
She allowed Jean-Marie to borrow her car

Elle le lui a permis (le means ‘to borrow the car’)  
She allowed him to do it

Il a défendu à Suzanne de sortir ce soir  
He forbade Suzanne to go out this evening

Il le lui a défendu (le means ‘to go out this evening’)  
He forbade her to do it

**3.2.25 Use of *en* with numerals and quantifiers**

It is important to use *en* when numerals (deux, trois, une dizaine, une douzaine, etc.) and quantifiers (beaucoup, trop, la plupart, etc.) are on their own after a verb. In English a pronoun is normally absent in these cases, but in French *en* is obligatory:

J’ai acheté une douzaine de roses  
/ bought a dozen roses

Il a commandé une douzaine d’huîtres  
He ordered a dozen oysters

Elle produit beaucoup de documents  
She produces a lot of papers

J’ai acheté dix roses  
/ bought ten roses

Elle a cueilli plusieurs tomates  
She picked several tomatoes

Le comité avait demandé certains manuscrits  
The committee had asked for selected manuscripts

Le comité en avait demandé certains  
The committee had asked for selected ones
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Note that *quelques* 'some, a few' belongs to this group, but when *en* is present *quelques* becomes *quelques-un(e)s*:

On voyait quelques voiles au loin

We could see some sails in the distance

On en voyait quelques-unes au loin

(See also Chapter 6.9.2.)

3.2.26 *y* and *en* as an integral part of the verb structure

There is a small set of verbs in French which involve *y* or *en* as an integral part of their structure without any detectable specific meaning. Common examples are:

- *Il y a* . . .
- *s'en aller*
- *en imposer*
- *s'en prendre à*
- *en revenir*
- *s'en tenir à*
- *en vouloir à*
- *en voilà un*
- *c'en est fait*
- *en découdre*
- *Où en sommes-nous?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Il y avait trois hommes</td>
<td>there is/are ...</td>
<td>Yvette s'en va</td>
<td>Elle en impose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvette s'en va</td>
<td>go away</td>
<td>Je n'en reviens pas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il s'en est pris à Jacques</td>
<td>impress</td>
<td>Tenez-vous-en aux faits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je n'en reviens pas</td>
<td>lay into</td>
<td>Je lui en veux</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle en impose</td>
<td>get over</td>
<td>En voilà un qui m'énerve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il s'en est pris à Jacques</td>
<td>stick to</td>
<td>C'est fait de nos espoirs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je lui en veux</td>
<td>hold a grudge</td>
<td></td>
<td>Il est toujours prêt à en découdre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C'est fait de nos espoirs</td>
<td>that's the end of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il est toujours prêt à en découdre</td>
<td>to get into a fight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.27 Position of *y* and *en* with negative infinitives

When *y* and *en* appear with negative infinitives, they normally appear directly adjacent to the infinitive, just as all other object pronouns do, but in formal written French they can split the negative:

Most frequent:

Il vaudrait mieux ne pas en parler

*It would be better not to speak of it*

Formal written French:

Il vaudrait mieux n'en pas parler

Most frequent:

Elle avait décidé de ne plus y penser

*She had decided not to think about it any more*

Formal written French:

Elle avait décidé de n'y plus penser

3.2.28 *y* and *en* in French where the English translation has no preposition

The foreign learner of French should remember that the use of *y* and *en* is determined by the presence of *à* or *de* in the French verb phrase, and should not be misled by an English equivalent which does not have a preposition, e.g.:

*to use something* BUT *se servir de qch*

*often use it* = *Je m'en sers souvent*
Object pronouns 67

to need something BUT avoir besoin de qch
I need it = J'en ai besoin

to give something up BUT renoncer à qch
I will give it up = J’y renoncerai

to enter/join BUT entrer dans qch
I joined the firm when I was twenty
Je suis entré dans l’entreprise quand j’avais vingt ans
J’y suis entré quand j’avais vingt ans

to doubt something BUT douter de qch
I doubt it = J’en doute

But see the note to 3.2.24.

3.2.29 Order of unstressed object pronouns when more than one is present

When two (and more rarely three) unstressed object pronouns appear before a verb, their order usually follows the pattern indicated in Table 3.E (known by generations of British schoolchildren as the ‘soccer team’ of pronouns with a ball (en), a goalkeeper (y), two full-backs (lui, leur), three midfield players (le, la, les) and five strikers (me, te, se, nous, vous):

TABLE 3.E The order of unstressed object pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
<th>Fifth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>le</td>
<td>lui</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>en</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>te</td>
<td>la</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se</td>
<td>les</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples:

Il me l’a dit
*He told me about it*

Elle le lui a dit
*She told him about it*

Elle nous les a donnés
*She gave them to us*

Nous le leur avons dit
*We told them about it*

Susanne m’en a parlé
*Susanne spoke to me about it*

Nous nous y sommes beaucoup attachés
*We have become very fond of it*

Nous y en avons beaucoup trouvé
*We found a lot of it there*
Elle les y a souvent vus  
She has often seen them there

Nous leur en avons promis beaucoup  
We have promised a lot of those to them

Ne me le donne pas  
Don't give it to me

Lui en auras-tu parlé avant demain?  
Will you have spoken to him about it before tomorrow?

En voudriez-vous s'il y en avait?  
Would you want some if there were any?

M'y accompagnerez-vous?  
Will you come there with me?

Il y en a beaucoup  
There are a lot of them

Nous y en avons trouvé plusieurs  
We found several of them there

More rarely three pronouns may occur in combination where the first is a benefactive (i.e. indicates that the action described by the verb is 'for the benefit' of the person in question), although this benefactive use is regarded as colloquial:

Tu vas me le lui écrire, et plus vite que ça!  
You will write it to her for me, and be quick about it!

In formal French the benefactive interpretation would be expressed through other means:

Tu vas me le lui écrire = Tu vas me faire le plaisir de le lui écrire

3.2.30 Restrictions on possible combinations

Although Table 3.E describes in general the possible sequences of unstressed object pronouns, there are some restrictions on possible combinations. No pronoun from the first column (me, te, se, nous, vous) can normally appear in combination with a pronoun from the third column (lui, leur):

Whilst: Je vous présenterai Eve-Marie  
/ will introduce Eve-Marie to you

can, with two pronouns, become: Je vous la présenterai  
I will introduce her to you

the sentence Je vous présenterai à Eve-Marie  
/ will introduce you to Eve-Marie

cannot become *Je vous lui présenterai  
I will introduce you to her

Instead, you would use: Je vous présenterai à elle

Whilst: Je vous recommande Jean-Paul  
/ recommend Jean-Paul to you
can, with two pronouns, become:  

**Je vous le recommande**  
/recommend him to you

the sentence  

**Je vous recommande à Jean-Paul**  
/recommend you to Jean-Paul

cannot become  

*Je vous lui recommande*  
/I will recommend you to him

Instead, you would use:  

**Je vous recommande à lui**

Nor can any pronouns from within the same column appear together:

Richard s'est joint à notre petit groupe  
*Richard joined our little group*

cannot become:  

*I1 se nous est joint*  
*NOR*  
*I1 nous s'est joint*

BUT ONLY:

Richard s'est joint à nous  
*Richard joined us*

### 3.2.31 Order of multiple pronouns with imperatives

When two pronouns follow the verb in affirmative imperatives the ordering of pronouns is slightly different in that pronouns from the first column (me, te, se, nous, vous) follow pronouns from the second column (le, la, les). The other orders remain the same. Pronouns after imperatives are linked to the verb that governs them by hyphens:

- **Donne-le-moi**  
  *(NOT *Donne-moi-le)*  
  Give it to me

- **Passez-les-nous**  
  *(NOT *Passez-nous-les)*  
  Pass them over to us

- **Nettoyez-la-moi**  
  *(NOT *Nettoyez-moi-la)*  
  Clean it for me

NB: **Donne-moi-le, Passez-nous-les,** etc., are often heard in informal spoken French. The foreign learner should avoid them, however.

BUT:

- **Donne-le-lui**  
  Give it to him

- **Passez-les-leur**  
  Pass them over to them

- **Parlez-lui-en**  
  Talk to him about it

The pronouns *me, te* become *moi, toi* in affirmative imperatives when they are
Personal and impersonal pronouns

the last pronoun in the sequence, but become m, t' before y or en:

Donne-le-moi     Give it to me
Donne-m'en        Give me some

In these cases in informal spoken French it is not unusual to hear moi, toi I retained with a linking -z-, but the learner should avoid this usage:

Parlez-moi-z-en      Talk to me about it
Accroche-toi-z-y     Hang on to it

In negative imperatives pronouns precede the verb, and the order of multiple pronouns is as indicated in the table:

Ne me le donne pas    Don't give it to me
Ne me les nettoyez jamais!  Don't you ever clean them for me! (i.e. I forbid you to ...)

3.2.32 Position of more than one object pronoun with faire etc. + infinitive

When the verbs faire, laisser, envoyer, and perception verbs like voir, entendre, regarder, sentir axe followed by an infinitive, there are different ways of placing two pronouns depending on which verb is being used.

If the verb is faire, both the pronouns come before faire (or avoir if faire is in a compound tense):

Je les lui ferai manger   Je les lui ai fait manger
I shall make him eat them I made him eat them

If the verb is laisser, envoyer or one of the perception verbs, there are the two possibilities illustrated below:

Tu les lui laisses lire?    Tu la laisses les lire?
Will you let her read them?  Will you let her read them?
Je le leur ai entendu dire  Je les ai entendus le dire
I heard them say so        I heard them say so
Elle me l'envoya chercher  Elle m'envoya le chercher
She sent me to fetch it or She sent me to fetch it
She had it fetched for me

(For the structure of sentences involving faire, laisser, envoyer and perception verbs, see Chapter 12.3.8 and 12.3.9.)

3.2.33 Position of object pronouns with devoir, pouvoir + infinitives

After devoir, pouvoir (modal verbs) followed by an infinitive, object pronouns come before the infinitive:

Je dois vous l'avouer tout de suite
I must admit it to you immediately
Ils peuvent nous le signaler dès son arrivée
They can tell us about it as soon as he arrives

3.2.34 Object pronouns in coordinated clauses

When clauses containing unstressed object pronouns are coordinated by et or ou, it is normally necessary to repeat the pronoun in the second clause:
Cela m’agace et m’ennuie
That irritates and bores me

Je les ai préconisés et les ai proposés
7 advocated and proposed them

Elle l’a aidé et lui a donné de l’argent
She helped him and gave him money

However, where the two pronouns are identical in form and attached to an auxiliary (avoir or être), the second pronoun and auxiliary may be deleted together:

Je les ai préconisés et proposés

The pronouns must be identical, however, and both the pronoun and the auxiliary must be deleted together. Hence the following are impossible:

NOT *Je les ai préconisés et ai proposés
NOT *Cela m’agace et ennuie
NOT *Elle l’a aidé et donné de l’argent

In this last example it is not so much that the pronouns have different functions (le being a direct object and lui an indirect object), as that they differ in their surface forms. In the following example the first me is a direct object and the second me an indirect object, but the second me can be deleted with the auxiliary because the two me’s are identical in surface form:

Elle m’a aidé et m’a donné de l’argent
Elle m’a aidé et donné de l’argent

### 3.3 Stressed pronouns

#### Table 3.F Summary table of stressed pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First person</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moi</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>nous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toi</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>vous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Second person** |          |              |
|                  |          | vous         |

| **Third person** |          |              |
| feminine         | elle     | elles        |
| masculine        | lui      | eux          |
| neutral          | cela, ça|             |
| non-specific     | soi      |              |

|                  |         |              |
|                  | her     | them         |
|                  | that    |              |
|                  | oneself |              |

#### 3.3.1 Use of stressed pronouns for emphasis

To highlight or emphasize a pronoun a common strategy is to 'double up' by the addition of a stressed pronoun. This can be done with:
Subject pronouns

Toi, tu le crois peut-être mais lui, il ne le croit pas
YOU might believe that, but HE doesn't

Moi, je veux travailler ce soir, mais lui pas
I want to work this evening, but HE doesn't

The stressed subject pronoun copy may equally appear at the end of the clause with the same effect:

Tu le crois peut-être, toi, mais il ne le croit pas, lui
Je veux travailler ce soir, moi, mais pas lui

When third person subject pronouns are highlighted or emphasized, the stressed pronoun alone may, on occasions, be used:

Lui pourrait le faire
HE could do it

Eux sauraient quoi dire
THEY would know what to say

This is not possible with first and second person pronouns:

NOT *Moi pourrais le faire (but Moi, je pourrais le faire)
NOT *Toi saurais quoi dire (but Toi, tu saurais quoi dire)

Only stressed pronouns and not unstressed subject pronouns can be separated from the tense-marked verb by adverbs or parenthetical expressions:

Lui, souvent, critique son professeur
(Not *Il souvent critique son professeur)
He often criticizes his professor

Eux, par exemple, connaissent l'italien
(Not *Ils, par exemple, connaissent l'italien)
They, for example, know Italian

(For stressed pronouns introduced by c'est/ce sont, sometimes followed by relative clauses, see Chapter 9.1.6.)

Object pronouns

A common strategy is to add a second, stressed pronoun at either the beginning or the end of the clause:

Lui, on le sait innocent
HE is known to be innocent

Elle se tient à l'écart, elle
SHE is keeping well out of it

Il me parle à moi (et pas à toi)
He confides in ME (and not in you)

Eux, on va leur demander de participer aux frais
We'll be asking THEM for a financial contribution

When the unstressed pronoun is an indirect object, the stressed pronoun being used to highlight it is preceded by à only when it is at the end of the clause:
Nous, elle nous a souvent écrit or
Elle nous a souvent écrit, à nous
*She has often written to US*

Moi, cela me ferait plaisir or
Cela me ferait plaisir, à moi
*That would give ME pleasure*

This 'doubling' of an unstressed pronoun by a stressed pronoun is also used to disambiguate ambiguous pronouns. In the following sentence *leur* is ambiguous between a masculine and a feminine interpretation:

Simon leur a dit de partir
Simon told them to leave

But it can be disambiguated by the addition of stressed pronouns:

Jean leur a dit à eux de partir
Jean leur a dit à elles de partir

### 3.3.2 Stressed pronouns standing alone

Stressed pronouns are normally used where the pronoun stands alone, or is in a phrase without a verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qui est là?</td>
<td>Moi (NOT <em>je</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qui tu as vu?</td>
<td>Lui (NOT <em>il</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C'est elle qui t'aidera, pas moi (NOT <em>pas je</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3.3 Stressed pronouns used as the object of a preposition

Stressed pronouns are the forms to use after all prepositions other than *à* (but see 3.2.19):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je suis venu malgré lui</td>
<td>I came in spite of him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J'ai agi comme elle</td>
<td>I acted as she did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ne le dites pas devant eux</td>
<td>Don't say it in front of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle s'est assise à côté de moi</td>
<td>She sat down next to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je n'ai rien contre elles</td>
<td>I have nothing against them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phrases introduced by *de* are normally pronominalized using *en*, but, when humans are referred to, *de* followed by a stressed pronoun is more usual:

Ma mère avait parlé de lui
My mother had spoken of him

### 3.3.4 Stressed pronouns with *même, aussi, seul, autres, tous* and numerals

Stressed pronouns are used in conjunction with the forms: *même, aussi, seul, autres, tous* and numerals (*deux, trois*, etc.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Les enfants avaient préparé la salade eux-mêmes</td>
<td>The children had prepared the salad themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lui aussi aura des problèmes</td>
<td>He too will have problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eux seuls pourraient la convaincre</td>
<td>They alone could persuade her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous autres Européens, on se comprend</td>
<td>We Europeans understand one another</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vous tous irez prendre une douche
You will all go and have a shower

NB: Some adjectives, like fier 'proud', fidèle 'faithful', sûr 'sure' are followed by a stressed pronoun alone, and not by moi-même, lui-même, elles-mêmes, etc., when used reflexively:

Elle est très fière d'elle
She is very proud of herself

Je ne suis plus sûr de moi
I am not sure of myself any more

3.3.5 Coordination of stressed pronouns

Only stressed pronouns can be coordinated with each other or with other noun« by et, ou:

Marianne et moi (NOT *je) en avons discuté à fond
Marianne and I have discussed it in depth

Lui (NOT *il) et vous devrez vous mettre d'accord
You and he ought to come to an agreement

J'ai dit la même chose à vous et à lui (NOT *il)
I said the same thing to you and him

NB: The form the verb takes with coordinated subjects involving stressed pronouns is determined in the following way:

(a) If one of the pronouns is first person, the verb will be first person:

Lui et moi connaissons la famille
He and I know the family

Vous et moi connaissons la famille
You and I know the family

(b) In the absence of a first person pronoun, if one of the pronouns is second person, the verb will be second person:

Vous et lui connaissez la famille
You and he know the family

(See also Chapter 9.1.1.)

A frequent way of expressing the notion 'somebody and I did X' is:

Avec quelqu'un nous avons fait X
Avec Christine nous avons ouvert les colis
Christine and I opened the parcels

3.3.6 Stressed pronouns with ne ... que and ni ... ni ... ne

Stressed pronouns are used with the expressions ne ... que, and ni... ni... ne:

Ce n'est que lui
It's only him

Francine ne connaît qu'eux
Francine only knows them
Pour moi, il n'y a qu'elle qui compte
*For me, she's the only one who matters*

Ni moi ni lui ne saurons quoi faire
*Neither I nor he will know what to do*

### 3.3.7 Use of *soi*

*soi* is a non-specific stressed pronoun which is normally used either when it refers to non-specific persons or things, or indefinite phrases like *on, chacun, nul, aucun, personne, tout le monde*. It tends to be used after prepositions, with *-même*, and after *ne ... que*:

- **On pense à soi**
  *People think of themselves*
- **Pour une fois, personne ne songeait à soi**
  *For once, no-one was thinking of themselves*
- **On doit prendre la décision soi-même**
  *One must take the decision oneself*

### 3.4 Demonstrative pronouns

**TABLE 3.G  Summary table of demonstrative pronouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proximate</th>
<th>Non-proximate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>masc</td>
<td>celui</td>
<td>celui-là</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sing</td>
<td><em>the one</em></td>
<td><em>that one</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fern</td>
<td>celle</td>
<td>celle-là</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sing</td>
<td><em>the one</em></td>
<td><em>that one</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masc</td>
<td>ceux</td>
<td>ceux-là</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plur</td>
<td><em>the ones</em></td>
<td><em>those ones</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fern</td>
<td>celles</td>
<td>celles-là</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plur</td>
<td><em>the ones</em></td>
<td><em>those ones</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demonstrative pronouns are used where English uses 'the one'. They agree in gender with the noun they refer to:

- **Sur ce mur nous voyons deux portraits. Celui qui est à droite représente le premier propriétaire de la maison**
  *On this wall we see two portraits. The one on the right is of the first owner of the house*
- **Nous avons acheté trois propriétés en Dordogne. Celle qui est près de Bergerac sera revendue la première**
  *We have bought three properties in the Dordogne. The one near Bergerac will be resold first*

Demonstrative pronouns are used particularly frequently to 'head' relative clauses (see Chapter 15.1):

- **Ceux qui m'écouter ce soir sauront que je n'ai rien à cacher**
  *Those who are listening to me tonight will know that I have nothing to hide*
Je ne peux rien faire pour vous: il faut vous adresser à celui qui est responsable de l'administration
I can do nothing for you: you must talk to the person who is responsible for administration

(For ce qui, ce que, ce dont, etc., see Chapter 15.9.)

3.4.1 Demonstrative pronouns with -ci and -là
The forms celui-ci/celle-ci/ceux-ci/celles-ci and celui-là/celle-là/ceux-là/celles-là translate English 'this one/these ones' and 'that one/those ones' respectively. These distinctions are mainly used in formal French:

Des deux tissus qui sont sur le comptoir, là-bas, il est évident que celui-ci est plus cher que celui-là
Of the two pieces of material on the counter over there, it's obvious that this one is dearer than that one

Pour moi tous les diamants se ressemblent. Mais ceux-ci coûtent deux fois plus cher que ceux-là
To me diamonds all look the same. But these ones here cost twice as much as those over there

NB: The pronouns with -ci can also mean 'the latter', and those with -là 'the former':

J'ai rencontré Pierre et Jean-Marie au café. Celui-là arrivait à l'instant d'un entretien avec le percepteur
I met Pierre and Jean-Marie at the café. The former had just come from a meeting with the tax inspector

Est-ce que vous désirez le flan ou la tarte aux pommes? Celle-ci sort directement du four
Do you want the custard pie or the apple tart? The latter has just come out of the oven

3.5 Possessive pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.H</th>
<th>Summary table of possessive pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First person</th>
<th>Second person</th>
<th>Third person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>msg</td>
<td>le mien</td>
<td>le nôtre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fsg</td>
<td>la mienne</td>
<td>la vôtre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mpl</td>
<td>les miens</td>
<td>les vôtres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fpl</td>
<td>les miennes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>msg</td>
<td>le tien</td>
<td>le leur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fsg</td>
<td>la tienne</td>
<td>la leur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mpl</td>
<td>les tiens</td>
<td>les leurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fpl</td>
<td>les tiennes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>msg</td>
<td>le sien</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fsg</td>
<td>la sienne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mpl</td>
<td>les siens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fpl</td>
<td>les siennes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Possessive pronouns agree in gender and number with a noun mentioned or implied elsewhere in the discourse:

Voici ta clef. Rends-moi la mienne  
*Here is your key. Give me back mine*

Il portait un chapeau qui n’était pas le sien  
*He was wearing a hat which wasn’t his*

Ils ont emporté mes notes, mais j’ai gardé les leurs  
*They took away my notes, but I kept theirs*

Tu ne peux pas prendre ceux-là, ils ne sont pas à nous. Ce sont les leurs  
*You can't take those, they don't belong to us. They are theirs.*

Vos idées ne sont pas toujours les nôtres  
*Your ideas aren't always the same as ours*

*les siens* also has the special meaning of 'one's family': *On travaille pour les siens*  
*People work for their families*, and *les nôtres* can mean 'with us', as in: *Elle n'était pas des nôtres* 'She wasn’t with us'.
4

Adjectives

4.1 Adjectives modifying the noun

Most French adjectives follow the noun. But there is a small set which normally precede, and another set which regularly appear before and after the noun, often with a change of meaning.

4.1.1 Adjectives which normally follow the noun

Since the majority of French adjectives normally follow the noun, English speakers really only need to learn those which can precede. However, here are some typical classes of adjectives which almost always follow the noun:

**Colour adjectives**

*bleu, gris, vert, blanc, noir, violet, etc.:

- un manteau gris
- un gazon vert
- un nuage noir
- a grey coat
- a green lawn
- a black cloud

*une souris grise
- une veste verte
- une robe noire
- a grey mouse
- a green jacket
- a black dress

**Adjectives of nationality**

*français 'French', britannique 'British', américain 'American', grec 'Greek', tunisien 'Tunisian', etc.:

- un livre français
- du vin algérien
- du fromage grec
- a French book
- Algerian wine
- Greek cheese

- de la bière française
- une ville algérienne
- une antiquité grecque
- French beer
- an Algerian town
- a Greek antique

NB: Adjectives of nationality in French begin with a small letter, unlike English. When *français, britannique*, etc., are used as nouns, however, they begin with a capital letter. Compare: *Elle est française 'She is French' with C'est une Française 'She is a Frenchwoman'. (See also 4.5 and Chapter 3.1.22.)*

**Adjectives of shape or form:**

*rond 'round', carré 'square', rectangulaire 'rectangular', oval 'oval', etc.*
Adjectives modifying the noun

un bureau carré  a square desk
un plateau rond  a round tray
un cadre rectangulaire  a rectangular frame

une boîte carrée  a square box
une table ronde  a round table
une cour rectangulaire  a rectangular courtyard

Adjectives describing religious affiliation

icon 'Anglican', catholique 'Catholic', musulman 'Muslim', protestant
Protestant', orthodoxe 'Orthodox', juif 'Jewish', etc.:

un prêtre catholique  a Catholic priest
un père juif  a Jewish father
un garçon musulman  a Muslim boy

une jeune fille catholique  a Catholic girl
une mère juive  a Jewish mother
une jeune fille musulmane  a Muslim girl

Adjectives which relate to a time or place of origin

une église médiévale  a medieval church
une ambiance citadine  an urban atmosphere
un paysage rural  a rural landscape

un accent campagnard  a rustic accent

Past and present participles

un mariage forcé  a forced marriage
un élève brillant  a brilliant pupil
un voyage fatigant  a tiring journey

une grille rouillée  a rusty gate
une étoile brillante  a brilliant star
une voiture puissante  a powerful car

NB: Present participles, which are formed by adding -ant to the first person plural stem of a verb (e.g. amus-ons/amusant, ralentiss-ons/ralentissant, dev-ons/devant, etc.), can function both as a verb in a subordinate clause, and as an adjective. As verbs in subordinate clauses present participles are invariable (see Chapter 17.9.2):

En enfilant son manteau, elle a dit au revoir
Putting her coat on, she said goodbye

J'ai rencontré des touristes prenant l'air sur l'esplanade
I met some tourists taking a stroll along the promenade

As adjectives they agree in gender and number with the noun they modify, as in the examples above: une étoile brillante, (see Chapter 17.9.1).

A number of present participles are also spelled differently when they function as verbs in subordinate clauses, and when they are adjectives. Some common cases are:
4.1.2 Adjectives which normally occur before the noun

autre
beau/bel/belle
bon/bonne
bref/brève
double
haut/e
joli/e
mauvais/e
nouveau/nouvel/nouvelle
petit/e
vaste
vieux/vieil/vieille

Verb in subordinate clause   Adjective
convainquant  convincing
différent  differing
equivalent  being equivalent to
fatiguant  tiring
négligeant  neglecting
précédant  preceding

convaincant  convincing
diffèrent  different
equivalent  equivalent
fatigant  tiring
négligent  negligent
précédent  previous

4.1.3 Adjectives which regularly occur before and after the noun, but with a change of meaning

The meaning given to a certain number of adjectives when they occur after a noun and when they occur after the verb être is the same:

Cette maison est ancienne  It's an old house

But when these adjectives occur before the noun the meaning is different. Compare:

La rue est bordée de maisons anciennes
The Street is lined with old(-style) houses

Son ancienne maison a été détruite
His former house was destroyed

When adjectives occur before the noun they tend to contribute to the meaning of the noun itself. So, un ancien soldat is someone who is 'old in the profession of soldiering', i.e. 'an old (ex-)soldier'. Un gros fumeur is not 'a fat smoker', but 'a heavy smoker' (un fumeur gros is 'a fat smoker').

Common adjectives which have different meanings when they precede or follow nouns are:

un ancien élève  an old boy/girl i.e. (ex-)pupil
une maison ancienne  an old house
un brave type  a nice guy
un homme brave  a courageous man
d'un certain âge  middle-aged
une vérité certaine  a certain truth
mon cher ami  my dear friend
une robe chère  an expensive dress
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>French Example</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chic</td>
<td>un chic type</td>
<td>a nice guy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une robe chic</td>
<td>a smart dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curieux</td>
<td>une curieuse histoire</td>
<td>an odd story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une personne curieuse</td>
<td>an inquisitive person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dernier</td>
<td>son dernier livre</td>
<td>his last book (latest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>la semaine dernière</td>
<td>last week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drôle</td>
<td>une drôle d’histoire</td>
<td>an odd story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une histoire drôle</td>
<td>a funny story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fameux</td>
<td>ton fameux problème</td>
<td>the problem you keep on going on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>un vin fameux</td>
<td>a delicious wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>franc</td>
<td>une franche idiote</td>
<td>a real idiot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une personne franche</td>
<td>a frank person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grand</td>
<td>un grand homme</td>
<td>a great man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>un homme grand</td>
<td>a tall man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gros</td>
<td>un gros effort</td>
<td>a big effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>un homme gros</td>
<td>a fat man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jeune</td>
<td>une jeune femme</td>
<td>a young woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une femme jeune</td>
<td>a woman who is not old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>méchant</td>
<td>une méchante histoire</td>
<td>a nasty business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une fille méchante</td>
<td>an unpleasant girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>même</td>
<td>toujours les mêmes histoires</td>
<td>always the same stories/problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>le jour même</td>
<td>that very day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pauvre</td>
<td>un pauvre homme</td>
<td>a man you feel sorry for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>un homme pauvre</td>
<td>a man who isn’t rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>propre</td>
<td>ma propre chambre</td>
<td>my own bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une serviette propre</td>
<td>a clean towel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pure</td>
<td>une pure illusion</td>
<td>a complete illusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>de race pure</td>
<td>pure bred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rare</td>
<td>un rare moment de paix</td>
<td>a precious moment of peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>un moment rare de l’histoire</td>
<td>an exceptional moment in history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sale</td>
<td>une sale histoire</td>
<td>a nasty business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une nappe sale</td>
<td>a dirty tablecloth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seul</td>
<td>le seul inconvénient …</td>
<td>the only disadvantage …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>un homme seul</td>
<td>a lonely man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simple</td>
<td>une simple question de …</td>
<td>simply a matter of...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une question simple</td>
<td>an easy question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>triste</td>
<td>une triste histoire</td>
<td>a sorry story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une histoire triste</td>
<td>a sad story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>véritable</td>
<td>un véritable problème</td>
<td>a real problem (serious)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>un problème véritable</td>
<td>a genuine problem (not invented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vert</td>
<td>une verte réprimande</td>
<td>a real dressing-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>une voiture verte</td>
<td>a green car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vilain</td>
<td>une vilaine action</td>
<td>a bad deed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>un enfant vilain</td>
<td>an ugly (or naughty) child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: *neuf* and *nouveau*. *Ma voiture neuve* is likely to be 'my brand new car' (not
second-hand), while *ma nouvelle voiture* is a car which is different from the one I had before (it may or may not be 'brand new'). *feu*'late, deceased' can be used in two ways: *feu la reine/la feue reine.* Both mean 'the late queen', but note that in the first case *feu* does not agree with *reine.* Usually limited to legal papers.

### 4.1.4 Adjectives which normally follow the noun but can also precede, without significant changes in meaning

Most adjectives which normally follow the noun can occur before it as well, without a significant change in the meaning of the adjective. Such prepositioning is usually for stylistic effect: to vary sentence structure or avoid having two or more adjectives following the same noun. The position before the noun is favoured where the adjective in some way measures or quantifies the meaning of the noun:

- **un léger rhume**  
  *a slight cold*
- **une charmante soirée**  
  *a delightful evening*
- **une forte odeur**  
  *a strong smell*
- **un misérable repas**  
  *a measly meal*
- **une importante augmentation**  
  *a large increase*

### 4.1.5 Combinations of adjectives

#### Multiple adjectives before the noun

Cardinal numbers are usually the first in any combination of adjectives preceding a noun, but after that the order of adjectives is the same as it is in English:

- **les deux premières semaines**  
  *the first two weeks*
- **les quatre dernières jolies phrases**  
  *the last four pretty sentences*
- **au bon vieux temps**  
  *in the good old days*
- **une autre nouvelle maison**  
  *another new house*
- **un vrai beau grand château**  
  *a really beautiful large castle*
- **ce pauvre cher homme**  
  *that poor dear man*

The exception to cardinal numbers occurring first is when a complex number is involved:

> Il m’a versé les derniers sept cents francs qu’il me devait  
*He paid me the last seven hundred francs he owed me*

To avoid having a long string of adjectives before the noun, one or more may be combined with *et,* and/or moved after the noun. To illustrate, 'a young pretty little cat' could be:

- **un jeune et joli petit chat**  
  *or*
- **un petit chat jeune et joli**

#### Multiple adjectives after the noun

The order of adjectives after the noun is the mirror image of English. For example, 'the Spanish Civil War' becomes 'the War Civil Spanish':

> la guerre civile espagnole

Similarly (these examples are from Waugh, 1977):

- **des lignes parallèles invisibles**  
  *invisible parallel lines*
Adjectives which follow verbs or verbal expressions

4.1.6 Adjectives modified by adverbs and prepositional phrases

When adjectives which normally precede the noun are modified by adverbs or prepositional expressions, they may appear after the noun. The longer the modifying expression, the more likely this is:

- un bel homme -> a handsome man
- un très bel homme -> a very handsome man
- un homme vraiment beau -> a really handsome man
- un gros effort -> a great effort
- un effort démesurément gros -> an inordinately large effort
- une jolie figure -> a pretty face
- une figure un peu trop jolie -> a face which is a bit too pretty
- un grand jardin -> a large garden
- un jardin grand comme un mouchoir de poche -> a garden the size of your hand

This also applies to superlatives (see 4.1.2):

- un bref aperçu -> a brief outline
- le plus bref aperçu -> the briefest outline
- un aperçu des plus brefs -> the briefest of outlines

4.1.7 Adjectives preceded by de

When nouns are quantified by numbers, following adjectives may directly follow the noun or they may be preceded by *de*. The use with *de* is found in informal French. For a number of speakers there is a difference in meaning between the two. When *de* is present, the implication is that there were more of the things described by the noun than the number indicates:

- Il y avait dix voyageurs de blessés
  *There were ten travellers injured*
  (implies that there were more than ten involved, but the rest weren't injured)
- Il y avait dix voyageurs blessés
  *There were ten injured travellers*
  (has no implication about whether there were other, non-injured travellers)
- J'ai une heure de libre aujourd'hui
  *I have an hour free today* (implies that all the other hours in my day are busy)
- J'ai une heure libre aujourd'hui
  *I have a free hour today* (has no implication about whether my other hours are busy or not)

Note that the contrast in English is captured by whether the adjective precedes or follows the noun.

4.2 Adjectives which follow verbs or verbal expressions

Some verbs and verbal expressions can be followed by adjectives. With the following verbs/verbal expressions, adjectives must agree in number and gender with the subject:
Adjectives

- avoir l’air, to seem, appear
- être, to be
- être considéré comme, to be thought of as
- devenir, to become
- se montrer, to show oneself to be
- paraître, to appear
- passer pour, to be considered to be
- sembler, to seem

Elle est aussi belle que sa sœur
She is as pretty as her sister

Les enfants semblent énervés par ce temps
The children seem over-excited by this weather

Tous les membres de la famille passent pour pauvres
All the members of the family are thought to be poor

With the following verbs, mainly those which express an opinion, adjectives must agree in number and gender with the direct object:

croire, to believe
considérer, to consider
trouver qn de, to call sb sth
considérer, to consider
trouver qn de, to call sb sth
deviner, to guess
voir, to see
imaginer, to imagine
se voir, to see oneself
s’imaginer, to imagine oneself

Je croyais la bataille perdue d’avance
I thought the battle was already lost

Je les devine un peu fâchés par cette histoire
I guess they are a little bit annoyed by this affair

Vous les voyez toujours petits; mais ils ont grandi
You see them as if they were still little; but they’ve grown up

Les enfants traitaient les petits voisins de fâches
The children were calling the little neighbours cowards

4.3 Adjectives with complements

Some adjectives can be followed by nouns, pronouns or infinitives, with a linking de or à:

Ils étaient blancs de colère
They were white with anger

Ces jeunes femmes sont très sûres d’elles
These young women are very self-confident

Je suis très heureux de faire votre connaissance
I am very pleased to meet you

Ce problème est facile à résoudre
This problem is easy to solve

(For the use of de with adjectives followed by nouns see Chapter 13.15.2; and followed by infinitives see Chapter 12.7.)
4.4 Indefinite and negative noun phrases with adjective complements

Indefinite noun phrases like quelque chose 'something', quelqu’un 'someone', ceci 'this', cela 'that', quoi? 'what?', and negative expressions like rien 'nothing', personne 'no-one', can be followed by adjectives linked by de. The adjective is invariable in this construction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>quelque chose de bon</td>
<td>something,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quelqu’un d’intéressant</td>
<td>someone interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rien de plus facile</td>
<td>nothing easier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoi de neuf?</td>
<td>What's new?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Adjectives used as nouns

In French it is almost always possible to convert an adjective into a noun simply by placing an article in front of it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je ne veux que les mûrs</td>
<td>I only want the ripe ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous prendrons les grands</td>
<td>We’ll take the big ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les petits sont déjà partis</td>
<td>The small ones have already gone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les gentils gagnent à la fin</td>
<td>The goodies win in the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les méchants sont punis</td>
<td>The baddies are punished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’adore le rustique</td>
<td>I love rural styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle aurait préféré du moderne</td>
<td>She would have preferred something up-to-date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le plus énervant, c’est sa voix</td>
<td>It’s her voice that is the most annoying thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le rouge te va bien</td>
<td>Red suits you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’important c’est de partir tôt</td>
<td>The important thing is to leave early</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, because English does not permit the creation of nouns with such freedom, translations either have to use vague terms like ‘ones’, 'thing(s)' or it is necessary to rephrase the sentence.

NB: Compare the post-verbal use of adjectives as nouns with the post-verbal use of numbers and quantifiers as nouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nous prendrons les grands</td>
<td>We’ll take the big ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous en prendrons deux</td>
<td>We’ll take two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous avons acheté des ovales</td>
<td>We bought some oval ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous en avons acheté plusieurs</td>
<td>We bought several</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With numbers and quantifiers en must be inserted in front of the verb (see Chapter 3.2.25 and Chapter 6.1.7).

Adjectives of nationality and nouns of nationality are usually identical in form when used as adjectives or nouns EXCEPT that the nouns are written with capital letters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elle est américaine</td>
<td>C’est une Américaine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is American</td>
<td>She is an American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tout Français qui se respecte aime le fromage</td>
<td>Every true French person loves cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle est de nationalité française</td>
<td>She is of French nationality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6 Adjectives used as adverbs

A limited number of adjectives can also be used as adverbs. In this case they are invariable (see also Chapter 5.3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bas</td>
<td>Ils parlent bas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bon</td>
<td>Le café sent bon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cher</td>
<td>Cela coûte trop cher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clair</td>
<td>Je n'arrive pas à y voir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clar</td>
<td>dans son raisonnement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>droit</td>
<td>Ils marchent droit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dur</td>
<td>Ils travaillent dur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faux</td>
<td>Elles chantent faux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fin</td>
<td>Il faut couper le jambon très fin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fort</td>
<td>Ils parlent trop fort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grand</td>
<td>Ils ont vu trop grand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jeune</td>
<td>Ils s'habillent jeune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juste</td>
<td>Tu as vu juste dès le début</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lourd</td>
<td>Cet acte pèse lourd sur ma conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>menu</td>
<td>de la viande hachée menu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vieux</td>
<td>Ils font vieux</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7 Masculine and feminine forms of adjectives

The general rule is that an -e is added to the masculine form of adjectives to produce the feminine form.

4.7.1 A change in written, but not spoken, French

In cases where the masculine form ends in one of the following vowels or consonants, there is a change in the written form but not in the spoken form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-u</td>
<td>absolue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aigu</td>
<td>aiguë</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambigu</td>
<td>ambiguë</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contigu</td>
<td>contiguë</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: In the case of aigu, ambigu, contigu, a diacritical mark (ë) is added to the feminine -e in written French to indicate that the -u sound is maintained in spoken French (aiguë would be pronounced rather like English 'egg' otherwise; compare long/longue).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-é</td>
<td>fermé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-er</td>
<td>fier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cher</td>
<td>chère</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amer</td>
<td>amère</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: In these cases, where the final r is pronounced in the masculine, a grave accent is added to the first written e.
Masculine and feminine forms of adjectives 87

-1
hardi hardie bold

NB: Exception:
favori favorite favourite

c
public publique public

turque Turkish

NB: c is maintained in:
grec grecque Greek
direct directe
sûr sûre certain

-al
national nationale national
général générale general
hivernal hivernale winter
final finale final

-el
personnel personnelle personal
professionnel professionnelle professional
passionnel passionnelle emotive

-ul
nul nulle no-

NB: In these cases, it is -le which is added and not just -e.

espagnol espagnole Spanish
puéril puerile civil

NB: In these cases the / is pronounced in the masculine.

By contrast in the following adjectives the final -il is pronounced as indicated:
gentil [-i] gentille [-ij] kind
pareil [-ej] pareille [-ej] similar
vermeil [-ej] vermeille [-ej] bright red

4.7.2 A change in written and spoken French

In the following cases, addition of feminine -e to the written masculine form also corresponds to the pronunciation of a final consonant in spoken French:

Addition of -e without further changes:

petit petite small
cuit cuite cooked
gris grise grey
mauvais mauvaise bad

Addition of -e and doubling of the final consonant

was
bas basse low
gras grassie fatty
d'as épais épaisse thick
esse lâse tired

-et
muet muette mute
cocquet coquette cute

-ot
sot sotte stupid
### Addition of -e and a grave accent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Possessive Singular</th>
<th>Possessive Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>complet</td>
<td>complète</td>
<td>complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inquiet</td>
<td>inquiète</td>
<td>worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secret</td>
<td>sécrète</td>
<td>secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discret</td>
<td>discrète</td>
<td>discreet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concret</td>
<td>concrète</td>
<td>concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>replet</td>
<td>replète</td>
<td>plump</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.7.3 A change from a nasal vowel to an oral vowel

In the following cases, addition of -e, and sometimes the doubling of the final consonant, corresponds to a change from a nasal vowel to an oral vowel + consonant in spoken French:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>grand</td>
<td>grande</td>
<td>big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paysan</td>
<td>paysanne</td>
<td>peasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partisan</td>
<td>partisane</td>
<td>biased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ancien</td>
<td>ancienne</td>
<td>old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enfantin</td>
<td>enfantine</td>
<td>childlike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>européen</td>
<td>européenne</td>
<td>European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>féminin</td>
<td>féminine</td>
<td>feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fin</td>
<td>fine</td>
<td>fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mignon</td>
<td>mignonne</td>
<td>pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bon</td>
<td>bonne</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brun</td>
<td>brune</td>
<td>brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportun</td>
<td>opportune</td>
<td>opportune</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NB:** In some cases -ne is added and not just -e.

### 4.7.4 A change in the final consonant or syllable

In the following cases, addition of final -e is accompanied by a change in the final consonant or the whole of the final syllable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ais/aîche</td>
<td>frais</td>
<td>fresh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-aux/ausse</td>
<td>faux</td>
<td>false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-er/ère</td>
<td>premier</td>
<td>first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dernier</td>
<td>last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>étranger</td>
<td>foreign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-eux/euse</td>
<td>heureux</td>
<td>happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>amoureux</td>
<td>in love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nerveux</td>
<td>nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>affreux</td>
<td>frightful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>peureux</td>
<td>frightened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-eux/-eille</td>
<td>vieux</td>
<td>old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-eur/euse</td>
<td>voleur</td>
<td>dishonest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>flatteur</td>
<td>flattering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trompeur</td>
<td>misleading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moqueur</td>
<td>likes to make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>joueur</td>
<td>fun of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vengeur</td>
<td>vengeful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Plural forms of adjectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-eur/rice</th>
<th>consolateur</th>
<th>consolatrice</th>
<th>consoling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>observateur</td>
<td>observatrice</td>
<td></td>
<td>observant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>créateur</td>
<td>créatrice</td>
<td></td>
<td>creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservateur</td>
<td>conservatrice</td>
<td></td>
<td>conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-eau/elle</td>
<td>nouveau</td>
<td>nouvelle</td>
<td>new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beau</td>
<td>belle</td>
<td></td>
<td>beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jumeau</td>
<td>jumelle</td>
<td></td>
<td>twin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-c/che</td>
<td>sec</td>
<td>sèche</td>
<td>dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blanc</td>
<td>blanche</td>
<td></td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>franc</td>
<td>franche</td>
<td></td>
<td>frank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-f/ve</td>
<td>neuf</td>
<td>neuve</td>
<td>new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actif</td>
<td>active</td>
<td></td>
<td>active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bref</td>
<td>brève</td>
<td></td>
<td>brief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>créatif</td>
<td>créative</td>
<td></td>
<td>creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vif</td>
<td>vive</td>
<td></td>
<td>lively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-in/igne</td>
<td>bénin</td>
<td>bénigne</td>
<td>benign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malin</td>
<td>maligne</td>
<td></td>
<td>sharp, clever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ong/ongue</td>
<td>long</td>
<td>longue</td>
<td>long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ou/olle</td>
<td>mou</td>
<td>molle</td>
<td>soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fou</td>
<td>folle</td>
<td></td>
<td>mad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-oux/ouce/ouss</td>
<td>oux</td>
<td>douce</td>
<td>gentle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rousse</td>
<td></td>
<td>red-haired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: *beau, fou, mou, nouveau, vieux* also have a special masculine form - *bel, fol, mol, nouvel, vieil* - which appears when a following noun begins with a vowel or a so-called 'silent h':

- un bel effet: *a fine effect*
- un fol espoir: *a vain hope*
- un nouvel homme: *a new, a changed man*
- un mol effort: *a weak effort*
- un vieil hélicoptère: *an old helicopter*

### 4.7.5 No change in written or spoken French

In cases where the adjective already ends in *-e*, there is no change:

- manifeste: masculine and feminine
- sale: masculine and feminine
- tranquille: masculine and feminine
- utile: masculine and feminine

### 4.8 Plural forms of adjectives

#### 4.8.1 The normal case

In most cases *-s* is added to the singular form of the adjective and there is no change in the pronunciation:

- Elle est contente: *Elles sont contentes*
- *She is happy*
- Il est content: *Ils sont contents*
- *He is happy*

*They (fi are happy)*
Adjectives

La veste est rouge
The jacket is red
Le sac est rouge
The bag is red

Les vestes sont rouges
The jackets are red
Les sacs sont rouges
The bags are red

If the word ends in -s or -x, it will be invariable:

Notre fils est heureux
Our son is happy
Le cahier est gris
The exercise book is grey

Nos fils sont heureux
Our sons are happy
Les cahiers sont gris
The exercise books are grey

4.8.2 Adjectives which end in -eau add x rather than s

Un nouveau magnétoscope
A new video-tape recorder
Un beau cadre
A beautiful setting

De nouveaux magnétoscopes
New video-tape recorders
De beaux cadres
Beautiful settings

4.8.3 Adjectives which end in -al generally change to -aux

Le chanteur principal
The principal singer
Le principe général
The general principle
Un homme marginal
A man on the margins (of society)
Un point de vue normal
A normal point of view

Des chanteurs principaux
Principal singers
Des principes généraux
General principles
Des hommes marginaux
Men on the margins (of society)
Des points de vue normaux
Normal points of view

Exceptions: banal, bancal, fatal, glacial, naval, natal

Un discours banal
A banal speech
Un buffet bancal
A sideboard with a damaged leg
Un revirement fatal
A fatal change of heart
Un vent glacial
A very cold wind

Des discours banals
Banal speeches
Des buffets bancals
Sideboards with damaged legs
Des revirements fatals
Fatal changes of heart
Des vent glaciaux
Very cold winds

Un chantier naval
A naval dockyard
Mon pays natal
My home country

Des chantiers navals
Naval dockyards
Des pays natal
Home countries

Adjectives which alternate:

idéal
matinal
pascal
astral

idéals and idéaux
matinaux and matinaux
pascaux and pascaux
astraux and astraux

ideal
early morning
related to Easter
related to stars
4.9 Adjective agreement with nouns

4.9.1 Adjectives agreeing with just one noun

Adjectives agree in gender and number with the noun whose meaning they modify. This is usually straightforward when there is just one noun:

- d'une voix hésitante: in a faltering voice
- ce fameux dimanche: that famous Sunday
- L'eau était froide: The water was cold
- Il lançait aux passants: He shot rapid and
- des regards rapides et insstants: insistent glances at the passers-by

NB: A plural noun might be modified by a string of singular adjectives, depending on the meaning: *Les économies russe, bulgare et roumaine rencontrent de graves difficultés* 'The Russian, Bulgarian and Romanian economies are (each) encountering serious difficulties'.

4.9.2 An adjective agreeing with nouns linked by et, ou or ni

The adjective may agree with the closest noun only:

- une table et une chaise bleue: a table and a blue chair

The adjective may agree with all the nouns, in which case it will be plural, and will be feminine only if all the nouns are feminine. Otherwise it will be masculine:

- une table et une chaise bleues: a blue table and chair
- Il ne portait ni de veste ni de pantalon bleus: He was wearing neither a blue jacket nor a blue pair of trousers
- un stylo ou un cahier bleus: a blue pen or exercise book

4.9.3 An adjective agreeing with nouns linked by de

The adjective may agree with the first or the second noun, depending on the meaning:

- un groupe de chanteuses talentueuses: a group of talented female singers
- une bande de voyous agressive: an aggressive gang of layabouts
- des bains de mer fréquents: frequent dips in the sea
- un geste de générosité déplacée: an act of misplaced generosity

NB: *un/une drôle de* can be used adjectivally meaning 'weird', 'strange'. Its gender is determined by the following noun: *une drôle d'idée* 'a strange idea', *un drôle de type* 'a weird bloke'.

4.10 Invariable adjectives

A number of adjectives do not change either in relation to gender or to number. It is sometimes argued that these are nouns being used adjectivally.

- un pull marron: a brown pullover
- une jupe marron: a brown skirt
- des chaussures marron: brown shoes
- un carton orange: an orange box
- une voiture orange: an orange car
- des rideaux orange: orange curtains
un chemisier crème
a cream blouse

un lecteur de cassettes bon marché
a cheap cassette player

une planche à roulettes bon marché
cheap skateboard

des fruits bon marché
cheap fruit

un pull cerise

a cherry pullover

des sous-vêtements crème
cream underwear

une jupe crème
a cream skirt

des uniformes cerise
cherry-coloured uniforms

Other invariable adjectives:

angora

baba
flabbergasted

bath
great
cucu
twee
gaga
nurs

gnagnan
childish, immature

kaki
khaki

pop

porno

riquiqui
inadequate (too small, too poor etc. depending on context)

rococo

snob

sympa
friendly

NB: chic is invariable for gender but agrees for number:

un tailleur chic
a smart suit

une robe chic
a smart dress

des vêtements chics
smart clothes

4.1 Compound adjectives

Like compound nouns (see Chapter 1.2.11) compound adjectives can be made up in a variety of ways. Their internal structure determines the way in which they agree with the noun they modify.

4.1.1 Adjective-adjective compounds

Where adjectives are coordinated, both agree with the noun:

sourd-muet

deaf-mute

Les enfants sourds-muets ont fait des progrès exceptionnels
The deaf-mute children have made exceptional progress

aigre-doux

sweet and sour

J'adore les sauces aigres-douces
I adore sweet and sour sauces

nouveau-né

new-born

Les bébés nouveaux-nés sont très fatigants pour leurs parents
New-born babies are very exhausting for their parents

dernier-né

last-born

Les filles dernières-nées profitent de la présence de leurs frères et sœurs
Last-born girls take advantage of the presence of their brothers and sisters

grand-ouvert

wide open

Ils dorment la bouche grande-ouverte
They sleep with their mouths wide open

Exception: where the first adjective ends in -i, -o, only the second part agrees:

tragi-comique

tragi-comedy

Toutes ses pièces étaient tragi-comiques
All her plays were tragi-comédies
Comparative and superlative forms of adjectives

Dans le cadre de l'union européenne, les accords franco-allemands ont duré plus de trente ans.

Franco-German Within the European framework, the Franco-German agreements have lasted for more than thirty years.

4.11.2 Adverb-adjective compounds

Where an adverb and an adjective are combined, the adverb (always the first element) remains invariable and the adjective agrees:

haut placé Je connais des fonctionnaires haut placés qui pourraient nous aider.

highly placed I know some highly placed civil servants who could help us.

bien intentionné Ce sont toujours les personnes bien intentionnées qui créent le plus de problèmes.

well-intentioned It's always the well-intentioned people who cause the most problems.

avant-coureur Voilà les signes avant-coureurs d'une maladie grave.

early-warning There are the early-warning signs of a serious illness.

4.11.3 Colour adjective compounds

Combinations of colour adjectives remain invariable:

des cheveux châtain clair light-brown hair

une veste bleu foncé a dark-blue jacket

une mer vert-bouteille a bottle-green sea

une couverture gris-rouge a red-grey cover

4.11.4 Compounds involving demi-, nu- and mi-

In combinations involving demi-, nu- and mi-, demi- and nu- are invariable before the noun, but agree when they follow it:

une demi-heure but une heure et demie

a half-hour an hour and a half

une demi-page a page et demie

a half-page a page and a half

nu-tête sortir tête nue

bareheaded to go out without a hat

nu-pieds sortir pieds nus

barefoot to go out barefooted

mi- can only occur before the noun and is invariable:

à mi-temps part-time (e.g. work)

la mi-juin halfway through June

la mi-saison middle season (Spring, Autumn)

la mi-journée the middle of the day

mi-américain half-American

mi-clos half-open, half-closed

4.12 Comparative and superlative forms of adjectives

4.12.1 Comparatives

In English, adjectives can be used to compare one entity with another by adding -er, or putting 'more' or 'less' in front: 'bigger', 'lighter', 'more dangerous', 'less
interesting’. In French, the comparative forms of adjectives are created by putting plus 'more' or moins 'less' in front of them. The adjective stays in the position it would normally occupy, before or after the noun, and agrees with the noun as usual (see 4.9):

Il désire avoir une plus grande voiture
He wants to have a bigger car

Je n’ai jamais fait de traversée plus dangereuse
I have never made a more dangerous crossing

Ce film est moins intéressant pour les enfants
This film is less interesting for children

Elle semble moins malade aujourd’hui
She seems less ill today

plus and moins make unequal comparisons between entities. A related construction is aussi 'as' (which often changes to si after a negation), which makes a comparison of equality between entities:

Il désire avoir une aussi grande voiture
He wants to have as big a car

Le courant n’est pas si dangereux par ici
The current isn’t as dangerous here

NB: Adding aussi to a preceding adjective does not alter its position. This contrasts with English. Compare: une aussi grande voiture with 'as big a car'.

In clauses dependent on nouns modified by comparative adjectives with plus and moins, writers often insert ne, le or ne le in formal written French:

Ces virages sont plus dangereux qu’on (ne) (le) pense
These bends are more dangerous than one thinks

Le film est moins intéressant qu’on (ne) (l’)espérait
The film is less interesting than we hoped

In clauses dependent on nouns modified by comparative adjectives with aussi, only le may be inserted in formal written French:

La charge de travail est aussi lourde que je le croyais
The workload is as demanding as I thought

There are two irregular comparative forms of adjectives which are used productively in French:

meilleur/-e better (comparative of bon 'good')
pire worse (comparative of mauvais 'bad')

meilleur is used everywhere that bon could be, and agrees with the noun it modifies:

Il désire avoir une meilleure place
He wants to have a better seat

Ces marchandises sont meilleures
These mods are better
Le texte est **meilleur** maintenant que tu l’as raccourci
*The text is better now you have shortened it*

*plus bon* 'more good' is only possible where English can use 'more good', but, again as in English, the form is rather unusual:

Il est **plus bon** qu’intelligent
*He is more good than intelligent*

(For the distinction between *meilleur* and *mieux* see Chapter 5.6.6.)

*pire* and *plus mauvais* both exist, *plus mauvais* is the most commonly used form, but *pire* will be used where the comparison is between two things which are already both bad:

Le remède est **pire** que le mal
*The cure is worse than the illness*

or to refer to abstract nouns:

La vérité est pénible, mais le mensonge est **pire**
*Truth hurts, but lying is worse*

### 4.12.2 Superlatives

In English, adjectives can be used to describe the best or worst of something by adding '-est' or putting 'most' or 'least' in front of them: 'biggest', 'lightest, 'most dangerous', 'least interesting'. These are superlative forms of adjectives.

In French the superlative forms of adjectives are created by putting the definite article - *le, la, les* - in front of the comparative forms: *la plus grande voiture* 'the biggest car', *la plus forte odeur* 'the strongest smell'. When adjectives follow the noun, this means that there are two definite articles, one before the noun and one before the comparative form of the adjective: *la voiture la plus puissante* 'the most powerful car', *les virages les plus dangereux* 'the most dangerous bends'. Note that the article agrees in gender and number with the noun:

C'était le plus **grand** joueur de tous
*He was the greatest player of all*

Elle est la moins ambitieuse de sa famille
*She is the least ambitious in her family*

C'est la route la plus dangereuse de la région
*It's the most dangerous road in the region*

NB: 'in' after superlative adjectives is usually **de**: la route la plus dangereuse de la région, la moins malade de sa famille. (See Chapter 13.15.3.)

There are three irregular superlative forms of adjectives which are used productively in French:

- *le/la/les meilleur(e)(s)* **the best** (superlative of *bon* 'good')
- *le/la/les pire(s)* **the worst** (superlative of *mauvais* 'bad')
- *le/la/les moindre(s)* **the least** (superlative of *petit* 'small')
The conditions under which *meilleur* and *pire* are used are the same as those described in 4.12.1:

- Notre chef de cuisine est le meilleur de la ville
  *Our chef is the best in town*
- Elle porte les meilleurs vêtements
  *She wears the best clothes*
- Cette solution est la pire des trois proposées
  *This solution is the worst of the three proposed*
- Le pire, c'était qu'elle voulait revenir
  *The worst thing was that she wanted to come back*

`le/la/les moindre(s)` is used in semi-fixed expressions, and with abstract nouns:

- le principe du moindre effort
  *the principle of least effort*
- Ils ont essayé de suivre la politique du moindre mal
  *They tried to follow the policy which would do the least harm*

Where concrete nouns are involved, however, `le/la/les plus petit(e)(s)` is used:

- Il a choisi le plus petit diamant
  *He chose the smallest diamond*

When adjectives which normally precede nouns are used in a superlative form, they may follow the noun they modify on the grounds that they are 'too long' to appear in front of the noun (see 4.1.6):

- un bref aperçu le plus bref aperçu
  *the briefest outline*
- un jeune homme le plus jeune homme
  *the youngest man*

### 4.13 Subjunctive versus indicative in clauses dependent on a superlative adjective

Clauses dependent on nouns modified by a superlative adjective have a verb in the subjunctive if the construction claims a unique status for the noun. For example:

- Ils ont acheté le plus grand sapin de Noël qu'ils aient pu trouver
  *They bought the biggest Christmas tree that they could find*
  (They couldn't find a bigger tree, so it is unique)

But where the construction does not claim a unique status for the noun, the verb in the dependent clause is in the indicative:

- Ils ont acheté le plus grand sapin de Noël qu'ils ont pu transporter dans leur voiture
  *They bought the biggest Christmas tree that they could take in their car*
  (there is no claim that it is the biggest Christmas tree available)

(For more on this construction see Chapters 11.1.8 and 15.11.3.)
4.14 Absolute use of the superlative

One way of translating into French expressions like 'the simplest of all', 'the most interesting imaginable' (known as 'absolute superlatives') is to put the expression des plus in front of the adjective: des plus simple(s), des plus intéressants). In this construction the adjective must agree in gender with the noun it modifies, but if the noun is singular the adjective may be either singular or plural:

C'était une journée des plus intéressante(s)
*It was the most interesting of days*

C'était un voyage des plus intéressant(s)
*It was the most interesting trip imaginable*

In modern French the plural form is probably the more frequent of the two.

Other ways of expressing an absolute superlative are:

Ce raisonnement est tout ce qu'il y a de plus simple
*This line of argument is of the simplest kind*

Un raisonnement on ne peut plus simple
*The simplest line of argument of all*

Il préfère des solutions les plus simples possible (*possible* is invariable in this construction)
*He prefers the simplest possible solutions*
5

Adverbs

5.1 Function of adverbs

Adverbs are words or phrases of invariable form which modify the meaning of words, phrases or whole sentences:

Il est entré dans un monde étrangement silencieux  He entered a strangely silent world

(étrangement modifies just silencieux; it is the silence which is strange, not the person or the world he enters)

J'ai entendu un bruit dehors  I heard a noise outside

(dehors modifies just entendre un bruit; it indicates where the noise was, not where the person hearing it was)

Soudain j'ai entendu un bruit  Suddenly I heard a noise

(soudain modifies the sentence and expresses the suddenness of the whole event)

5.2 Formation of adverbs with the ending -ment

5.2.1 Adverbs ending in -ment derived from the feminine form of an adjective

Most adverbs ending in -ment are formed from the feminine form of a corresponding adjective:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>affreux</td>
<td>affreuse</td>
<td>affreusement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clair</td>
<td>claire</td>
<td>clairement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distinct</td>
<td>distincte</td>
<td>distinctement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doux</td>
<td>douce</td>
<td>doucement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mou</td>
<td>molle</td>
<td>mollement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naturel</td>
<td>naturelle</td>
<td>naturellement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public</td>
<td>publique</td>
<td>publiquement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionnel</td>
<td>professionnelle</td>
<td>professionnellement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sec</td>
<td>sèche</td>
<td>sèchement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sûr</td>
<td>sûre</td>
<td>sûremenent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vif</td>
<td>vive</td>
<td>vivement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exception:

gentil  kind  gentille  kind  gentiment  kindly

Although -ment corresponds broadly to English -ly, French is much less productive than English. Often English -ly adverbs must be translated by phrases (see 5.5).
5.2.2 Adverbs ending in -ment derived from the masculine form of an adjective
Where an adjective ends in -é (not -oi), -é, or -u (not -eau or -ou), the adverb is formed from the masculine form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>absolu</td>
<td>absolute</td>
<td>absolument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambigu</td>
<td>ambiguous</td>
<td>ambigument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aisé</td>
<td>easy</td>
<td>aisément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joli</td>
<td>pretty</td>
<td>joliment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>true</td>
<td>vraie</td>
<td>virement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exception:

| gai       | cheerful | gaie     | cheerful |
|           |          | gaiement | cheerfully |

Seven adjectives which end in -u but add a circumflex accent in the adverbial form are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assidu</td>
<td>assiduously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continu</td>
<td>continuously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cru</td>
<td>crudely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dû</td>
<td>duly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goulu</td>
<td>greedily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incongru</td>
<td>incongruously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indu</td>
<td>inappropriately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.3 Adverbs ending in -amment and -eminent derived from adjectives ending in -ant or -ent
Adjectives ending in -ant and -ent form the adverb with -amment and -emment, respectively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abondant</td>
<td>abundantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apparent</td>
<td>apparently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brillant</td>
<td>brilliantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constant</td>
<td>constantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>courant</td>
<td>fluently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>précédent</td>
<td>beforehand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prudent</td>
<td>prudently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violent</td>
<td>violently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaillant</td>
<td>with valour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are three forms which do not follow this pattern exactly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lent</td>
<td>slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>présent</td>
<td>presently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>véhément</td>
<td>vehemently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: véhémentement is quite rare, and avec véhémence is usually preferred.

Three forms follow the pattern, but the present participles from which they derive no longer exist in modern French:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>précipiter</td>
<td>precipitamment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>précipitant</td>
<td>precipitately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adverbs can also be formed in a similar way from the masculine form of past participles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Past participle</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aveugler</td>
<td>aveuglé</td>
<td>aveuglément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conformer</td>
<td>conformé</td>
<td>conformément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forcer</td>
<td>force</td>
<td>forcément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>préciser</td>
<td>précisé</td>
<td>précisément</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a similar, but irregular, vein we find:

impuni  unpunished  impunément  with impunity

A small number of adverbs ending in -ément have been created from adjectives ending in -e: some always end in -e, others are the feminine form of adjectives:

**Adjectives which always end in -e**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>énorme</td>
<td>énormément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immense</td>
<td>immensément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intense</td>
<td>intensément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uniforme</td>
<td>uniformément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commodé</td>
<td>commodément</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exceptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>probable</td>
<td>probablement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>véritable</td>
<td>véritablement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Feminine forms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>commun</td>
<td>commune</td>
<td>communément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confus</td>
<td>confuse</td>
<td>confusément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>importun</td>
<td>importune</td>
<td>importunément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obscus</td>
<td>obscure</td>
<td>obscurément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportun</td>
<td>opportune</td>
<td>opportunément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>profond</td>
<td>profonde</td>
<td>profondément</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>profus</td>
<td>profuse</td>
<td>profusément</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some adverbs ending in -ment are derived from words which no longer exist in the language:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bref  brief</td>
<td>brève</td>
<td>brièvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adjectives used as adverbs without addition of -ment 101

grave serious (grief - old French)  
grave grièvement seriously

traître treacherous (traîtreux - old French)  
traîtresse traîtreusement treacherously

(journel - old French)  
journellement daily

(nuitantre - old French)  
nuitamment nightly

NB: grief 'is still used in certain set expressions: faire grief à quelqu'un de quelque chose 'to hold something against somebody', formuler des griefs 'to express grievances'.

5.2.7 Adverbs ending in -ment derived from nouns

There are a few adverbs ending in -ment which are derived from nouns and function like degree adverbs (see 5.6.2). These would be used only in spoken French: vachement in particular is used in very informal spoken French:

bougrement C'est bougement difficile It's bloody difficult

diablement Cette voiture est diablement lourde This car is hellishly heavy

vachement Elle est vachement jolie She's bloody good-looking

5.3 Adjectives used as adverbs without addition of -ment

Not all adverbs derived from adjectives end in -ment. The masculine forms of several adjectives can be used as adverbs in combination with a particular set of verbs. They do not change in gender or in number when used in this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Used in expressions such as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bas</td>
<td>parler bas to talk quietly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>voler bas to fly low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bon</td>
<td>sentir bon to smell nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tenir bon to hold on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chaud</td>
<td>servir chaud to serve hot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cher</td>
<td>cuûter cher to cost a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>payer cher to pay a lot (for sth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clair</td>
<td>voir clair to see clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>court</td>
<td>tourner court to come to an abrupt end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>couper court à qch to cut sth short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s'habiller court to wear one's skirts/dresses short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creux</td>
<td>sonner creux to ring hollow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doux</td>
<td>filer doux to keep a low profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>droit</td>
<td>aller droit to go straight on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dru</td>
<td>tomber dru to fall in stair-rods (rain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dur</td>
<td>travailler dur to work hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faux</td>
<td>chanter faux to sing out of tune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ferme</td>
<td>tenir ferme to hold out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fort</td>
<td>parler fort to talk loudly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frais</td>
<td>servir frais to serve cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>franc</td>
<td>parler franc to say what you think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gras</td>
<td>manger gras to eat rich food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gros</td>
<td>parier gros to bet heavily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>risquer gros to take big risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haut</td>
<td>être haut placé to be in a position of authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juste</td>
<td>viser juste to aim correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>deviner juste to guess right</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The fact that some of these adjectives are used as adverbs has allowed the creation of related forms ending in \textit{-ment} with different meanings:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{bon}: \textit{bonnement}
  \item \textit{cher}: \textit{chèrement}
  \item \textit{bas}: \textit{bassement}
\end{itemize}

\textit{bonnement} is used almost always with \textit{tout} to give \textit{tut bonnement}: 'quite simply'

\textit{chèrement} is used with the verb \textit{vendre} in the set phrase: \textit{vendre chèrement sa vie}: 'to sell one's life dearly'.

\textit{bassement} has taken the meaning: 'in a mean or despicable way' and is used in the set phrase \textit{agir bassement}: 'to act in a mean or despicable way'.

\section*{5.4 Phrases used as adverbs}

A number of adverbs are composed of invariable phrases. The following are a sample:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{au maximum}
  \item \textit{à bon escient}
  \item \textit{au fur et à mesure}
  \item \textit{à brûle-pourpoint}
  \item \textit{à côté}
  \item \textit{à l'heure}
  \item \textit{à tire-larigot (informal)}
  \item \textit{à tue-tête}
  \item \textit{à plat ventre}
  \item \textit{à qui mieux mieux}
  \item \textit{à peu près}
  \item \textit{à part}
  \item \textit{d'ores et déjà}
  \item \textit{d'habitude}
  \item \textit{d'emblée}
  \item \textit{de plus belle}
  \item \textit{d'arrache-pied}
  \item \textit{de bonne heure}
  \item \textit{de temps en temps}
  \item \textit{en haut}
  \item \textit{en bas}
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{to the utmost}
  \item \textit{advisedly}
  \item \textit{as we go along}
  \item \textit{point blank}
  \item \textit{beside}
  \item \textit{on time}
  \item \textit{non-stop}
  \item \textit{at the top of one's voice}
  \item \textit{on one's belly}
  \item \textit{each one more than the next}
  \item \textit{nearly}
  \item \textit{at the same time}
  \item \textit{separately}
  \item \textit{from this time onwards}
  \item \textit{usually}
  \item \textit{straightaway}
  \item \textit{with renewed vigour}
  \item \textit{flat out (to work)}
  \item \textit{early}
  \item \textit{from time to time}
  \item \textit{up(stairs)}
  \item \textit{down(stairs)}
\end{itemize}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Phrase</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>en arrière</td>
<td>behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en avant</td>
<td>in front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en retard</td>
<td>late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en avance</td>
<td>early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en amont</td>
<td>upstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en aval</td>
<td>downstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en dehors</td>
<td>outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en vain</td>
<td>in vain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en catimini</td>
<td>in secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en général</td>
<td>in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en particulier</td>
<td>in particular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en définitive</td>
<td>finally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n’importe où</td>
<td>anywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n’importe quand</td>
<td>anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n’importe qui</td>
<td>anybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par hasard</td>
<td>by chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par monts et par vaux</td>
<td>over hill and dale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par ailleurs</td>
<td>in addition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par devant</td>
<td>in the front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par dessus</td>
<td>over and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par contre</td>
<td>on the other hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans la suite</td>
<td>in what followed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et ainsi de suite</td>
<td>and so on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de suite</td>
<td>immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par la suite</td>
<td>in what followed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sans cesse</td>
<td>continuously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sans détour</td>
<td>straight, to the point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sur ces entrefaites</td>
<td>and with that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tout à fait</td>
<td>completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tout de suite</td>
<td>immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tout à l’heure</td>
<td>in a moment, later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tout d’un coup</td>
<td>suddenly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tout de go</td>
<td>straight out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>côte à côte</td>
<td>side by side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ça et là</td>
<td>here and there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>petit à petit</td>
<td>little by little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sur-le-champ</td>
<td>immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaille que vaille</td>
<td>somehow or other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Borrowings from Latin, frequently heard, are:

- **grosso modo**: more or less
- **a fortiori**: even more so
- **a priori**: a priori
- **a posteriori**: a posteriori
- **vice versa**: vice versa
- **in extremis**: at the last moment
5.5 English and French adverb formation

-ly is a more productive form in English than -ment is in French. Therefore, not every English form in -ly will find a ready translation in -ment in French. The most frequent solution is an adverbial phrase introduced by a preposition such as avec, d'une manière. . ., d'une façon. . ., sur un ton . . .:

- avec colère, sur le ton de la colère  
- d'une manière concise, avec concision  
- avec charme, d'une manière charmante  
- avec beaucoup de talent/d'imagination  
- sur le ton de la plaisanterie  
- de façon possessive  
- de façon réfléchie  
- avec tristesse  
- avec entêtement  
- de façon surprenante, à ma/ta grande surprise  
- sur un ton vengeur

An English equivalent might be:

- angrily  
- concisely  
- charmingly  
- creatively  
- jokingly  
- possessively  
- reflectively  
- sadly  
- stubbornly  
- surprisingly  
- vengefully

When colours are used as adverbs they are preceded by en:

- le colorier en bleu  
  to colour it blue
- le peindre en rouge  
  to paint it red

When shapes are used as adverbs, they have to be turned into an expression involving a noun in French:

- lui donner une forme ronde  
  to make it round
- le couper au carré  
  to cut it square

5.6 Types of adverbs

There are five main types of adverbs: manner adverbs, degree adverbs, time adverbs, place adverbs and sentence-modifying adverbs. Some forms fall into more than one of these categories. Typical examples of each are given in Tables 5.A, 5.B, 5.C, 5.D and 5.E (but the lists are not exhaustive).

5.6.1 Manner adverbs

Adverbs which describe the manner in which something is done are manner adverbs:

- Je dors bien  
  I sleep well
- Les choses tournent mal  
  Things are turning out badly
### TABLE 5.A Typical manner adverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical manner adverbs</th>
<th>Ending in -ment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ainsi</strong> (like this/that, so, thus) (can also be a sentence-modifying adverb - see 5.6.17)</td>
<td>affectueusement affectionately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bien</strong> (well) (can also be a degree adverb - see 5.6.2)</td>
<td>autrement differently (can also be a degree adverb - see 5.6.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>debout</strong> (standing)</td>
<td>clairement clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ensemble</strong> (together)</td>
<td>confusément in a confused manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>exprès</strong> (purposely, on purpose)</td>
<td>correctement correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mal</strong> (badly, on purpose)</td>
<td>facilement easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mieux</strong> (better) (for a comparison with meilleur see 5.6.6)</td>
<td>lentement slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>vite</strong> (quickly)</td>
<td>précautionneusement cautiously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invariable phrases</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à dessein</td>
<td>purposely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à genoux</td>
<td>on one's knees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à pied</td>
<td>on foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à la fois</td>
<td>at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à tort</td>
<td>wrongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de travers</td>
<td>crookedly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Representative examples:

- Il s'est toujours comporté **ainsi**  
  *He always behaved like that*
- Tu chantes **bien**  
  *You sing well*
- Mets-toi **debout**  
  *Stand up*
- Il a **mal** lu l'étiquette  
  *He misread the label*
- Hier soir ça n'allait guère **mieux**  
  *It was hardly any better yesterday evening*
- Je l'oublierai très **facilement**  
  *I'll forget it very easily*
- Elle étendait **soigneusement** son tailleur  
  *She carefully laid out her suit*
5.6.2 Degree adverbs

Adverbs which indicate the extent to which something is the case are degree adverbs. As a class they can modify every kind of sentence element: verbs, adjectives, nouns, prepositions and other adverbs. But individually some of them may be restricted to modifying particular categories of item (e.g. très can modify adjectives, prepositions and adverbs - très heureux 'very happy', très à la mode 'very fashionable', très bien 'very well' - but not verbs *je fume très 'I smoke very'):

Je fume modérément
*I smoke moderately
Tout est si clair maintenant
*Everything is so clear
Ce ne sera pas tout à fait la vérité
*That won’t be entirely the truth
Je tends ma main jusqu’à presque toucher son visage
*I stretch out my hand almost to touch his face
Elle a dressé trop brusquement la tête
*She lifted her head up too quickly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical degree adverbs</th>
<th>Ending in -ment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assez</td>
<td>sufficiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autant</td>
<td>as much (modifies verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beaucoup</td>
<td>much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bien</td>
<td>really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>davantage</td>
<td>more (can only modify verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encore</td>
<td>again; still; another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juste</td>
<td>just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>même</td>
<td>even (when it follows a noun it may correspond to English very)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moins</td>
<td>less (see 5.6.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peu</td>
<td>little</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Invariable phrases**

au moins... (expresses a concrete estimate of a quantity: au moins dix personnes blessées; au moins expresses the speaker’s view of an event: du moins, il n’est pas blessé - see 5.6.17)
TABLE 5.B (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical degree adverbs</th>
<th>Invariable phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>plus / more (can modify verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions - see 5.6.5)</td>
<td>à peine / hardly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plutôt / rather</td>
<td>à peu près / nearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presque / almost (does NOT contract to *presqu' in front of a vowel: presque à la fin)</td>
<td>de loin / by far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si / so</td>
<td>par trop / by far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tant / so much</td>
<td>tout à fait / completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tout / completely; quite (see 5.6.7)</td>
<td>un peu / a little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>très / very</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trop / too</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Representative examples

C'est un acteur assez connu
La route tue autant que la guerre
Elle est autrement intelligente que sa soeur
Ils ont beaucoup discuté pendant le weekend
C'est bien bête
Il y en a davantage qu'on ne le pense
Elle a acheté un billet juste avant de prendre le train
On ramène même des souvenirs
Voici le vélo même dont il s'est servi
un monde si étrangement silencieux
Elle est tellement plus sympathique
J'ai répondu tout de travers
Je suis ici depuis très longtemps
Elle parle trop

He is quite a well-known actor
Road accidents are the cause of as many deaths as war
She is much more intelligent than her sister
They spent a lot of time discussing over the weekend
That's really stupid
There are more than you think
She bought a ticket just before catching the train
They even bring back souvenirs
This is the very bike he used
such a strangely silent world
She is so much nicer
I replied in a quite confused way
I have been here for a very long time
She talks too much

A number of degree adverbs also function as quantifiers modifying nouns (see Chapter 6.9):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>adverbs</th>
<th>nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assez d'excuses</td>
<td>enough excuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autant d'argent</td>
<td>as much money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beaucoup de clients</td>
<td>many customers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6.3 Comparative and superlative forms of adverbs

In English, the majority of adverbs can be made into comparative forms by putting 'more', 'less' or 'as' in front of them, and into superlative forms by putting 'the most' or 'the least' in front of them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These days I can remember it</td>
<td>De nos jours je m'en souviens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more easily (than I used to)</td>
<td>plus facilement (qu'auparavant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less easily (than I used to)</td>
<td>moins facilement (qu'auparavant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as easily (as I used to)</td>
<td>aussi facilement (qu'auparavant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A small set of English adverbs, however, have special comparative and superlative forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She finishes</td>
<td>Cette fenêtre-ci ouvre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faster</td>
<td>le plus facilement (de toutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the fastest</td>
<td>le moins facilement (de toutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well</td>
<td>moins bien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better</td>
<td>le mieux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the best</td>
<td>le moins bien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>badly</td>
<td>moins bien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worse</td>
<td>le meilleur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the worst</td>
<td>le moins bon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar pattern exists in French where the majority of adverbs can be made into comparative forms by putting the degree adverbs plus, moins or aussi in front of the adverb, and into superlative forms by putting le plus or le moins in front of the adverb. In the latter case le plus and le moins do not change in gender and number:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De nos jours je m'en souviens</td>
<td>Cette fenêtre-ci ouvre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus facilement (qu'auparavant)</td>
<td>le plus facilement (de toutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moins facilement (qu'auparavant)</td>
<td>le moins facilement (de toutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aussi facilement (qu'auparavant)</td>
<td>le moins facilement (de toutes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.4 bien 'well', mieux 'better', mal 'badly', pis 'worse'

One adverb in French has special comparative and superlative forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bien</td>
<td>mal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well</td>
<td>badly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mieux</td>
<td>pis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better</td>
<td>worse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elle chante bien mieux moins bien le mieux le moins bien
She sings well better less well the best the least well

The adverb mal 'badly' has two sets of comparative and superlative forms, one regular and one irregular:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mal (badly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus mal worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le plus mal the worst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moins mal less badly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le moins mal the least badly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irregular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pis worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le pis the worst</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

pis and le pis only occur these days in fixed expressions like:

tant pis
Les choses vont de mal en pis
(or de pis en pis)
qui pis est, . . .
au pis aller
en mettant tout au pis, . . .
too bad
Things are going from bad to worse
what's worse, . . .
if the worse comes to the worst
at the worst, . . .

5.6.S beaucoup 'much', plus 'more', peu 'little', moins 'less'
The comparative and superlative forms of the degree adverb beaucoup are plus and le plus (the final s is pronounced except in front of words beginning with a consonant); the comparative and superlative forms of the degree adverb peu are moins and le moins:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elle mange</th>
<th>Elle mange</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ beaucoup plus [s]</td>
<td>[ peu moins (de toutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le plus [s] (de toutes)</td>
<td>1 aussi peu (que moi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autant (que moi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She eats</td>
<td>She eats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot more</td>
<td>little less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the most (of all)</td>
<td>the least (of all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as much (as me)</td>
<td>as little (as me)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

plus and moins are also used in expressions like:

De plus en plus de femmes enceintes veulent connaître le sexe de leur bébé
More and more pregnant women want to know what sex their baby is

De moins en moins de femmes enceintes fument
Fewer and fewer pregnant women smoke
I 10 Adverbs

**Plus** on est âgé *plus* on a de difficultés à s'adapter au changement
*The older one is, the more difficulty one has adapting to change*

**Moins** on a de revenus *moins* on a de choix dans la vie
*The less wealthy one is, the fewer choices one has in life*

Elle est **encore plus** talentueuse que je n’avais pensé
*She is even more talented than I had thought*

Ce roman est **encore moins** lisible que je ne croyais
*This novel is even less readable than I had thought*

5.6.6 Difference between **meilleur(e)(s)** and **mieux**, and **le/la/les meilleur(e)(s)**

*meilleur(e)(s)* and *le/la/les meilleur(e)(s)* are the comparative and superlative forms respectively of the adjective *bon* 'good', *mieux* and *le mieux* are the comparative and superlative forms respectively of the adverb *bien* 'well':

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>bon</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>meilleur(s)</th>
<th>meilleure(s)</th>
<th>better</th>
<th>le meilleur</th>
<th>la meilleure</th>
<th>les meilleur(e)s</th>
<th>the best</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>bien</td>
<td>well</td>
<td>mieux</td>
<td></td>
<td>better</td>
<td>le mieux</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Il désire avoir une **meilleure** place
*He wants to have a better seat*

Ces marchandises sont **meilleures**
*These goods are better*

Elle se habille **mieux** que les autres
*She dresses better than the others*

Elle se habille **le mieux** de toutes
*She dresses the best of all*

Since the adverb *bien* 'well' can also sometimes function as an adjective close in meaning to *bon*, particularly with *être*, there are contexts where *meilleur* and *mieux* are both possible:

Tout est **bien** / Tout est **mieux**
*Everything is fine/Everything is better*

Tout est **bon** / Tout est **meilleur**
*Everything is good/Everything is better*

Elle est **bien** comme directeur / Elle est **mieux** comme directeur
*She is fine as a director/She is better as a director*

Elle est **bonne** comme directeur / Elle est **meilleure** comme directeur
*She is good as a director/She is better as a director*

On est **bien** ici / On est **mieux** ici
*We’re fine here/We’re better here*

C’est **bon** ici / C’est **meilleur** ici
*It’s good here/It’s better here*

5.6.7 Form and uses of **tout**

*tout* can function as a determiner, a quantifier, a pronoun and an adverb. It behaves differently with respect to agreement in each of these roles, so it is important to distinguish them.
tout as a determiner

tout is a determiner in constructions like the following. Here there is no article and tout agrees with the noun which it determines:

- Tout parent veut le bien de son enfant
  Every parent wants what is best for his or her child

- Toutes taxes comprises
  All taxes included

- Les repas sont servis à toute heure
  Meals are served at any time

- Ils sont venus à toute vitesse
  They came as quickly as they could

- Un tel costume convient à toute occasion
  Such a suit can be worn on any occasion

tout as a quantifier

tout is a quantifier (see Chapter 6.9) in the following examples. Its translation equivalent in English is usually 'all'. It agrees with the noun which it modifies:

- Tous les garçons sont arrivés
  All the boys have arrived

- Toutes les chansons qu'ils passent sur cette chaîne sont dépassées
  All the songs they play on that station are out of date

- Il s'en est plaint toute la journée
  He complained about it all day

tout as a pronoun

tout is a pronoun when it is used as a subject, direct object, indirect object or follows a preposition.

When it has the indefinite meaning 'everything, all' it is invariable:

- Tout bien considéré, j'ai décidé de ne pas le faire
  All things considered, I've decided not to do it

- Tu m'avais dit que tout serait réglé avant ce soir
  You told me that everything would be sorted out by this evening

When it refers to people or things mentioned or implied elsewhere in the discourse, it agrees in gender and number with those entities, and takes one of the forms tout, toute, tous, toutes. In this use the final -s of tous is pronounced:

- Nous sommes infiniment redevables à tous (final -s pronounced)
  We are eternally grateful to everyone

- Nous allons chanter tous ensemble (final -s pronounced)
  We'll all sing together

- Je n'aime plus ces chansons. Toutes sont dépassées
  I don't like these songs anymore. They are all out of date
112 *Adverbs*

*tout* as an adverb

*tout* is an adverb when it modifies another adverb, a preposition or an adjective. It has the meaning of 'completely, very'.

In front of an adverb or preposition it is invariable:

*Elle chante tout bas*
*She is singing very quietly*

*Son succès était tout bonnement la meilleure surprise de l’année*
*His success was quite simply the best surprise of the year*

*Tu fais tout de travers*
*You do everything the wrong way round*

In front of an adjective it agrees if the adjective is feminine and begins with a consonant:

*Les petites filles étaient toutes désespérées par l’annonce de la directrice*
*The little girls were completely taken aback by the headmistress’s announcement*

*Tes sœurs sont toutes prêtes à venir te rejoindre*
*Your sisters are quite ready to come out and pin you*

Agreement is optional in front of adjectives which are feminine and begin with a vowel or a silent *h*:

*Tu sais bien que ta sœur serait tout (or toute) heureuse de te revoir*
*You know full well that your sister would be delighted to see you again*

*Les petites chattes étaient tout (or toutes) excitées par les mouvements de la bobine de fil*
*The little kittens were thoroughly excited by the movements of the cotton reel*

5.6.8 *Time adverbs*

Adverbs which indicate the time at which something takes place, or the duration or frequency of an event, are time adverbs (as shown in Table 5.C):

*L’image est nette à présent*
*The picture is clear now*

*Il y est toujours*
*He is still there*

*Soudain il y a eu comme un déplacement d’air*
*Suddenly there was a kind of movement of air*
### TABLE 5.C Typical time adverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical time adverbs</th>
<th>Ending in -ment</th>
<th>Invariable phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alors <strong>then, at that time</strong> (can also be a sentence-modifying adverb - see 5.6.17)</td>
<td>soudain <strong>suddenly</strong></td>
<td>à présent <strong>at present</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aujourd'hui <strong>today</strong></td>
<td>souven <strong>often</strong></td>
<td>dès lors <strong>from then on</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auparavant <strong>beforehand</strong></td>
<td>tantôt tantôt . . . tantôt <strong>this afternoon one minute . . . the next . . .</strong></td>
<td>d'un instant à l'autre <strong>at any moment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aussitôt <strong>immediately</strong></td>
<td>tard <strong>late</strong></td>
<td>longtemps <strong>a long time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autrefois <strong>in the past</strong></td>
<td>tô <strong>early</strong></td>
<td>maintenant <strong>now</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bientôt <strong>soon</strong></td>
<td>toujours <strong>always; still</strong></td>
<td>naguère <strong>in the recent past</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>déjà <strong>already</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>parfois <strong>sometimes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demain <strong>tomorrow</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>quelquefois <strong>sometimes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depuis <strong>since then</strong></td>
<td>actuellement <strong>currently</strong></td>
<td>en présent <strong>at present</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>désormais <strong>henceforth</strong></td>
<td>dernièrement <strong>recently</strong></td>
<td>dès lors <strong>from then on</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dorénavant <strong>henceforth</strong></td>
<td>fréquemment <strong>frequently</strong></td>
<td>d'un instant à l'autre <strong>at any moment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encore <strong>again; still; yet</strong> (can also be a sentence-modifying adverb - see 5.6.17)</td>
<td>précédemment <strong>previously</strong></td>
<td>longtemps <strong>a long time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enfin <strong>finally</strong></td>
<td>prochainement <strong>soon</strong></td>
<td>maintenant <strong>now</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensuite <strong>afterwards</strong></td>
<td>récemment <strong>recently</strong></td>
<td>par la suite <strong>subsequently</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entre-temps <strong>meanwhile</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>naguère <strong>in the recent past</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hier <strong>yesterday</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>parfois <strong>sometimes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>quelquefois <strong>sometimes</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adverbs

Representative examples:

- Actuellement il sort avec ma sœur  
  Currently, he's going out with my sister
- Il l'avait rencontrée deux ans auparavant  
  He had met her two years before
- Dès lors il voulait passer sa vie avec elle  
  From then on he wanted to spend his life with her
- Elle s'en est rendu compte aussitôt  
  She realized immediately
- Ensuite il ne s'est rien passé  
  Afterwards nothing happened
- Entre-temps elle avait rencontré quelqu'un d'autre  
  Meanwhile she had met someone else
- Son sourire n'a plus été le même par la suite  
  His smile was never the same afterwards
- Nous avons parlé longtemps  
  We spoke for a long time
- Le bureau occupe deux étages, naguère habités  
  The office occupies two floors, formerly living accommodation
- Quelquefois on me conduisait à Roubaix  
  Sometimes they took me to Roubaix
- J'ai souvent voulu le faire  
  I've often wanted to do it
- Sors tout de suite  
  Get out of here immediately

5.6.9 alors

alors has two distinct adverbial uses. One as a time adverb meaning 'then, at that time':

Il était alors directeur d'une petite agence immobilière en province
At that time he was the manager of an estate agency in a small town

In this use it can appear in the middle of a clause, as in the above example (for the position of adverbs see 5.7).

Its other use is as a sentence-modifying adverb meaning 'so', which occurs at the beginning of a clause. This use is as frequent in spoken French as 'so' is in spoken English:

- Alors, quoi de neuf?  
  So, what's new?
- Alors, qu'est-ce que tu en penses?  
  So, what do you think about it?

5.6.10 encore and toujours

encore and toujours have several meanings, and overlap in one of those meanings, which makes them difficult for the learner. Both encore and toujours can mean 'still' in clauses which express an ongoing state of affairs:

- Est-il encore/toujours là?  
  Is he still here?  
  (His being here is an ongoing state of affairs)
- Elle se plaint encore/toujours  
  She is still complaining  
  (Her complaining is an ongoing state of affairs)

In clauses which describe a completed action, or the potential for the completion of an action, however, encore means 'again':

Encore une fois  
Again, one more time
Il a encore perdu sa clé  
(His losing of the key is a completed action)

J'ai peur de m'évanouir encore  
(Although I haven't done so yet, fainting has the potential for being a completed action)

He has lost his key again

I am afraid of fainting again

Note that if encore modifies the first clause, which expresses a state of affairs, it could mean either 'still' or 'again': j'ai encore peur de m'évanouir 'I'm still afraid of fainting' or 'Once again I am afraid of fainting'.

Where encore modifies noun phrases or other adverbs it means 'still more, further':

Encore du pain, s'il vous plaît  
(He wants more bread)

More bread, please

 Ils ont roulé encore dix ou vingt kilomètres  
(They've travelled ten or twenty kilometres)

They travelled a further ten or twenty kilometres

Elle est encore plus douée que sa sœur  
(She's even more gifted than her sister)

She is even more gifted than her sister

J'aime encore mieux votre idée que la mienne  
(I like your idea even more than mine)

I like your idea even more than mine

toujours, in addition to meaning 'still', can also mean 'always':

Elles ont toujours refusé de me parler  
(They have always refused to talk to me)

They have always refused to talk to me

On s'efforçait depuis toujours de me le cacher  
(They had always tried to hide it from me)

They had always tried to hide it from me

In sentences negated by pas, if toujours precedes the pas it means 'still', if it follows it means 'always':

Il n'est toujours pas arrivé  
(He still hasn't arrived)

He still hasn't arrived

Il n'est pas toujours arrivé  
(He didn't always arrive/turn up)

He didn't always arrive/turn up

Encore can only follow pas and means 'yet':

Il n'est pas encore arrivé  
(He hasn't yet arrived)

He hasn't yet arrived

5.6.1 ensuite and puis

ensuite and puis both mean 'afterwards, then', but ensuite is a time adverb which can occur in the middle of a clause (for the position of adverbs see 5.7), while puis is a coordinating conjunction which can occur only at the beginning of a clause (see Chapter 17.2):

Il a payé l'addition, et il est ensuite parti  
(He paid the bill, and afterwards left)

He paid the bill, and afterwards left

Il a payé l'addition, puis il est parti  
(He paid the bill, then he left)

He paid the bill, then he left

5.6.12 jamais

jamais is mostly used with ne to mean 'never' (see Chapter 16.9). It can, however, also mean 'ever' in questions, in si-clauses or when it is a complement to sans:
Adverbs

As-tu jamais vu une chose pareille?
Have you ever seen anything like it?

Si jamais tu rencontres Jules, tu lui diras bonjour de ma part
If you ever meet Jules, say hello to him from me

Il a fait cet exercice cent fois sans jamais se tromper
He’s done that exercise a hundred times without ever making a mistake

5.6.13 tard versus en retard
Both of these terms translate as Tate’ into English. However, en retard is restricted in meaning to the idea of 'not on time':

Tu es de nouveau en retard. Tu resteras après l’école
You are late again. You'll stay behind after school

tard has a wider range of meaning:

Il est déjà tard, nous devons rentrer
It's already late, we must go home

Pour toi, il est trop tard. Tu aurais dû le faire il y a plusieurs années
For you it’s too late. You should have done it several years ago

Il n’est jamais trop tard
It's never too late

5.6.14 tout à l’heure
The meaning of tout à l’heure is determined by the tense of the verb in the clause which contains it. If the verb is in a past tense it means 'just now'; if the verb is in a present or future tense it means 'presently':

Je suis arrivé tout à l’heure
I arrived just now

Elle va arriver tout à l’heure
She will arrive presently

5.6.15 Choice of some time adverbs relative to the moment of speaking
The meaning of some time adverbs is determined by their relation to the time of speaking. If someone says:

Je suis arrivé hier
I arrived yesterday

hier refers to the day before the day on which the person is speaking. Similarly, if someone says:

J’arriverai demain
I'll arrive tomorrow

demain refers to the day after the day on which the person is speaking. By contrast, if someone says:

Je suis arrivé la veille
I arrived the day before
they are referring to a day before some point prior to the time when they are speaking. Similarly in:

Je suis arrivé le lendemain
*I arrived the day after*

*le lendemain* refers to the day after some point prior to the moment of speaking.

Different series of adverbs must be used depending on whether they refer to before or after the actual moment of speaking, or whether they refer to before or after some point prior to the moment of speaking. Examples are presented in Tables 5.D and 5.E.

**TABLE 5.D Adverbs and time reference 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More distant past</th>
<th>Recent past</th>
<th>Concurrent with the time of speaking</th>
<th>Near future</th>
<th>More distant future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>avant-hier&lt;br&gt;the day before yesterday</td>
<td>hier&lt;br&gt;yesterday</td>
<td>aujourd'hui&lt;br&gt;today</td>
<td>demain&lt;br&gt;tomorrow</td>
<td>après-demain&lt;br&gt;the day after tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alors&lt;br&gt;then</td>
<td>maintenant&lt;br&gt;now</td>
<td>bientôt&lt;br&gt;soon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hier matin&lt;br&gt;yesterday morning, midday, etc.</td>
<td>ce matin&lt;br&gt;this morning, midi&lt;br&gt;this afternoon, this evening</td>
<td>demain matin&lt;br&gt;tomorrow morning, midday, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autrefois&lt;br&gt;jadis (literary) formerly</td>
<td>tout à l'heure&lt;br&gt;just now</td>
<td>actuellement&lt;br&gt;currently</td>
<td>tout à l'heure&lt;br&gt;('tantôt' in parts of France, in Belgium and Quebec) presently</td>
<td>à l'avenir&lt;br&gt;in the future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 5.E Adverbs and time reference 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More distant past</th>
<th>Recent past</th>
<th>Prior to the time of speaking</th>
<th>Near future</th>
<th>More distant future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>l'avant-veille</td>
<td>la veille</td>
<td>ce jour-là</td>
<td>le lendemain</td>
<td>le surlendemain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the day before</td>
<td>the day before</td>
<td>that day</td>
<td>the day after</td>
<td>the day after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'avant-veille</td>
<td>la veille au matin</td>
<td>ce matin-là</td>
<td>le lendemain matin</td>
<td>le lendemain matin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the day before</td>
<td>the day before the morning</td>
<td>that morning</td>
<td>the morning of the day after</td>
<td>the morning of the day after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la veille à midi</td>
<td>ce midi-là</td>
<td>cet après-midi-là</td>
<td>le lendemain midi</td>
<td>le lendemain midi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>midday of the day before</td>
<td>that after noon</td>
<td>that afternoon</td>
<td>midday of the day after</td>
<td>midday of the day after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans l'après-midi de la veille</td>
<td>ce soir-là</td>
<td>le lendemain soir</td>
<td>le lendemain soir</td>
<td>le lendemain soir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the afternoon of the day before</td>
<td>that evening</td>
<td>the evening of the day after</td>
<td>the evening of the day after</td>
<td>the evening of the day after</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.6.16 Place adverbs

Adverbs which describe the place where an event occurs are place adverbs:

- J'entends des pas précipités dehors
  
  *I hear hurried steps outside*

- On m'a tiré en arrière
  
  *I was pulled backwards*

Representative examples:

- Nous voulons habiter ailleurs
  
  *We want to live elsewhere*

- Vous entrez dedans
  
  *You go inside*

- Quelqu'un, dehors, s'est inquiété
  
  *Someone, outside, got nervous*

- Derrière il y a un champ de betteraves
  
  *Behind there is a beet field*

- Vous trouverez l'étiquette dessous
  
  *You'll find the label on the bottom*

- L'adresse est marquée dessus
  
  *The address is written on the top arm in arm*

- bras dessus bras dessous
  
  *Papers were left almost everywhere*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical place adverbs</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ailleurs</td>
<td>elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dedans</td>
<td>inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en dedans</td>
<td>inwardly; facing inwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au-dedans</td>
<td>on the inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>là-dedans</td>
<td>in there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dehors</td>
<td>outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en dehors</td>
<td>outwardly; facing outwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au-dehors</td>
<td>on the outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>derrière</td>
<td>behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par derrière</td>
<td>from behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dessous</td>
<td>underneath, on the bottom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en dessous</td>
<td>underneath, on the back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au-dessous</td>
<td>below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par-dessous</td>
<td>underneath (implying motion: passer par-dessous 'to go underneath')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dessus</td>
<td>over, on the top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en dessus</td>
<td>on the top, on the front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au-dessus</td>
<td>above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par-dessus</td>
<td>across (sauter par-dessus 'to jump across')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ci-contre</td>
<td>opposite (on a page)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ci-dessous</td>
<td>below (in a piece of writing: voir ci-dessous 'see below')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ci-dessus</td>
<td>above (voir ci-dessus 'see above')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ci-après</td>
<td>later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ci-devant</td>
<td>earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en bas</td>
<td>(down) below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en haut</td>
<td>(up) above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 5.F Typical place adverbs
5.6.17 Sentence-modifying adverbs

Sentence-modifying adverbs fall into two types. Those which establish a link between what has been said already and what is being said now:

La porte de la pièce est fermée. Je l’ai pourtant laissée ouverte derrière moi
The door to the room is closed. Yet I left it open behind me
(pourtant highlights the contrast between a previous state of affairs and the current state of affairs)

Les arguments en faveur de cette ligne politique sont clairs. Nous devons donc la suivre de près
The arguments in favour of this policy are clear. Therefore we should follow it closely
done signals a causal link between the first sentence and the second)

The second group of sentence-modifying adverbs express the speaker's assessment of the probability or desirability of the event described by the sentence being true:

Elle était pauvre, probablement She was probably poor
(probablement is the speaker's judgement of the likelihood of her being poor)

Je n’ai malheureusement pas pu venir Unfortunately I wasn’t able to come
(malheureusement is an expression of the speaker's regret at not being able to come)

See table 5.G for typical cases.

Representative examples:

J’ai beaucoup travaillé pour terminer à temps. Cependant, ils n’ont pas voulu me payer mon treizième mois
/ worked very hard to finish in time. Yet they refused to pay me my bonus

M Bergamote a expliqué la situation très clairement. En effet, nous devrons prendre une décision aujourd’hui même
Mr Bergamote explained the situation very clearly. Indeed, we must take a decision this very day

Jouer en Bourse est une bonne occupation pour ceux qui s’y connaissent. En revanche, cela peut être une catastrophe pour ceux qui n’y connaissent rien
Playing the Stock Exchange is a sensible activity for those who know what they’re doing. On the other hand, it can be a catastrophe for those who don’t

Le bateau a coulé au mois de juin. Néanmoins, la compagnie d’assurance établissait toujours les faits au mois de décembre
The boat sank in June. Nonetheless, the insurance company was still trying to establish the facts in December

Mon fils ne m’écrit jamais. Sa sœur, par contre, me tient au courant de tout ce qu’elle fait
My son never writes to me. His sister, on the other hand, keeps me informed of everything she is doing
Alors, que préférait-elle?  
So, what did she prefer?

Ils me répondraient, bien sûr, que j’aurais pu le faire depuis longtemps  
They would reply, of course, that I could have done it long before

**TABLE 5.G Typical sentence-linking and speaker-oriented adverbs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical sentence-linking adverbs</th>
<th>Typical speaker-oriented adverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aïnsi <strong>so, in the same way</strong></td>
<td>alors <strong>so</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(can also be a manner adverb - see 5.6.1)</td>
<td>(can also be a time adverb - see 5.6.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au contraire <strong>conversely</strong></td>
<td>assurément <strong>surely</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aussi <strong>so, thus</strong></td>
<td>bien sûr <strong>of course</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(can also be a degree adverb - see 5.6.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cependant <strong>yet</strong></td>
<td>certaintement <strong>certainly</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d’ailleurs <strong>moreover, what’s more</strong></td>
<td>certes <strong>certainly</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encore <strong>for all that</strong></td>
<td>du moins <strong>at least</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(can also be a time adverb - see 5.6.8)</td>
<td>(expresses the speaker’s reservation - au moins is a degree adverb (see 5.6.2) used when ‘at least’ is concrete: au moins dix fois ‘at least ten times’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en effet <strong>indeed</strong></td>
<td>en général <strong>in general</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en revanche <strong>on the contrary</strong></td>
<td>évidemment <strong>evidently</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en somme <strong>in sum, briefly</strong></td>
<td>heureusement <strong>fortunately</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>néanmoins <strong>nonetheless</strong></td>
<td>peut-être <strong>perhaps</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par conséquent <strong>consequently</strong></td>
<td>probablement <strong>probably</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en conséquence <strong>in consequence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par contre <strong>on the other hand</strong></td>
<td>sans doute <strong>doubtlessly</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plutôt <strong>rather</strong></td>
<td>seulement <strong>only</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pourtant <strong>yet</strong></td>
<td>soit <strong>so be it</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quand même <strong>all the same</strong></td>
<td>sûrement <strong>surely</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toutefois <strong>nevertheless</strong></td>
<td>vraisemblablement <strong>in all likelihood</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adverbs

Je n'aurais certainement pas pu le comprendre
*I certainly couldn't have understood it*

Elle ne s'en doutait certes pas
*She certainly didn't suspect it*

Le prof a du moins cette qualité qu'il articule bien
*The teacher has at least this quality, that he speaks very clearly*

C'est sans doute un ami
*He's probably a friend*

Il a entrepris cette démarche avec de très bonnes intentions. Seulement, il ne possédait pas les connaissances requises
*He took these steps with the very best of intentions. Only he didn't have the knowledge required*

## 5.7 Location of adverbs

### 5.7.1 Location of adverbs modifying adjectives, prepositions, noun phrases and other adverbs

Adverbs which modify adjectives, prepositions, noun phrases, and other adverbs appear immediately in front of those items:

Je ne suis pas vraiment mauvais  
*I'm not really bad*

Nous irons loin au-delà de la frontière  
*We'll go far beyond the frontier*

Il y a au moins dix ans  
*At least ten years ago*

Je suis ici depuis très longtemps  
*I have been here for a very long time*

### 5.7.2 Location of adverbs modifying verb phrases

Adverbs which modify the verb phrase (manner, degree, some time and place adverbs) and adverbs which modify the sentence may have several possible locations.

Manner, degree and time adverbs which consist of just one word usually immediately follow the tense-marked verb:

Elle a soigneusement étendu son tailleur sur le lit  
*She carefully laid out her suit on the bed*

On ramène parfois des souvenirs  
*We sometimes bring back souvenirs*

J'ai souvent voulu le faire  
*I have often wanted to do it*

Ils ont beaucoup discuté pendant le weekend  
*They discussed a lot during the weekend*
Il a mal lu l’étiquette
He misread the label

Elles ont toujours refusé de me parler
They have always refused to talk to me

NB: With verbs in simple tenses it is normal in French for these adverbs to occur between the verb and its complement, but not between the subject and the verb: the reverse is the case in English:

On ramène parfois des souvenirs NOT *On parfois ramène des souvenirs
Je veux souvent le faire NOT *Je souvent veux le faire
Elles refusent toujours de me parler NOT *Elles toujours refusent de me parler

Usually manner, degree and time adverbs consisting of just one word and modifying the verb phrase can also appear at the end of the clause:

Elle a étendu son tailleur soigneusement
On ramène des souvenirs parfois

But some appear most naturally in a clause-internal position after the verb. This tends to be the case for short monosyllabic adverbs: bien, mal, vite, trop, tant. An exception, though, is time adverbs which designate specific moments in the past or future: hier ‘yesterday’, demain ‘tomorrow’, la veille ‘the day before’, and so on. These usually appear at the beginning or the end of a clause, not in the middle:

J’ai ramassé les clefs hier OR Hier j’ai ramassé les clefs
I picked up the keys yesterday

La veille elle avait vendu sa maison OR Elle avait vendu sa maison la veille
She had sold her house the day before

Adverbs of manner, degree and time which consist of more than a single word, together with place adverbs as a class, usually come at the beginning or end of a clause, not in the middle:

Il a emporté le dossier à dessin
He took the file away on purpose
Ici tout le monde fait la vaisselle
Everybody does the washing-up here
Nous voulons habiter ailleurs
We want to live elsewhere
Derrière il y a un champ de betteraves
Behind there is a beet field
Vous trouverez l’étiquette dessous
You’ll find the label on the bottom
On a laissé des papiers un peu partout
Papers were left almost everywhere

It is always possible, however, for such adverbs to occur clause-internally with heavy pausing on either side (indicated by commas in written French). This has the effect of stressing the adverb:

J’ai ramassé, hier, les clefs
Quelqu’un, dehors, s’est inquiété
Il y a, derrière, un champ de betteraves

5.7.3 Location of adverbs modifying sentences
Sentence-modifying adverbs can usually appear at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of clauses:
There is a tendency in French not to put short constituents at the end of a sentence where a long constituent precedes. This can sometimes determine a preferred location for adverbs. For example, it is less natural to say:

Il s’ensuit donc que nous devons la suivre de près donc

where the short donc is in sentence-final position and is preceded by the long constituent que nous devons la suivre de près, than:

Il s’ensuit donc que nous devons la suivre de près

In a sentence like:

On a laissé des papiers partout

the place adverb partout would normally appear at the end of the clause, rather than in the middle. But if the direct object is made longer, it becomes more natural to put it at the end, leaving partout in the middle:

On a laissé partout des papiers couverts de gribouillis

5.7.4 Inversion of subject and verb after some sentence-initial adverbs

In formal written French, a small set of adverbs (drawn from several of the classes described in this chapter) may provoke subject-verb inversion when they occur in sentence-initial position. Inversion is likely with the following adverbs:

A peine Pierre s’est-il assis qu’on lui a demandé de se déplacer
Hardly had Pierre sat down when he was asked to move

Peut-être Alice arrivera-t-elle demain
Perhaps Alice will arrive tomorrow

Sans doute vous a-t-elle écrit
Doubtless she has written to you

Toujours est-il que je ne peux pas vous payer
The fact remains that I cannot pay you

(For the properties of subject-verb inversion see Chapter 14.2.3.)

An alternative in the case of peut-être and sans doute is the use of a following que without inversion:
**Peut-être** qu'Alice arrivera demain
**Sans doute** qu'elle vous a écrit

In spoken French *peut-être que* and *sans doute que* are frequent, but inversion is not, speakers locating the adverbs in a different position, or simply not inverting after the adverb.

Other adverbs after which inversion is possible (but less likely) in formal written French are:

- **Ainsi** a-t-elle gagné le prix
  *In that way she won the prize*
- Il n'a plus d'argent; aussi doit-il rentrer
  *He has no more money; so he must go home*
- Du **moins** ont-ils gardé leur calme
  *At least they kept their cool*
- Encore ne suis-je là que pour prendre des notes
  *For all that, I'm here just to take notes*
- **En vain** a-t-il cherché
  *In vain he searched*
- **Rarement** trouve-t-on une affaire pareille
  *Rarely does one find such a bargain*
6

Numbers, measurements, time and quantifiers

6.1 Cardinal numbers

Numbers like *un*, *deux*, *trois*, etc., are called cardinal numbers:

- **0**  zéro
- **1**  un  (*masculine*) is used in contexts like the following: *il porte le numéro 'un'*, 'He is wearing the number "one"'; *à la page un*, 'on page one'; *la partie un*, 'part one'. It is also used as a masculine pronoun: *As-tu un stylo? Pierre en a un* 'Have you got a pen? Pierre has one'.
- **2**  deux
- **3**  trois
- **4**  quatre  *quatre* is invariable and never takes a plural *-s*: *les quatre chats* 'the four cats'.
- **5**  cinq  The final *q* of *cinq* is always pronounced [k], except when it precedes *cent*, where it is not pronounced: *cinq cents*.
- **6**  six  *six* is pronounced with a final [s] when it is at the end of a phrase: *j'en ai vu six* 'I saw six'; it is pronounced with a final [z] when it precedes a noun beginning with a vowel: *six hommes* 'six men'. When it precedes a noun beginning with a consonant the *x* is not pronounced: *six joueurs* 'six players'.
- **7**  sept
- **8**  huit  *huit* is pronounced with a final [t] when it is at the end of a phrase: *j'en ai vu huit* 'I saw eight', and when it precedes a noun beginning with a vowel: *huit entreprises ont fermé* 'eight firms have closed'. When it precedes a noun beginning with a consonant the *t* is not pronounced: *huit semaines plus tard* 'eight weeks later'.
neuf  The final / of neuf is always pronounced [f], except in neuf ans 'nine years' and neuf hemes 'nine hours, nine o'clock' where it is pronounced [v].

dix  The pronunciation of dix is the same as for six.

onze  douze is invariable, and never takes a plural -s: douze hommes 'twelve men'.

douze

treize

quatorze

quinze

seize

dix-sept

dix-huit  The pronunciation of dix-huit is the same as for huit.

dix-neuf  The pronunciation of dix-neuf is the same as for neuf.

vingt  vingt is pronounced like vin, with the following exceptions: it is pronounced with a final [l] when it precedes a noun beginning with a vowel: vingt exercices 'twenty exercises', and also in the numbers 22-29 inclusive.

vingt et un  vingt et unie), trente et unie), quarante et unie), etc. are used under the same conditions described for unie).

vingt-deux

vingt-trois

vingt-neuf
	
trente

trente et un

trente-deux

trente-neuf

quarante

quarante et un

quarante-deux

quarante-neuf

cinquante
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>French Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>cinquante et un</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>cinquante-deux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>cinquante-neuf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>soixante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>soixante et un</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>soixante deux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>soixante-neuf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>soixante-dix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Belgian and Swiss French, the word **septante** is used instead of **soixante-dix**: septante et un, septante-deux, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>French Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>soixante et onze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>soixante-douze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>soixante-treize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>soixante-dix-neuf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>quatre-vingts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>quatre-vingt-un</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>quatre-vingt-deux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>quatre-vingt-neuf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>quatre-vingt-dix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Belgian and Swiss French, the word **nonante** is used instead of **quatre-vingt-dix**: nonante-un, nonante-deux, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>French Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>quatre-vingt-onze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>quatre-vingt-douze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>quatre-vingt-treize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>quatre-vingt-dix-neuf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>cent un</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'one hundred, a hundred' is simply **cent**: 'a hundred times' **cent fois**

**cent une réponses** 'a hundred and one answers'
Cardinal numbers

102 cent deux
111 cent onze

The [t] of cent is NOT pronounced in cent un, cent huit, cent onze, but it is pronounced when followed by a non-numeral noun beginning with a vowel: cent ans 'a hundred years'.

200 deux cents
201 deux cent un
202 deux cent deux

1000 mille

'millefois'

1001 mille un

1 100 onze cents or mille cent

'There are two ways of describing numbers between 1100 and 1999: onze cents or mille cent (1100); dix-huit cent soixante or mille huit cent soixante (1860); dix-neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf or mille neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf (1999), etc.'

1 101 onze cent un OR mille cent un
1 200 douze cents OR mille deux cents
1 201 douze cent un OR mille deux cent un
1 500 quinze cents OR mille cinq cents

2 000 deux mille
2 001 deux mille un
2 101 deux mille cent un
1 000 000 un million
1 201 101 un million deux cent mille cent un
1 000 000 000 un milliard

6.1.1 et in cardinal numbers

et is used for cardinal numbers ending in -1 between 21 and 71 inclusive (note the absence of hyphens):

21 vingt et un
31 trente et un
41  quarante et un
51  cinquante et un
61  soixante et un
71  soixante et onze

*et* is NOT used in numbers ending in -1 between 81 and 101 inclusive (note the use of hyphens in the case of 81 and 91), nor in 1 001, 1 000 001 and 1 000 000 001:

81  quatre-vingt-un
91  quatre-vingt-onze
101  cent un
1001  mille un
1 000 001  un million un
1 000 000 001  un milliard un

### 6.1.2 Hyphens in written cardinal numbers

Compound cardinal numbers less than 100 are linked by hyphen (other than those ending in -1 between 21 and 71 inclusive):

17  dix-sept 32  trente-deux
18  dix-huit 33  trente-trois
19  dix-neuf
22  vingt-deux 72  soixante-douze
23  vingt-trois 80  quatre-vingts
81  quatre-vingt-un

But cardinal numbers of 100 and above are not linked to other numbers by hyphen, in compound numbers:

101  cent un 520  cinq cent vingt
102  cent deux 522  cinq cent vingt-deux
192  cent quatre-vingt-douze
10 340  dix mille trois cent quarante

### 6.1.3 Plurals in cardinal numbers

The numbers *quatre-vingts* and *deux cents, trois cents, quatre cents*, etc., take a plural *-s* in the written language when they are used in isolation or phrase-final position:

J'en ai vu quatre-vingts 7 saw eighty
La capacité de la salle est de huit cents The room can hold eight hundred

and when they precede non-numeral nouns:

trois cents visiteurs three hundred visitors
quatre-vingts candidats eighty applicants

However, when these numbers precede other numerals, there is generally no plural *-s*:

quatre-vingt-deux
quatre-vingt-trois
Cardinal numbers

131

deu x cent deux
deu x cent trois
trois cent mille

unless those numerals are millions or milliards:

deu x cents millions d'habitants
cin cents milliards de francs

two hundred million inhabitants
five hundred billion francs

mille never takes a plural -s:

mille personnes
dix mille gagnants
deu x mille vingt lecteurs

a thousand people
ten thousand winners
two thousand and twenty readers

6.1.4 When to use figures and when to use words

Numbers are usually written in words, except in the following cases:

in scientific or academic texts
in dates: Elle arrive le 25 mars 1996 'She's arriving on the 25th of March 1996'
in prices: Cela coûte 32 francs 'That costs 32 francs'
in weights and measures: Il mesure 1 mètre 50 'He is 1 metre 50 tall'
describing kings and queens: Henri IV 'Henry the Fourth'
in percentages: 22 pour cent '12 per cent'

6.1.5 Conventions for writing cardinal numbers in figures

Where English uses a comma to separate hundreds from thousands, and thousands from millions, French normally uses spaces; and where English uses a full stop to separate whole numbers from decimals, French normally uses a comma:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63,321</td>
<td>63 321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>412,633,221</td>
<td>412 633 221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4,25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.25</td>
<td>0,25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

£4.50 4,50FF/4F50 (the latter is more frequent. FF tends to be restricted to banks)

(For money, see 6.8.)

6.1.6 nombre, chiffre and numéro

nombre refers to a number as a concept:

Pensez à un nombre
nombres entiers
un nombre cardinal

Think of a number
whole numbers
a cardinal number

Le nombre de femmes qui fument a augmenté
The number of women who smoke has increased

chiffre refers to the figures or digits which make up a number; it can also be used to mean 'statistics':
Ecrire un nombre en chiffres et en lettres
To write a number in figures and words

Ces chiffres ne reflètent pas la situation exacte
These figures do not reflect the real situation

 numéro refers to a numbered entity:

un numéro de téléphone a telephone number
le numéro d’une maison a house number
Il porte le numéro un He’s wearing the number one
un numéro d’immatriculation a car number plate

6.1.7 Necessity to use en when numbers are direct objects
The pronoun en must be inserted before the verb when a number on its own (or followed by an adjective, e.g. deux grands) is a direct object:

J’en prends deux (grands), s’il vous plaît
I’ll take two (big ones), please

Elle lui en a offert une douzaine
She offered him a dozen

This is not the case, however, when a number alone (or followed by an adjective) is a subject:

Deux (grands) ont disparu Two (big ones) have disappeared
Une douzaine me suffira A dozen will be enough for me

en must be similarly inserted before the verb when quantifiers like quelques-uns, plusieurs and certains stand alone as direct objects:

J’en ai encore quelques-uns I still have a few
J’en ai encore plusieurs I still have several
J’en ai encore certains I still have some

(For quantifiers, see 6.9.2.)

6.1.8 Non-agreement of direct object numerals with coûter, peser, mesurer
Although past participles normally agree with preceding direct objects (see Chapter 9.3.1), including direct objects involving numerals:

Les cinq cents francs que j’ai gagnés
The five hundred francs I won

with the verbs coûter ‘cost’, peser ‘weigh’, mesurer ‘measure’, and other measure verbs, numerals are normally adverbs rather than direct objects, so there is no agreement when the numeral precedes the past participle:

Les cinq cents francs que cela m’a coûté
The five hundred francs which that cost me

(See Chapter 9.3.5.)

6.1.9 Simple arithmetic (le calcul)

trois et quatre font sept 3 + 4 = 7
(trois plus quatre égale sept)
Ordinal numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>1er/ère</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>2e</td>
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<td>3rd</td>
<td>3e</td>
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<td>100th</td>
<td>100e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000th</td>
<td>1000e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: As in English, the verbs can vary between singular and plural: *trois et quatre font sept* ‘three plus four makes seven’.

### 6.2 Ordinal numbers

Numbers like *premier, deuxième, troisième*, etc., are called ordinal numbers:
6.3 Fractions

6.3.1 Ordinal numbers as fractions

The majority of fractions can be constructed from the ordinal numbers, and are masculine in gender. They are usually introduced by the definite article (as opposed to the indefinite article or absence of article in English):

Le cinquième des élèves ont été recalés
A fifth of the pupils have failed

Les sept dixièmes de la population du monde sont pauvres
Seven-tenths of the world's population are poor

6.3.2 'half, «third', 'quarter'

'Half, 'third', 'quarter' have their own names. 'Half is translated by la moitié (de) when it is a noun (i.e. is followed by de or stands alone):

La moitié des conducteurs ont dépassé la limite de vitesse
Half of all drivers have broken the speed limit

La moitié seront recyclés
Half will be retrained

However, 'half is translated by demi when it is part of a compound noun (and is invariable):

un demi-verre de cognac a half-glass of brandy
une demi-heure a half an hour
la demi-finale the semi-final

It is also translated by demi in compounds involving et, but here it agrees with the preceding noun in gender:

deux heures et demie two and a half hours
un litre et demi one and a half litres
deux kilos et demi two and a half kilos

Some compounds are constructed with invariable mi-:

la mi-trimestre half-term
à mi-chemin half-way
mi-clos half-closed

'Third' is translated by tiers:

Un tiers des étudiants ont des dettes
A third of students are in debt
Les deux tiers des blessés ont été évacués
Two-thirds of the injured were evacuated

NB: le tiers monde 'the Third World'.

'Quarter' is translated by quart:

Un quart seulement des accidents ont lieu sur les autoroutes
Only a quarter of accidents happen on motorways
Les trois quarts étaient des hommes
*Three-quarters were men*

NB: Il est deux heures et quart or Il est deux heures un quart
*It’s quarter past two*

Il est deux heures moins le quart
*It’s quarter to two*

cinq kilos et quart or cinq kilos un quart
*five and a quarter kilos*

(See 6.7 for time.)

### 6.3.3 Verb agreement with fractions

Verbs are usually plural when fractions are subjects and refer to plural entities:

- *Le cinquième (des élèves) ont été recalés*
  *A fifth (of the pupils) have failed*

- *La moitié (des conducteurs) ont dépassé la limite de vitesse*
  *Half (of all drivers) have broken the speed limit*

- *Un tiers (des étudiants) ont des dettes*
  *A third (of students) are in debt*

Verbs are singular when fractions are subjects and refer to singular entities:

- *La moitié (de l'année) est déjà passée*
  *Half (of the year) has already passed*

- *Un tiers (du livre) reste à écrire*
  *A third (of the book) remains to be completed*

### 6.4 Some differences in the use of cardinal and ordinal numbers in French and English

#### 6.4.1 Dates

While English uses ordinal numbers in dates French uses cardinal numbers, with the exception of ‘first’, which is *premier*.

- le premier janvier *the first of January*
- le deuxième février *the second of February*
- le troisième mars *the third of March*

In letter headings the normal way of writing dates is:

- le 1er Janvier 2001
- le 2 février 2001
- le 3 mars 2001

or where the day is included:

- le lundi 1er janvier 2001 or lundi, le 1er janvier 2001
- le vendredi 2 février 2001 or vendredi, le 2 février 2001

NB: Months and days are written with a lower case initial letter in French, but with a capital letter in English.
6.4.2 Kings, queens and popes
As with dates, where English uses ordinal numbers, French uses cardinal numbers, with the exception of ‘first’ premier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>François I</td>
<td>François premier</td>
<td>Elizabeth I</td>
<td>Elizabeth première</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henri II</td>
<td>Henri deux</td>
<td>Louis XIV</td>
<td>Louis quatorze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean XXIII</td>
<td>Jean vingt-trois</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.3 Ordinal number abbreviations
The abbreviated forms of premier, première are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st</th>
<th>1st</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>er</td>
<td>è</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

where er and è are superscripts. The abbreviation for all other ordinal numbers is an e which can either be a superscript or a simple lower case letter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2e</td>
<td>3e</td>
<td>4e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.4 Order of cardinal numbers and adjectives
In English, cardinal numbers follow adjectives:

the last nine chapters
the other four guests
the first three winners

In French they precede adjectives:

les neuf derniers chapitres
les quatre autres invités
les trois premiers gagnants

6.4.5 Page numbers, bus numbers, etc.
As in English, French page numbers, bus numbers and so on are cardinal numbers which follow the noun; un is invariable in this usage. A definite article always accompanies the noun in French:

à la page un on page one
Prenez le trente-deux Catch the number 32
Le train part du quai vingt The train leaves from platform twenty

6.4.6 Addresses
Like English, address numbers are cardinal numbers in French. But the French for 'a', 'b', 'c' is bis, ter, quater:

12, rue Lamarck
12bis, rue Lamarck
12ter, rue Lamarck

NB: In addresses, rue, avenue, boulevard, etc., usually begin with lower case letters.

6.4.7 'hundreds','thousands','millions' and 'billions'
The numeral nouns centaine, millier, million, milliard are always followed by de when they are followed by other nouns:
Cardinal and ordinal numbers in French and English

6.4.8 *mille, milliers, milliards*

These numbers are often confused by English speakers:

*mille* 'thousand' is directly followed by a noun: *mille francs* 'a thousand francs'

*des milliers* 'thousands' is followed by *de* when followed by another noun: *des milliers de francs* 'thousands of francs'

*des milliards* 'billions' is also followed by *de* when followed by another noun: *des milliards de francs* 'billions of francs'

6.4.9 'once','twice','three times', etc.;'both','all three','all four', etc.

Whereas English has the forms 'once', 'twice', then a regular pattern from 'three' onwards: 'three times', 'four times' etc., French has a fully regular pattern from 'one' on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>une fois</td>
<td>once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deux fois</td>
<td>twice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trois fois</td>
<td>three times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quatre fois</td>
<td>four times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

French has alternative forms for 'both', 'all three', 'all four', one with a definite article and one without (found only in formal written French); but from 'all five' onwards the definite article must be used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tous /toutes les deux</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tous/toutes les trois</td>
<td>all three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tous/toutes les quatre</td>
<td>all four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tous/toutes les cinq</td>
<td>all five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tous/toutes les six</td>
<td>all six</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tous les deux sont arrivés
Je les ai invitées toutes les six

Both have arrived
I invited all six

NB: These expressions cannot precede a noun directly. To translate phrases like 'both players', 'all six singers', either use the definite article and a numeral alone: *les deux joueurs, les six chanteuses*:

Les deux joueurs sont arrivés
J'ai invité les six chanteuses

or, when the phrase is in subject position, move the *tous/toutes (les)* X to a position after the verb marked for tense:

Les joueurs sont tous deux arrivés

(See also 6.9.5.)
6.5 Measurements and comparisons

6.5.1 Numbers with length, height, depth etc.

With the verb *être*, numbers specifying length, height, depth, width, distance and so on, are preceded by *de*:

La piscine est longue de 50 mètres
La longueur de la piscine est de 50 mètres
*The swimming pool is 50 metres long*

Cette tour est haute de 20 mètres
La hauteur de cette tour est de 20 mètres
*This tower is 20 metres high*

Le lac est profond de 300 mètres
La profondeur du lac est de 300 mètres
*The lake is 300 metres deep*

Le fleuve est large de 2 kilomètres à cet endroit
La largeur du fleuve à cet endroit est de 2 kilomètres
*The river is 2 kilometres wide at this point*

La distance de Londres à Paris est de 500 kilomètres
*The distance from London to Paris is 500 kilometres*

An alternative way of describing some of these measurements is with the verbs *faire* and *avoir*; in this case *de* precedes *long, haut, large, etc.*, which remain invariable in form:

La piscine fait/a 50 mètres de long
Cette tour fait/a 20 mètres de haut
Le fleuve fait/a 2 kilomètres de large

In talking about how tall people are, the verbs *mesurer, faire* are usually used:

Je mesure 1,97 mètres
*I am 1.97 metres tall*
Elle fait 1,80 mètres
*She is 1.80 metres tall*

The verbs *mesurer, faire* are the equivalent of English 'is' in describing dimensions:

La table mesure (or fait) trois mètres sur deux
*The table is three metres by two*

6.5.2 Numbers in comparisons

When numbers figure in comparisons with the verb *être*, they are often preceded by *de*:

Elle est mon aînée de six ans
*She is six years older than me*

La fenêtre est trop grande de cinq centimètres
*The window is five centimetres too big*

Elle est plus lourde de huit kilos
*She is eight kilograms heavier*
Measurements and comparisons

In some of these cases alternative expressions with *avoir* are possible:

Elle a six ans de plus que moi
J'ai six ans de moins qu'elle

Translating 'more than' and 'less than' into French often causes English speakers some difficulty, because there are two possibilities:

plus de           plus que
moins de         moins que

*plus de, moins de* imply that there is a specific benchmark against which something is measured as being 'more than' or 'less than', and this is often a number:

Elle gagne **plus de** 30 000FF par mois
*She earns more than* 30,000 francs a month
*(30 000FF is the benchmark - she earns more than this)*

Il travaille **moins de** deux heures par jour
*He works less than two hours a day*
*(deux heures is the benchmark - he works less than this)*

Interdit aux **moins de** 15 ans
*Not suitable for children under fifteen*
*(15 ans is the benchmark - below this age, children are not allowed)*

*plus que, moins que* imply a comparison between one person or thing and another, without a specific benchmark being mentioned:

Elle gagne **plus que** moi
*She earns more than me*
*(how much I earn isn’t specified - but she earns more)*

Il travaille **moins que** son frère
*He works less than his brother*
*(how much his brother works isn’t specified - but he works less)*

The difference between the two can be illustrated in the following pair of sentences:

Elle a réuni **plus de** cinquante de ses collègues pour la fête
*She got more than fifty of her colleagues together for the party*
*(cinquante de ses collègues is the benchmark - she managed to persuade more colleagues than this to come)*

Elle a gagné **plus que** tous ses collègues ensemble pendant l’année
*She earned more than all her colleagues during the year*
*(her colleagues earned an unspecified amount during the year - however much it was, she earned more than this)*

**NB:** The following expressions compare one measurement with another:

quatre mètres **sur** trois
*four metres by three*

un Français **sur** sept
*one French person in seven*

une chose à la fois
*one thing at a time*

20% **par** an
*20% a year*

deux heures **par** jour
*two hours a day*
'miles per gallon' is measured in French by the number of litres consumed per hundred kilometres: *dix litres aux cent (kilomètres)* (roughly 30 miles per gallon).

**6.5.3 Numeral nouns and approximations**

The following numeral nouns describe approximate, rather than specific, numbers:

- **une dizaine**  
  *ten or so*
- **une quinzaine**  
  *fifteen or so*
- **une vingtaine**  
  *twenty or so*
- **une trentaine**  
  *thirty or so*
- **une quarantaine**  
  *forty or so*
- **une cinquantaine**  
  *fifty or so*
- **une soixantaine**  
  *sixty or so*
- **une centaine**  
  *a hundred or so*

Je reviendrai dans une quinzaine (une huitaine) de jours  
*I'll come back in about a fortnight (a week) or so*

Il a environ la trentaine  
*He is thirty something*

Elle a une quarantaine d'années  
*She is in her forties*

J'approche de la cinquantaine  
*I'm approaching my fifties*

*une douzaine (une demi-douzaine)*, however, means 'a dozen (a half-dozen)' exactly: *une douzaine d'œufs* 'a dozen eggs'.

A variety of other expressions, when used with numbers, also express approximations:

 Ça coûte environ 300F/à peu près 300F/dans les 300F/près de 300F  
*That costs around/about/nearly 300 francs*

Il a cinquante ans et quelques  
*He is over fifty*

Il a autour de cinquante ans  
*He is around fifty*

Elle va sur ses vingt-six ans  
*She is going on twenty-six*

Le train arrive vers 11h/aux alentours de 11h/aux environs de 11 heures  
*The train arrives around 11 a.m.*

NB: *ans* is always present when describing a person's age.

**6.6 Dates, days, years**

**6.6.1 Dates**

Dates always begin with *le* (which does not contract to *l' even before numbers beginning with a vowel: *le huit mars, le onze septembre*):

- le 1er janvier
- le 2 mai
- le 8 mars
- lundi le 11 juin
Quelle est la date d'aujourd'hui? C'est le 2 janvier
On est le combien? On est le 2 janvier

NB: When writing dates, months always begin with lower case letters.

6.6.2 Days
When days of the week are used without a determiner, they usually refer to a specific day:

Je viendrai vous voir lundi     I'll come and see you on Monday

(But in dates, days of the week are preceded by le: le lundi 8 août.)

When days of the week are preceded by a definite article they usually describe what habitually happens:

Le magasin est fermé le lundi (or tous les lundis)
The shop is closed on Mondays

le matin, l'après-midi, le soir, la nuit are used in the same way:

Elle se lève tôt le matin
She gets up early in the mornings

(versus Elle s'est levée tôt lundi matin 'She got up early on Monday morning'.)

Seasons can be used in a similar way:

faire du ski l'hiver (also en hiver)     to go skiing in winter
jouer au tennis l'été (also en été)    to play tennis in summer

But the definite article may be used to stress that an event occurred on a particular day:

Le concours s'est déroulé le lundi
The competition took place on the Monday

Note the following expressions:

dimanche en huit           a week on Sunday
vendredi en quinze        a fortnight on Friday
tous les deux jours      every other day

6.6.3 Years
In referring to years in a date, cent is obligatory (while 'hundred' is often omitted in English):

1945                       dix-neuf or mille neuf cent
                           quarante-cinq
                           nineteen (hundred and) forty-five

le 2 mai 1993               le deux mai dix-neuf cent quatre-vingt-treize
                           the second of May nineteen (hundred and)
                           ninety-three

'BC' is av. J-C (avant Jésus-Christ): 50 av. J-C
If *mille* is used in AD dates, it can be written optionally *mille* or (very rarely) *mil*:

en mille neuf cent quinze or en mil neuf cent quinze
in nineteen fifteen

*a* is used in *Van 2000 'the year 2000', en Van 1789 'in the year 1789', etc.; but *année* is used in *les années 60 'the 60s', les années 30 'the 30s', etc.* (See Chapter 1.4 for *an/année*.)

### 6.7 Clock time

In telling time, 'it is' is always *il est*, never *c'est*:

Quelle heure est-il? (Or Quelle heure avez-vous?)
What time is it?

*heures* is obligatory:

Il est deux heures vingt; il est trois heures moins vingt
It's two twenty; it's twenty to three

*et* links *quart* and *demi* to the hour in times past the hour - *demi* agrees in gender with the noun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>onze heures et quart</td>
<td>a quarter past eleven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>midi et quart</td>
<td>a quarter past midday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minuit et quart</td>
<td>a quarter past midnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onze heures et demie</td>
<td>halfpast eleven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>midi et demi</td>
<td>half past midday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minuit et demi</td>
<td>half past midnight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'a quarter to' the hour is *moins le quart* (*or moins un quart)*:

onze heures moins le quart  a quarter to eleven

As in English, one can equally say *onze heures quinze* 'eleven fifteen', *midi trente* 'thirty minutes past midday', etc.

In French timetables, times are usually written as *21h35* or *21:35*.

**NB:**

à l'heure  on time
à temps  in time
à deux heures précises  at two o'clock precisely (official report)
justes  exactly two o'clock (looking at watch)
sonnantes  hang on two o'clock (for effect)
tapantes  spot on two (for effect, more informal)

vers deux heures/vers les deux heures/autour de deux heures/ about two
à deux heures environ/dans les environs de deux heures  o'clock

Je peux faire mes comptes dans une heure  I can do my accounts in an hour's time
Je peux faire mes comptes en une heure  I can do my accounts within an hour

(See Chapters 13.14.4 and 13.26.3.)
6.8 Money

*franc* is always present in quoting prices, but *centime* is optional:

- huit francs cinquante (centimes)
  - *eight francs fifty (centimes)*

- deux cents francs quatre-vingts (centimes)
  - *two hundred francs eighty (centimes)*

Foreign currencies are described in the same way:

- deux livres cinquante
  - *two pounds fifty*

- trois dollars cinquante
  - *three dollars fifty*

Prices can be written in various ways:

- F8,50
- FF8,50
- 8,50F
- 8,50FF
- 8F50 (usually found on price labels)

Ça va chercher dans les quatre cents francs

*That'll fetch around four hundred francs*

(informal spoken style)

6.9 Quantifiers

6.9.1 Common quantifiers

Quantifiers, like numbers, determine ‘how much’ there is of something, but are less specific than numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assez de</td>
<td><em>enough</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autant de</td>
<td><em>as many</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beaucoup de</td>
<td><em>many</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bien des</td>
<td><em>many</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>certains</td>
<td><em>particular</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chaque</td>
<td><em>every</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chacun des</td>
<td><em>each one of the</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>une majorité de</td>
<td>a majority of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une minorité de</td>
<td>a minority of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moins de</td>
<td>fewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nombre de</td>
<td>a lot of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une partie des</td>
<td>a portion of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peu de</td>
<td>few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pas mal de</td>
<td>quite a lot of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(informal French)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la plupart des</td>
<td>most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus de</td>
<td>more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plusieurs</td>
<td>several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quantité de</td>
<td>a lot of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quelques</td>
<td>some, a few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le reste des</td>
<td>the rest of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tous les</td>
<td>all the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.9.2 Direct object quantifiers and *en*

When a quantifier on its own is a direct object, *en* must be inserted in front of the verb, as in the case of numbers (see 6.1.7):

- J'en ai encore certains
- Ils n'en consomment qu'une partie
- Il en a vendu la plupart

*NB:* When *quelques* 'some, a few' stands alone, it becomes *quelques-un(e)s:*

- Il y avait *quelques* clients dans le magasin
- Il y en avait *quelques-uns* dans le magasin

### 6.9.3 *de* or *du, de la, des* after quantifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assez de</td>
<td>enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>des clients</td>
<td>customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assez de clients</td>
<td>enough customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autant de</td>
<td>as much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de l'argent</td>
<td>money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autant d'argent</td>
<td>as much money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peu de</td>
<td>not much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du travail</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peu de travail</td>
<td>not much work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantifiers listed in 6.9.1 with *des*, however, are those which are followed by
des, du or de la:

- bien des clients
  - many customers
- la plupart de l'argent
  - most of the money
- une partie du travail
  - part of the work

When the quantifiers listed with de in 6.9.1 are followed by a noun with a definite article, this is not omitted. Compare:

- Beaucoup d'étudiants (indefinite) dorment moins qu'ils ne le souhaitent
  - Many students sleep less than they would wish
- Beaucoup des étudiants interviewés (definite) dorment moins qu'ils ne le souhaitent
  - Many of the students interviewed sleep less than they would wish

See also Chapter 2.3.2 and 2.4.

6.9.4 Quantifiers and personal pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>certains</th>
<th>eux</th>
<th>some</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>beaucoup</td>
<td>elles</td>
<td>many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peu</td>
<td>nous</td>
<td>few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plusieurs</td>
<td>vous</td>
<td>several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la plupart</td>
<td>d'entre</td>
<td>most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chacun</td>
<td></td>
<td>each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The preposition d'entre is used with quantifiers which precede stressed pronouns (for stressed pronouns see Chapter 3.3):

One can also find certains parmi eux 'some of them', chacun de nous 'each of us'.

6.9.5 tout and chaque
tous/toutes, like other quantifiers, can appear with the nouns they quantify or on their own:

- Toutes les assiettes sont sales/Toutes sont sales
  - AU the plates are dirty/All are dirty
- J'ai cassé toutes les assiettes/Je les ai toutes cassées
  - I broke all the plates/I broke them all

When tous/toutes quantifies a subject, it can be optionally moved to a position after the verb:

- Tous les invités sont maintenant arrivés or Les invités sont maintenant tous arrivés
  - All the guests have arrived now/The guests have all arrived now
When *tous/toutes* is used alone as a direct object, it can be optionally moved to a position after the verb:

```
Je les ai **tous** vus  Je les ai vus **tous**  I saw them all
```

*chacun(e)* means 'each, every':

```
Chaque passager est prié de se présenter à la porte 12
Every passenger is requested to go to gate 12
```

*chaque* cannot stand alone: it becomes *chacun(e)*:

```
Chaque assiette est peinte à la main / **Chacun(e)** est peinte à la main
Every plate is hand painted / Every one is hand painted
```

(For adverbial use of *tout*, as in *toute blanche, tout blanc*, see Chapter 5.6.7.)

### 6.9.6 Subject-verb agreement when subject quantifiers are present

With some quantifiers, the verb agrees not with the quantifier but with the noun:

```
Beaucoup de professeurs sont surmenés
Many teachers are overworked
```

Similar quantifiers are:

```
bien des, nombre de, peu de, la plupart de, quantité de, trop de
```

With other quantifiers, however, the verb may agree with the noun or with the quantifier:

```
La majorité de nos étudiants **ont/a** moins de quarante ans
The majority of our students are under forty
```

```
Une bonne partie de ses clients viennent/vient de l'étranger
A good portion of his customers come from abroad
```

Similar quantifiers are: *une minorité de, le reste de, la moitié de, un tiers de,* and numeral nouns like *une dizaine de, une vingtaine,* etc. (See Chapter 9.1.5.)
7 Verb forms

7.1 Introduction

As in many languages, verbs in French have different forms for the different functions they perform in sentences. It is traditional (and easiest for reference) to present verb forms in paradigms (i.e. lists), and this is what we do in this chapter. We follow Judge and Healey (1983) in dividing the paradigms into simple forms, compound forms and double compound forms. Simple forms are made up of stems to which endings are attached (see 7.3 for stems and endings). Compound forms are made up of forms of the auxiliary verbs avoir and être plus a past participle. Double compound forms are made up of forms of the compound auxiliary verbs avoir eu or avoir été plus a past participle. The set of verb forms that this produces is illustrated below, using the third person singular form of the verb donner 'to give' (stems are in normal type, endings are in bold).

Not all books and teachers use the terminology we employ here, so we have added other terms in common use in brackets:

**Simple tenses**

| Present     | II donn-e |
| Imperfect   | II donn-ait |
| Simple past (past historic) | II donn-a |
| Future      | II donn-era |
| Conditional | II donn-erait |
| Present subjunctive | Qu’il donn-e |
| Imperfect subjunctive | Qu’il donn-ât |

**Simple non-finite forms**

| Simple infinitive      | donn-er |
| Present participle     | donn-ant |
| Past participle        | donn-é |
| Imperative             | donn-ez |
|                       | donn-ons |

**Compound tenses**

| Compound past (perfect) | Il a donné |
| Pluperfect              | Il avait donné |
| Past anterior           | Il eut donné |
| Compound future (future perfect) | Il aura donné |
| Compound conditional (conditional perfect) | Il aurait donné |
| Compound past subjunctive | Qu’il ait donné |
| Pluperfect subjunctive  | Qu’il eût donné |
Verb forms

Compound non-finite forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compound infinitive</td>
<td>avoir donné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound present participle</td>
<td>ayant donné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound past participle</td>
<td>eu donné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound imperative</td>
<td>aie donné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ayez donné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ayons donné</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Double compound tenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Double compound past</td>
<td>II a eu donné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound pluperfect</td>
<td>II avait eu donné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double compound future</td>
<td>II aura eu donné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double compound conditional</td>
<td>II aurait eu donné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double compound past subjunctive</td>
<td>Qu’il eût eu donné</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Double compound non-finite forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Double compound infinitive</td>
<td>avoir eu donné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double compound participle</td>
<td>ayant eu donné</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2 Conjugations

For the purposes of systematic presentation, French verbs are best grouped into four conjugations. These are:

1. Verbs whose infinitive ends in -er (e.g. donner, chanter, parler). This is by far the largest group.
2. Verbs whose infinitive ends in -ir. Within this group there are two subgroups:
   a) verbs whose stems sometimes end in -iss- (e.g. finir: fin-iss-ons, fin-iss-ant, fin-iss-aient, etc.);
   b) verbs whose stems do not add -iss- (e.g. dormir, mentir).
3. Verbs whose infinitive ends in -re (e.g. vendre, rendre).
4. Verbs whose infinitive ends in -oir (e.g. recevoir).

Verbs which differ from this pattern are included in the list of irregular verbs under 7.6.8.

7.2.1 Organization of the paradigms

The paradigms which follow in this chapter are divided into eight sections:

- 7.6.1 and 7.6.2 describe the forms of avoir and être, because these two verbs are essential to all the compound forms.
- 7.6.3 describes the forms of regular verbs belonging to the -er conjugation (e.g. dormer, chanter, parler).
- 7.6.4 and 7.6.5 describe the forms of regular verbs belonging to the -ir conjugation. These subdivide into those whose stem sometimes ends in -iss- (like finir: fin-iss-ons, fin-iss-ant, fin-iss-aient, etc.) - these are the majority of verbs in the -ir conjugation, and those whose stem does not add -iss (like dormir: dorm-ons, dorm-ant, dorm-aient, etc.). There are only about 30 of these verbs.
- 7.6.6 describes the forms of regular verbs belonging to the -re conjugation (e.g. vendre, rendre).
- 7.6.7 describes the forms of regular verbs belonging to the -oir conjugation (e.g. recevoir, décevoir, concevoir).
- 7.6.8 lists the forms of irregular verbs (i.e. those whose stems change idiosyncratically at various points in the paradigm).
7.3 Easy ways of generating some parts of the paradigms

A number of the parts of the verb paradigms can be productively generated using a few simple rules. It is sometimes easier to learn these rules than learning every verb form individually. However, be aware that these only work with regular verbs - irregular verbs have idiosyncratic forms which have to be learned.

7.3.1 An easy way of generating the present tense

For regular verbs ending in -er (like donner), -ir (the finir kind whose stems sometimes end in -iss-: fin-iss-ons, fin-iss-ant, fin-iss-aient, etc., but NOT the dormir kind - see 7.6.4 and 7.6.5) or -re (like vendre), take the infinitive form of the verb, omit the ending -er, -ir or -re (this creates a stem: donn-, fin-, vend-) and add the following endings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>je</th>
<th>tu</th>
<th>il/elle</th>
<th>nous</th>
<th>vous</th>
<th>ils/elles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-er verbs</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-es</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-ons</td>
<td>-ez</td>
<td>-ent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ir verbs (most verbs - see 7.6.4)</td>
<td>-is</td>
<td>-is</td>
<td>-it</td>
<td>-issons</td>
<td>-issez</td>
<td>-issant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-re verbs</td>
<td>-s</td>
<td>-s</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-ons</td>
<td>-ez</td>
<td>-ent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Present tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>donner</td>
<td>donn-</td>
<td>je donn- e, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finir</td>
<td>fin-</td>
<td>je fin- is, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vendre</td>
<td>vend-</td>
<td>je vend- s, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3.2 An easy way of generating the imperfect tense

For all regular verb conjugations, take the first person plural nous form of the present tense, omit -ons and add the following endings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>je</th>
<th>tu</th>
<th>il/elle</th>
<th>nous</th>
<th>vous</th>
<th>ils/elles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ais</td>
<td>-ais</td>
<td>-ait</td>
<td>-ions</td>
<td>-iez</td>
<td>-aient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>First person plural</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Imperfect tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>donner</td>
<td>donnons</td>
<td>donn-</td>
<td>je donn- ais, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commencer</td>
<td>commençons</td>
<td>commenç-</td>
<td>je commenç- ais, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partager</td>
<td>partageons</td>
<td>partage-</td>
<td>je partager- ais, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finir</td>
<td>finissons</td>
<td>finiss-</td>
<td>je finiss- ais, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormir</td>
<td>dormons</td>
<td>dorm-</td>
<td>je dorm- ais, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vendre</td>
<td>vendons</td>
<td>vend-</td>
<td>je vend- ais, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recevoir</td>
<td>recevons</td>
<td>recev-</td>
<td>je recev- ais, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3.3 An easy way of generating the simple past (past historic)

For -\textit{er} verbs, take the first person plural \textit{nous} form of the present tense, omit \textit{-ons} and add the following endings: \textit{-ai, -as, -a, -âmes, -âtes, -èrent}.

For -\textit{ir} (both \textit{finir} and \textit{dormir} types - see 7.6.4 and 7.6.5) and -\textit{re} verbs, take the past participle, omit the final vowel, and add the following endings: \textit{-is, -is, -it, -îmes, -îtes, -irent}.

For -\textit{oir} verbs, take the past participle, omit the final vowel, and add the following endings: \textit{-us, -us, -ut, -ûmes, -ûtes, -urent}.

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|l|l|l|l|}
\hline
 & je & tu & il/elle & nous & vous & ils/elles \\
\hline
\textit{-er} verbs (most verbs - see 7.6.3) & -ai & -as & -a & -âmes & -âtes & -èrent \\
\hline
\textit{-ir} verbs & -is & -is & -it & -îmes & -îtes & -irent \\
\textit{-re} verbs & -us & -us & -ut & -ûmes & -ûtes & -urent \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>First person plural</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Simple past tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>donner</td>
<td>donnons</td>
<td>donn-</td>
<td>je donn- ai, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commencer</td>
<td>commençons</td>
<td>commenç-</td>
<td>je commenç- ai, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partager</td>
<td>partageons</td>
<td>partage-</td>
<td>je partage- ai, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finir</td>
<td>fini</td>
<td>fin-</td>
<td>je fin- is, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormir</td>
<td>dormi</td>
<td>dorm-</td>
<td>je dorm- is, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vendre</td>
<td>vendu</td>
<td>vend-</td>
<td>je vend- is, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recevoir</td>
<td>reçu</td>
<td>reç-</td>
<td>je reç- us, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3.4 An easy way of generating the future and conditional

Take the infinitive form of -\textit{er}, -\textit{ir} and -\textit{re} verbs (deleting the final \textit{e} in the latter case) and add the following endings:

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>je</th>
<th>tu</th>
<th>il/elle</th>
<th>nous</th>
<th>vous</th>
<th>ils/elles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ai</td>
<td>-as</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td>-ons</td>
<td>-ez</td>
<td>-ont</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Future/Conditional**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>je donner</th>
<th>Stem donner-</th>
<th>Future/conditional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>donner</td>
<td>je donner- ai, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finir</td>
<td>je finir- ai, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormir</td>
<td>je dormir- ai, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vendre</td>
<td>je vendir- ai, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(For the doubling of consonants in verbs like \textit{je jeterai}, \textit{j’appellerai}, the change
Easy ways of generating some parts of the paradigms 151

from e to e in verbs like j’achèterai, il gèlera, and the change from é to e in verbs like j’espémerai, je compléterai, etc., see 7.4.)

7.3.5 An easy way of generating the present subjunctive
For all regular verb conjugations, take the third person plural ils/elles form of the present tense, omit -ent and add the endings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>je</th>
<th>tu</th>
<th>il/elle</th>
<th>nous</th>
<th>vous</th>
<th>ils/elles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-es</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-ions</td>
<td>-iez</td>
<td>-ent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Third person plural</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Present subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>donner</td>
<td>donnent</td>
<td>donn-</td>
<td>je donn- e, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finir</td>
<td>finissent</td>
<td>finiss-</td>
<td>je finiss- e, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormir</td>
<td>dormant</td>
<td>dorm-</td>
<td>je dorm- e, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vendre</td>
<td>vendent</td>
<td>vend-</td>
<td>je vend- e, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recevoir</td>
<td>recoivent</td>
<td>reçoiv-</td>
<td>je reçoiv- e, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: The stem reçoiv- changes when the ending does not begin with -e: reçoive, but recevions, receviez.

7.3.6 An easy way of generating the imperfect subjunctive
For all regular verb conjugations, take the first person singular je form of the simple past tense, omit the last letter and add the endings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>je</th>
<th>tu</th>
<th>il/elle</th>
<th>nous</th>
<th>vous</th>
<th>ils/elles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-sse</td>
<td>-sses</td>
<td>-^t</td>
<td>-ssions</td>
<td>-ssiez</td>
<td>-ssent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>First person simple past</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Imperfect subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>donner</td>
<td>donnai</td>
<td>donna-</td>
<td>je donna- sse, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finir</td>
<td>finis</td>
<td>fini-</td>
<td>je fini- sse, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormir</td>
<td>dormis</td>
<td>dormi-</td>
<td>je dormi- sse, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vendre</td>
<td>vendis</td>
<td>vendi-</td>
<td>je vendi- sse, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recevoir</td>
<td>reçus</td>
<td>reçu-</td>
<td>je reçu- sse, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3.7 An easy way of generating the imperative
For all verbs (with four exceptions - see below) take the second person singular tu form, the second person plural vous form and the first person plural nous form of the present tense, delete the subject and the final -s of any verb which ends in -es or -as. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Present tense</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>donner</td>
<td>tu donnes</td>
<td>donne!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous donnez</td>
<td>vous donnez</td>
<td>donnez!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous donnons</td>
<td>nous donnons</td>
<td>donnons!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aller</td>
<td>tu vas</td>
<td>va!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous allez</td>
<td>vous allez</td>
<td>allez!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous allons</td>
<td>nous allons</td>
<td>allons!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Verb forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>tu</th>
<th>vous</th>
<th>nous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>finir</td>
<td>finis</td>
<td>finissez</td>
<td>finissons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormir</td>
<td>dors</td>
<td>dormez</td>
<td>dormons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vendre</td>
<td>vends</td>
<td>vendez</td>
<td>vendons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recevoir</td>
<td>reçois</td>
<td>recevez</td>
<td>recevons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NB:** The final -s which disappears from second person singular verbs ending in -es or -as reappears where the pronouns y or en follow the imperative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Present tense</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aller</td>
<td>Va!</td>
<td>Vas-y!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parler</td>
<td>Parle!</td>
<td>Parlez-en!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Four exceptions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Present tense</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>être</td>
<td>tu es</td>
<td>sois!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vous êtes</td>
<td>soyez!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nous sommes</td>
<td>soyons!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoir</td>
<td>tu as</td>
<td>aie!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vous avez</td>
<td>ayez!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nous avons</td>
<td>ayons!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>savoir</td>
<td>tu sais</td>
<td>aie!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vous savez</td>
<td>sachez!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nous savons</td>
<td>sachons!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vouloir</td>
<td>tu veux</td>
<td>veuille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vous voulez</td>
<td>veuillez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nous voulons</td>
<td>not used</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Both veuille and veuillez mean 'please'.)

**NB:** Although vouloir has irregular imperative forms, the related verb en vouloir à qn 'to hold a grudge against sb' has regular forms:

- Tu ne lui en veux pas: Ne lui en veux pas!
- Vous ne lui en voulez pas: Ne lui en voulez pas!
- Nous ne lui en voulons pas: Ne lui en voulons pas!

### 7.4 Changes in the stem form of some -er conjugation verbs

The stems of a number of verbs of the -er conjugation change their form when they are followed by an e. (See also listings under irregular verbs, Table 7.H.)

The majority of verbs ending in -eler or -eter double the final consonant of the stem when it is followed by -e in the present, future, conditional and present subjunctive:

**appeler**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>j'appelle, tu appelles, il/elle appelle, ils/elles appellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>j'appellerai, ... , nous appellerons, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional</td>
<td>j'appellerais, ... , nous appellerions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>que j'appelle, que tu appelles, qu'il/elle appelle, qu'ils/elles appellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive</td>
<td>appellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Both veuille and veuillez mean 'please'.

- Although vouloir has irregular imperative forms, the related verb en vouloir à qn 'to hold a grudge against sb' has regular forms:

- Tu ne lui en veux pas: Ne lui en veux pas!
- Vous ne lui en voulez pas: Ne lui en voulez pas!
- Nous ne lui en voulons pas: Ne lui en voulons pas!
Verbs whose stems end in c- or g-

The following verbs, however, do not double the final stem consonant, but change the first e to è: acheter, celer, ciser, corseter, crocheter, démanteler, écarteler, furter, geler, haletter, marteler, modeler, peler (together with verbs derived from these like congeler, dégeler, etc.):

acheter
Present j’achète, . . . etc.
Future j’achèterai, . . . etc.

Other verbs which have an unstressed e in the syllable before the final -er also change that vowel to è in the same circumstances, for example mener, sème:

mener
Present je mène, . . . etc.
Future je mènerai, . . . etc.

Verbs which have an é in the syllable before the final -er change that vowel to è in the same circumstances, for example espérer, révéler:

espérer
Present j’espère, . . . etc.
Future j’espérerai, . . . etc

Verbs of the -er conjugation whose stem ends in -y, for example employer, nettoyer, essayer, change the y to i in the same circumstances:

employer
Present j’emploie, . . . etc.
Future j’emploierai, . . . etc

7.4.1 The forms of créer, nier, scier, rire, etc.

Verbs whose stems end in -é or -i behave just like any other verb: the final vowel does not change, for example:

je crée (present tense)
j’ai créé (compound past)
l’entreprise que j’ai créée (past participle agreement with a preceding feminine direct object - see Chapter 9.3.)

nous rions (present tense)
nous rions (imperfect tense or present subjunctive)

7.5 Verbs whose stems end in c- or g-

Verbs whose stems end in c- (pronounced [s]) change to c- before an ending beginning with -a, -o, or -u, e.g. commencer, rec-evoir:

commencer
Present nous commençons (present)
j’eu commencé (compound past)
l’entreprise que j’ai créée (past participle agreement with a preceding feminine direct object - see Chapter 9.3.)
nous rions (present tense)
nous rions (imperfect tense or present subjunctive)

rec-evoir
Present je reçois (present)
je reç- ais (imperfect)
nous reç- âmes (simple past) etc.
nous reç- anies (simple past) etc.
Verbs whose stems end in a *g*-(pronounced like 'je') change to *ge*- before an ending beginning with *-a* or *-o*, e.g. *partag-er, protég-er*:

- *partag-er*
  - nous partage- ons (present)
  - je partage- ais (imperfect)
  - nous partage- âmes (simple past) etc.

### 7.6 Verb paradigms

#### 7.6.1 The irregular verb *avoir*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7.A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infinitive:</strong> avoir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past participle:</strong> eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present participle:</strong> ayant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Simple forms</strong></th>
<th><strong>Compound forms</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Compound past:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J'ai</td>
<td>J'ai eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu as</td>
<td>Vous avez eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il a</td>
<td>Ils ont eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous avons</td>
<td>Nous avons eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous avez</td>
<td>Vous avez eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils ont</td>
<td>Ils ont eu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Imperfect:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pluperfect:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J'avais</td>
<td>J'avais eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu avais</td>
<td>Vous aviez eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il avait</td>
<td>Ils avaient eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous avions</td>
<td>Nous avions eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous aviez</td>
<td>Vous aviez eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils avaient</td>
<td>Ils avaient eu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Simple past (past historic):</strong></th>
<th><strong>Past anterior:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J'eus</td>
<td>J'eus eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu eus</td>
<td>Vous eûtes eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il eut</td>
<td>Ils eurent eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous eûmes</td>
<td>Nous eûmes eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous eûtes</td>
<td>Vous eûtes eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils eurent</td>
<td>Ils eurent eu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Future:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Compound future:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J'aurai</td>
<td>J'aurai eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuauras</td>
<td>Vous aurrez eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il aura</td>
<td>Ils auront eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous aurons</td>
<td>Nous aurons eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous aurez</td>
<td>Vous aurez eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils auront</td>
<td>Ils auront eu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Conditional:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Compound conditional:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J'aurais</td>
<td>J'aurais eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuaurais</td>
<td>Vous auriez eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il aurait</td>
<td>Ils auraient eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous aurions</td>
<td>Nous aurions eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous auriez</td>
<td>Vous auriez eu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils auraient</td>
<td>Ils auraient eu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TABLE 7.A (continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present subjunctive:</th>
<th>Compound past subjunctive:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que j'aie que nous ayons que j'aie eu que nous ayons eu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que tu aies que vous ayez que tu aies eu que vous ayez eu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu'il ait qu'ils aient qu'il ait eu qu'ils aient eu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperfect subjunctive:</th>
<th>Pluperfect subjunctive:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que j'eusse que nous eussions que j'eusse eu que nous eussions eu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que tu eusses que vous eussiez que tu eusses eu que vous eussiez eu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu'il eût qu'ils eussent qu'il eût eu qu'ils eussent eu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperative:</th>
<th>Compound imperative:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aie</td>
<td>not used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ayons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ayez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**7.6.2 The irregular verb être**

**TABLE 7.B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: être</th>
<th>Compound infinitive: avoir été</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past participle: été</td>
<td>Compound past participle: eu été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present participle: étant</td>
<td>Compound present participle: ayant été</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple forms</th>
<th>Compound forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je suis</td>
<td>J'ai été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu es</td>
<td>Tu as été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il est</td>
<td>Il a été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous sommes</td>
<td>Nous avons été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous êtes</td>
<td>Vous avez été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils sont</td>
<td>Ils ont été</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperfect:</th>
<th>Pluperfect:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J'étais</td>
<td>J'avais été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu étais</td>
<td>Tu avais été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il était</td>
<td>Il avait été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous étions</td>
<td>Nous avions été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous étiez</td>
<td>Vous aviez été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils étaient</td>
<td>Ils avaient été</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple past (past historic):</th>
<th>Past anterior:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je fus</td>
<td>J'eus été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu fus</td>
<td>Tu eus été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il fut</td>
<td>Il eut été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous fûmes</td>
<td>Nous eûmes été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous fûtes</td>
<td>Vous eûtes été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils furent</td>
<td>Ils eurent été</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future:</th>
<th>Compound future:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je serai</td>
<td>J'aurai été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu seras</td>
<td>Tu auras été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il sera</td>
<td>Il aura été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous serons</td>
<td>Nous aurons été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous serez</td>
<td>Vous aurez été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils seront</td>
<td>Ils auront été</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 7.B (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditional:</th>
<th>Compound conditional:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je serais</td>
<td>J'aurais été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous serions</td>
<td>Nous aurions été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu serais</td>
<td>Tu aurais été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous seriez</td>
<td>Vous auriez été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il serait</td>
<td>Il aurait été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils seraient</td>
<td>Ils auraient été</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present subjunctive:</th>
<th>Compound past subjunctive:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que je sois</td>
<td>que j'aie été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que nous soyons</td>
<td>que nous ayons été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que tu sois</td>
<td>que tu aies été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que vous soyez</td>
<td>que vous ayez été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu'il soit</td>
<td>qu'il ait été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu'ils soient</td>
<td>qu'ils aient été</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperfect subjunctive:</th>
<th>Pluperfect subjunctive:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que je fusse</td>
<td>que j'eusse été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que nous fussions</td>
<td>que nous eussions été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que tu fusses</td>
<td>que tu eussiez été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que vous fussiez</td>
<td>qu'il eût été</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu'il fût</td>
<td>qu'ils eussent été</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperative:</th>
<th>Compound imperative:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sois</td>
<td>not used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soyons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soyez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7.6.3 Conjugation I: verbs whose infinitive ends in -er

### TABLE 7.C

| Infinitive: parler          | Compound infinitive: avoir parlé    |
| Past participle: parlé     | Compound past participle: eu parlé |
| Present participle: parlant| Compound present participle: ayant parlé |

#### Simple forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present:</th>
<th>Compound past:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je parle</td>
<td>J'ai parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous parlons</td>
<td>Nous avons parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu parles</td>
<td>Tu as parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous parlez</td>
<td>Vous avez parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il parle</td>
<td>Il a parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils parlent</td>
<td>Ils ont parlé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperfect:</th>
<th>Pluperfect:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je parlais</td>
<td>J'avais parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous parlions</td>
<td>Nous avions parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu parlais</td>
<td>Tu avais parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous parliez</td>
<td>Vous aviez parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il parlait</td>
<td>Il avait parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils parlaient</td>
<td>Ils avaient parlé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple past (past historic):</th>
<th>Past anterior:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je parlai</td>
<td>J'eus parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous parlâmes</td>
<td>Nous eûmes parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu parlas</td>
<td>Tu eus parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous parlâtes</td>
<td>Vous eût es parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il parla</td>
<td>Il eut parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils parlèrent</td>
<td>Ils eurent parlé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Verb paradigms

TABLE 7.C (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future:</th>
<th>Compound future:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je parlerai</td>
<td>J’aurai parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu parleras</td>
<td>Tu auras parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il parlera</td>
<td>Il aura parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous parlerons</td>
<td>Nous aurons parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous parlez</td>
<td>Vous aurez parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils parleront</td>
<td>Ils auront parlé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditional:</th>
<th>Compound conditional:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je parlerais</td>
<td>J’aurais parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu parlerais</td>
<td>Tu aurais parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il parlerait</td>
<td>Il aurait parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous parlerions</td>
<td>Nous aurions parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous parliez</td>
<td>Vous auriez parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils parlaient</td>
<td>Ils auraient parlé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present subjunctive:</th>
<th>Compound past subjunctive:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que je parle</td>
<td>que j’aie parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que tu parles</td>
<td>que tu aies parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que qu’il parle</td>
<td>que qu’il ait parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que nous parlions</td>
<td>que nous ayons parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que vous parliez</td>
<td>que vous ayez parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que qu’ils parlent</td>
<td>que qu’ils aient parlé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperfect subjunctive:</th>
<th>Pluperfect subjunctive:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que je parlassse</td>
<td>que j’eusse parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que tu parlassses</td>
<td>que tu eusses parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu’il parlât</td>
<td>qu’il eût parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que nous parlassions</td>
<td>que nous eussions parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que vous parlassiez</td>
<td>que vous eussiez parlé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que qu’ils parlassent</td>
<td>que qu’ils eussent parlé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperative:</th>
<th>Compound imperative:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parle (but parles-en)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parlons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parlez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Verbs whose stem ends in c or g are written ç and ge respectively before endings which begin with a or o: e.g. nous commençons, je mangeais - see 7.5.

NB: Verbs of the -er conjugation whose stem changes, like compléter, espérer (and other verbs ending in -éter, -érer), appeler, mener, jeter, employer, nettoyer (and other verbs ending in -oyer - see 7.4) are individually listed under irregular verbs.
7.6.4 Conjugation 2 (a): verbs whose infinitives end in -ir, and whose stems end in -iss- in certain paradigms

**TABLE 7.D**

| Infinitive: finir | Compound infinitive: avoir fini |
| Past participle: fini | Compound past participle: eu fini |
| Present participle: finissant | Compound present participle: ayant fini |

**Simple forms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Compound past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je finis</td>
<td>J'ai fini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous finissons</td>
<td>Nous avons fini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu finis</td>
<td>Tu as fini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous finissez</td>
<td>Vous avez fini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il finit</td>
<td>Il a fini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils finissent</td>
<td>Ils ont fini</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Imperfect**

| Je finissais | J'avais fini |
| Nous finissions | Nous avions fini |
| Tu finissais | Tu avais fini |
| Vous finissiez | Vous aviez fini |
| Il finissait | Il avait fini |
| Ils finissaient | Ils avaient fini |

**Simple past (past historic)**

| Je finis | J'eus fini |
| Nous finimes | Nous eûmes fini |
| Tu finis | Tu eus fini |
| Vous finites | Vous eûtes fini |
| Il finit | Il eut fini |
| Ils finirent | Ils eurent fini |

**Future**

| Je finirai | J'aurai fini |
| Nous finirons | Nous aurons fini |
| Tu finiras | Tu auras fini |
| Vous finirez | Vous aurez fini |
| Il finira | Il aura fini |
| Ils finiront | Ils auront fini |

**Conditional**

| Je finirais | J'aurais fini |
| Nous finirions | Nous aurions fini |
| Tu finiras | Tu aurais fini |
| Vous finiriez | Vous auriez fini |
| Il finirait | Il aurait fini |
| Ils finiraient | Ils auraient fini |

**Present subjunctive**

| que je finisse | que j'aie fini |
| que nous finissions | que nous ayons fini |
| que tu finisses | que vous ayez fini |
| qu'il finisse | qu'il ait fini |
| qu'ils finissent | qu'ils aient fini |

**Imperfect subjunctive**

| que je finisse | que j'eusse fini |
| que nous finissions | que nous eussions fini |
| que tu finisses | que vous eussiez fini |
| qu'il finît | qu'il eût fini |
| qu'ils finissent | qu'ils eussent fini |
TABLE 7.D (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperative:</th>
<th>Compound imperative:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>finis</td>
<td>aie fini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finissons</td>
<td>ayons fini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finissez</td>
<td>ayez fini</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Verbs which approximate to this pattern but which have significant differences are: *fleurir, haïr*. These are listed as irregular verbs.

### 7.6.5 Conjugation 2 (b): verbs whose infinitives end in *-ir*, and whose stems do not end in *-iss-* (e.g. *dormir*)

#### TABLE 7.E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Simple forms</th>
<th>Compound forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>dormir</strong></td>
<td>Present:</td>
<td><strong>Compounding</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past participle:</td>
<td>Je dors</td>
<td>J'ai dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nous dormons</td>
<td>Nous avons dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present participle:</td>
<td>Tu dors</td>
<td>Tu as dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vous dormez</td>
<td>Vous avez dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Il dort</td>
<td>Il a dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ils dormant</td>
<td>Ils ont dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past (past historic):</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pluperfect:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je dormais</td>
<td>J'avais dormi</td>
<td>Nous avions dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu dormais</td>
<td>Tu avais dormi</td>
<td>Vous aviez dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il dormait</td>
<td>Il avait dormi</td>
<td>Ils avaient dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future:</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Compound future</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je dormirai</td>
<td>J'aurai dormi</td>
<td>Nous aurons dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu dormiras</td>
<td>Tu auras dormi</td>
<td>Vous aurez dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il dormira</td>
<td>Il aura dormi</td>
<td>Ils auront dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional:</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Compound conditional</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je dormirais</td>
<td>J'aurais dormi</td>
<td>Nous aurions dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu dormirais</td>
<td>Tu aurais dormi</td>
<td>Vous auriez dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il dormirait</td>
<td>Il aurait dormi</td>
<td>Ils auraient dormi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 7.E (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present subjunctive:</th>
<th>Compound past subjunctive:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que je dorme</td>
<td>que j’aie dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que tu dormes</td>
<td>que tu aies dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu’il dorme</td>
<td>qu’il ait dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que nous dormions</td>
<td>que nous ayons dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que vous dormiez</td>
<td>que vous ayez dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu’ils dorment</td>
<td>qu’ils aient dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect subjunctive:</td>
<td>Pluperfect subjunctive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que je dormisse</td>
<td>que j’eusse dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que tu dormisses</td>
<td>que tu eusses dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu’il dormît</td>
<td>qu’il eût dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que nous dormissions</td>
<td>que nous eussions dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que vous dormissiez</td>
<td>que vous eussiez dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu’ils dormissent</td>
<td>qu’ils eussent dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative:</td>
<td>Compound imperative:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dors</td>
<td>aie dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormons</td>
<td>ayons dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormez</td>
<td>ayez dormi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: S’endormir, servir, desservir, mentir, démentir, partir, repartir, se repentir, sentir, consentir, ressentir, sortir and ressortir conjugate like dormir BUT asservir, impartir, répartir, assortir, conjugate like finir.

Verbs which are similar to one or other of these -ir conjugations are: cueillir, accueillir, recueillir, assaillir, tressaillir, couvrir, découvrir, recouvrir, offrir, ouvrir, rouvrir, souffrir but they have special characteristics. They are listed individually as irregular verbs.

7.6.6 Conjugation 3: verbs with infinitives which end in -re (e.g. vendre)

TABLE 7.F

<p>| Infinitive: | vendre |
| Past participle: | vendu |
| Present participle: | vendant |
| Simple forms | Compound forms |
| Present: | |
| Je vends | Nous vendons |
| Tu vends | Vous vendez |
| Il vend | Ils vendent |
| Imperfect: | Pluperfect: |
| Je vendais | Nous vendions |
| Tu vendais | Vous vendiez |
| Il vendait | Ils vendaient |
| J’ai vendu | Nous avons vendu |
| Tu as vendu | Vous avez vendu |
| Il a vendu | Ils ont vendu |
| J’avais vendu | Nous avions vendu |
| Tu avais vendu | Vous aviez vendu |
| Il avait vendu | Ils avaient vendu |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Verb</th>
<th>Simple past (past historic)</th>
<th>Past anterior</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Je vendis</strong></td>
<td>Nous vendîmes</td>
<td>J'eus vendu</td>
<td><strong>I sold</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tu vendis</strong></td>
<td>Vous vendîtes</td>
<td>Tu eus vendu</td>
<td><strong>You sold</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Il vendit</strong></td>
<td>Ils vendirent</td>
<td>Il eut vendu</td>
<td><strong>He sold</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Verb</th>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Compound future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Je vendrai</strong></td>
<td>Nous vendrons</td>
<td>J'aurai vendu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tu vendras</strong></td>
<td>Vous vendrez</td>
<td>Tu auras vendu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Il vendra</strong></td>
<td>Ils vendront</td>
<td>Il aura vendu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Verb</th>
<th>Conditional</th>
<th>Compound conditional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Je vendrais</strong></td>
<td>Nous vendrions</td>
<td>J'aurais vendu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tu vendrais</strong></td>
<td>Vous vendriez</td>
<td>Tu aurais vendu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Il vendrait</strong></td>
<td>Ils vendraient</td>
<td>Il aurait vendu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Verb</th>
<th>Present subjunctive</th>
<th>Compound past subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>que je vende</strong></td>
<td>que nous vendions</td>
<td>que j'aie vendu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>que tu vendes</strong></td>
<td>que vous vendiez</td>
<td>que tu aies vendu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>qu'il vende</strong></td>
<td>qu'ils vendent</td>
<td>qu'il ait vendu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Verb</th>
<th>Imperfect subjunctive</th>
<th>Pluperfect subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>que je vendisse</strong></td>
<td>que nous vendissions</td>
<td>que j'eusse vendu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>que tu vendisses</strong></td>
<td>que vous vendissiez</td>
<td>que tu eusses vendu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>qu'il vendît</strong></td>
<td>qu'ils vendissent</td>
<td>qu'il eût vendu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Verb</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Compound imperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>vends</strong></td>
<td>aie vendu</td>
<td><strong>I sell</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>vendons</strong></td>
<td>ayons vendu</td>
<td><strong>We sell</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>vendez</strong></td>
<td>ayez vendu</td>
<td><strong>You sell</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few verbs follow this pattern in its entirety, especially those ending in -andre, -endre, -ondre, -ordre, e.g. épandre, répandre, attendre, défendre, descendre, détendre, entendre, étendre, fendre, prétendre, rendre, tendre, vendre, confondre, correspondre, fondre, pondre, répondre, tonsdre, mordre, perdre, tordre.

Other verbs which have sufficient differences to be listed individually as irregular verbs are: prendre (and compounds of prendre), rompre (and compounds of rompre), battre (and compounds of battre), vaincre (and compounds of vaincre), verbs ending in -a/e/oindre: contraindre, craindre, plaindre, enfreindre, étendre, êtreindre, attendre, αeindre, dépeindre, peindre, restreindre, teindre, jointre, verbs ending in -aire: apparaître, connaître, disparaire, méconnaître, paraître, reconnaître, repaître, accroître, décroître, croître.

A distinct group of verbs end in -uire, e.g. conduire, construire, cuire, déduire,
détruire, enduire, introduire, produire, séduire, traduire. These all follow the same pattern which is illustrated by construire in the table of irregular verbs.

7.6.7 Conjugation 4: verbs with infinitives which end in -o/r (e.g. recevoir)

TABLE 7.G

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>recevoir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past participle:</td>
<td>reçu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present participle:</td>
<td>recevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple forms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je reçois</td>
<td>Nous recevons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu reçois</td>
<td>Vous recevez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il reçoit</td>
<td>Ils reçoivent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je recevais</td>
<td>Nous recevions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu recevais</td>
<td>Vous receviez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il recevait</td>
<td>Ils recevaient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Compound forms     |                        |
| Compound Past:     |                        |
| J'ai reçu          | Nous avons reçu        |
| Tu as reçu         | Vous avez reçu         |
| Il a reçu          | Ils ont reçu           |
| Simple past (past historic): |                |
| Je reçus           | Nous reçûmes           |
| Tu reçus           | Vous reçûtes           |
| Il reçut           | Ils reçurent           |
| Pluperfect:        |                        |
| J'avais reçu       | Nous avions reçu       |
| Tu avais reçu      | Vous aviez reçu        |
| Il avait reçu      | Ils avaient reçu       |
| Future:            |                        |
| Je recevrai        | Nous recevrons         |
| Tu recevras        | Vous recevrez          |
| Il recevrait       | Ils recevront          |
| Compound future:   |                        |
| J'aurai reçu       | Nous aurons reçu       |
| Tu aurais reçu     | Vous auriez reçu       |
| Il aurait reçu     | Ils auront reçu        |
| Conditional:       |                        |
| Je recevais        | Nous recevrions        |
| Tu recevais        | Vous recevriez         |
| Il recevait        | Ils recevaient         |
| Compound conditional: |                   |
| J'aurais reçu      | Nous aurions reçu      |
| Tu aurais reçu     | Vous auriez reçu       |
| Il aurait reçu     | Ils auraient reçu      |
| Present subjunctive: |                     |
| que je reçoive     | que nous recevions     |
| que tu reçois      | que vous receviez      |
| qu'il reçoive      | qu'ils recevaient      |
| Compound past subjunctive: |                 |
| que j'aie reçu     | que nous ayons reçu    |
| que tu aies reçu   | que vous ayez reçu     |
| qu'il ait reçu     | qu'ils aient reçu      |
| Imperfect subjunctive: |                   |
| que je reçusse     | que nous reçussions    |
| que tu reçusses    | que vous reçussiez     |
| qu'il reçût        | qu'ils reçussent       |
| Pluperfect subjunctive: |                  |
| que j'eusse reçu   | que nous eussions reçu |
| que tu eusses reçu | que vous eussiez reçu  |
| qu'il eût reçu     | qu'ils eussent reçu    |
TABLE 7.G (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperative:</th>
<th>Compound imperative:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reçois</td>
<td>aie reçu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recevons</td>
<td>ayons reçu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recevez</td>
<td>ayez reçu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: A number of verbs, e.g. *voir* and derivatives, do not follow this pattern. They are listed individually as irregular verbs.

7.6.8 Irregular verbs

**TABLE 7.H**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Present indicative:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abattre</td>
<td>j’abats nous abattons</td>
<td>abattant abattu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to knock down</td>
<td>tu abats vous abattez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il abat ils abattent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j’abattrai</td>
<td>j’abattrai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absoudre</td>
<td>j’absous nous absolvons</td>
<td>absolvant absous/absoute (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to absolve</td>
<td>tu absous vous absolvez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il absout ils absolvent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j’absoudrai</td>
<td>j’absoudrai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j’absolvais</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>que j’absolvent</td>
<td>que j’absolve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (près): que j’abatte</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (imp): que j’abatissesse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>s’abstenir de</td>
<td>absolu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to abstain from: see tenir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abstraire</td>
<td>accrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to abstract: see traire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accourir</td>
<td>j’accroissaient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to run up: see courir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>acheter</td>
<td>j’achetant acheté</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to buy</td>
<td>j’achèterai (è in all forms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j’achetai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accueillir</td>
<td>achetons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to welcome: see cueillir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accroître</td>
<td>j’accroîtrai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to increase</td>
<td>j’accroissais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>que j’accroisse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>que j’accrusse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accueillir</td>
<td>j’accueillera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to welcome: see cueillir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accueillir</td>
<td>j’accueillera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to welcome: see cueillir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>acheter</td>
<td>j’achètera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to buy</td>
<td>j’achèterai (è in all forms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j’achetai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>que j’achète</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>que nous achetons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>que vous achetiez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>que j’achetassse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 7.H (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>achever to finish:</td>
<td>j’acquiers nous acquérons</td>
<td>acquérant acquis</td>
<td>j’acquerrai</td>
<td>j’acquis</td>
<td>j’acquérais</td>
<td>que j’acquière</td>
<td>que j’acquisse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>àcquerir to acquire</td>
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**Participles:**
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  - complétant
  - concluant
  - confisant
- **simple past:**
  - combattu
  - complété
  - conclu
  - confit
- **imperfect:**
  - combattant
  - complétant
  - concluant
  - confisant
TABLE 7.H (continued)

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**NB:** The future and conditional have *cueiller* as a base and not *cueillir*. The same is true of *accueillir* and *recueillir* (but not *assaillir*).
### Verb forms

**TABLE 7.H (continued)**

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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Verb paradigms

#### Infinitive: dépeindre to describe

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>je dépeins</td>
<td>nous dépeignons</td>
<td>dépeignant</td>
<td>je dépeindrai</td>
<td>je dépeignis</td>
<td>je dépeignais</td>
<td>que je dépeigne</td>
<td>que je dépeignisse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu dépeins</td>
<td>vous dépeignez</td>
<td>dépeint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il dépeint</td>
<td>ils dépeignent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Infinitive: déplaire à to displease: see plaire

#### Infinitive: désapprendre to unlearn: see prendre

#### Infinitive: déteindre to fade

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>je déteins</td>
<td>nous déteignons</td>
<td>déteignant</td>
<td>je déteindrai</td>
<td>je déteignis</td>
<td>je déteignais</td>
<td>que je déteigne</td>
<td>que je déteignisse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu déteins</td>
<td>vous déteignez</td>
<td>déteint</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>il déteint</td>
<td>ils déteignent</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Infinitive: détenir to be in possession of: see tenir

#### Infinitive: détruire to destroy: see construire

#### Infinitive: dévêtir to undress: see vêtir

#### Infinitive: devoir must

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>je dois</td>
<td>nous devons</td>
<td>devant</td>
<td>je devrai</td>
<td>je dus</td>
<td>je devais</td>
<td>que je doive</td>
<td>que je dusse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu dois</td>
<td>vous devez</td>
<td>dû (due)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il doit</td>
<td>ils doivent</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Infinitive: dire to say

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>je dis</td>
<td>nous disons</td>
<td>disant</td>
<td>je dirai</td>
<td>je dis</td>
<td>je disais</td>
<td>que je dise</td>
<td>que je disse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu dis</td>
<td>vous dites</td>
<td>dit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il dit</td>
<td>ils disent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Infinitive: disconvenir à to be unsuited to: see venir

#### Infinitive: discourir to hold forth: see courir

#### Infinitive: disjoindre to sever: see joindre
### Verb forms

#### TABLE 7.H (continued)

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>disparaire</td>
<td>je disparais</td>
<td>disparaissez</td>
<td>je disparaîtrai</td>
<td>je disparais</td>
<td>je disparaissais</td>
<td>que je disparaisse</td>
<td>que je disparusse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to disappear</td>
<td>nous disparaissons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tu disparaît</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ils disparaissent</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Infinitive:**
dissoudre *to dissolve:* see absoudre

distriare *to distract:* see traire

s'èbattre *to frolic:* see battre

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>écchoir</td>
<td>j'échoit</td>
<td>échoient</td>
<td>il échoit</td>
<td>il échoit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fall due</td>
<td>nous échoit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Infinitive:**
éclore *to blossom:* see clore

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>écrire</td>
<td>j'écris</td>
<td>écrivons</td>
<td>j'écrirai</td>
<td>j'écrivis</td>
<td>j'écrivais</td>
<td>que j'écrive</td>
<td>que j'écrivisse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to write</td>
<td>tu écris</td>
<td>vous écrivez</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il écrit</td>
<td>ils écrivent</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Infinitive:**
elire *to elect:* see lire

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>éémouvoir</td>
<td>j'émous</td>
<td>émeuvons</td>
<td>j'émouvrail</td>
<td>j'émeus</td>
<td>j'émouvais</td>
<td>que j'émeuve</td>
<td>que j'émusse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to excite</td>
<td>tu émeus</td>
<td>vous émeuez</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il émeut</td>
<td>ils émeuent</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Infinitive:**
émeprompir *to emit:* see mettre

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>éémouvant</td>
<td>j'émouvai</td>
<td>ému</td>
<td>j'émouvai</td>
<td>j'emploie</td>
<td>j'employais</td>
<td>que j'emploie</td>
<td>que j'employasse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to excite</td>
<td>tu émeuez</td>
<td>vous employez</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il émeuement</td>
<td>ils employent</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Infinitive:**
emplaire *to stamp:* see craindre
TABLE 7.H  (continued)

Infinitive:  
s’en aller to go away: see aller

Infinitive:  
enceindre to surround: see ceindre

Infinitive:  
enclore to fence in: see clore

Infinitive:  
encourir to incur: see courir

Infinitive:  
enfuir to flee: see fuir

Infinitive:  
enjoindre to call upon: see joindre

Infinitive:  
enlever to remove: is like mener in the use of è in some forms of the verb

Infinitive:  
enquérir to make enquiries: see acquérir

Infinitive:  
'enlever to result, follow: see suivre
An impersonal verb used only in the infinitive and third singular form

Infinitive:  
enentretenir to maintain: see tenir

Infinitive:  
entrevoir to make out: see voir

Infinitive:  
entrouvrir to half-open: see ouvrir

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: to infringe</th>
<th>Present indicative:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>enfreindre</td>
<td>j’enfreins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nous enfreignons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tu enfreins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vous enfreignez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il enfreint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ils enfreignent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>enfreignant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enfreint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>j’enfreindrai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple past:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>j’enfreignis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperfect:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>j’enfreignais</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subj (près):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que j’enfreigne</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subj (imp):</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que j’enfreignisse</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 7.H (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: to send</th>
<th>Present indicative:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>envoyer</td>
<td>j’envoie</td>
<td>envoyant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tu envoies</td>
<td>envoyons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il envoie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nous envoyons</td>
<td>envoyé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vous envoyez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ils envoient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Future:            | j’enverrai          |
| Simple past:       | j’envoyai           |
| Imperfect:         | j’envoyais          |
| Subj (près):       | que j’envoie        |
| Subj (imp):        | que j’envoyasse     |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: to spell</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>épeler to spell: is like appeler in the distribution of single l and double ’ll</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: to fall in love with</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>s’éprendre de</td>
<td>espérant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>espéré</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future:</td>
<td>j’espérerai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past:</td>
<td>j’espérai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect:</td>
<td>j’espérais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (près):</td>
<td>que j’espère</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (imp):</td>
<td>que j’espérasse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: to be equivalent to</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>équivaloir à</td>
<td>espérer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future:</td>
<td>j’espère</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past:</td>
<td>j’espérai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect:</td>
<td>j’espérais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (près):</td>
<td>que j’espère</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (imp):</td>
<td>que j’espère</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Infinitive: to hope</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>espérer to hope:</td>
<td>espéré</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future:</td>
<td>j’espérerai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past:</td>
<td>j’espérai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect:</td>
<td>j’espérais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (près):</td>
<td>que j’espère</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (imp):</td>
<td>que j’espère</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: to extinguish</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>éteindre to extinguish:</td>
<td>éteint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future:</td>
<td>j’éteindrai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past:</td>
<td>j’éteignis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect:</td>
<td>j’éteignais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (près):</td>
<td>que j’éteigne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (imp):</td>
<td>que j’éteignisse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: to embrace</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>étreindre to embrace:</td>
<td>étreint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future:</td>
<td>j’étreindrai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past:</td>
<td>j’étreignis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect:</td>
<td>j’étreignais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (près):</td>
<td>que j’étreigne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (imp):</td>
<td>que j’étreignisse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: to exclude</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>exclure to exclude:</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future:</td>
<td>failli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past:</td>
<td>je failli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect:</td>
<td>je faillis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (près):</td>
<td>j’entreil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (imp):</td>
<td>je taillais</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: to almost do, nearly do</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>faillir to almost do, nearly do:</td>
<td>failli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future:</td>
<td>je faillirai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past:</td>
<td>je faillis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect:</td>
<td>je taillais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (près):</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj (imp):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e.g. j’ai failli/ il a failli, etc., tomber I/the nearly fell

Je ne faillirai pas à mon devoir
i won’t fail in my duty
<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>faire</td>
<td>je fais</td>
<td>faisant</td>
<td>je ferai</td>
<td>je fis</td>
<td>je faisais</td>
<td>que je fasse</td>
<td>que je fisse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do</td>
<td>tu fais</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il fait</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>falloir</td>
<td>il faut</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>il faudra</td>
<td>il fallut</td>
<td>il fallait</td>
<td>qu’il faille</td>
<td>qu’il fallût</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be necessary, 'must'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feindre</td>
<td>je feins</td>
<td>feignant</td>
<td>je feindrai</td>
<td>je feignis</td>
<td>je feignais</td>
<td>que je feigne</td>
<td>que je feignisse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to feign</td>
<td>tu feins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il feint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fleurir: has two present participles depending on meaning: fleurissant for the meaning of 'coming into flower', but florissant for 'flourishing' a; in 'a flourishing business'.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>frire</td>
<td>je fris</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>je frirai</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fry</td>
<td>tu fris</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il frit</td>
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<td>to be at rest, (as in grave), lie about (as clothes on floor)</td>
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<td>NB: ci-gît ... here lies ...</td>
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TABLE 7.H (continued)

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**NB:** The ï (i with trema) indicates two syllables. The verb is regular apart from the use of the tréma.

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**TABLE 7.H (continued)**

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**TABLE 7.H (continued)**

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<td>is similar to construire, except that its past participle is 'lui' and it normally does not have a simple past or an imperfect subjunctive.</td>
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<td>tu manges</td>
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### Verb forms

#### TABLE 7.H (continued)

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<td>que j'offre</td>
<td>que j'offrisse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to give</td>
<td>tu offres</td>
<td>vous offrez</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il offre</td>
<td>ils offrent</td>
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<tr>
<td>omettre</td>
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<td>j'offrierai</td>
<td>j'offris</td>
<td>que j'offre</td>
<td>que j'offrisse</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>to omit</td>
<td>voir</td>
<td>nous vons</td>
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<td>voir</td>
<td>voir</td>
<td>voir</td>
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<td>mettre</td>
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<td>offert</td>
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<td>j'offris</td>
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<tr>
<td>of</td>
<td>j'offre</td>
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<td>j'offrirai</td>
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<td>que j'offre</td>
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<td>l</td>
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### Verb paradigms

**TABLE 7.H** (continued)

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<td>nous ouvrons</td>
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<td>j’ouvris</td>
<td>j’ouvrais</td>
<td>que j’ouvre</td>
<td>que j’ouvrissé</td>
<td>ouvre (ouvrez before y and en)</td>
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<td><strong>to open</strong></td>
<td>tu ouvres</td>
<td>vous ouvrez</td>
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<td>je paraîs</td>
<td>nous paraîssons</td>
<td>jé paraîtraï</td>
<td>jé parus</td>
<td>jé paraîsais</td>
<td>que je paraîsse</td>
<td>que je paraîssisse</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>to seem</strong></td>
<td>tu paraîs</td>
<td>vous paraîsez</td>
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<td><strong>parcourir</strong></td>
<td>je peins</td>
<td>nous peignons</td>
<td>jé peindrai</td>
<td>jé peignis</td>
<td>jé peignais</td>
<td>que je peigne</td>
<td>que je peignisse</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>to travel through:</strong></td>
<td>tu peins</td>
<td>vous peignez</td>
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<td><strong>peindre</strong></td>
<td>je me plains</td>
<td>nous nous plaignons</td>
<td>jé me plaindrai</td>
<td>jé me plaingis</td>
<td>jé me plaingais</td>
<td>que je me plaîgne</td>
<td>que je me plaîgnisse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>to paint</strong></td>
<td>tu te plains</td>
<td>vous vous plaing2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il se plaint</td>
<td>ils se plaignent</td>
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<td>je plains</td>
<td>nous plaignons</td>
<td>jé me plaindrai</td>
<td>jé me plaingis</td>
<td>jé me plaingais</td>
<td>que je me plaîgne</td>
<td>que je plaîgnîsse</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>to complain</strong></td>
<td>tu plais</td>
<td>vous plaisez</td>
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<td>ils plaisez</td>
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<td><strong>plaire</strong></td>
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<td>nous plaisons</td>
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<td>jé plus</td>
<td>jé plaîsais</td>
<td>que je plaîse</td>
<td>que je plussse</td>
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<td><strong>to please</strong></td>
<td>tu plais</td>
<td>vous plaisez</td>
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<td>il plait</td>
<td>ils plaisent</td>
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</table>
### TABLE 7.H (continued)

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<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Present indicative:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pleuvain</td>
<td>il pleut</td>
<td>pleuvant plu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to rain</td>
<td></td>
<td>Future: il pluvra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(impersonal)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Simple past: il plut</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect: il pleuvait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (près): qu'il pleuve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (imp): qu'il plût</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poursuivre</td>
<td>to pursue: see suivre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pourvoir</td>
<td>je pourvois</td>
<td>pourvoyant pourvu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to provide</td>
<td>tu pourvois</td>
<td>Future: je pourvoirai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il pourvoit</td>
<td>Simple past: je pourvus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect: je pourvoyais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (près): que je pourvoie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (imp): que je pourvusse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pouvoir</td>
<td>je peux</td>
<td>pouvant pu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be able to</td>
<td>tu peux</td>
<td>Future: je pourrai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il peut</td>
<td>Simple past: je pus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(alternative: je</td>
<td>Imperfect: je pouvais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>puis)</td>
<td>Subj (près): que je puisse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (imp): que je pusse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prédire</td>
<td>to predict: see interdire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prendre</td>
<td>je prends</td>
<td>prenant pris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to take</td>
<td>tu prends</td>
<td>Future: je prendrai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il prend</td>
<td>Simple past: je pris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect: je prenais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (près): que je prenne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>que nous prenions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>que vous preniez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (imp): que je prissee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prescrire</td>
<td>to prescribe: see écrire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prévaloir</td>
<td>to prevail: see valoir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prévoir</td>
<td>je prévois</td>
<td>prévoyant prévu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to foresee</td>
<td>tu prévois</td>
<td>Future: je prévoirai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il prévoit</td>
<td>Simple past: je prévis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect: je prévoyais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (près): que je prévoie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subj (imp): que je prévisse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Two 'n's when 'ri' is followed by a 'silent' e: prenne, prennes, prenent.
### Verb paradigms

**TABLE 7.H (continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Present indicative:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>produire to produce: see construire</td>
<td>je produis, tu produis, il/ils/elle produit; nous produisons, vous produisez, ils/elles produisent</td>
<td>produisant, produit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>projeté to plan: is like jeter in the use of single 't' and double 'tt'</td>
<td>je projette, tu projettes, il/ils/elle projette; nous projetons, vous projetez, ils/elles projettent</td>
<td>projetant, projeté</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>promettre to promise: see mettre</td>
<td>je promets, tu promets, il/ils/elle promet; nous promettons, vous promettez, ils/elles promettent</td>
<td>promettant, promis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proscrire to outlaw: see écrire</td>
<td>je proscrit, tu proscris, il/ils/elle proscrit; nous proscritons, vous proscrivez, ils/elles proscrittent</td>
<td>proscrit, proscrit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protéger to protect: is like espérer, compléter in the distribution of é and è</td>
<td>je protège, tu protèges, il/ils/elle protège; nous Protectons, vous protégez, ils/elles protègent</td>
<td>protégeant, protégé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provenir de to arise from: see venir</td>
<td>je provient, tu proviens, il/ils/elle provient; nous provenons, vous provenez, ils/elles provenent</td>
<td>provenant, provenu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **r-, re-, ré-:** for derived verbs with these prefixes, e.g. rasseoir, reconstruire, réélire, etc., see the entry for the non-prefixed counterpart, i.e. s’asseoir, construire, lire, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive:</th>
<th>Present indicative:</th>
<th>Participles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rabattre to pull down (e.g. hat)</td>
<td>je rabats, tu rabats, il rabat; nous rabattons, vous rabattez, ils rabattent</td>
<td>rabattant, rabattu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reconnaître to recognize</td>
<td>je reconnais, tu reconnais, il reconnaît; nous reconnaissions, vous reconnaissiez, ils reconnaissent</td>
<td>reconnaissant, reconnu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recouvrir to cover</td>
<td>je recouvre, tu recouvres, il recouvre; nous recouvrons, vous recouvrez, ils recouvrent</td>
<td>recouvrant, recouvert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refléter to reflect: is like espérer and compléter in the distribution of é and è</td>
<td>je reflète, tu reflètes, il reflète; nous reflétons, vous reflétez, ils reflètent</td>
<td>reflétenant, reflété</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rejeter to throw back: is like jeter in the use of single 't' and double 'tt'</td>
<td>je rejette, tu rejettes, il rejette; nous rejettons, vous rejettes, ils rejetent</td>
<td>rejetant, rejeté</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 7.H (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: renvoyer</th>
<th>Present indicative: je renvoie nous renvoyons tu renvoies vous renvoyez il renvoie ils renvoient</th>
<th>Participles: renvoyant renvoyé</th>
<th>Future: je renverrai</th>
<th>Simple past: je renvoyai</th>
<th>Imperfect: je renvoyais</th>
<th>Subj (près): que je renvoie</th>
<th>Subj (imp): que je renvoyaiss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>to sack, send back</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: répéter</th>
<th>Present indicative: je répète nous répétons tu répètes vous répétez il répète ils répètent</th>
<th>Participles: répétant répeli</th>
<th>Future: je répéterai</th>
<th>Simple past: je répetais</th>
<th>Imperfect: je répétai</th>
<th>Subj (près): que je répète</th>
<th>Subj (imp): que je répétisse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: résoudre</th>
<th>Present indicative: je résous nous résolvons tu résous vous résolvez il résout ils résolvent</th>
<th>Participles: résolvant résolu</th>
<th>Future: je résoudrai</th>
<th>Simple past: je résolut</th>
<th>Imperfect: je résolvais</th>
<th>Subj (près): que je résolve</th>
<th>Subj (imp): que je résolusse</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>to resolve</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: restreindre</th>
<th>Present indicative: je restreins nous restreignons tu restreins vous restreignez il restreint ils restreignent</th>
<th>Participles: restreignant restreint</th>
<th>Future: je restreindrai</th>
<th>Simple past: je restreignis</th>
<th>Imperfect: je restreignais</th>
<th>Subj (près): que je restreigne</th>
<th>Subj (imp): que je restreignisse</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>to restrain</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: rire</th>
<th>Present indicative: je ris nous rions tu ris vous riez il rit ils rient</th>
<th>Participles: riant rie</th>
<th>Future: je rirai</th>
<th>Simple past: je riais</th>
<th>Imperfect: je risse</th>
<th>Subj (près): que je rie</th>
<th>Subj (imp): que je rissse</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>to laugh</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Infinitive: rompre</th>
<th>Present indicative: je romps nous rompons tu romps vous rompez il rompt ils rompent</th>
<th>Participles: rompant rompu</th>
<th>Future: je romprai</th>
<th>Simple past: je rompais</th>
<th>Imperfect: je rompissse</th>
<th>Subj (près): que je rompe</th>
<th>Subj (imp): que je rompisse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>to break</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive: savoir</th>
<th>Present indicative: je sais nous savons tu sais vous savez il sait ils savent</th>
<th>Participles: sachant su</th>
<th>Future: je saurai</th>
<th>Simple past: je sus</th>
<th>Imperfect: je savais</th>
<th>Subj (près): que je sache</th>
<th>Subj (imp): que je susse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>to know</strong></td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>to help</strong></td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>to seduce</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>souffrir</td>
<td>je souffre</td>
<td>souffrant</td>
<td>je souffrirai</td>
<td>je souffris</td>
<td>je souffrais</td>
<td>que je souffre</td>
<td>que je souffrisse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to suffer</td>
<td>nous souffrons</td>
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<td>tu souffres</td>
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<tr>
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<td>vous souffrez</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ils souffrent</td>
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Verb paradigms 183

TABLE 7.H (continued)

Verb paradigms 183
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>que je visse</td>
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<tr>
<td>vouloir</td>
<td>je veux</td>
<td>voulant</td>
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<tr>
<td>to want</td>
<td>tu veux</td>
<td>voulu</td>
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<td>il veut</td>
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<td>nous voulons</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vous voulez</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ils veulent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>je voudrai</td>
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<td></td>
<td>nous voulu</td>
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<td>vous voulez</td>
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<td>ils veulent</td>
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<td>que je veuille</td>
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<td></td>
<td>que je voulu</td>
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<td>que je voulsse</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verb constructions

8.1 Relations between verbs and their complements

Verbs can be classified by the kinds of complement they take. Table 8.A outlines the main types dealt with in this chapter.

TABLE 8.A Classification of verbs by the complements they take

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb type</th>
<th>Complement type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intransitive (8.2) e.g. <em>partir</em> <em>Jeanne partira</em></td>
<td>Direct object Prepositional object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directly Transitive (8.3) e.g. <em>fermer</em> <em>Il ferme</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>les yeux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly Transitive (8.4) e.g. <em>hériter</em> <em>Yvon hérite</em></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>d’une fortune “</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditransitive (8.5) e.g. <em>planter</em> <em>Hervé a planté</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>le jardin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronominal (8.7) (a) <em>se</em> is a direct object e.g. <em>s’évanouir</em></td>
<td>(a) <em>Marie s’est évanouie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) <em>se</em> is an indirect object e.g. <em>se faire mal</em></td>
<td>(b) <em>Elle s’est fait mal</em> (à elle-même)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2 Intransitive constructions

Intransitive verbs have no object:

Depuis Janvier les prix ont augmenté  
Il a acquiescé  
L’eau scintillait  
La neige tombe  

*Since January prices have gone up*  
*He agreed*  
*The water sparkled*  
*Snow is falling*
Intransitive constructions

La fête continue
Elle avait disparu
Vous descendez?
Il ne souffrira pas

The party is going on
She had disappeared
Are you going down?
He won't suffer

They may be accompanied (usually optionally, but sometimes obligatorily) by adverbs (see Chapter 5). Examples shown in brackets indicate that the adverb is optional:

Elle part (en vacances)  
Un léger brouillard montait (de la mer)
Il a respiré fortement
Christian serait tombé (du haut de la falaise)
Elle est descendue (péniblement)
Cet homme avait vécu plus de 90 ans
Louis tremblait (de tous ses membres)
Les minutes passaient (lentement)

She is going (on holiday)
A mist rose (from the sea)
He breathed deeply
Christian apparently fell (from the cliff)
She went down (gingerly)
That man had lived into his nineties
Louis was trembling (all over)
The minutes passed (slowly)

8.2.1 Intransitive verbs and auxiliary avoir

Most intransitive verbs employ the auxiliary avoir in compound tenses:

Depuis Janvier les prix ont augmenté
Il aurait acquiescé
La fête avait continué
Elle avait disparu
Il n’a pas souffert
La situation aura probablement empiré

Since January prices have gone up
He agreed, apparently
The party had gone on
She had disappeared
He didn’t suffer
The situation will probably have got worse

A small set of verbs, including commencer, changer, disparaître, vieillir, normally appear with the auxiliary avoir in compound tenses, but their past participles may be used with être to describe a state of affairs. In this case the past participle is used in very much the same way as an adjective (for adjectives, see Chapter 4). Compare the following sentences:

Il a commencé à lire ce roman
La pièce est commencée
Il a changé les pneus de sa voiture
Depuis dix ans elle est vraiment changée

He began to read this novel
The play has begun
He changed the tyres on his car
She has really changed in ten years

NB: With être and a state of affairs, there will be agreement between the past participle and the subject. With avoir and an action there will not. (See Chapter 9.2 and 9.3.)

8.2.2 Intransitive verbs and auxiliary être

Intransitive verbs with être

A small set of intransitive verbs, some very frequently used, appear with the auxiliary être in compound tenses:

Un léger brouillard est monté de la mer
Christian est tombé du haut de la falaise
Elle était descendue
Marie-Christine est née en 1968

A mist rose from the sea
Christian fell from the cliff
She had gone down
Marie-Christine was born in 1968
The verbs which take être in this way are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aller</td>
<td>to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arriver</td>
<td>to arrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>décéder</td>
<td>to die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demeurer</td>
<td>to remain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>descendre</td>
<td>to go down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devenir</td>
<td>to become</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entrer</td>
<td>to enter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monter</td>
<td>to go up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mourir</td>
<td>to die</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and verbs derived from the above: redescendre, remonter, renaître, repartir, retomber, parvenir and survenir.

Intransitive verbs with avoir or être

A further set of intransitive verbs, e.g. accourir, apparaître, passer, can appear either with avoir or with être in compound tenses. It would seem that the use of être is now more common and avoir may appear dated:

- Quand il a appris la nouvelle il est accouru
- Il nous est apparu que le gardien avait menti
- Il est passé nous voir

(See 8.3.4. for intransitive verbs which can be used with avoir when used transitively.)

8.3 Directly transitive verbs

Directly transitive verbs have direct objects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lire la nouvelle dans le journal</td>
<td>to read the item in the newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quitter le Pays de Galles</td>
<td>to leave Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composer un billet</td>
<td>to punch a ticket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fumer une cigarette</td>
<td>to smoke a cigarette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ouvrir la portière</td>
<td>to open the (car, train) door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prendre le train</td>
<td>to take the train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rencontrer un ami</td>
<td>to meet a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expliquer les faits</td>
<td>to explain the facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>étouffer un juron</td>
<td>to stifle an oath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lever la tête</td>
<td>to raise one's head</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.3.1 Directly transitive verbs without objects

Sometimes the objects of transitive verbs may be omitted. When this happens the object is still understood', but with a general or non-specific interpretation:

- Clément boit
- La vitesse tue
- Gustave enseigne
- Il ne sait pas conduire
- On attend

- Clément drinks ('alcohol' understood)
- Speed kills ('people' understood)
- Gustave teaches ('pupils' understood)
- He can't drive ('cars' understood)
- We're waiting (for something to happen' understood)

8.3.2 Directly transitive verbs take the auxiliary avoir

All transitive verbs take the auxiliary avoir in compound tenses, whether the object is present or omitted:
8.3.3 Verbs with intransitive and transitive uses

Some verbs can be used intransitively (without an object) and transitively (with an object):

- Les prix augmentent
  Prices are going up
- La chaîne augmente ses prix
  The store is increasing its prices
- Il rentre
  He is going home
- Il rentre la voiture au garage
  He is putting the car in the garage
- Elle sort
  She is going out
- Elle sort son appareil-photo
  She is getting her camera out
- Le moteur a calé
  The engine stalled
- Alain a calé le moteur
  Alain stalled the engine

8.3.4 être and avoir with verbs used intransitively and transitively

Intransitive verbs which take the auxiliary être in compound tenses take avoir when they are used transitively:

- Pierre est descendu
  Pierre went down
- BUT
  Pierre a descendu les valises
  Pierre has taken the suitcases down
- Marie est montée prendre son maillot de bain
  Marie has gone up to fetch her swimming costume
- BUT
  Marie avait monté un sac de charbon
  Marie had taken a sack of coal up
- Mickey est sorti
  Mickey has gone out
- BUT
  Mickey a sorti une pièce d’identité
  Mickey got out some identification
- Bernard sera rentré
  Bernard will have gone home
- BUT
  Bernard avait rentré la voiture au garage
  Bernard had put the car in the garage
- Eliane était retournée à la banque
  Eliane had gone back to the bank
- BUT
  Eliane a retourné tout l’appartement
  Eliane has turned the flat upside down

The verbs descendre and monter also take the auxiliary avoir in compound tenses when they are used with adverbials of place like l’escalier, la rue, la côte:

- Il a descendu l’escalier/la rue
  He went down the stairs/the street
- Elle a monté la côte
  She went up the hill

Compare with:

- Il est descendu vers la rue
  He went down towards the street
- Elle est monté à l’échelle
  She climbed up the ladder
8.3.5 Verbs which are directly transitive in French but whose translation equivalents involve the object of a preposition in English

English speakers should pay special attention to the following verbs. Unlike their English counterparts, their objects are not preceded by a preposition:

- approuver un choix
- attendre le train
- chercher une enveloppe
- demander un verre d'eau
- descendre la rue
- écouter la radio
- espérer une récompense
- habiter une maison, une ville, une région
- longer la falaise
- monter la côte
- payer un tour de manège
- payer une tournée
- présider une séance
- regarder le soleil
- viser la cible

**habiter also appears in constructions like:** habiter à la campagne, habiter en ville, habiter en France. **Here à la campagne, en ville and en France are not objects but adverbials; they can co-occur with direct objects:** habiter une petite maison à la campagne, habiter un bon quartier en ville, etc.

Examples:

- Il approuve mon choix  (NOT *Il approuve de mon choix)
- J'attends le train     (NOT "J'attends pour le train)
- Nous cherchons la gare (NOT *Nous cherchons pour la gare)
- Cette publicité vise les jeunes (NOT *Cette publicité vise aux jeunes)

(See Chapter 3.2 to see how this influences the choice of object pronouns.)

8.4 Indirectly transitive verbs

Indirectly transitive verbs take an object introduced by a preposition:

**Introduced by à**

- assister à une réunion  to be present at a meeting
- compatir à la douleur de quelqu'un to feel for somebody in their sorrow
- croire au diable to believe in the devil
- en vouloir à son cousin to hold a grudge against one's cousin
- participer aux activités to take part in the activities
- penser à son avenir to think about one's future
- pourvoir aux besoins de quelqu'un to provide for somebody's needs
- réfléchir à son passé to reflect on one's past
- songer à un voyage en Italie to envisage a trip to Italy
- veiller au bon règlement d'une affaire to see to the proper handling of a matter

NB: (a) *Croire à* is used to mean 'to believe in the existence of some phenomenon': croire aux fées 'to believe in fairies', croire au bonheur 'to believe in (human) happiness'. *Croire* can also take direct objects: Je crois cette histoire T believe this
Indirectly transitive verbs

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story'. Elle le croit 'She believes him'. Croire en means 'to believe in' in the sense of 'to have faith in': croire en Dieu 'to believe in God', croire en ses co-équipiers 'to believe in one's team-mates'.

(b) Penser can also take an object preceded by de with the meaning 'to have an opinion about something': Qu'est-ce que vous pensez de son article? 'What do you think of his article?'

(c) veiller sur quelqu'un means 'to watch over somebody'.

Introduced by de

déborder d'eau
déjeuner de fruits
dépendre des circonstances
dîner de moules et de frites
défouiller d'abeilles
gémir de douleur
grouiller de fourmis
parler de ses amis
regorger de richesses
répondre de son ami
rire de ses compagnons
rougir de honte
tenir de sa mère
trembler de peur
triompher de son adversaire
vivre de l'air du temps
vivre de presque rien
to overflow with water
to lunch on fruit
to depend on the circumstances
to dine on mussels and french fries
to swarm with bees
to groan with pain
to swarm with ants
to speak of one's friends
to abound in wealth
to answer for one's friend
to laugh at one's friends
to go red with shame
to take after one's mother
to tremble with fear
to overcome one's opponent
to live on fresh air alone
to live on next to nothing

(For pronominal verbs which take prepositional objects (s'habituer à, s'éloigner de, etc.) see 8.7.3.)

8.4.1 Verbs which are indirectly transitive in French but whose translation equivalents are directly transitive in English

Special attention should be given to the following verbs because, while they are indirectly transitive in French, their English counterparts are directly transitive.

Objects introduced by à

contravenir à la réglementation
convenir à Julie
(dé)plaire à son professeur
(dés)obéir à ses parents
échapper à la police
échouer à un examen
jouer au football, au rugby, au tennis
nuire à la réputation de quelqu'un
parvenir au sommet
plaire à quelqu'un
remédier à la situation
renoncer à l'alcool
résister à une force
ressembler à son chien
subvenir aux besoins de quelqu'un
succéder à son père
to break the rule
to suit Julie
to (dis)please one's teacher
to (dis)obey one's parents
to evade capture by the police
to fail an exam
to play football, rugby, tennis
to harm somebody's reputation
to reach the summit
to please somebody
to rectify the situation
to give up alcohol
to resist a force
to look like one's dog
to look after somebody financially
to succeed one's father
survivre à un accident
 téléphoner à quelqu’un
 toucher aux affaires de quelqu’un

to survive an accident
to telephone somebody
to mess about with somebody’s things

While échapper à means ‘to evade capture’, s’échapper de means ‘to escape from’:
 s’échapper de la prison.

Examples:

Il joue au football
Il a téléphoné à sa femme
Elle ressemble beaucoup à sa mère
Le nouveau poste plaisait à Antoine

(NOT *Il joue football)
(NOT *Il a téléphoné sa femme)
(NOT *Elle ressemble beaucoup sa mère)
(NOT *Le nouveau poste plaisait Antoine)

See Chapter 3.2 for the relevance of this distinction to the choice of object pronoun.

Objects introduced by de
abuser de son héritage
douter de la vérité d’une histoire
hériter d’une fortune
jouer du piano/du violon/de la flûte
jouir de privilèges sans précédent
médire de son voisin
redoubler d’efforts

to misuse one’s inheritance
to doubt the truth of a story

to inherit a fortune
to play the piano/violin/flute

to enjoy unprecedented privileges
to slander one’s neighbour
to double one’s efforts

Note that entrer is usually followed by dans: entrer dans la maison. Grimper is usually followed either by sur or by à: grimper sur un escabeau ‘to climb a step-ladder’, grimper à l’échelle ‘to climb a ladder’.

Examples:

Elle espère hériter d’une fortune
Elle jouait du piano

(NOT *Elle espère hériter une fortune)
(NOT *Elle jouait le piano)

(For pronominal verbs which take prepositional objects - s’apercevoir de, se servir de, etc. - see 8.7.3.)

8.5 Ditransitive verbs

Ditransitive verbs take a direct object and an object introduced by a preposition.

Introduced by à and corresponding typically to English 'to'

accoutumer un apprenti au métier
admettre un invité à la fête
appeler quelqu’un au téléphone
apprendre le français à des élèves
avouer un crime à la police
condamner un malfaiteur à une peine de prison
conduire les hôtes à leur chambre
contraindre les rebelles à l’obéissance
convier des amis à une fête
dire ses quatre vérités à quelqu’un

to get an apprentice used to a trade
to admit a guest to the party
to call somebody to the phone
to teach French to pupils
to cotifess to the police about a crime
to condemn a criminal to prison

to take the guests to their room
to force the rebels into obedience
to invite friends to a party
to shout the bare truth at somebody
Ditransitive verbs

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destiner son fils à une belle carrière
dire des mensonges à sa famille
emmener les invités à leur hôtel
exposer sa famille à des dangers
forcer les citoyens à la révolution
habituier les motocyclistes au port du casque
inciter les ouvriers à la révolte
inviter les syndicalistes à une réunion

jurer l’amour éternel à quelqu'un
louer une voiture à un touriste
obliger ses créanciers au remboursement
ordonner la retraite à ses troupes
provoquer quelqu'un à une réaction trop vive
réduire quelqu'un à la mendicité
rendre le magnétoscope à son voisin

suggérer une idée à un collègue

NB: louer une voiture à un garagiste is likely to mean: 'to hire a car from a garage owner'.

Introduced by à and corresponding typically to English 'from' or 'for'

acheter un camion à un garagiste
to buy a lorry from a garage owner
arracher de l'argent à un avare
to prise money from a miser
cacher la catastrophe à sa famille
to hide the disaster from one's family
dérober de l'argent à ses enfants
to steal money from one's children
emprunter cinq cents francs à un ami
to borrow five hundred francs from a friend

enlever le pistolet au voleur
to take the revolver away from the thief
ôter une écharde à quelqu'un
to remove a splinter from somebody's flesh
louer une camionnette au garagiste
to hire a van from the garage owner
préparer la famille à de bien tristes nouvelles
to prepare the family for very sad news
reprocher une liaison à son mari
to be angry with one's husband for having had an affair
réservé des sièges aux invités
to reserve some seats for the guests
retirer son permis au conducteur
to take the driver's licence away from him
soustraire une grosse somme à une vieille dame
to swindle an old lady out of a large sum
voler une bague à sa cousine
to steal a ring from one's cousin

Introduced by de and corresponding typically to English 'with' or 'in' or, less frequently, 'from' or 'on'

accabler son amie de cadeaux
to overwhelm one's girl friend with presents
accompagner ses commentaires de sarcasme
to bring sarcasm into one's comments
affranchir une population de l'esclavage
to free a population from slavery
armé ses soldats de mitrailleuses
to arm one's soldiers with machine guns
charger un voisin d'une commission
to entrust an errand to a neighbour
coiffer un enfant d'un chapeau de paille
to put a straw hat on a child's head
comblé ses invités de gentillesses
to cover one's guests in kindness
**8.5.1 In French, unlike English, double object constructions with no preposition are impossible**

Some ditransitive verbs in English allow the preposition introducing the second object to be omitted and the order of the objects to be switched around. This is not possible in French:

- *to give a present to one's uncle*  
  *offrir un cadeau à son oncle* BUT NOT *offrir son oncle un cadeau*  
  *to pass the salt to one's neighbour*  
  *passer le sel à son voisin* BUT NOT *passer son voisin le sel*

(See 8.6.3 for the consequences of this in forming a passive.)

**8.6 The passive**

By use of the passive, emphasis may be placed on the receiver of an action (usually what would be the object in the equivalent active sentence) rather than on the agent of the action (usually the subject).

**8.6.1 Formation of the passive**

Passives are produced from directly transitive sentences by moving the object noun phrase into the position of the grammatical subject, introducing the verb *être* and, optionally, moving the erstwhile subject into a phrase introduced by *par* or *de*:

Nantes a battu Paris St Germain
*Nantes beat Paris St Germain*
becomes:

Quand elle est arrivée au commissariat, son mari l'accompagnait
When she got to the police station, her husband was with her

Note that the rules of agreement for the past participle are those of être (see Chapter 9.2.2): i.e. it agrees with the subject:

Delphine a été battue au tennis (par Suzanne)
Delphine was beaten at tennis by Suzanne

George a été battu au tennis par Jean-Claude
George was beaten at tennis by Jean-Claude

NB: The use of the preposition par to introduce the subject usually implies some degree of voluntary involvement; the use of de suggests more a state of affairs. See also Chapter 13.15.5.

8.6.2 Problems in the formation of the passive arising from different kinds of direct objects

Most verbs which have a direct object (directly transitive verbs - see 8.3) will convert into a passive, but there are limitations to whether the meaning is sensible or not. Aimer can be turned into a sensible passive:

Juliette aime Georges
Juliette loves George

but lire produces a less natural sentence:

Je lis ce livre
I am reading this book

Ce livre est lu par moi (???)
This book is being read by me (???)

Usually passives which make an inanimate direct object a subject and put an animate subject in a par or de phrase are unnatural.

NB: The verb avoir is used in the passive only in the colloquial J'ai été eu T have been had' in the sense of 'swindled'.

8.6.3 Possible confusions between English and French over what is a direct object: English 'double object' verbs

English has a set of verbs which allow two structures for a similar meaning: one has a direct object and a prepositional object, the other has two non-prepositional objects and the word order is different:
In both sentences 'Naomi' is the indirect object of the verb 'give' and 'flowers' is the direct object, but in the 'double object' construction 'Naomi' directly follows the verb, which gives the impression that it is the direct object.

English allows either object to become the subject in a passive sentence:

- Flowers were given to Naomi by John
- Naomi was given flowers by John

French, however, only allows the prepositional object construction offrir quelque chose à quelqu'un: Jean a offert des fleurs à Naomi (NOT *Jean a offert Naomi des fleurs) Furthermore, French only allows the direct object to become the subject in a passive sentence. Thus:

- Des fleurs furent offertes à Naomi par Jean
- Flowers were given to Naomi by Jean

is an acceptable French sentence, but

"Naomi fut offerte des fleurs par Jean

is entirely unacceptable.

Sentences constructed with similar verbs run into the same problems:

**English**

To teach somebody something:

- I taught French to John
- I taught John French
- French was taught to John by me
- John was taught French by me

**French**

Enseigner quelque chose à quelqu'un:

- J'ai enseigné le français à Jean
  
  But *J'ai enseigné Jean le français is unacceptable

  Therefore Le français fut enseigné à Jean par moi is acceptable

- But *Jean fut enseigné le français par moi is unacceptable

**English**

To tell somebody something:

- I told a story to John
- I told John a story
- A story was told to John by me
- John was told a story by me

**French**

Raconter quelque chose à quelqu'un:

- J'ai raconté une histoire à Jean
  
  But *J'ai raconté Jean une histoire is unacceptable

  Therefore Une histoire fut racontée à Jean par moi is acceptable

- But *Jean fut raconté une histoire par moi is unacceptable

Common French verbs whose prepositional objects must keep the preposition and cannot be made the subject of a passive are listed below:

- accorder qc à qn to grant sb sth
- apprendre qc à qn to teach sb sth
commander qc à qn to order sb to do sth/to order sth from sb
counsiller qc à qn to advise sb to do sth
defendre qc à qn to forbid sb sth
demander qc à qn to ask sb sth
donner qc à qn to give sb sth
ecrire qc à qn to write sb sth
enseigner qc à qn to teach sb sth
laisser qc à qn to leave sb sth
montrer qc à qn to show sb sth
offrir qc à qn to offer sb sth, treat sb to sth
pardonner qc à qn to forgive sb sth
passer qc à qn to pass sb sth
permettre qc à qn to allow sb sth
prescrire qc à qn to prescribe sb sth
prêter qc à qn to lend sb sth
promettre qc à qn to promise sb sth
refuser qc à qn to refuse sb sth

8.7 Pronominal verbs

Pronominal verbs are accompanied by an unstressed pronoun which agrees with the subject, and is one of me, te, se, nous, vous. This can function as a direct object:

Direct object

s'êlaver 'to wash (oneself)'

je me lave nous nous lavons
tu te laves vous vous lavez
Paul se lave ils se lavent
Virginie se lave elles se lavent

or as an indirect object:

Indirect object

s'êlaver le visage 'to wash one's face' (literally: 'to wash the face to oneself)

je me lave le visage nous nous lavons le visage
tu te laves le visage vous vous lavez le visage
Paul se lave le visage ils se lavent le visage
Virginie se lave le visage elles se lavent le visage

Some verbs exist in both a pronominal and non-pronominal form, as laver does: laver la voiture 'to wash the car', se laver le visage 'to wash one's face'. Others are always pronominal, for example s'évanouir 'to faint', s'enorgueillir de 'to take pride in', s'évertuer à 'to try very hard to'.

All pronominal verbs are conjugated with être in compound tenses. (For the agreement of past participles with pronominal verbs see 8.7.7 and Chapter 9.4.)

8.7.1 Pronominal verbs used reflexively

When pronominal verbs are used to describe something which the subject does to herself, himself, themselves, etc., they are being used reflexively:

Je me vois dans la glace I can see myself in the mirror
Je me déteste I hate myself
Il s'est fait mal \hspace{1cm} He hurt himself
Elle s'était cassé la jambe \hspace{1cm} She had broken her leg

Note that English translations of pronominal verbs used reflexively do not always require a form of -self. In French, however, the reflexive pronoun is always required:

le me lave \hspace{1cm} I am washing (myself)
Il se rase \hspace{1cm} He is shaving (himself)
Il s'est roulé par terre \hspace{1cm} He rolled (himself) on the ground

The pronoun itself may be the direct or indirect object of the verb. If the verb in its non-pronominal form is directly transitive, the pronoun will be a direct object. If the verb in its non-pronominal form is indirectly transitive, the pronoun will be an indirect object pronoun. For example, laver takes a direct object: laver la voiture. Therefore in Je me lave the pronoun is direct. But parler (parler à qn) takes an indirect object, e.g. parler à une amie. Therefore in Je me parle the pronoun is indirect.

The reflexive pronoun is the direct object

le me lave à l’eau froide \hspace{1cm} I wash in cold water
Elle est maladroite et se blesse fréquemment \hspace{1cm} She is clumsy and often injures herself
Il se coiffe pendant des heures \hspace{1cm} He spends hours doing his hair
Tu te baignes tous les jours? \hspace{1cm} Do you have a swim every day?
Suzanne s’habille très mal \hspace{1cm} Suzanne dresses very badly
Jean-Pierre se nourrit très bien \hspace{1cm} Jean-Pierre has a healthy diet
Marianne se cache dans l’armoire \hspace{1cm} Marianne is hiding in the cupboard

The reflexive pronoun is the indirect object

Je me parle constamment en me promenant \hspace{1cm} I constantly talk to myself when I go for a walk
En répétant des confidences on ne peut que se nuire \hspace{1cm} By repeating secrets you only succeed in doing yourself harm
Tu t’achèteras un nouveau blouson pour la rentrée \hspace{1cm} You’ll buy yourself a new jacket to go back to school
Je me reproche ces bêtises \hspace{1cm} I feel bad about this foolishness
Je me jure de continuer à travailler \hspace{1cm} I promise myself that I will continue to work
Il faut bien s’admettre la vérité \hspace{1cm} We just have to accept the truth
Marianne se cache la vérité \hspace{1cm} Marianne is hiding the truth from herself

The difference between direct object reflexives and indirect object reflexives is clear from the last example in each set:

Marianne se cache dans l’armoire
Marianne se cache la vérité

In the first example the se is the person who is hidden: Marianne cache Marianne dans l’armoire. In the second example it is la vérité which is hidden and the se is the indirect object: Marianne cache la vérité à Marianne. These differences are significant when it comes to past participle agreement (see 8.7.7 below and Chapter 9.4).
Many ordinarily directly transitive, indirectly transitive and ditransitive verbs can be used pronominally as reflexives, for example:

- Il critique son patron  
  He criticizes his boss
- Je juge le prisonnier coupable  
  I consider the prisoner guilty
- Elle regarde son amie  
  She is looking at her girlfriend
- Tu offres un cadeau à Philippe  
  You are giving a present to Philip
- Il parle à sa mère  
  He’s talking to his mother
- Elle cache la vérité à son mari  
  She is hiding the truth from her husband

8.7.2 Pronominal verbs and body parts

The normal way of describing events in which subjects do things to their own bodies is to use a pronominal verb and the part of the body preceded by a definite or indefinite article, and not by a possessive determiner as in English:

- Je me lave toujours les mains avant de déjeuner  
  I always wash my hands before lunch
- Elle va se couper le doigt si elle ne fait pas attention  
  She will cut her finger if she’s not careful
- Nathan s’est cassé la jambe en jouant au football  
  Nathan broke his leg playing football
- Tu as encore oublié de te brosser les dents!  
  You forgot to brush your teeth again!
- J’aime bien me brosser les cheveux  
  I like brushing my hair
- Elle s’est cassé une dent de devant  
  She broke one of her front teeth

(See also Chapter 2.2.8 for the use of the definite article with parts of the body.)

8.7.3 Pronominal verbs without a reflexive interpretation

Some verbs include a pronoun but it is impossible to see in what way they can be assigned a reflexive interpretation, e.g. s’abstenir, se douter, s’en aller, s’enfuir, s’évanouir, se repentir, se taire etc.:

- Je m’abstiendrai de tout commentaire  
  I will refrain from making any comment
- Tu t’es toujours douté qu’il lui ferait faux bond  
  You always guessed he would let her down
- Il reste encore aujourd’hui mais il s’en va demain  
  He’s staying today but he is going tomorrow
- A la vue de tout ce sang, ils se sont évanouis  
  At the sight of so much blood they fainted
- Il s’est toujours repenti de ces paroles  
  He always regrets those words
Ils se sont tus pour protéger leur camarade
They kept quiet to protect their friend

Common pronominal verbs which do not have a reflexive interpretation:

- s'abstenir de tout commentaire: to refrain from making any comment
- s'accouder au parapet: to lean on one's elbows on the parapet
- s'accoutumer à conduire la nuit: to get used to driving at night
- s'approcher de qn: to approach somebody
- s'appuyer au rebord de la fenêtre: to lean on the windowsill
- s'asseoir dans un fauteuil: to sit down in an armchair
- s'assoupir au volant: to doze off at the wheel
- s'avancer vers la montagne: to advance towards the mountain
- se blottir contre sa mère: to cuddle up to one's mother
- se charger d'une tâche: to take on a task
- se contenter d'une carrière médiocre: to make do with a mediocre career
- s'écarter du chemin: to stray from the track
- s'éloigner de la ville: to move away from the town
- s'emparer de son adversaire: to hold of one's opponent
- se fermer doucement: to close gently
- se fier à ses collègues: to trust one's colleagues
- se fermer derrière un arbre: to crouch behind a tree
- s'affaîbler lentement: to get slowly weaker
- s'affaîsser/s'affaler/s'écrouler par terre: to collapse on the ground
- s'agenouiller près de quelqu'un: to kneel down next to somebody
- s'atteindre d'une carrière médiocre: to stand out by one's intelligence
- s'appeler Dupont: to be called Dupont
- s'asseoir dans un fauteuil: to sit down in an armchair
- s'approcher de qn: to approach somebody
- s'asseoir dans un fauteuil: to sit down in an armchair
- s'assoupir au volant: to doze off at the wheel
- s'avancer vers la montagne: to advance towards the mountain
- se blottir contre sa mère: to cuddle up to one's mother
- se charger d'une tâche: to take on a task
- se contenter d'une carrière médiocre: to make do with a mediocre career
- s'écarter du chemin: to stray from the track
- s'éloigner de la ville: to move away from the town
- s'emparer de son adversaire: to hold of one's opponent
- se fermer doucement: to close gently
- se fier à ses collègues: to trust one's colleagues
- s'habiller en tenue de soirée: to wear evening dress
- s'habiliter à un nouvel emploi: to get used to a new job
- s'intéresser au latin: to be interested in Latin
- se lever tard: to get up late
- se méfier de la police: to distrust the police
- se mêler à la conversation: to join in the conversation
- se mettre debout: to stand up
- se moquer de qn: to make fun of somebody
Pronominal verbs

8.7.4 se faire and se laisser

_se faire_ and _se laisser_ are used to convey the idea that the subject causes some event to befall himself or herself without necessarily intending that it should:

- **Julie s’est fait écraser par un camion**
  Julie was run over by a lorry

- **Pierre s’est fait sortir du terrain**
  Pierre got himself sent off the field

- **Jean s’est fait embrasser par Christine**
  Jean got Christine to kiss him

- **Elle s’est laissé convaincre par son père**
  She let herself be persuaded by her father

- **Il se laissait guider**
  He let himself be led

- **Guido s’est laissé pousser les moustaches**
  Guido allowed his moustache to grow

(See Chapter 9.4 for agreement of the past participle _ô faire_ and _kisser_ in this construction.)

8.7.5 Pronominal verbs used reciprocally

When a pronominal verb is used in the plural and describes a situation where several subjects are doing things to each other, it is being used reciprocally:

- **D’ordinaire, les journalistes se consultent avant de publier un article de ce genre**
  Journalists usually consult each other before publishing this kind of article

- **Ils se rencontreront à Paris**
  They will meet (each other) in Paris

- **Nous nous connaissons**
  We know each other

- **Les enfants se disputent**
  The children are arguing (with each other)

The pronoun can be a direct object, as in the above examples, or an indirect object, as in the following examples:

- **Souvent les participants s’écrivent et restent en contact après la conférence**
  Participants often write to one another and keep in touch after the conference

- **Il a ensuite été demandé aux élèves de se poser des questions sans le secours du professeur**
  Pupils were then required to ask each other questions without the teacher’s help

- **Nous nous envoyons des cadeaux à Noël chaque année**
  We send each other presents every year at Christmas
Sometimes there is a possible ambiguity between a reflexive interpretation of the pronoun and a reciprocal interpretation, for example:

Les boxeurs se sont blessés
The boxers hurt each other or
The boxers hurt themselves (i.e. each hurt himself but not the other)

Les participants se sont posé des questions
The participants asked each other questions or
The participants asked questions of themselves

One way to make the reciprocal interpretation entirely clear is to add the expression l'un l'autre 'each other' in its appropriate form. For example, where a direct object is involved:

Les boxeurs se sont blessés l'un l'autre
The boxers hurt each other

But where an indirect object is involved:

Les participants se sont posé des questions l'un à l'autre
The participants asked each other questions

l'un l'autre also varies for gender and number. If the subjects are feminine in gender l'une l'autre is required:

On s'aide l'une l'autre pour la garde des enfants
We help each other out with looking after the children

If more than just two subjects are involved a plural form of l'un l'autre is required:

Les universitaires du monde entier peuvent se contacter les uns les autres par courrier électronique
Academics all over the world can contact each other by electronic mail

(For agreement of the past participle see 8.7.7 and Chapter 9.4.)

8.7.6 Pronominal verbs used as passives

Pronominal verbs are increasingly used with a meaning equivalent to an English passive:

Les jeux électroniques se vendent comme des petits pains
Computer games are selling like hot cakes

Ces verbes se conjuguent avec 'être'
These verbs are conjugated with 'être'

Le français se parle au Canada et en Afrique
Trench is spoken in Canada and in Africa

Les baskets s'achètent dans les magasins de sport
Trainers can be bought in sports shops

Les valeurs se maintiennent à la Bourse
Stocks and shares are holding up on the Stock Exchange

Cela ne se fait pas
That is just not done

Ce vin se boit chambré
This wine is drunk at room temperature

La vengeance est un plat qui se mange froid
Revenge is a meal to be eaten cold

C'est une revue qui se lit facilement
This journal is easy to read
Pronominal verbs, the auxiliary être and the agreement of the past participle

Pronominal verbs are always conjugated with être in their compound tenses, and the question arises as to when the past participle is marked for agreement. Whereas the past participle of non-pronominal verbs which take être always agrees with the subject (elle est arrivée, nous sommes arrivés, elles sont arrivées - see Chapter 9.2), the participle with pronominal verbs only agrees with a direct object pronoun. For example:

(a) Where the meaning of the pronoun is reflexive and it is a direct object:

Je (fem) me suis lavée à l'eau froide
_I washed in cold water_

Elle était maladroite et s'était fréquemment blessée
_She was clumsy and often injured herself_

Suzanne s'est très mal habillée
_Suzanne dressed very badly_

Marianne s'est cachée dans l'armoire
_Marianne hid in the cupboard_

(See also 8.7.1)

(b) Where the meaning of the pronoun is reciprocal and it is a direct object:

Les deux équipes se sont rencontrées à Paris
_The two teams met (each other) in Paris_

Nous nous sommes attendus les uns les autres avant de rentrer
_We waited for each other before going home_

Jean-Pierre et Richard se sont rencontrés à Lyon
_Jean-Pierre and Richard met in Lyons_

Marianne et sa mère se sont attendues à la gare
_Marianne and her mother waited for each other at the station_

(c) Where the pronoun has no detectable reflexive or reciprocal meaning, but is an integral part of the verb, and is a direct object:

A la vue de tout ce sang, elles se sont évanouies
_At the sight of so much blood, they fainted_

Ils se sont toujours repentis de ces paroles
_They always regretted those words_

Ils se sont tus dès qu'ils ont vu le directeur
_They kept quiet as soon as they saw the headmaster_

This includes when the pronominal verb is used as a passive:

Les jeux vidéo se sont vendus comme des petits pains
_Video games sold like hot cakes_

BUT the past participle will not agree in any case where the pronoun is an indirect object (see 8.7.1). In particular this will be the case:

(i) where the non-pronominal version of the verb has a prepositional indirect object e.g. nuire à an, cacher qch à qn, écrire à an and therefore the se is seen as an indirect object:
Verb constructions

Elle s'est nui en faisant de telles demandes
She did herself harm by these requests
Marianne s'est caché la vérité
Marianne hid the truth from herself
Les participants se sont écrit
The participants wrote to each other

(ii) where the pronoun is indirect, given that the direct object is a body part (as in 8.7.2):

Je (fern) me suis lavé les mains avant de déjeuner
I washed my hands before lunch
Elle s'est coupé le doigt parce qu'elle ne faisait pas attention
She cut her finger because she was careless
Nathan s'est cassé la jambe en jouant au football
Nathan broke his leg playing football

NB: Where the pronoun is an indirect object (and hence the participle does not agree with it), the participle may nevertheless agree with a preceding direct object, as in:

Les deux valises qu'il s'est achetées sont cassées
The two suitcases he bought are broken

Combien de valises s'est-il achetées?
How many suitcases did he buy?

(See Chapter 9 for the general rules of past participle agreement.)

8.8 Impersonal verbs

A number of verbs only exist in an impersonal (and infinitive) form. They only take the pronoun il as their subject, which in this case does not refer to a person or thing: i.e. it is an impersonal use.

8.8.1 Weather verbs

The best-known group of impersonal verbs describe the weather:

Il pleut
It's raining
Il pleut des cordes
It's raining cats and dogs
Il neige
It's snowing
Il grêle
It's sleet
Il tonne
There's thunder about
Il vente
It's windy
Il bruine
It's drizzling

More generally climatic conditions can be expressed by an impersonal use of faire followed by an adjective or a noun:

Il fait beau
It's a nice day
Il fait du soleil
It's sunny
Il fait mauvais
It's not a nice day
Il fait chaud
It's hot
Il fait lourd
The weather is oppressive
Il fait sec
It's very dry
Il fait humide
It's very humid
Il fait du brouillard
It's foggy
Impersonal verbs

Il fait de l'orage  
It's stormy
Il fait un froid de canard  
It's very cold

8.8.2 falloir

falloir only exists in impersonal forms (see the list of irregular verbs in Chapter 7). It may be followed by a noun, by an infinitive, by a clause - with the verb in the subjunctive - and it may be preceded by a pronoun acting as indirect object:

Il faut du temps  
Time is needed
Il faut partir  
It is time to leave
Il faut que nous partions  
We must leave
Il nous faut partir  
We must leave
Il nous faudra revenir dans trois semaines  
We must come back in three weeks
Il a fallu trois mois pour que nous nous décisions  
It took us three months to make up our minds
Il faudrait être certain que cela soit la bonne décision  
We need to be sure that this is the right decision

8.8.3 il y a

il y a (‘there is’ or ‘there are’) also exists only in the impersonal form. It is usually followed directly by a noun but may also be followed by an infinitive introduced by à or by de quoi. It is frequently used in spoken French in the construction: il y a + noun + relative clause. In spoken French the pronunciation often reduces to /ja/:

Il y a quelques problèmes au garage  
There are a few problems at the garage
Il y a eu de bons gouvernements, autrefois  
There have been good governments, in the past
Il y avait toujours quelque chose à faire  
There was always something to be done
Il y a à faire dans la cuisine  
There are things to do in the kitchen
Il y a à boire et à manger dans le frigo  
There's something to eat and drink in the fridge
Il y a de quoi vous occuper ici  
There's lots to do here
Il y avait de quoi vous faire peur la nuit  
It was enough to make you afraid at night
Il y a des gens qui vous attendent dehors  
There are people waiting for you outside
Il y a ceux qui prétendent tout savoir  
There are those who think they know everything
Il y en a qui disent du mal des autres  
Some people say bad things about others

8.8.4 il s'agit de

il s'agit de is only ever used impersonally. It may be followed by a noun, by an infinitive and, rarely, by a clause. English-speaking learners frequently attempt to use it with a personal subject, e.g. *ce livre s'agit de. . . . This is impossible.
Il s'agit de votre frère
It's about your brother

Il s'agit de faire ce qui vous intéresse
You have to do what interests you

Il s'agit de convaincre votre tante
It is a matter of convincing your aunt

Il s'agissait de vous faire changer d'avis
It was an attempt to make you change your mind

Tout au long de cette affaire il s'est agi de mon honnêteté
Throughout this matter it has been a question of my honesty

Il ne s'agit pas que vous preniez toute la responsabilité sur vous
There is no question of your taking on the whole responsibility

Il ne s'agit pas de prendre du retard
We'd better not get behind schedule

8.8.5 Verbs which take a personal subject can also on occasions be used impersonally

Il se passe ici des choses qui vous intéresseront sûrement
There are things going on here which will probably interest you

Il est arrivé hier soir un événement très curieux
A very unusual event took place yesterday evening

Il convient d'être très circonspect de nos jours
It is sensible to be very careful these days

Il nous arrive assez souvent de recevoir des personnalités importantes
We quite often have important people as guests

Il manque des couverts à cette table
This table has not been laid properly

Il y va de sa vie
His life is at stake

Il nous manque plusieurs de nos camarades ce soir
Several of our comrades are missing tonight

Il ne me souvient pas d'avoir été présenté à cette personne
I don't (seem to) remember having been introduced to this person (formal language)

êt re can also be used impersonally, either in set expressions or more formally as an alternative to il y a:

Il est grand temps que nous partions
It is high time we went

Il n'est absolument pas question d'attendre
There can be no question of waiting

Il est dommage d'avoir attendu si longtemps
It is a pity to have waited so long

Est-il besoin de vous le rappeler?
Is there any need to remind you?

(formal style)

Il est des jours où l'on souhaiterait être ailleurs
There are days when one would wish to be elsewhere

There are two set phrases used to introduce fairy stories:

Il était une fois . . . and
Il y avait une fois . . .
Once upon a time . . .
Verbs which take noun + adjective or noun + noun complements

89 Verbs which take noun + adjective or noun + noun complements

A small number of verbs allow an adjective or predicative noun (président, directeur, etc.) to follow the noun which is the direct object:

- boire qc frais (to drink sth chilled)
- considérer qc peu probable (to consider sth unlikely)
- croire qn heureux (to believe sb happy)
- élire qn président (to elect sb president)
- estimer qn inapte (to reckon sb unsuitable)
- juger qn maladroit (to judge sb clumsy)
- laisser qn tranquille (to leave sb alone)
- manger qc chaud (to eat sth hot)
- nommer qn directeur (to appoint sb director)
- rendre qn malade (to make sb ill)
- trouver qc difficile (to find sth difficult)

Note that ‘to make somebody happy, sad, etc.’ or ‘to make something difficult, easy, etc.’ is the verb rendre, and NOT * faire: rendre qn heureux, rendre qn triste, rendre qc difficile, rendre qc facile.
Verb and participle agreement

9.1 Subject-verb agreement

As in English, French verbs agree with their subject in person and number:

- Je ne voulais pas jouer
  *I didn't want to play*
- Elle voulait partir en vacances
  *She wanted to go on holiday*
- Les garçons voulaient tous participer au match
  *The boys all wanted to take part in the match*

9.1.1 Agreement with more than one subject linked by et

If one of the subjects is a **first person pronoun**, the verb will be in the first person plural form:

- Hubert et moi sommes allés vous chercher
  *Hubert and I went to look for you*
- Ma sœur et moi serons dans la même famille en France
  *My sister and I are staying with the same family in France*
- Toi/Vous et moi sommes toujours d'accord
  *You and I always agree*

If one of the subjects is a **second person pronoun** and there is no first person pronoun, the verb will be in the second person plural form:

- Toi et ton copain avez intérêt à nettoyer cette pièce avant que tes parents ne rentrent.
  *You and your friend had better clean this room before your parents get back*
- Vous et vos amis devrez vous dépêcher si vous voulez prendre le train de 15 heures
  *You and your friends will have to hurry if you want to catch the 3 o'clock train*

If all the subjects are **third person**, the verb will be in a third person plural form:

- Jeanne et Suzanne sont venues toutes les deux
  *Jeanne and Suzanne both came*
- Le groupe Alsthom et le groupe GEC sont arrivés à un accord pour le développement d'une nouvelle locomotive
  *Alsthom and GEC have reached agreement on the development of a new train*
(See also Chapter 3.3.5 for coordinated stressed pronouns.)

9.1.2 Agreement with more than one subject linked by:

\textit{ni... ni, 'neither... nor', so/t... soit, 'either... or' and ou, 'or'}

French tends to make a distinction between the two kinds of meaning which may be conveyed by these methods of coordination. If the meaning emphasizes the individual and does not 'add them together', the verb may well be singular:

\begin{quote}
Ni Simon ni Steven n'a pu me dire où se trouvaient les autres
\textit{Neither Simon nor Steven was able to tell me where the others were}

C'est soit lui soit sa sœur qui doit te téléphoner
\textit{Either he or his sister must be responsible for telephoning you}
\end{quote}

If, on the other hand, the intention is to consider the two elements as a group, the verb will be plural:

\begin{quote}
Ni Lord Byron ni Chateaubriand n'ont pu comprendre l'inutilité des rêveries romantiques
\textit{Neither Lord Byron nor Chateaubriand could understand how useless romantic dreams are}
\end{quote}

The same principle underlies agreement with \textit{ni l'un ni l'autre}. Where they are 'additive' the verb is likely to be plural, where they act as 'alternative individuals' the verb is likely to be singular:

\begin{quote}
Ni Alberte ni Suzanne n'avaient pu rencontrer le peintre
\textit{Neither Alberte nor Suzanne managed to meet the painter}

Ni l'une ni l'autre n'ont pu rencontrer le peintre
\textit{Neither the one nor the other was able to meet the painter}

Ni Alberte ni Suzanne ne viendra
\textit{Neither Alberte nor Suzanne will come}

Ni l'une ni l'autre ne viendra
\textit{Neither the one nor the other will come}
\end{quote}

9.1.3 Verb agreement with collective noun subjects

Normally collective nouns which are singular require the verb to be in a singular form, unlike English where speakers use either a singular or plural verb form:

\begin{quote}
Le gouvernement a décidé de modifier la loi sur la nationalité
\textit{The government has/have decided to change the nationality law}

Le comité a proposé une réunion pour 16 heures
\textit{The committee has/have suggested a meeting at 4 o'clock}

La famille passe les vacances de Noël en Bretagne
\textit{The family is/are spending the Christmas holidays in Brittany}
\end{quote}

\textbf{NB:} \textit{Tout le monde} always agrees with a singular verb:

\begin{quote}
Tout le monde vient passer le weekend chez moi
\textit{Everybody's coming to my place for the weekend}
\end{quote}

This may change, however, when the collective noun is followed by a plural
complement. The verb may then be in the singular or the plural (although some speakers still have a preference for the singular):

L’équipe de footballeurs anglais a (or ont) dû quitter la ville très rapidement
*The team of English football players had to leave town in a hurry*

La foule des supporters ont (or a) été rapidement dispersé(e)(s)
*The crowd of supporters were rapidly dispersed*

Note that in English there is a preference for a plural verb in these cases.

### 9.1.4 Verb agreement with fractions

When fractions (see Chapter 6.3) are subjects and have plural complements, whether they are present or implied, verbs normally agree with those complements:

La moitié (des gens) se sont exprimés
*Half (of the people) made their views known*

Un tiers (de ceux qui étaient présents) se sont exprimés
*A third (of those present) made their views known*

But when the fraction has a singular complement, whether present or implied, verbs agree with the fraction:

La moitié (de la population) s'est exprimée
*Half (the population) made their view known*

Un tiers (de la maison) a été détruit
*A third (of the house) was destroyed*

**NB:** *les deux tiers* and percentages usually agree with a plural verb:

Les deux tiers des électeurs ont voté pour la droite
*Two-thirds of the electorate voted for the right*

66% ont voté pour la droite
*66% voted for the right*

### 9.1.5 Verb agreement with numeral nouns and quantifiers

When numeral nouns like *une dizaine* 'ten or so', *une vingtaine* 'twenty or so' *une douzaine* 'a dozen' etc. (see Chapter 6.5.3) are subjects, the verb can agree with the numeral noun or its complement, depending on where the emphasis lies:

Nous sommes vingt ce midi à la maison: une douzaine d'œufs ne nous suffira pas
*There are twenty of us having lunch at home today: a dozen eggs won't be enough*

Une vingtaine de policiers ont été blessés
*Twenty or so policemen were injured*

When most quantifiers (like *la plupart de* 'most', *(un grand) nombre de* 'a large number of, *quantité de* 'a lot of, *beaucoup de* 'many') are subjects, the verb agrees with their complement, whether it is present or implied:

La plupart (des habitants) partagent mes sentiments
*Most (of the inhabitants) share my feelings*
La plupart (d'entre eux) sont prêts à nous aider
Most (of them) are ready to help us

Un grand nombre (de locataires) sont déjà allés se plaindre
A large number (of the tenants) have already been to complain

Beaucoup (de manifestants) se présenteront à la mairie cet après-midi
A lot (of demonstrators) will go to the Town Hall this afternoon

With _la majorité de_ 'the majority of, _une minorité de_ 'a minority of, _le reste de_ 'the rest of, the verb can agree either with the quantifier or its complement:

La majorité (de nos étudiants) ont/a moins de quarante ans
The majority, (of our students) are under forty

_Plus d'un_ tends to be singular:

Plus d'un ami m'a incité à me présenter au premier tour
More than one friend suggested I should stand in the first round

But _moins de_ tends to be plural:

Moins de dix personnes m'ont indiqué leur désaccord
Fewer than ten people told me they disagreed

### 9.1.6 Agreement with the verb _être_

Where two nouns are linked by the verb _être_, the verb normally agrees with the preceding subject, although some speakers will make it agree with what follows:

Mon problème était mes enfants, car je n'avais personne pour les garder
My problem was my children, for I had no-one to look after them

When _ce_ is the subject of _être_, there is a choice between using _c'est_ or _ce sont_. Whereas most nouns and pronouns follow _c'est_, for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C'est moi/nous</th>
<th>It's me/us</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C'est toi /vous /lui /elle</td>
<td>It's you/him/her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C'est le facteur</td>
<td>It's the postman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In formal French, plural nouns and third person plural pronouns are supposed to follow _ce sont_:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ce sont mes parents</th>
<th>It's my parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ce sont eux</td>
<td>It's them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, most speakers (and even writers) of formal French use _c'est_ in these cases these days:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C'est mes parents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C'est eux</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where numbers are involved, _c'est_ is always used:

| C'est 1 000 francs que je vous dois | It's 1,000 francs that I owe you |

The _c'est/ce sont_ construction is often used with relative clauses, and it is important to remember that the verb in the relative clause agrees in person and number with the complement of _c'est/ce sont_: 
212 Verb and participle agreement

C'est moi qui suis le plus âgé
It's me who's the oldest

C'est nous qui sommes les responsables
We are the ones responsible

C'est vous qui avez pris ma serviette de bain
Ifs you who has taken my towel

Ce sont elles qui ont fait cela
They are the ones who did that

9.2 Agreement of the past participle with the subject of être

There are three cases where the past participle agrees with the subject of être:
(a) with intransitive verbs which select the auxiliary être in compound tenses;
(b) in passives; (c) where the past participle functions like an adjective.

9.2.1 Agreement of the past participle with the subject of intransitive verbs which select auxiliary être in compound tenses

The past participles of aller 'to go', monter 'to go up', mourir 'to die', naître 'to be born', sortir 'to go out', tomber 'to fall', etc (see Chapter 8.2.2 for the full list) agree with the subject in gender and number in compound tenses:

Les Durand étaient allés à Morlaix
The Durands had gone to Morlaix

Suzanne est sortie
Suzanne went out

Elles sont tombées
They fell over

Jean-Paul et Janine sont montés au troisième
Jean-Paul and Janine went up to the third floor

NB: Some intransitive verbs which select auxiliary être in compound tenses can also be used transitively (see Chapter 8.3.4). In this case they select the auxiliary avoir in compound tenses and there is no agreement between the subject and the past participle:

Jean-Paul et Janine ont monté les valises au troisième
Jean-Paul and Janine took the cases up to the third floor

9.2.2 Agreement of the past participle following être with the subject of a passive

Passives are constructed from transitive verbs by turning the direct object into the subject and making the verb an être + past participle construction (see Chapter 8.6). The past participle agrees with the subject in gender and number in these cases:

La guerre a été déclenchée par un malentendu
The war was started by a misunderstanding

Les bourgeois de Calais ont été choqués par l'œuvre de Rodin
The burghers of Calais were shocked by Rodin's work of art

9.2.3 Past participles used as adjectives with être

When past participles are used like adjectives and follow être, they agree with the subject:
93 Agreement of the past participle of verbs conjugated with *avoir* with a preceding direct object

There are three cases where past participles agree with preceding direct objects in the compound tenses of verbs conjugated with *avoir*: (a) when the preceding direct object is an unstressed pronoun like *le, la, les, me, te* etc., e.g. *Je les ai vus* 'I saw them'; (b) when the preceding direct object is the head of a relative clause: e.g. *La lettre que j’ai écrite* 'The letter which I wrote'; (c) in questions, when the direct object has been moved to a position preceding the past participle, e.g. *Quelle lettre a-t-il écrite?*

### 9.3.1 Agreement of the past participle with preceding direct object pronouns

In compound tenses, the past participle of verbs conjugated with *avoir* normally agrees with preceding unstressed direct object pronouns:

- *J’ai vu Marie*: *Je l’ai vue*
- *Les policiers avaient repéré les voleurs*: *Les policiers les avaient repérés*
- *Les voisins ont appelé ma sœur et moi (fem)*: *Les voisins nous ont appelées*

NB: *le* used to refer to a clause is invariably masculine (see Chapter 3.2.8), and so there is no agreement with the past participle:

- *Sa mère est malade; il l’a souvent dit*

Past participles do NOT agree with any other preceding pronouns, nor with indirect objects, nor with *en*:

- *j’ai parlé à Marie*: *Je lui ai parlé (NOT *parlée)*
- *j’ai indiqué le chemin à Jean-Claude et Paul*: *Je leur ai indiqué (NOT "indiqués") le chemin*
- *Ce matin il y a eu des vaches qui sont passées dans le champ du voisin. J’en ai vu (NOT *vues*) hier aussi*

### 9.3.2 Recognizing when an unstressed pronoun is a direct object

Whilst English speakers may learn to remember to make the agreement between a preceding direct object pronoun and the past participle without too much difficulty, they often still have problems in recognizing when a preceding pronoun is a direct object and when it is not. This is particularly the case where the pronouns are *me, te, nous, vous* which can function either as direct object or indirect object pronouns, and when the verbs involved are directly
transitive in English but have indirectly transitive counterparts in French (see Chapter 8.4.1). For example, there is no agreement in the following cases because the pronouns are all indirect objects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French verb</th>
<th>French subject</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>convenir à qn</td>
<td>La situation</td>
<td>The situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nous a</td>
<td>suited us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>convenu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>désobéir à qn</td>
<td>Lucien vous</td>
<td>Lucien disobeyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a désobéié</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuire à qn</td>
<td>Hubert m'a</td>
<td>Hubert did me (fern)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nui</td>
<td>some damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>succéder à qn</td>
<td>Suzanne m'a</td>
<td>Suzanne succeeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>succédé</td>
<td>me (fem) some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>té lé phoner à qn</td>
<td>Les voisins</td>
<td>The neighbours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vous ont</td>
<td>phoned you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>résister à qn</td>
<td>Les voleurs</td>
<td>The thieves resisted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nous ont</td>
<td>us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>résisté</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.3.3 Agreement with a preceding direct object pronoun when the participle is followed by infinitives

When a verb is preceded by a direct object pronoun and followed by an infinitive, it is usually said that the participle only agrees when the pronoun is the subject of the infinitive and is the direct object of the verb containing the participle. There will be no agreement when it is the object of the infinitive.

This means that there will be agreement in cases like the following:

- Nathalie a vu une voiture écraser son chien
  Nathalie saw a car run her dog over
  *(une voiture is the subject of écraser and the object of vu)*

- Hubert-Jean a regardé sa fille gagner la course
  Hubert-Jean watched his daughter win the race
  *(sa fille is the subject of gagner and the object of regardé)*

- On a entendu les voix résonner dans la caverne
  We heard the voices echoing in the cave
  *(les voix is the subject of résonner and the object of entendu)*

But no agreement in cases like the following:

- Nathalie a vu écraser sa maison par une énorme roche
  Nathalie saw her house crushed by a huge rock
  *(sa maison is the object of écraser)*

- Hubert-Jean a regardé détruire la forêt par des bulldozers
  Hubert-Jean watched the forest being destroyed by bulldozers
  *(la forêt is the object of détruire)*

- Derrière la haie, j'ai entendu chanter une vieille chanson
Behind the hedge I heard (someone) singing an old song
(une vieille chanson is the object of chanter)

Derrière la haie, je l’ai entendu chanter

Behind the hedge I heard (someone) singing it

Verbs which are likely to be preceded by direct object pronouns and followed by infinitives are perception verbs like écouter ‘to listen to’, entendre ‘to hear’, voir ‘to see’, etc. (see Chapter 12.3.8).

Verbs of movement like amener ‘to bring’, emmener ‘to take’, envoyer ‘to send’ may also be followed by infinitives with subjects which give rise to agreement:

J’ai emmené les invités prendre le petit déjeuner à l’hôtel
I took the guests to have breakfast at the hotel
(les invités is the subject of prendre and the object of emmené)

Je les ai emmenés prendre le petit déjeuner à l’hôtel
I took them to have breakfast at the hotel

Jean-Claude a envoyé les secrétaires chercher du papier à lettres
Jean-Claude sent the secretaries to look for some typing paper
(les secrétaires is the subject of chercher and the object of envoyer)

Jean-Claude les a envoyées chercher du papier à lettres
Jean-Claude sent them to look for some typing paper.

The verb laisser follows the same pattern:

Nous avons laissé les enfants partir en vacances tout seuls
We let the children go on holiday on their own
(les enfants is the subject of partir and the object of laisser)

Nous les avons laissés partir en vacances tout seuls
We let them go on holiday on their own

Les voisins ont laissé les chiens jouer dans le jardin
The neighbours let the dogs play in the garden
(les chiens is the subject of jouer and the object of laissé)

Les voisins les ont laissés jouer dans le jardin
The neighbours let them play in the garden

(But see 9.4 for agreement of se laisser.)

Taire, however, is an exception. When it is followed by an infinitive, its past participle never agrees with a preceding direct object:

Nous les avons fait (NOT *faits) partir en vacances tout seuls
We made them go on holiday on their own

Les voisins les ont fait (NOT *faits) jouer dans le jardin

(See also Chapter 12.3.9. For object pronouns in this construction see Chapter 3.2.32. See 9.4 for agreement of se faire.)

NB: Perception verbs and laisser may allow a following infinitive with either a preceding or following subject:
Verb and participle agreement

J’ai entendu les voisins parler or
J’ai entendu parler les voisins
I heard the neighbours talk(ing)

J’ai laissé les enfants partir or
J’ai laissé partir les enfants
I let the children leave

In either case, if the subject of the infinitive is turned into an unstressed pronoun, it will give rise to agreement with the past participle:

Je les ai entendus parler
I heard them talk(ing)

Je les ai laissés partir
I let them go

(See Chapter 3.2.32 for position of pronouns.)

9.3.4 Agreement of past participles with preceding direct objects in relative clauses

When the head of a relative clause (see Chapter 15.1) is the implied direct object of that clause, and it precedes the verb, a past participle agrees with it in gender and number:

Voilà l’homme que j’ai rencontré à la gare hier
There’s the man I met at the station yesterday

Voilà la femme que j’ai rencontrée à la gare hier
There’s the woman I met at the station yesterday

Voilà les enfants que j’ai rencontrés à la gare hier
There are the children I met at the station yesterday

Voilà les jeunes filles que j’ai rencontrées à la gare hier
There are the girls I met at the station yesterday

NB: The past participles of impersonal verbs (see Chapter 8.8), like *il y a 'there is/are', never agree with a preceding complement:

Il y a eu des problèmes
There were problems

Les problèmes qu’il y a eu (NOT *eus) ont été vite oubliés
The problems that there were were quickly forgotten

It is important to distinguish this impersonal use from the personal use where agreement would take place:

Les problèmes qu’il a eus ont été vite oubliés
The problems which he had have been quickly forgotten

9.3.5 Recognizing when the head of a relative clause is a direct object

Sometimes it is not easy to determine whether the head of a relative clause is a direct object or not. Verbs like courir ‘to run’, coûter ‘to cost’, dormir ‘to sleep’, marcher ‘to walk’, mesurer ‘to measure’, payer ‘to pay’, peser ‘to weigh’, valoir ‘to be worth’, vivre ‘to live’ can take complements which look like direct objects, but are in fact measure adverbs:
Agreement of the past participle with a preceding direct object

Ce livre m'a coûté cinquante francs  
This book cost me fifty francs

La valise pèse vingt kilos  
The suitcase weighs twenty kilos

Il a marché une dizaine de kilomètres  
He walked ten kilometres or so

Elle a dormi deux heures  
She slept for two hours

In each of these cases the phrase in bold is a measure adverb and not a direct object. One test you can use to find out if the complement of a verb is a direct object or not is to try to make it the subject of a passive sentence - most direct objects can be turned into passive subjects. None of the above examples can be: you cannot say *Cinquante francs ont été coûté par ce livre, nor *Une dizaine de kilomètres ont été marché, etc.

If the head of a relative clause is an adverb, there is no agreement between it and the past participle:

Les cinquante francs que ce livre m'a coûté ...  
The fifty francs that this book cost me...

Les deux heures qu'elle a dormi...  
The two hours she slept...

But to make matters more confusing, some of these verbs can also take direct objects. When direct objects are the heads of relative clauses there is agreement with the past participle:

J'ai pesé la valise  (direct object)  
I weighed the suitcase

La valise a pesé vingt kilos  (adverb)  
The suitcase weighed twenty kilos

La valise que j'ai pesée ...  
Les vingts kilos que la valise a pesé...

9.3.6 Agreement with a preceding direct object in a relative clause when the participle is followed by an infinitive

As in the case of preceding direct object pronouns (see 9.3.3), when a verb is preceded by a direct object which is the head of a relative clause and followed by an infinitive, the participle only agrees when that head is the implied direct object of the verb containing the participle and the subject of the infinitive. This means that there will be agreement in cases like the following:

Nathalie a vu une énorme roche écraser sa maison  
Nathalie saw a huge rock crush her house

Voilà l'énorme roche que Nathalie a vue écraser sa maison  
There's the huge rock which Nathalie saw crush her house

On a entendu les voix résonner dans la caverne  
We heard the voices echoing in the cave
Ce sont les voix qu'on a entendues résonner dans la caverne
Those are the voices we heard echoing in the cave

But no agreement in cases like the following:

Nathalie a vu écraser sa maison par une énorme roche
Nathalie saw her house crushed by a huge rock

C'est sa maison que Nathalie a vu écraser par une énorme roche
It's her house that Nathalie saw crushed by a huge rock

Hubert-Jean a regardé détruire la forêt par des bulldozers
Hubert-jean watched the forest being destroyed by bulldozers

Voilà la forêt que Hubert-Jean a regardé détruire par des bulldozers
There's the forest that Hubert-Jean watched being destroyed by bulldozers

As in the case of preceding direct object pronouns, the types of verb which
give rise to these contexts are perception verbs, movement verbs and laisser
(but not faire) (see 9.3.3).

9.3.7 Agreement of past participles with preceding direct objects in
questions
Questions can be formed in various ways (see Chapter 14). When they
are constructed in such a way that the direct object precedes the past participle
in compound tenses, the past participle agrees with it in gender and number:

Quel livre as-tu acheté?
Which book did you buy?

Quelle voiture as-tu achetée?
Which car did you buy?

Laquelle a-t-il choisie?
Which one did he buy?

Lesquels ont-ils acceptés?
Which ones did they accept?

Combien de citrons as-tu acheté?
How many lemons did you buy?

Combien de bouteilles de vin as-tu achetées?
How many bottles of wine did you buy?

NB: The past participles of impersonal verbs (see Chapter 8.8), like il y a 'there
is/are', never agree with a preceding questioned complement:

Quels problèmes y a-t-il eu (NOT *eus)?
What problems were there?

This must be distinguished from the personal use where agreement would take
place:

Quels problèmes a-t-il eu?
What problems did he have?

9.3.8 Recognizing when a questioned phrase is a direct object
Sometimes it is not easy to determine whether a questioned phrase is a direct
object or not. Verbs like courir 'to run', coûter 'to cost', dormir 'to sleep', marcher
'to walk', mesurer 'to measure', payer 'to pay', peser 'to weigh', valoir 'to be worth', vivre 'to live' can take complements which look like direct objects, but are in fact measure adverbs. Where such phrases are questioned there is no agreement with a past participle (see also 9.3.5):

Elle a dormi deux heures
She slept for two hours

Combien d’heures a-t-elle dormi (NOT *dormies)?
How many hours did she sleep?

Ce livre m’a coûté cinquante francs
This book cost me fifty francs

Combien de francs ce livre a-t-il coûté (NOT *coûtés)?
How many francs did this book cost?

9.3.9 Agreement with a preceding questioned direct object when the participle is followed by an infinitive

As in the case of preceding direct object pronouns (see 9.3.3), when a verb is preceded by a questioned direct object and followed by an infinitive, the participle only agrees when the questioned phrase is the implied direct object of the verb containing the participle and is the subject of the infinitive. This means that there will be agreement in cases like the following:

Nathalie a vu une voiture écraser son chien
Nathalie saw a car run her dog over

Quelle voiture Nathalie a-t-elle vue écraser son chien?
Which car did Nathalie see run her dog over?

On a entendu les voix résonner dans la caverne
We heard voices echoing in the cave

Quelles voix avez-vous entendues résonner dans la caverne?
What voices did you hear echoing in the cave?

But no agreement in cases like the following:

Nathalie a vu écraser sa maison par une énorme roche
Nathalie saw her house crushed by a huge rock

Quelle maison Nathalie a-t-elle vu écraser par une énorme roche?
Which house did Nathalie see crushed by a huge rock?

Hubert-Jean a regardé détruire la forêt par des bulldozers
Hubert-Jean watched the forest being destroyed by bulldozers

Quelle forêt Hubert-Jean a-t-il regardé détruire par des bulldozers?
Which forest did Hubert-Jean see destroyed by bulldozers?

As in the case of preceding direct object pronouns, the types of verb which give rise to these contexts are perception verbs, movement verbs and laisser (but not faire).
9.4 Agreement of the past participle of pronominal verbs in compound tenses

Pronominal verbs (see Chapter 8.7) include an unstressed object pronoun which agrees with the subject:

- Je me rase  
  I'm shaving
- Elle se lève  
  She's getting up

In compound tenses the past participle agrees with this preceding object pronoun only if it is a direct object. The problem is determining when it is a direct object and when it is not.

With verbs where the pronoun is not understood as a reflexive (that is, where it does not mean anything, but is just a part of the verb - see Chapter 8.7.3), the participle always agrees, with one exception:

- Elle s'est levée  
  She got up  
  S'est levé  
  They got up
- Ils se sont tus  
  They fell silent
- Nous nous sommes abstenus de tout commentaire  
  We refrained from making any comment

Exception: se rire de 'to make light of: Ils se sont ri de vos menaces 'They made light of your threats'.

Where a pronominal verb is used reflexively (see Chapter 8.7.1), it will have a non-reflexive counterpart. If the verb has a direct object in its non-reflexive counterpart, the reflexive pronoun is a direct object, and a past participle will agree with it in compound tenses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflexive use</th>
<th>Non-reflexive counterpart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je me rase</td>
<td>Le coiffeur rase son client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am shaving</td>
<td>The barber is shaving his client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle se sert la première</td>
<td>Elle sert sa fille la première</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She serves herself first</td>
<td>She serves her daughter first</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Ils se sont rasés de bonne heure  
  They shaved early
- Elle s'est servie la première  
  She served herself first

If the verb has an indirect object in its non-reflexive counterpart, the reflexive pronoun is an indirect object, and there will be no agreement with a past participle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflexive use</th>
<th>Non-reflexive use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elle s'offre un gâteau</td>
<td>Elle offre un gâteau à Jean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She treats herself to a cake</td>
<td>She treats Jean to a cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous nous cachons la vérité</td>
<td>Nous cachons la vérité à nos amis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We hide the truth from ourselves</td>
<td>We hide the truth from our friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agreement of the past participle of pronominal verbs

Elle s'est offert (NOT *offerte) un gâteau
She treated herself to a cake

Nous nous sommes caché (NOT *cachés) la vérité
We hid the truth from ourselves

The past participles of pronominal verbs used with parts of the body do not agree with the preceding pronoun where the body part is a direct object:

Elle s'est coupé (NOT "coupée) le doigt (= Elle a coupé le doigt à elle-même, although you cannot say this)
She cut her finger (can even mean 'Her finger was cut off)

But where the body part is an indirect object, the pronoun is a direct object and a past participle agrees with it:

Elle s'est coupée au doigt (= Elle a coupé sa main au doigt, although again you cannot say this)
She cut her finger (can only mean a surface cut)

There is no agreement between the past participle and the preceding pronoun with se laisser + infinitive, se faire + infinitive or se voir + infinitive:

Elle s'est laissé (NOT *laissée) convaincre
She let herself be persuaded

Julie s'est fait (NOT *faite) écraser par un camion
Julie got run over by a lorry

Jeanette s'est vu (NOT *vue) offrir des fleurs par Georges
Jeanette has been given flowers by Georges
10

Tense

10.1 Introduction

One of the essential functions of verbs is to express distinctions in time. Tenses serve (a) to situate events as taking place in the Present, Past or Future; (b) to indicate the time at which events occur relative to other events. The verb forms for each of the tenses mentioned in this chapter are given in full in Chapter 7.

10.2 The present

(a) The present tense is used to refer to an action or a state of affairs which exists at the time of speaking:

Je ne peux pas lui parler parce que je suis dans mon bain
I can't speak to him because I'm in the bath

Il vous téléphone pour demander votre aide
He's phoning to ask for your help

(b) It is used to express timeless facts:

L'eau se transforme en vapeur quand elle bout
Water turns to steam when it boils

La terre tourne autour du soleil
The earth goes round the sun

(c) It is used to refer to an action which is habitual:

Je prends un bain tous les matins à huit heures
I take a bath every morning at eight o'clock

Il vient me voir toutes les semaines pour s'assurer que tout va bien
He comes to see me every week to check that everything's OK

(d) In certain contexts, notably when the context provides a clear temporal reference to the future, it can refer to the future:

Je viens demain, c'est sûr
I'll come tomorrow for sure

Demain, il part pour Paris
Tomorrow he will be leaving for Paris

(e) Some writers use the present tense to refer to past events when they wish to render the past event more immediate. This can be found particularly in the writings of historians, journalists, novelists, and so on:
The past 223

Grâce au vignoble, les villes sont prospères dès le 16e siècle
The vineyard enabled the towns to prosper from the 16th century

10.2.1 Differences between French and English in the use of the present tense

French simple present for the English progressive

English indicates that an event is in progress via a special form of the verb called the 'progressive': 'be + V-ing', e.g. 'I am thinking'. French does not have an equivalent special form for this. The English present progressive will normally be translated into French by the simple present:

Je réfléchis
I think or I am thinking

However, if it is important to stress the length of time, or the simultaneity of the event, French can use en train de:

Je suis en train de réfléchir
I am thinking

Thus, when French uses a present tense, this may correspond either to the simple present or the present progressive of English. The meaning will depend on the context. For example, Je promène mon chien will be I walk my dog' in the first example below, but I am walking my dog' in the second:

Je promène mon chien tous les matins aux Champs Elysées
I walk my dog in the Champs Elysées every morning
(Simple present in English because it expresses an habitual action)

Qu'est-ce que vous faites?
What are you doing?
Je promène mon chien
I am walking my dog
(Progressive form in English because it stresses the ongoing nature of the current action)

French simple present for English perfect

English has a form of the verb called the 'perfect': 'have + V-ed/V-en', e.g. 'I have walked', 'He has spoken'. It is used for reference to an event which happened in the past, but whose consequences continue into the present. In some cases the English perfect will be translated by the simple present in French:

J'envisage souvent de partir
I have often thought of leaving

Je vous apporte des fraises
I have brought you some strawberries

10.3 The past

Three forms are available to express PAST events:

**The imperfect:**
Je jouais du piano

**The simple past (past historic):**
Je jouai du piano

**The compound past (perfect):**
J'ai joué du piano
10.3.1 The imperfect

(a) This tense is used to describe ongoing past events without reference to a time of starting or finishing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pierre lisait</td>
<td>Pierre was reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il était tard</td>
<td>It was late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La ville dormait</td>
<td>The town was sleeping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In narratives, the imperfect typically provides a background of ongoing events against which particular completed events are acted out. If the narrative is written, these completed events will be in the compound past and/or simple past; if the narrative is spoken, they will be in the compound past (see 10.3.3):

Il était tard. M. Dupont arrêta sa voiture devant un café

Les voleurs faisaient beaucoup de bruit. Les gendarmes se glissèrent dans la pièce sans se faire remarquer

Je somnolais tranquillement quand quelqu'un a sonné à la porte

(b) It also typically refers to an habitual action in the past. This is generally described in English through the use of the forms 'used to' or 'would':

M. Dupont s'arrêtait toujours au café quand il avait le temps

M. Dupont would always stop at the café when he had the time

Since 'would' can also express the conditional in English, it is important for the English speaker to distinguish the 'would' which corresponds to the French imperfect from the 'would' which corresponds to the French conditional. If 'would' is imperfect, it should be possible to replace it with 'used to' and still have a grammatical sentence. If substitution of 'would' by 'used to' produces an ungrammatical sentence, it is a conditional:

Le dimanche, j'allais manger dans un restaurant à Paris

On Sundays, I would ('used to' is OK) go to a restaurant in Paris

Si tu me donnais de l'argent, j'irais manger dans un restaurant à Paris dimanche

If you gave me some money, I would (NOT *'used to', therefore a conditional) go to a restaurant in Paris on Sunday

(See 10.4.2 for the conditional tense. See Chapter 11.3.1 for the use of 'would'.)

(c) It can be used to describe completed past events where the speaker or writer wishes to make the past event more immediate by presenting it as if it were in progress:

Je courais jusqu'à la voiture. J'attendais un instant, puis je faisais marche arrière. Je roulais en me répétant: « Fais attention »

I ran to the car. I waited a moment, then I put it into reverse. I drove, repeating to myself. 'Be careful'
10.3.2 The simple past (past historic)
The simple past tense refers to completed events in the past which are not seen as having any particular relevance to the present from the point of view of the speaker. Nowadays the use of the simple past (past historic) is restricted to written or very formal spoken French (e.g. very formal speeches):

Les Jeux Olympiques eurent lieu à Montréal en 1982
*The Olympic Games took place in Montreal in 1982*

Les dinosaures vécurent au jurassique
*Dinosaurs lived in the Jurassic period*

Le président partit à 22h pour New York
*The president left at 10 p.m. for New York*

10.3.3 The compound past (perfect)
The compound past tense refers to a completed event in the past. In contrast to the simple past (past historic), however, if may refer to an action in the past whose effect continues into the present. It is available both in spoken and written French:

Nous sommes arrivés hier de Dijon
*We came in from Dijon yesterday*

Ils ont vendu leur maison et ils sont partis à l’étranger
*They sold their house and went abroad*

Ils ont acheté six croissants pour notre petit déjeuner
*They bought six croissants for our breakfast*

In some texts the simple past and the compound past are used together. The simple past refers to completed events which do not give rise to consequences continuing into the present, from the perspective of the writer. The compound past, by contrast, refers to past events whose consequences do continue to have present relevance, from the perspective of the writer. For example, the following extract from a newspaper article marking the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the French airman and novelist Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, opens with the following passage:

Le 31 juillet 1944, quand un officier porta [simple past] officiellement disparu le Lightning P38 no. 223 piloté par Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, un colosse trop à l’étroit dans sa combinaison d’aviateur est entré [compound past] dans la légende

*On 31 July 1944, when an officer officially reported as lost the Lightning P38 no. 223 piloted by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a giant of a man, too big for his aviator’s suit, became a legend*

The simple past *porta* describes an event which is seen as over and done with; the compound past *est entré* describes an event which is seen as having a continuing consequence for the present, from the perspective of the writer: Saint-Exupéry became and still is a legendary figure.
10.3.4 An illustration of the working of the past tenses in context

Compound past (perfect) and imperfect

Here is a literary example taken from the novel *L'Eté meurtrier* by Sébastien Japrisot. The completed events are in the compound past because, although written, this particular piece of narrative is told in the first person from the point of view of one of the characters, giving the effect of a spoken narrative. These events are set against a descriptive background defined by the imperfect:

J'ai connu Gabriel [compound past - completed event] en avril 1945, quand nous avons fui Berlin [compound past - completed event], et que je suivais [imperfect - background context] avec ma mère et d'autres réfugiés, les colonnes des soldats qui allaient [imperfect - background context] vers le sud. C'était dans un village [imperfect - background context] un matin très tôt, près de Chemnitz. Nous avions déjà perdu ma cousine Herta [pluperfect - see 10.4.1 - earlier completed event] qui avait trois ans de plus que moi [imperfect - background context] entre Torgèn et Leipzig, parce qu'elle avait trouvé un camion et nous un autre [pluperfect - see 10.5.1 - earlier completed event]. Et c'est ce matin-là que j'ai perdu ma mère [compound past - completed event]. Je crois qu'elle a changé de direction [compound past - completed event], qu'elle est allée vers Kassel [compound past - completed event], à l'ouest, où elle avait des amis [imperfect - background context]...

I met Gabriel in April 1945 when we fled from Berlin, and when I was following, with my mother and other refugees, the columns of soldiers going south. It was in a village very early one morning, near Chemnitz. We had lost my cousin Herta, who was three years older than me, between Torgèn and Leipzig because she had found one lorry, and we another. And it was the same morning that I lost my mother. I believe she changed direction, and that she went towards Kassel, to the West, where she had friends ...}

Simple past (past historic)

The simple past tense refers to completed events in the past which are not seen as having any particular relevance to the present from the point of view of the speaker. For example, consider the following narrative from another novel by Sébastien Japrisot, *La Dame dans l'auto avec des lunettes et un fusil*. Here a series of events are over and done with at some point prior to when the narrator is speaking:

Elle ramassa ses vêtements épars [simple past - completed event with no consequences continuing into the present from the perspective of the narrator]. Elle les rangea soigneusement dans sa valise noire [simple past - completed event with no continuing consequences]. Elle ne prit pas la route déserte [simple past - completed event with no continuing consequences] par où ils étaient venus [pluperfect - see 10.5.1 - earlier completed event]. Elle gravit à nouveau la colline [simple past - completed event with no continuing consequences] et, sur la roche plate où ils s'étaient assis [pluperfect - see 10.5.1 - earlier completed event], elle étala [simple past - completed event with no continuing consequences] ses nu-pieds neufs. Elle écrivit dessus [simple past - completed event with no continuing consequences] ... .

She picked up her scattered clothes. She packed them carefully into her black suitcase. She didn't take the deserted road along which they had come. She climbed the hill again and, on the flat rock where they had sat, she spread the opened-out paper bag which had contained her new flip-flops. She wrote on it ...
In modern French the simple past tense is restricted to written French. It is found in literary texts (novels, plays, poems) and in newspaper articles. It is used typically in passages of **impersonal third person narration**, as in the above example. Engel (1990) has conducted a survey of the use of the simple past in newspaper articles. Among other things, she found that the simple past was likely to be used in formal, objectivity-seeking articles, in sports reports, in *faits divers* (reports of accidents, fires, rescues, etc.), and in items on the arts.

As noted above, the simple past is not found in all contexts in written French, even in literary French. Where a narrative is told from a personal, first person perspective (and hence is more like spoken French than written) it is very likely that it will be told in the compound past. Japrisot, for example, in the novel quoted from above, has passages narrated in the third person and simple past tense, and passages narrated in the first person and compound past. The extract cited above would become the following if recounted from the point of view of the woman in question:

> J'ai ramassé mes vêtements épars. Je les ai rangés dans ma valise noire. Je n'ai pas pris la route déserte par où nous étions venus. J'ai gravi à nouveau la colline et, sur la plate roche où nous nous étions assis, j'ai étalé, ouvert en deux, le sac en papier qui avait enveloppé mes nu-pieds neufs. J'ai écrit dessus...

### 10.3.5 Differences between French and English in the use of past tense forms

**French compound past/simple past and imperfect for English simple past**

The English simple past is used in a range of contexts where French distinguishes between the compound past/simple past on the one hand and the imperfect on the other. Take, for example, the English sentence 'He slept all afternoon'. This can describe a one-off, completed past event, in which case the French equivalent would be a compound past or a simple past form of the verb:

(Hier) il a dormi tout l'après-midi

(Hier) il **dormit** tout l'après-midi

(compound past or simple past (past historic) because it is a completed action in the past)

(Yesterday) he slept all afternoon

Or it can describe an habitual action, in which case the French equivalent would be an imperfect form of the verb:

(Quand il était plus jeune,) il **dormait** tout l'après-midi

(When he was younger,) he slept all afternoon (= he used to sleep ...)

Note that there is a distinction between viewing an action as habitual and viewing it as repeated. Repeated actions which are completed are described by verbs in the compound past/simple past in French:

Tous les jours de cette année-là elle a travaillé d'arrache-pied/elle travaille d'arrache-pied

(compound past or simple past because each of the repeated actions, i.e. the work carried out each day, is envisaged as a completed action in the past)

*Every day that year she worked like mad*
French imperfect for English past progressive

English indicates that an event was in progress in the past via a special form of the verb known as the 'progressive': 'was/were V-ing', e.g. 'He was sleeping'. French does not have an equivalent special form for this. The English past progressive will normally be translated into French by the imperfect tense:

Quand je l'ai trouvé, il dormait paisiblement sur la plage
When I found him he was sleeping peacefully on the beach

Nous allions vers l'Arc de Triomphe quand les avions sont passés/passèrent au-dessus de nous
We were going towards the Arc de Triomphe when the planes flew over us

If there is a need to emphasize the duration, en train de can be used:

Elle était en train de mettre la dernière touche à son dessin quand on a frappé/frappa à la porte
She was putting the finishing touches to her drawing when someone knocked at the door

10.4 The future

Two tenses are used to refer to future time: the future and the conditional, although the conditional also expresses meanings which are not simply related to future time.

10.4.1 The future tense

The future tense has three main functions:

(a) It is used to describe events which take place in the future:

Quand il ira à Paris il m'achètera des livres
When he goes to Paris he will buy me books

(b) As in English, it can be used as a more polite alternative to the imperative to give orders:

Vous fermez la porte, s'il vous plaît
Will you close the door, please

je prendrai un kilo de vos prunes jaunes
TU have a kilo of your yellow plums

Vous m'excuserez
Will you excuse me

(c) It is sometimes the equivalent of English 'may', when a speaker is speculating about possible causes or outcomes:

Elle aura encore sa migraine
She may have her headache again

Peut-être qu'elle viendra
She may perhaps come

(See Chapter 11.3.4 for more on 'may'.)
NB: The future can be replaced by a present tense form of the verb *aller* + an infinitive where a greater certainty about the likelihood of an event taking place is implied than is given by the future. In many contexts the future and *aller* + an infinitive can be interchanged, e.g.:

Tu vas y aller, je le sais bien *or* Tu *iras*, je le sais bien
*I’m quite sure you will go*

But in some contexts there is a clear difference in meaning between the two:

Elle va avoir un bébé
*She will have a baby* *or* *She's having a baby (i.e. She's pregnant)*

Compared with:

Elle aura un bébé (un jour, mais elle n'est pas pressée)
*She will have a baby (one day, but she is in no hurry)*

10.4.2 The conditional tense

The conditional has six main functions:

(a) It refers to events which *would* take place in the future if certain conditions were met:

Il m’achèterait des livres à Paris si je lui donnais l’argent
*He would buy me books in Paris if I gave him the money*

Je l’accompagnerais volontiers si je ne devais pas retourner à Dijon
*I would love to go with him if I didn't have to go back to Dijon*

(b) In reported speech (see 10.7) it is the equivalent of a future tense in direct speech:

Il a dit: 'Je viendrai'
*He said: T will come'*

Je lui ai demandé: "Est-ce tu pourras venir?"
*I asked him, 'Will you be able to come?''*

(c) The conditional is used, especially in journalistic language, to state something as an 'alleged' fact, i.e. one which the writer doesn't wish to state as definitely true and often one attributed to other sources:

Selon des sources bien informées, le Prince de Galles rejoindrait le reste de la famille royale aux sports d'hiver la semaine prochaine
*According to reliable sources, the Prince of Wales will be joining the rest of the royal family for a skiing holiday next week*

D’après notre correspondant à Tel Aviv, un accord de paix serait réalisable dans la semaine à venir
*According to our correspondent in Tel Aviv, a peace agreement will be possible in the coming week*

(d) The conditional (and even the compound conditional - see 10.5.5) can be used in French as 'could' and 'would' are in English to make a request sound
more polite:

Je voudrais réserver deux places, s'il vous plaît
I would like to book two seats, please

Je voudrais vous demander un renseignement
J'aurais voulu vous demander un renseignement
I was wondering if I could ask you for information

(e) Sometimes the conditional can be the equivalent of English 'might' when
the speaker is speculating about possible causes or outcomes - it expresses
greater uncertainty than the future tense used for the same purpose:

Elle aurait encore sa migraine
She might have her headache again

Peut-être qu'elle viendrait
She might come, perhaps

(See Chapter 11.3.5 for more on 'might'.)

(f) In formal French the conditional can be used as an alternative to a clause
with *si* (see also Chapter 17.3.7):

Il me proposerait un million de francs que je n'irais pas!
Even if he offered me a million francs I still wouldn't go!

(For tenses in *si* clauses see 10.8 and Chapter 17.3.6.)

10.4.3 Differences between French and English in the use of future
and conditional tenses

In English, verbs in clauses introduced by conjunctions like 'when', 'as soon
as', 'as long as', 'after', 'once' are usually in a present or past tense verb form:

*When she comes I'll tell her*

*He will arrive as soon as I have left*

Where such clauses refer to events which are yet to happen (as they mostly
do), in French you must use a future, conditional, compound future or com­
pound conditional, as appropriate. These clauses are introduced by conjunc­
tions like: *quand, lorsque, aussitôt que, dès que, sitôt que, dès lors que, tant que, après
que, une fois que.*

*Quand elle viendra (NOT *vient*), je le lui dirai*

*Il arrivera dès que je serai parti (NOT *suis parti)*

*Une fois que nous serons passés à l'hôtel je pourrai enfin me débarrasser de
ces valises*

*Once we've been to the hotel I will finally be able to get rid of these suitcases*

A good indicator that the event has yet to happen is the verb in the other clause,
which will be in a future tense, conditional tense, etc., in English: 'He will
arrive as soon as I have left'. (See also Chapter 17.3.2.)

10.4.4 Use of tenses with *depuis*, *il y a* and *pendant*

*depuis*

In clauses containing the preposition *depuis* 'for' or 'since', the tense of the verb differs systematically between French and English.

(a) In the case of the present, there are two points in time, now and an event in the past. Where the consequences of the event in the past continue into the present, from the perspective of the speaker, French uses a present tense, while English uses the perfect:

- Je suis ici depuis plus d’un an
  *I have been here for more than a year*
  (My being here continues at the time I am speaking)

- Elle habite notre village depuis Pâques
  *She has been living in our village since Easter*
  (She is still living there at the time of speaking)

However, if the event does not have consequences which continue into the present, a past tense form of the verb will be used in French:

- Il n’est pas venu ici depuis plus d’un an
  *He hasn’t been here for more than a year*
  (The last time he was here was over a year ago, so the event does not continue at the time of speaking)

- Il a arrêté de fumer depuis plus d’un an
  *He has stopped smoking for more than a year*
  (His giving up smoking was an event which was completed more than a year ago, and so does not continue at the time of speaking)

Compare with:

- Il fume depuis plus d’un an
  *He has been smoking for more than a year*
  (His smoking started more than a year ago and continues into the present)

(b) In the case of the past, there are also two points in time, one in the past and one further back in the past. If the consequences of the event further back in the past continue forwards to the event in the past, French uses the imperfect tense where English uses the pluperfect:

- J’étais là depuis plus d’un an
  *I had been there for more than a year*

But if the more distant event does not have continuing consequences, a pluperfect form of the verb will be used in French:

- Il avait arrêté de fumer depuis plus d’un an quand il est tombé malade
  *He had stopped smoking for more than a year when he became ill*
By contrast *il y a 'ago'* focuses on the completion of an event in the past, and the tense used in French is a past tense, just as it is in English:

- **Je suis arrivé il y a un an**
  *I arrived a year ago*

- **Elle a commencé à habiter notre village il y a six mois**
  *She began living in our village six months ago*

- **Nous y sommes allés il y a plus de dix ans**
  *We went there more than ten years ago*

*pendant*

*pendant* ‘for’, enables the speaker to indicate the length of time associated with an event, whether it is in the present, future or is a completed event in the past:

- **Jean-Paul prétend qu'il veut maintenir son silence pendant trois semaines**
  *Jean-Paul says that he wants to keep quiet about it for three weeks*

- **Ensuite nous irons passer des vacances en Irlande pendant quinze jours**
  *After that we will spend a fortnight on holiday in Ireland*

- **J'y suis resté pendant trois semaines l'année dernière**
  *I stayed there for three weeks last year*

(For *il y a un mois que ... 'it's a month since ...', voilà/voici plusieurs ans que ... 'it's several years since ...', see Chapter 17.3.4.)

### 10.5 Other tenses indicating the time at which events occur relative to other events

#### 10.5.1 The pluperfect tense

Whereas the simple past and compound past tenses refer to events completed in the past from the perspective of the speaker or writer, the pluperfect describes events completed at some point even before these past events:

- **La police laissa une balise pour indiquer où l'accident était arrivé**
  *The police left a marker to show where the accident happened/had happened*  
  (Pluperfect - an event which occurred prior to the police marking the spot)

- **Je n'ai pas pris la route déserte par où nous étions venus**
  *I didn't take the very quiet road along which we had come*  
  (Pluperfect - an event which occurred prior to me taking a different road)

#### 10.5.2 The past anterior tense

The past anterior is not used very frequently and can only occur in texts in which the simple past is used. It has two functions:

(a) It refers to a past event which immediately precedes another past event described by the simple past (as opposed to one past event preceding another
without any specification of the length of the period between the two events - in this case a pluperfect would be used). A typical context for the past anterior is a clause introduced by the conjunctions quand, lorsque 'when', aussitôt que, dès que, sitôt que, dès lors que 'as soon as', tant que 'as long as', après que 'after', une fois que 'once':

Après qu'elle fut sortie, il enleva la nappe
*After she left, he removed the tablecloth*
*Her leaving immediately preceded his removing the tablecloth)*

Dès que j'eus fini, je me rendis chez moi
*As soon as I had finished, I went home*
*(My finishing immediately preceded my going home)*

(b) It is used with adverbs like vite 'quickly', bientôt 'soon' where the idea of speed or urgency is expressed, and the verb would otherwise be in the pluperfect:

Elle eut bientôt écrit la lettre
*She had soon written the letter*

Il fut vite envoyé chercher un médecin
*He had quickly been sent to fetch a doctor*

(See also Chapter 17.3.3.)

10.5.3 The double compound past and compound pluperfect tenses

The double compound past tense and compound pluperfect tense can be used in spoken French where the past anterior is used in written French, to describe an event which immediately precedes another past event (typically in clauses introduced by quand, lorsque 'when', etc. - see 10.5.2), or to express speed or urgency. Where the verb describing the main past event is in a compound past tense form, the verb describing the preceding event is in a double compound past form:

Ils ont gardé le silence pendant tout mon discours, mais ils ont applaudi quand j’ai eu fini
*They were quiet throughout my speech but they applauded when I had finished*
*(The main past event is their applauding, and the verb is in a compound past form; my finishing the speech immediately precedes their applauding, and is in a double compound past form)*

Where the verb describing the main past event is in a pluperfect tense form, the verb describing the preceding event is in a compound pluperfect form:

Quand ils avaient eu fini de préparer leurs questions, ils les avaient données au Président de séance
*When they had finished preparing their questions, they had given them to the Chair of the session*
*(The main past event is their having given the questions to the Chair, and the verb is in a pluperfect form; their finishing preparing the questions immediately precedes their giving the questions to the Chair, and is in a compound pluperfect form)*
In expressing speed or urgency, only the double compound past tense is possible:

J'ai eu vite fini le livre
I quickly finished the book

The use of the double compound past and compound pluperfect tenses is not obligatory and is in fact relatively rare. Ordinary compound past and pluperfect tenses are the normal forms to use in these contexts.

10.5.4 The compound future tense (future perfect)

Typically the compound future tense describes a future event from the perspective of its completion (as opposed to the future tense, which views an event simply from the perspective of its futurity). It usually corresponds to English 'will have':

J'aurai fini mon travail dès lundi
I will have finished my work from Monday
(versus: Je finirai mon travail lundi 'I will finish my work on Monday')

Given this perspective, a compound future can describe an event which takes place before another event in the future:

J'aurai fini mon travail avant de partir en vacances
I will have finished my work before going on holiday

The compound future can also be the equivalent of English 'may have', when a speaker is speculating about an event which may have occurred before another in the past:

Elle aura fini peut-être ses devoirs avant de vous téléphoner
She may perhaps have finished her homework before she telephoned you

10.5.5 The compound conditional tense (conditional perfect)

The compound conditional has four main functions:

(a) It refers to events which would have taken place if certain conditions had been met (but weren't):

C'aurait été la chute du gouvernement, s'il y avait eu des élections à ce moment-là
The government would have fallen if there had been elections at that time

Tu l'aurais vu partir si tu étais venu plus tôt
You would have seen him leave if you had come earlier

(b) In reported speech (see 10.7) it is the equivalent of a compound future in direct speech:

Direct speech: Il a dit: 'J'aurai fini mon travail avant de partir en vacances'
He said: 'I will have finished my work before going on holiday'

Reported speech: Il a dit qu'il aurait fini son travail avant de partir en vacances'
He said he would have finished his work before going on holiday
(c) The compound conditional can be used to indicate that the speaker is stating something as a possible fact and not as a certainty, most often a fact asserted by others:

Le Président serait déjà parti pour l'Allemagne
(It is said that) the President may have already left for Germany
(i.e. I have been told he has but I am not repeating it as a fact)

Selon mes collègues, j'aurais dit que le président allait prendre sa retraite
According to my colleagues, I said that the chairman was going to retire

This is widely used in the press to express unsubstantiated or alleged facts:

On ne sait donc toujours pas si l'assassin présumé, qui aurait avoué son crime, était bien le seul tireur ou s'il avait été aidé de plusieurs complices
We therefore still do not know whether the suspected killer, who has allegedly admitted his crime, was indeed the only one who fired or whether he was helped by several accomplices

(d) In formal French the compound conditional can be used as an alternative to a si clause containing a verb in the pluperfect (see also Chapter 17.3.7):

Il me l'aurait dit plus tôt, j'aurais pu m'y prendre autrement
S'il me l'avait dit plus tôt, j'aurais pu m'y prendre autrement
If he'd told me earlier, I could have done it another way

10.5.6 The double compound future
The double compound future can be used (but need not be) to describe an event completed in the future immediately before another future event. Typical contexts where it might be found are clauses introduced by dès que, quand, lorsque, aussitôt que, and so on (see 10.5.2 for the list):

Dès qu'ils auront eu bu leur café, il faudra qu'ils se dépêchent de partir
As soon as they have drunk their coffee, they will have to hurry up and leave

10.6 Combining tenses
When it is necessary to use tenses to indicate one moment in time relative to another, French is much more precise than English. In many sentences one clause establishes the main tense and another situates a second event in relation to it. When this is the case, it is essential to express the relative time relationship clearly in French by use of the appropriate tense as exemplified below.

10.6.1 Time relative to the present
(a) Assuming that one clause of a sentence relates to the present, events which precede the present will be in:

the imperfect if one wishes to stress the duration of the action;
the compound past (perfect) if one wishes to link the past action to the present or to leave that possibility open;
and in the simple past (past historic) if one wishes to indicate, in written French, that the action is definitely completed.
The English sentence:

*She often played the violin, now she plays the piano*

could be rendered into French in each of the following ways, depending on which of three possible meanings is intended:

(i) If 'played' refers to an habitual action in the past compared with the situation now, then the imperfect will be the appropriate tense:

> Elle jouait souvent du violon, maintenant elle joue du piano

(*jouait* indicates that she was in the habit of playing the violin: a meaning which could have been conveyed by the English ‘used to’ or ‘would’)

(ii) If 'played' refers to an event completed in the past but possibly still relevant to the present, then the compound past (perfect) will be the appropriate tense:

> Elle a souvent joué du violon, maintenant elle joue du piano

(*a joué* indicates that on several occasions in the past, she played the violin: it is neutral about whether she still plays it or not but leaves open that possibility)

(iii) If 'played' refers to an event (or a repeated set of events) seen as completed in the past and with no relevance to the present, the simple past (past historic) will be the appropriate tense in writing:

> Elle joua souvent du violon, maintenant elle joue du piano

(*joua* suggests that for a specified period in the past (e.g. up to the age of ten), she played the violin but that the event is sharply cut off from the present)

(b) Assuming that one clause of the sentence relates to the present, events which follow the present will be expressed through the future:

> J'exige une excellente performance de mes employés aujourd'hui, et je l'exigerai encore demain

*I demand a high-level of performance from my employees now and I will continue to do so in the future*

> Il pleut aujourd'hui et il va pleuvoir encore demain

*It's raining today and it will rain again tomorrow*

(c) An event which occurs immediately before an event which is in the present, can be expressed by the present tense of *venir de*. The English translation usually involves ‘just’:

> Mais non! Tu ne fais que répéter ce que je viens de te dire!

*Not at all! You are simply repeating what I have just told you!*

> Nous venons de présenter nos idées aux clients

*We have just presented our ideas to the clients*

> Nous reviendrons sur la question que nous venons d'évoquer

*We will come back again to the topic we have just been discussing*
10.6.2 Time relative to the past

(a) Assuming that one clause of a sentence indicates that an event has taken place in the past, the following forms are used to indicate events further in the past than the given past event. Where the past event is expressed by the compound past (perfect) or the simple past (past historic), an event further in the past will be expressed by the pluperfect (see 10.5.1), or, in certain styles, the past anterior (see 10.5.2). These differences are frequently not expressed in the equivalent English sentences where simple past forms are used:

Elle a voulu revendre le meuble dès qu'elle l'avait acheté
She wanted to sell the piece of furniture as soon as she bought it

Quand elle eut fini de jouer du violon elle joua du piano
When she finished playing the violin, she played the piano

It is frequently possible for English to use the pluperfect 'had bought', 'had finished playing', etc. but most often users prefer the simpler forms and leave the interpretation to the reader: normally it is clear in context what is meant. However, despite the fact that English frequently does not mark these temporal distinctions, they cannot be left vague in French:

Papa veut savoir à quelle heure elle est rentrée hier soir
Dad wants to know at what time she came in last night

Papa a voulu savoir à quelle heure elle était rentrée hier soir
Dad wanted to know at what time she came in last night

On déposa des fleurs sur le trottoir pour indiquer où l'accident était arrivé
Flowers were left (or people left flowers) on the pavement to show where the accident happened

Quand je suis entré dans la pièce je me suis rendu compte que Jean était arrivé avant moi
When I went into the room I realized that John was there before me

(b) The double compound past is used in cases where it is required that the event further in the past is marked as completed:

Ils ont gardé le silence pendant tout mon discours, mais ils ont applaudi quand j'ai eu fini
They were quiet throughout my speech but they applauded when I had finished

(c) The compound conditional is used to refer to a hypothetical event related to an event in the past:

Nous aurions acheté votre maison si nous en avions entendu parler à temps
We would have bought your house if we had heard of it in time

Vous auriez pu l'acheter si vous aviez voulu
You could have bought it if you had wanted to

(d) The imperfect of venir de can be used when one event is indicated as just having been completed prior to another one already expressed in the past tense. Note that the French imperfect must be translated by an English pluperfect 'had told/presented etc.':
Il ne faisait que répéter ce que je venais de lui dire
He simply repeated what I had just told him

Nous venions de conclure notre présentation quand la panne d'électricité est survenue
We had just finished our presentation when there was a power cut

La question que nous venions d'évoquer avait soulevé beaucoup de controverse
The matter we had just discussed raised a great deal of controversy

10.6.3 Time relative to the future

(a) A sequential relationship between two events in the future can be expressed through the compound future:

Est-ce qu'elle aura fini ses devoirs avant de partir demain matin?
Will she have finished her homework before she leaves tomorrow morning?

marks a future action which precedes the indicated future point in time.

Est-ce qu'elle finira ses devoirs après avoir pris sa douche demain matin?
Will she finish her homework after having her shower tomorrow morning?

marks a future action which follows the indicated future point in time. (Note the preferred translation with ‘-ing’.)

Une fois que nous serons passés à l'hôtel je pourrai enfin me débarrasser de ces valises
Once we've been to the hotel I will finally be able to get rid of these suitcases

Lorsqu'il m'aura fourni des explications valables, nous pourrons nous mettre d'accord sur la solution à adopter
Once he has provided me with a satisfactory explanation, we shall be able to agree on the solution to be chosen

both mark a future action which precedes another future action. (Note the translation into English by a present perfect.)

(b) The double compound future is used to indicate the completed nature of the event preceding another event in the future:

Quand vous aurez eu fini de préparer vos questions, vous les présenterez au Président de séance
When you have finished preparing your questions, you (will) give them to the Chair of the session

10.7 Tenses in direct and reported descriptions of events

When descriptions of events (e.g. Le prisonnier s'est évadé par la fenêtre 'The prisoner escaped through the window') or the utterances of others ('direct speech' - e.g. «Je viens demain» 'I'm coming tomorrow') are reported to a third party, the tense of the verb in the original sentence can change in certain circumstances, and there may also be consequential changes in any associated time adverbs:
Tenses in direct and reported descriptions of events

Direct description: Le prisonnier s’est évadé par la fenêtre
*The prisoner escaped through the window*

Reported description: La police croyait que le prisonnier s’était évadé par la fenêtre
*The police thought that the prisoner had escaped through the window*

Direct speech: Je viens demain
*I’m coming tomorrow*

Reported speech: Il a dit qu’il venait le lendemain
*He said that he was coming the following day*

(For the choice of appropriate time adverbs see Chapter 5.6.8.)

Verbs which introduce reported descriptions or reported speech are those like *dire que* ‘to say that’, *expliquer que* ‘to explain that’, *penser que, croire que* ‘to think, believe that’, *maintenir que* ‘to maintain that’, *prétendre que* ‘to claim that’, and so on.

Mostly, the tense of the verb in the reported clause is the same as the tense of the verb in the original statement or utterance. But where the reporting verb is in a past tense - imperfect, compound past/simple past or pluperfect - the following systematic changes occur in the tense of the reported verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original tense</th>
<th>Reported tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(compound) future</td>
<td>(compound) conditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compound/simple past</td>
<td>pluperfect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.A illustrates the pattern.

**TABLE 10.A** Tenses following a reporting verb in a past tense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct description</th>
<th>Reporting verb (imperfect, compound or simple past, pluperfect)</th>
<th>Reported verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elle parle (present) <em>She is speaking</em></td>
<td>Ils croyaient qu’ils ont cru/cruent qu’ils avaient cru qu’ils avaient cru qu’ils avaient cru qu’ils avaient cru qu’il aurait parlé</td>
<td>elle parlait (imperfect) she was speaking/spoke elle parlerait (conditional) she would speak elle aurait parlé (compound conditional) she would have spoken elle avait parlé (pluperfect) she had spoken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other tenses of reported verbs remain the same as the original. To take some typical examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct description</th>
<th>Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Elle parlait       | Ils avaient cru qu'elle parlait  
They had thought that she was speaking |
| Elle aurait parlé | Ils ont cru qu'elle aurait parlé  
They thought that she would have spoken |
| Elle avait parlé  | Ils croyaient qu'elle avait parlé  
They thought that she had spoken |

And where the reporting verb is in a non-past tense (i.e. present or any form of the (compound) future or (compound) conditional) the tense of the reported verb remains the same as the original:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct description</th>
<th>Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Elle parle         | Ils croiraient qu'elle parle  
They would think that she is speaking |
| Elle parlera       | Ils croient qu'elle parlera  
They think that she will speak |
| Elle a parlé       | Ils auraient cru qu'elle a parlé  
They would have thought that she spoke |

10.8 Tenses with si

*si* has two distinct functions. One is to introduce indirect questions, and corresponds to English 'if when it can also mean 'whether': *Elle m'a demandé si je voulais y aller* 'She asked me if/whether I wanted to go there'. Tenses following indirect question *si* are determined in exactly the same way as for reported speech, as described in 10.7. (See also Chapter 17.3.6.)

The other function of *si* is to introduce 'hypothetical clauses'. In this use it corresponds to English 'if when it cannot alternate with 'whether', e.g. 'I won't stay if (NOT *whether*) he comes' *Je ne resterai pas s'il vient*. The tense of the verb in the hypothetical *si* clause can never be in the (compound) future or (compound) conditional tense. Rather, it will typically obey one of the following patterns:

| Je ne reste pas s'il vient  
*I'm not staying if he comes* |
| Je ne resterai pas s'il vient  
*I won't stay if he comes* |
| Je ne resterais pas s'il venait  
*I wouldn't stay if he came* |
| Je ne serais pas resté s'il venait/était venu  
*I wouldn't have stayed if he came/had come* |
| Je ne restais pas s'il venait  
*I wasn't staying if he was coming* |
11.1 The attitude of the subject to events: the subjunctive

The subjunctive is expressed by a particular set of forms which verbs can typically take only in subordinate clauses (but see 11.4.4 for an exception). The selection of the subjunctive in a subordinate clause (rather than the normal indicative) is always determined by the nature of the clause on which it is dependent.

It should be noted that in many cases there is no choice about whether to use the subjunctive or indicative: certain types of main clause ALWAYS select subjunctive in a dependent subordinate clause; others ALWAYS select the indicative. However, some main clause constructions are ambiguous, and allow the verb in a dependent subordinate clause to be either subjunctive or indicative: the choice of one or the other produces different meanings.

The majority of main clause constructions which select the subjunctive have a general property in common, and it is useful to consider the subjunctive from this perspective. The subjunctive is selected in a subordinate clause where the subject of the main clause views the event described in the subordinate clause with a significant degree of personal interpretation. This notion of 'personal interpretation' can be broken down into three types, which are illustrated below:

(a) The subject judges an event to be more towards the 'unlikely' end of a scale going from 'probable' to 'unlikely'.
(b) The subject projects his or her personal desires or feelings on to an event.
(c) The subject cannot present an event as probable from his or her point of view, because it is in some way conditional on other events, is hypothetical, is unknowable or is simply vague.

**Subjunctive: dependent on the subject's belief that an event is unlikely to occur**

Where the subject of the main clause expresses a belief in the relative probability of an event's occurring (whether in the past or the future), the indicative will be used. For example, expressions like the following give rise to the indicative in dependent subordinate clauses:
Jean affirme que
Jean pense que
Jean imagine que  Pierre est venu
Jean declares that
Jean thinks that
Jean reckons that  Pierre came

In the case of impersonal subjects - *il est certain que, il est probable que*, etc. - or with verbs where the subject is in the first person - *je crois que, j'imagine que*, etc. - it is the speaker of the sentence who expresses a belief in the probability of an event's occurring and this equally gives rise to the indicative:

Je crois que
Je juge que
Je pense que
Je suppose que
Il est certain que
Il est probable que  Pierre viendra
*I believe that
I reckon that
I think that
I suppose that
It's certain that
It's probable that*

BUT where the main clause expresses the subject's belief that an event is unlikely to occur or to have occurred, the subjunctive is required. For example, where the above expressions are negated or questioned, or when other terms suggesting less certainty are used, the event becomes more 'unlikely' than 'probable'. This gives rise to the subjunctive in dependent subordinate clauses:

Jean ne pense pas que
Jean n'imagine pas que
etc.  Pierre soit venu
Jean doesn't think that
Jean doesn't imagine that
etc.  Pierre came

Je ne crois pas que
Il n'est pas certain que
Il est possible que
etc.  Pierre vienne
*I don't believe that
It's not certain that
It's possible that*

Est-il certain que
Crois-tu que
etc.  Pierre vienne?
*Is it certain that . . .
Do you think that*

Est-ce que Jean
demande que
Est-ce que Jean
imagine que
etc.  Pierre soit venu?
*Does Jean think that . . .
Does Jean imagine that*

**Subjunctive: dependent on the subject's attitude to an event**

Where the construction which introduces the subordinate clause inherently presents the event as simply a matter of fact, the indicative will be used. For example, after the verb *savoir que* 'to know that' the indicative will always be used because *savoir que* states the subject's view of an event as a matter of fact, uncoloured by a significant degree of personal interpretation:

*Il sait que Pierre est venu*

(*il sait que* states 'Pierre's having come' as a factual reality)

BUT where the construction which introduces the subordinate clause inherently expresses the subject's personal desires or feelings, the subjunctive will
be required. For example, after the verb regretter que 'to be sorry that', the subjunctive will always be used because regretter places the event in the context of an emotional, personal interpretation by the subject:

Il regrette que Pierre soit venu
('Pierre's having come' is not in doubt, but il regrette que expresses a personal attitude towards that event)

Thus, where a subject places a particular personal interpretation on an event described in a subordinate clause, the subjunctive is likely to be used - even if the factual reality of the event is not in doubt. It is the attitude towards the event, the way the subject wishes it to be seen, which is more important than the reality or otherwise of the event. For example, Josette Alia, writing in the Nouvel Observateur in 1990 about the beginning of the feminist movement wrote:

L'essentiel, pour nous, était que le scandale fût là
*The most important thing for us was that there should have been a scandal*

To have written the following, equally grammatical, sentence would have changed the meaning in an important way:

L'essentiel, pour nous, était que le scandale fut là
*The most important thing for us was that there was a scandal*

In using the subjunctive Josette Alia does not lay the stress on the concept that there actually was a scandal (although she certainly thinks that there was) because that, from her point of view, is not what is important: she wishes to stress that the important thing was for the early feminists (with whom she identifies herself) to have created one - hence the subjunctive.

**Subjunctive: dependent on the subject's view of an event as conditional, hypothetical, unknowable or vague**

In cases where the idea of conditionality is expressed overtly through the conditional word si, the indicative is always used (for tenses with si see 10.8):

Si tu viens demain nous pourrons nous promener au bord du lac
*If you come tomorrow, we will be able to go for a walk beside the lake*

S'ils avaient répondu à ma première lettre, j'aurais cessé de les importuner
*If they had replied to my letter, I would have stopped bothering them*

BUT certain expressions introducing dependent clauses place a condition on an event; the subject can then only present it as something which, from his or her point of view, is possible in certain circumstances, but no more than that. Therefore with expressions such as à condition que 'on the condition that' and à moins que 'unless', the subjunctive is obligatory:

Je veux bien y aller, à condition qu'on prenne l'avion
*I'd be very pleased to go, as long as we take the plane*

Jean-Charles devra changer ses habitudes à moins qu'il veuille qu'on le prenne pour un imbécile
*Jean-Charles will have to change his ways unless he wants people to think he is a complete idiot*
When time constraints make the outcome of events unknowable by the subject, references to events in an unknown time scale tend to be in the subjunctive: *avant que* 'before' and *jusqu'à ce que* 'until' must be followed by the subjunctive:

Avant que tu (ne) me le dises, je te promets que je serai là à l'heure
Before you say anything to me, I promise that I will be there on time

Je veux attendre ici jusqu'à ce qu'il soit arrivé chez lui
I want to stay here until he has got home

When subjects are confronted with a degree of vagueness which means that they do not know enough about the situation to be certain of anything they say, the subjunctive is used: *quoi que*, *quel(le(s)) que* 'whichever, whatever' must be followed by the subjunctive:

Quoi qu'il fasse, il ne mettra plus jamais les pieds chez moi
Whatever he does, he will never set foot in my house again

Quels que soient ses problèmes, je ne vois pas très bien comment je pourrais l'aider
Whatever her problems may be, I can't easily see how I could help her

**SUMMARY**

Contexts which give rise to the subjunctive

(a) The subjunctive is used mainly in subordinate clauses (but see 11.4.4).

(b) The subordinate clause is dependent on constructions which express a significant degree of personal interpretation of events: these interpretations present events as more unlikely than probable, and/or in a way which is coloured by the desires or feelings of the subject, and/or as conditional, hypothetical or unknowable.

NB: (a) As noted above, in the great majority of cases where the subjunctive is used, there is no choice: it is required after the relevant expression. However, in some limited subordinate contexts there is a genuine choice between using the indicative and the subjunctive because the construction on which the subordinate clause is dependent can be used with more than one meaning. This is the case in the example from Josette Alia used above. It is also the case in the following examples (the first from Judge and Healey, 1983:131).

A speaker trying to find a student who speaks Chinese might say:

Je cherche un étudiant qui sait parler chinois
I'm looking for a student who can speak Chinese

This would be used if the speaker is reasonably sure that there is such a student in a known group (i.e. I know one of the students speaks Chinese - I'm looking for that student'). By contrast, if the speaker said:

Je cherche un étudiant qui sache parler chinois
I'm looking for a student who can speak Chinese
he or she would be expressing reservations about whether such a student is likely to be available (i.e. 'I'm looking for any student who speaks Chinese - I don't know whether any of them do').

An irate parent waiting for a teenager who is coming in late might say:

Je suppose que tu vas me dire que tu es allé au cinéma avec ta copine
\textit{I suppose you're going to tell me that you went to the cinema with your girlfriend.}

The indicative is used because the parent wants to express his or her certainty about what excuses are likely to be offered.

By contrast, an insurance agent wanting to sell holiday insurance to a client might say:

Supposez toujours que vous soyez aux Etats-Unis et que vous tombiez malade, qu'est-ce que vous allez faire sans assurance?
\textit{just suppose that you are in the United States and you fall ill, how could you manage without health insurance?}

Here the whole issue is hypothetical. Hence the subjunctive.

(b) Although the subjunctive is typically marked in verbs in subordinate clauses introduced by \textit{que}, not every subordinate clause introduced by \textit{que} requires the verb to be in the subjunctive - in fact most of them don't! It is only when the subordinate clause is dependent on a construction which expresses a significant degree of subjective interpretation of the event along the lines described above, usually through the use of one of the specific ways of introducing the subordinate clause, that the subjunctive is used.

\textbf{1 1.1.1 Forms of the subjunctive}

The conjugation of verbs in the subjunctive is described fully in Chapter 7. Here is a brief summary of the way that regular verbs form the subjunctive in the various tenses (but see Chapter 7 for irregular verbs).

\textbf{Present subjunctive}

For many verbs, take the third person plural, present tense form of the indicative, delete -\textit{ent}:

for example:

\begin{align*}
(\text{ils}) & \quad \text{parlent} & \rightarrow & \text{parl-} \\
& \quad \text{finissent} & \rightarrow & \text{finiss} \\
& \quad \text{dorment} & \rightarrow & \text{dorm-} \\
& \quad \text{vendent} & \rightarrow & \text{vend-} \\
& \quad \text{reçoivent} & \rightarrow & \text{reçoiv-}
\end{align*}

and add the endings:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \text{-e}
  \item \text{-es}
  \item \text{-e}
  \item \text{-ions}
  \item \text{-iez}
  \item \text{-ent}
\end{itemize}
for example:

park, parles, parle, parlions, parliez, parlent
finisse, finisses, finisse, finissions, finissiez, finissent

NB: The stem reçois- changes when the ending does not begin with -e: reçois, reçoive, reçoive, recevions, receviez, reçoivent.

**Imperfect subjunctive**

For many verbs, take the first person singular, simple past tense form of the indicative, delete the last letter: for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(je) parlai</th>
<th>finis</th>
<th>dormis</th>
<th>vendis</th>
<th>reçus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parla-</td>
<td>fini-</td>
<td>dormi-</td>
<td>vendi-</td>
<td>reçu-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and add the endings:

-sse
-sses
.\A_f
-ssions
-ssiez
-ssent

for example:

parlasse, parlasses, parlât, parlassions, parlassiez, parlassent
finisse, finisses, finit, finissions, finissiez, finissent
reçusse, reçusses, reçuât, reçussions, reçussiez, reçussent
etc.

**Compound past and pluperfect subjunctive**

The compound past subjunctive is formed from the present subjunctive forms of avoir or être, as appropriate, followed by the past participle. The pluperfect subjunctive is formed from the imperfect subjunctive of avoir or être, as appropriate, followed by the past participle. (See Chapter 7 for details.)

**1.1.2 Which tense of the subjunctive should be used?**

In formal written French it is still possible to use all of the tenses of the subjunctive: present, imperfect, compound past and pluperfect. In such cases the tense to use is determined in a broadly similar way to the choice of tenses with indicative forms of the verb (see Chapter 10). The only difference is that because there is no future or conditional subjunctive, the present tense form of the subjunctive is normally used in contexts where the future or conditional would be appropriate.

However, in less formal written French, and generally in spoken French, only the present tense and the compound past tense of the subjunctive are used. In this case, the present tense forms of the subjunctive typically cover all cases where present, imperfect, simple past, future or conditional tenses of the indicative would be used. For example:
The attitude of the subject to events: the subjunctive

Nous préférons qu'il soit au courant
We prefer him to know about it
(Compare: Nous savons qu'il est au courant - present tense)

Le professeur se plaignait que ses élèves ne sachent pas employer correctement le subjonctif
The teacher used to complain that his pupils didn't know how to use the subjunctive correctly
(Compare: Le professeur disait que ses élèves ne savaient pas employer correctement le subjonctif - imperfect tense)

Il était heureux dans le bureau jusqu'à ce que le patron embauche une nouvelle secrétaire
He was happy in the office until the boss hired a new secretary
(Compare: Il était heureux dans le bureau. Mais alors le patron embaucha une nouvelle secrétaire - simple past tense)

Je démissionnerai tout de suite à moins que vous ne la renvoyiez
I'll resign immediately unless you sack her
(Compare: Vous ne la renverrez pas? Alors je démissionnerai - future tense)

Il serait peu probable que nos amis sachent que nous sommes partis
It would be unlikely that our friends would know that we have left
(Compare: Il serait probable que nos amis sauraient que nous sommes partis - conditional tense)

The compound past tense forms of the subjunctive typically cover all cases where compound past, pluperfect, compound future or compound conditional tenses of the indicative would be used. For example:

Quoiqu'ils aient fait de gros efforts, l'entreprise reste en difficulté
Although they have made considerable efforts, the company is still in difficulty
(Compare: Ils ont fait de gros efforts, mais l'entreprise reste en difficulté - compound past tense)

N'ont-ils pas cru que l'autre équipe ait été éliminée?
Didn't they think that the other team had been eliminated?
(Compare: Ils ont cru que l'autre équipe avait été éliminée - pluperfect tense)

Quoi que mes parents aient décidé, je n'y consentirai pas
Whatever my parents have decided, I won't agree to it
(Compare: Mes parents auront décidé, mais je n'y consentirai pas - compound future tense)

Crois-tu que les élèves aient obtenu d'aussi bonnes notes si quelqu'un d'autre avaient été leur professeur?
Do you believe that the pupils would have got such good marks if someone else had been their teacher?
(Compare: Je crois que les élèves auraient obtenu d'aussi bonnes notes si quelqu'un d'autre avait été leur professeur - compound conditional tense)

I 1.1.3 Subjunctive after verbs, adjectives and nouns which express the personal desires, orders, expectations, fears, regrets or other emotional states of the subject in relation to the event

Verbs and adjectives
Verbs and adjectives of wishing, ordering, expressing fears and other emotional states are normally followed by subjunctive subordinate clauses. The verb in
subordinate clauses dependent on the following verbs is almost always in the subjunctive:

- aimer que: to wish that
- attendre que: to wait for
- s'attendre à ce que: to expect that
- avoir envie que: to really want that
- commander que: to order that
- consentir que: to agree or to accept that
- être content que: to be pleased that
- craindre que: to fear that
- demander que: to ask that
- désirer que: to wish that
- être désolé que: to be sorry that
- être dommage que: to be a pity or to be regretted that
- douter que: to doubt that
- s'étonner que: to be surprised that
- exiger que: to require that
- être heureux que: to be happy that
- insister pour que: to insist that
- ordonner que: to order that
- permettre que: to allow that
- avoir peur que: to be afraid that
- préférer que: to prefer that
- être ravi que: to be delighted that
- regretter que: to regret that
- se réjouir que: to rejoice that
- souhaiter que: to wish that
- être surpris que: to be surprised that
- tenir à ce que: to be anxious that
- être triste que: to be sad that
- veiller à ce que: to be careful that
- vouloir que: to want that

J'aimerais que tous les étudiants puissent trouver du travail en fin d'études.
I would like all the students to be able to obtain a job at the end of their period of study

'Attendez que ma joie revienne et que soit mort le souvenir . . .' (chanson de Barbara)
'Wait until I can be happy again and for the memory to die . . .'

Je consens que tu fasses ce stage de photo mais n'oublie pas que tu devras quand-même aller à tes cours
I agree that you can go on this photography course, but don't forget that you will still have to go to your lectures

Je crains que cela (ne) soit vrai
I'm afraid that may be true

Il est dommage que le gouvernement n'ait pas pu obtenir la libération des otages plus tôt
It is to be regretted that the government was not able to obtain the release of the hostages at an earlier date

Personnellement, je ne doute pas que leur version soit véridique mais ils auront du mal à convaincre leurs parents
I don't doubt that their version is true but they will find it difficult to convince their parents
The attitude of the subject to events: the subjunctive

Je m'étonne que nous n'ayons pas encore reçu la marchandise
I'm surprised that we haven't yet received the goods

Il a exigé que nous l'emmenions jusqu'à Paris
He demanded that we should take him all the way to Paris

Elle était ravie que ses copains aient obtenu l'autorisation de passer dans la classe supérieure
She was very happy that her friends had been allowed to move up to the next class

J'ordonne que les prisonniers soient libérés tout de suite
I order that the prisoners should be freed immediately

J'ai peur que la vérité soit différente
I'm afraid that the truth might be different

Nous préférons qu'il soit au courant
We prefer him to know about it

Je suis ravi que tu ais trouvé l'âme sœur
I am delighted that you have found your partner for life

Je veux que tu sois là à la naissance
I want you to be present at the birth

(For the use of non-negative ne in subordinate clauses see Chapter 16.16.)

Nouns
The subjunctive is normally required in clauses dependent on nouns which express similar meanings to the verbs listed above, i.e. wishing, ordering, being pleased, sad, surprised, etc.: l'attente que, la crainte que, le désir que, l'ordre que, la peur que, le souhait que:

La crainte qu'il soit relâché a provoqué une manifestation devant la prison
The fear that he might be freed gave rise to a demonstration in front of the prison

Yvonne et Pierre ont exprimé le désir qu'elle soit invitée
Yvonne and Pierre have said that they want her to be invited

L'ordre qu'il soit exécuté a été donné au plus haut niveau
The order that he should be executed was given at the highest level

NB: Where the subject of the main clause is unspecified, as in a passive, or is the same as the subject of the subordinate clause, the subjunctive can be avoided by the use of an infinitive with la crainte de, le désir de, la peur de, l'ordre de etc.: 

L'ordre qu'il soit exécuté a été donné au plus haut niveau
L'ordre de l'exécuter a été donné au plus haut niveau

I 1.1.4 Subjunctive after verbs of saying, thinking and believing in negatives and questions
Verbs of saying, thinking and believing - affirmer que 'to state that', croire que 'to believe that', déclarer que 'to declare that', imaginer que 'to imagine that', penser que 'to think that', trouver que 'to find that', and so on - normally present an event simply as a fact and, where they are followed by a dependent subordinate clause, the verb in this clause is in the indicative:
The subjunctive, modal verbs, exclamatives and imperatives

Ils ont cru que l’autre équipe avait été éliminée
They thought that the other team had been eliminated

But when such verbs are negated or questioned, this introduces uncertainty about the likelihood of the event occurring, and verbs in the dependent clause are in the subjunctive:

N’ont-ils pas cru que l’autre équipe ait été éliminée?
Didn’t they think that the other team had been eliminated?

Nous n’affirmons pas que l’accident soit de votre faute, mais les circonstances prêtent à croire que cela pourrait être le cas
We are not saying that the accident was your fault, but the circumstances lead us to believe that this might be the case

Croyez-vous que la guerre froide soit vraiment terminée?
Do you think the cold war is really over?

Peut-on dire que cette statue soit un bon exemple du style de Michel-Ange?
Would you say that this statue is a good example of Michelangelo’s style?

Je ne pense pas que cela soit vrai
I don’t think that is correct

Je ne trouve pas que votre plaisanterie soit de mauvais goût, mais simplement déplacée dans ce contexte
I don’t think that your joke was in bad taste but merely out of place in this context

Similarly, when verbs of saying, thinking and believing are used to introduce hypothetical cases, verbs in clauses dependent on them will be in the subjunctive:

Imaginez quelle ait été sa surprise
Just imagine what her surprise must have been

Supposons que nous ayons gagné la loterie nationale
Let’s suppose that we won the national lottery

On imagine mal que ce film ait été tourné par Godard
It’s difficult to imagine that this film was made by Godard

NB: Note that espérer que ‘to hope that’ does NOT give rise to the subjunctive in a dependent clause, even when negated or questioned:

Ils espéraient que l’autre équipe avait été éliminée
They hoped the other team had been eliminated

N’espéraient-ils pas que l’autre équipe avait été éliminée?
Didn’t they hope that the other team had been eliminated?

1.1.5 Subjunctive after impersonal verbs expressing the belief that an event is unlikely as opposed to probable

Some impersonal verbs and expressions present the occurrence of events described in dependent subordinate clauses as probable: verbs in these clauses are in the indicative. Examples of such cases are: il est certain que ‘it is certain that’, il s’ensuit que ‘it follows that’, il est évident que ‘it is obvious that’, il est probable que ‘it is probable that’, il me semble que ‘I think that’, il est vrai que ‘it is true that’:
Il est probable que nous arriverons à Paris après-demain
It is probable that we will arrive in Paris the day after tomorrow

Il me semble que tout ce travail valait la peine
I think that all this work was worth it

But others present the events as less probable, only possible or even impossible; these require the subjunctive in dependent clauses: il n'est pas certain que 'it is not certain that'; il est douteux que 'it is doubtful that'; il est impossible que 'it is impossible that'; il est invraisemblable que 'it is unbelievable that'; il se peut que, il est possible que 'it is possible that'; il est peu probable que 'it is unlikely that'; il n'est pas sûr que 'it is not sure that'; il n'est pas vrai que 'it is not true that'.

Note particularly the following contrasts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>il est certain que</td>
<td>il n'est pas certain que</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il est probable que</td>
<td>il est peu probable que</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il est sûr que</td>
<td>il n'est pas sûr que</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il est vrai que</td>
<td>il n'est pas vrai que</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Il n'est pas certain que tes explications soient acceptées par tous
It is not certain that your explanations would be accepted by everyone

Il est douteux que le contrat ait été signé à temps
It is doubtful the contract will have been signed on time

Il est invraisemblable qu'ils aient pu s'enfuir sans être remarqués
It is incredible that they should have been able to escape without anyone noticing

Il se peut que nous rencontrions nos camarades à la sortie de la ville
We may meet up with our friends on the outskirts of town

Il est possible que nous puissions trouver une solution à votre problème
It is possible that we may be able to find a solution to your problem

Il est peu probable que vous réussissiez le permis la première fois
It is not very likely that you'll pass your driving test first time

Il n'est pas sûr que nous ayons choisi la meilleure solution
We can't be sure that we have chosen the best solution

Il n'est pas vrai que Juliette nous ait proposé de rester sur place
It is not true that Juliette proposed that we should stay where we were

Some impersonal constructions express the subjective desires or feelings of the speaker of the sentence: il faut que 'it is necessary that' (often equivalent to 'must'); il est important que 'it is important that'; il est nécessaire que 'it is necessary that'; il est regrettable que 'it is regrettable that'; il semble que 'it seems that'; il est temps que 'it is time that'; il vaut mieux que 'it is better if'.

Il faut qu'ils soient prêts à partir tout de suite
They must be ready to leave immediately

Il est important que tous comprennent la nécessité d'améliorer la productivité
It is important that everyone understands the need to increase productivity

Il est nécessaire que vous partiez avec eux: il serait trop dangereux de les laisser voyager seuls
It is necessary for you to go with them: it would be too dangerous to let them travel on their own
Il est regrettable que nous n’ayons pas pu transmettre ces renseignements
It is a pity that we were not able to pass on this information

Il semble que l’ennemi soit mieux préparé
It seems that the enemy is better prepared

Il est temps que nous nous préparions à aider les sans-abri
It is time for us to get ready to help the homeless

Il vaut mieux que ce soit Jean-Claude qui fournisse les explications
It is better that it should be Jean-Claude who puts forward the explanations

NB: Note in particular the contrast:

- il me semble que + indicative
  II me semble que l’ennemi est mieux préparé
  I think that the enemy is better prepared

- il semble que + subjunctive
  Il semble que l’ennemi soit mieux préparé
  It seems that the enemy is better prepared

I 1.1.6 Subjunctive after certain conjunctions

Some subordinating conjunctions introduce hypothetical situations or establish conditions: these are normally followed by verbs in the subjunctive in the subordinated clause:

- afin que
  in order that
- pour que
- en attendant que
  whilst waiting for
- non que
  not that
- ce n’est pas que
- à moins que
  unless
- à supposer que
  supposing that
- supposé que
- en supposant que
- en admettant que
- bien que
  although
- quoique
- encore que
- malgré que
- de façon que
  so that, in such a way that
- de manière que
- de sorte que
- si bien que
- de peur que
  for fear that
- de crainte que
- pour peu que
  however little that
- si peu que
- pourvu que
  provided that
- à condition que
- sans que
  without
soit que  
whether

tel que  
such as

Couvrez vos cahiers afin qu'ils ne se salissent pas
Cover your exercise books so that they won't get dirty

Ils sont allés habiter à Paris pour que leur fils puisse suivre des cours à Henri IV
They moved to Paris so that their son could study at the 'lycée Henri IV'

En attendant que le beau temps revienne, on passait les soirées à lire au coin du feu
Waiting for the fine weather to return, we spent the evenings reading by the fireside

Je lui ai demandé de modifier le manuscrit; non que je sois déçu, mais je voudrais qu'il y ait plus de dialogue
I asked her to change the manuscript; it's not that I am disappointed, but I would like there to be more dialogue

Je passe te prendre à six heures à moins que tu ne m'appelles avant
I'll call by to pick you up at six unless you ring me beforehand

A supposer que la réponse soit favorable, qu'est-ce que vous allez faire?
Supposing that the reply is positive, what will you do?

Bien que ces arguments soient en partie valables, ils ne justifient pas votre comportement
Although these arguments are valid to a certain degree, I do not think that they justify your behaviour

Quoique les ouvrières aient fourni de gros efforts, la compagnie est toujours en difficulté
Although the workers have made considerable efforts, the company is still in difficulty

J'ai branché le répondeur de crainte qu'on ne me dérange pendant la réunion
I've switched on the answering machine for fear that I might be interrupted during the meeting

Ils ont fait mettre leur numéro sur la liste rouge de peur qu'on ne les dérange chez eux
They have gone ex-directory for fear of being disturbed at home

Je te montrerai comment cela fonctionne de façon que tu puisses l'expliquer à Georges plus tard
TU show you how it works so that you can explain it to George later

Je mets les chaises au jardin de manière que tu puisses lire au soleil
TU set out the garden chairs in such a way that you can read in the sun

Expliquez-moi ce que vous avez décidé de sorte que je sois en mesure de rédiger un rapport
Let me know in detail what you have decided, so that I may write a report

Je veux bien vous conduire jusqu'à Lyon à condition que vous payiez mon billet de retour
I am quite willing to drive you to Lyons as long as you pay for me to come back

Nous nous offrirons des vacances cette année, pourvu que nos marges bénéficiaires nous le permettent
We will take some holidays this year, provided that we make sufficient profit
Elle aurait bien pu quitter le village sans que je m’en aperçoive
She could well have left the village without my noticing

Et s’il avait créé un scandale tel que vous ayez été obligé de céder, vous auriez perdu beaucoup d’argent
And if he had created such a scandal that you had been obliged to give in, you would have lost a lot of money

The conjunctions de façon que, de manière que, de sorte que, si bien que 'so that' have two distinct meanings. On the one hand they express a wish that something which has not yet happened might happen. With this meaning they have the force of 'creating the conditions for another event to occur' and are followed by the subjunctive:

Je te montrerai comment cela fonctionne de façon que tu puisses l’expliquer à Georges
Show you how it works so that you can explain it to George

Dis-m’en un peu plus sur ce qui se passe au bureau, de sorte que je puisse te conseiller
Tell me a little more about what’s happening at the office so that I can advise you

On the other hand, they can describe a causal effect of one event on another. With this meaning they have the force of 'with the result that' and are followed by the indicative:

Le mécanicien a réglé le fonctionnement des vitesses de façon que tu peux t’en servir de nouveau
The mechanic has adjusted the gears so that you can use them again

Tu ne me racontes plus jamais ce qui se passe au bureau, de sorte que je suis incapable de te conseiller
You never tell me any more about what’s happening at the office so that I cannot advise you

(See also Chapter 17.3.8.)

1.1.7 Subjunctive after time conjunctions
With the time conjunctions: avant que ‘before’ and jusqu’à ce que ‘until’ the subjunctive is always used:

Il faut réagir rapidement, avant que le problème ne devienne insurmontable
We must react quickly before the problem becomes impossible to deal with

Sébastien va s’assurer de sa situation financière avant qu’il ne démissionne
Sebastien will sort out his financial position before he resigns

Il a persisté jusqu’à ce qu’elle sorte avec lui
He kept on until she went out with him

avant que can be replaced by avant de when the subject of the verb in the subordinate clause is the same as that in the introducing clause:

Sébastien va s’assurer de sa situation financière avant qu’il ne démissionne
Sébastien va s’assurer de sa situation financière avant de démissionner
The conjunction *après que* ‘after’ is normally followed by the indicative and not the subjunctive:

Nous avons commencé après qu’ils étaient arrivés
We began after they arrived

However, presumably by analogy with *avant que*, you will often hear people using the subjunctive after *après que*. (See also Chapter 17.3.1.)

(For the use of non-negative *ne* in dependent clauses see Chapter 16.1.6, and for non-negative *ne* in clauses dependent on conjunctions see Chapter 17.3.8.)

I 1.1.8 Subjunctive in clauses dependent on expressions which claim a unique status for an entity

Verbs in clauses which are dependent on superlatives, on nouns modified by one of the adjectives *dernier, premier, seul, unique,* or on *personne* or *rien,* are in the subjunctive if the sentence makes the claim that the entity referred to is ‘peerless’ (i.e. is the biggest, best, worst, first, last, only one of its kind ever):

Ce chou-fleur est le plus gros que j’aie jamais vu
*This cauliflower is the biggest I have ever seen*

Jennifer est la meilleure spécialiste que j’aie entendue sur ce sujet
*Jennifer is the best specialist I have heard on this subject*

Jeanne est la seule qui soit capable de le faire
*Jeanne is the only woman who could do it*

Mon frère est l’unique candidat qui ait été sélectionné
*My brother is the only candidate who has been selected*

Je ne connais personne qui soit mieux qualifié que lui pour exprimer les espoirs de la jeune génération
*I don’t know anyone better qualified than him to express the aspirations of the young*

Il possède la dernière des voitures qui soit équipée d’un moteur spécial
*He owns the last of the cars which have a special engine*

However, where there is no claim about the ‘peerless’ quality of the entity (e.g. when it is described as the biggest, best, worst, first etc. of a particular set, but there may be other bigger, better, worse, etc., entities in the world) the verb is in the indicative:

C’est le premier film que j’ai vu
*That’s the first film I saw*

There is nothing peerless about this. It is simply the assertion of a fact. Other people see their first film as well. But compare with:

C’était la première personne qui ait fait l’ascension du Matterhorn
*He was the first person to scale the Matterhorn*

This was a ‘peerless’ first, and so the subjunctive is used. Similarly, compare:

Je ne connais personne qui soit plus doué pour le piano que vous
*I don’t know anyone more gifted for the piano than you (peerless)*
Je ne connais personne qui sait jouer du violon
I don't know anyone who plays the violin
(not peerless - there are plenty of people in the world who can play the violin; it's just that one of them is not in my set of acquaintances)

Other examples of non-peerless cases:

C'est la dernière fois que je viens vous voir
This is the last time I am coming to see you

La première fois que je t'ai vu, je t'ai trouvé un peu farfelu
The first time I saw you I thought you were a bit eccentric

Le livre de cuisine est le seul qui est tombé de l'étagère
The cook book is the only one which fell off the shelf

(See also Chapter 15.11.3.)

I 1.1.9 Use of the indicative in clauses introduced by an adverb

When an adverb, like peut-être que 'perhaps', heureusement que 'luckily', certainement que 'of course', apparemment que 'apparently', is used in the first part of a clause, despite the fact that they often express the meanings which in other clauses give rise to the subjunctive, the subjunctive is NOT used:

Peut-être qu'il viendra, peut-être qu'il viendra pas
Maybe he'll make it, maybe not

Heureusement que tu étais là, sinon j'aurais eu peur
Lucky you were here otherwise I'd have been afraid

Certainement que ton copain peut coucher ici
Of course your friend can sleep here

NB: This construction is more frequent in informal than formal French.

I 1.1.10 Use of the subjunctive in hypothetical clauses coordinated by et que

When a hypothetical clause introduced by si is extended by a coordinated clause, the second clause is introduced by que and the verb is usually in the subjunctive:

S'il retéléphone demain et qu'il veuille savoir où j'étais, dis-lui que j'étais chez ma mère
If he rings again tomorrow and he wants to know where I was, tell him I was at my mother's

Si Hélène hérite de la maison et qu'elle la vende, tante Zoë sera furieuse
If Helen inherits the house and sells it, Aunt Zoë will be furious

C'est curieux, mais, si Paris St Germain gagne le championnat et qu'ils perdent la Coupe d'Europe, ils seront mieux placés pour la saison suivante
It's odd but, if Paris St Germain win the league and lose the European cup, they will be in a better position for next season

(See also Chapter 17.5.)

A related construction is an adverbial clause introduced by que which also
The attitude of the subject to events: the subjunctive requires the subjunctive, and is translated by 'whether . . . or' in English:

Que Jeanne vienne ou ne vienne pas, il faudra inviter sa fille
Whether Jeanne comes or not, we will have to invite her daughter

Que tu sois présent ou que tu sois absent, cela m'indiffère totalement
Whether you are present or absent is all the same to me

I I.I.I.1 Subjunctive in subject clauses
When a clause, rather than a noun phrase, is the subject of a sentence, the verb in that clause is in the subjunctive:

Que des Allemands soient présents à la cérémonie du souvenir ne peut que renforcer la solidarité européenne
European solidarity can only be reinforced by the fact that Germans are present at the commemoration

Que Suzanne et Jean-Paul aient choisi le mariage religieux a pu paraître choquant à certains de leurs amis
(The fact) That Suzanne and Jean-Paul chose to get married in church may have been a shock for some of their friends

The subjunctive is also used when such subject clauses are introduced by le fait que 'the fact that', or l'idée que 'the idea that':

Le fait que Suzanne et Jean-Paul aient accepté de se marier . . .
L'idée que tu veuilles assister à cette cérémonie . . .

Note that the subjunctive is required in subject clauses even with verbs and adjectives which normally require the indicative when subordinate clauses are not in subject position. Compare:

Il est probable que nous arriverons à Paris après-demain
(indicative)
It is likely that we will arrive in Paris the day after tomorrow

Que nous arrivions à Paris après-demain est probable
(subjunctive)
That we shall arrive in Paris the day after tomorrow is likely

Il me semble certain qu'il est parti
(indicative)
I think it certain that he has left

Qu'il soit parti me semble certain
(subjunctive)
That he has left seems certain

I 1.1.12 Use of the subjunctive in clauses dependent on indefinite expressions
Verbs in subordinate clauses following the indefinite expressions qui que 'whoever', quoi que 'whatever', où que 'wherever', quelque + [noun] que 'whichever, whatever [noun]', quel que 'whatever', quelque/si/aussi/pour + [adjective] que 'however [adjective]', are in the subjunctive:
Qui que vous soyez, je n’accepterai pas ce comportement  
*Whoever you are, I won’t accept that behaviour*

Quoi qu’en disent mes parents, j’ai décidé d’y aller  
*Whatever my parents say, I have decided to go there*

Où qu’il se cache, je le trouverai  
*Wherever he is hiding, I will find him*

Quelques bêtises que tu aies faites, ton père et moi te, pardonnons  
*Whatever stupid things you may have done, your father and I forgive you*

Quelles que soient les raisons qui vous ont amené chez nous, je suis heureux de vous accueillir  
*Whatever might be the reasons which have brought you to us, I am happy to welcome you*

Quelque rares que soient ces pierres, on arrivera quand même à les vendre  
*However rare these stones may be, we will manage to sell them anyway*

Note that in this last example *quelque* does not agree with *rares* or *pierres*. (For more on these constructions see Chapter 15.10 and 15.11.1.)

More generally, where a subordinate clause is dependent on an indefinite expression which describes a hypothetical, rather than real, state of affairs, the verb in the subordinate clause is likely to be in the subjunctive:

*S’il connaissait un endroit qui convienne, il le dirait*  
*If he knew of a place which was suitable, he would say so*  
*(There is no particular place that he knows of)*

*Elle veut acheter une maison qui ait une piscine*  
*She wants to buy a house with a swimming pool*  
*(She has no particular house in mind)*

Compare with:

*S’il connaît un endroit qui convient, allons-y*  
*If he knows of a suitable place, let’s go there*

*Elle veut acheter une maison qui a une piscine*  
*(Which suggests that there is a specific house with a swimming pool which she wants to buy)*

(See also Chapter 15.11.2 and 15.11.4.)

**1 1.2 The use of *devoir, pouvoir, savoir, falloir***

The modal verbs *devoir, pouvoir, savoir* and *falloir* enable a speaker to express a number of attitudes about events and the participants in events: the likelihood of an event occurring; the ability of a participant to perform some action; how obligated a participant is in an event. Modal verbs are also used in granting permission and in formulas expressing politeness.

In this section we describe the various uses of these four verbs. Then in 11.3
we take a different perspective and describe how the English modals would', 'should', 'could', 'may', 'might', 'ought to' and 'must' are rendered in French.

I 1.2.1 devoir
devoir expresses four main meanings:

(a) something which the speaker sees as very probable, usually because it is logical;
(b) something which the speaker sees as a moral obligation;
(c) something which the speaker thinks of as planned or agreed;
(d) something which the speaker thinks of as an act, usually in the past, which was a necessary outcome of events.

**Probability (logical necessity)**

Les nouveaux joueurs sont les premiers sélectionnés du département, donc l'équipe devrait maintenant faire de meilleures performances
*The new players are the best in the département, so the team should now produce some better performances*

Cela doit être vrai
*It must be true*

Il doit être revenu puisqu'il recommence le travail demain
*He must have come back because he starts work again tomorrow*

Il pleut depuis trois semaines presque constamment. Nous devrons nous attendre à des inondations
*It has been raining almost constantly for three weeks. We must expect floods*

*Y ai dû payer la facture puisque je n'ai reçu aucun courrier de relance
*I must have paid the bill since I haven't had a reminder*

**Moral obligation**

Il est absolument essentiel que je parle à Sylvain. Vous savez où il est et vous devez me le dire
*It is absolutely essential that I should speak to Sylvain. You know where he is and you must tell me*

Tu dois revenir demain sinon maman sera très déçue
*You must come back tomorrow or Mum will be very disappointed*

Vous êtes allés dîner chez eux, maintenant vous devrez les inviter chez vous
*You have been to dinner at their house, now you will have to invite them to yours*

Ce toit est dangereux; vous devriez en parler au propriétaire
*This roof is dangerous; you should speak to the landlord about it*

**A planned event (usually which did not or will not happen)**

Ils devaient annoncer le nom du gagnant à 18 heures mais une panne d'électricité est survenue
*They were about to reveal the name of the winner when the power cut happened*

Le jour de l'accident je devais accompagner mon père à Paris
*The day of the accident I was to accompany my father to Paris*
A necessary outcome of events

Plus tard, il **devait** souvent repenser à ces quelques instants
*Later on he was often to reflect on these few moments*

Même si elle avait voulu occulter ces faits, elle ne le pouvait plus. Elle **devait** en tirer les conséquences
*Even if she had wanted to remain unaware of these facts, she could no longer do so. She was obliged to accept what followed from them*

50 ans après la fin de la guerre, son héroïsme **devait** être reconnu par le gouvernement
*Fifty years after the end of the war his heroism was to be recognised by the government*

1.2.2 pouvoir

**pouvoir** expresses five main meanings:

(a) The granting or refusing of permission by the speaker;
(b) An indication that the speaker believes someone else is capable of doing something;
(c) An indication that the speaker feels that something is probable in the future;
(d) A general assertion by the speaker about what may happen;
(e) An expression of politeness by the speaker.

The granting or refusing of permission by the speaker

Vous **pouvez** disposer!
*You are dismissed!*

Non, tu ne **peux** pas aller chez ce garçon
*No, you cannot go to this boy’s house*

Il **pourra** m’en parler quand il voudra
*He may talk to me about it when he wishes*

Vous **pourrez** partir dès que la réunion sera terminée mais pas avant
*You may go as soon as the meeting is over but not before*

An indication that the speaker believes someone is capable of doing something

Elle a déjà fait la cuisine pour toute la famille; elle **peut** très bien s’occuper du repas de nos invités
*She has already cooked for the whole family: she is quite capable of preparing the meal for our guests*

Un grand garçon comme toi! Bien sûr que tu **pourras** porter ma valise jusqu’à ma chambre
*A big boy like you! Of course you will be able to carry my case up to my room*

Nous ne **pourrons** prendre notre décision que lorsque les experts nous aurons remis leur rapport
*We will only be able to take our decision once the experts have put in their report*
An indication that the speaker feels that something is quite probable in the future

Votre lettre peut très bien arriver lundi matin; elle a sans doute été retardée à cause des fêtes de Noël
Your letter may very well arrive on Monday morning; it has probably been delayed by the Christmas holidays

S'ils continuent à jouer comme ça, ils pourraient gagner le championnat
If they go on playing like that, they could well win the title

Tu passes trop de temps devant ton écran d'ordinateur: tu peux t'abîmer la vue
You spend too much time working on your computer: you could damage your eyesight

La gouttière fuit: si cela continue, l'eau pourrait abîmer le mur
The gutter's leaking: if it goes on, the water could ruin the wall

Il faut soigner cette égratignure, elle pourrait s'infecter
Treat this scratch, it could get infected

A general assertion by the speaker about what may happen

On peut toujours faire mieux
It is always possible to do better

Dans une pièce où il y a une cheminée, une étincelle peut toujours mettre le feu
In a room with an open hearth, a spark can always cause a fire

Il n'est pas trop tard; il peut encore venir
It is not too late; he may still come

Comme papa a trouvé du travail, on va pouvoir déménager
Since dad has got a job we'll be able to move house

An expression of politeness by the speaker

Puis-je vous demander de m'aider?
May I request your assistance?

Pourriez-vous m'indiquer le chemin de Douaumont?
Could you show me the way to Douaumont?

On pourrait voir les choses sous cet angle, mais personnellement je pense que l'important est ailleurs
It would be possible to see things in this way but I personally think that there is a much more important point

1.2.3 savoir

savoir expresses two main meanings:

(a) 'to know' in the sense of 'to possess knowledge about';
(b) 'to know' in the sense of 'to know how to do something'.

'to know' (possess knowledge)

Je sais mes leçons par cœur
I know my lessons by heart

Jean et Marie savent où nous trouver
Jean and Marie know where to find us
The subjunctive, modal verbs, exclamatives and imperatives

Monet savait beaucoup de choses sur l'utilisation de la couleur en peinture
Monet knew a lot about the use of colour in painting

'to know' (know how to …)

N'ayez pas peur. Je sais nager
Don't worry. I can swim

Elle n'a que quatre ans mais déjà elle sait lire
She is only four but already she can read

Tu n'as pas besoin de parler si lentement. Ils savent parler français
You don't need to speak so slowly. They can speak French

Nous n'avons pas peur d'y aller. Nous savons nous défendre
We are not frightened to go there. We know how to look after ourselves

NB: There can be confusion between pouvoir and savoir in this area. Savoir is 'to know how to in principle' and pouvoir is 'to be able to do it in a particular situation':

Oui je sais réparer le moteur mais je ne peux pas le faire sans outils
Yes I can (= I know how to) repair the engine, but I can't do it (= I am unable to do so here and now) without tools

If people were feeling threatened in some way, they might say:

Nous savons nous défendre
We can look after ourselves

to indicate that they have necessary skills (karate, boxing, a willingness to fight etc.). In a situation where they may have to make use of these skills, they would say:

Nous pourrons nous défendre contre les attaques de l'extrême droite
We can defend ourselves against attacks by the extreme right

to indicate that they think they will be able to apply these skills in these circumstances.

I 1.2.4 falloir

falloir (impersonal) expresses one main meaning: it is equivalent to English: 'must', or 'ought to':

Il faut qu'ils viennent m'aider
They must come and help me

Il aurait fallu que les Anglais restent en dehors de l'Union Européenne
The English should have stayed out of the European Union

I 1.3 The French equivalents of the English modal verbs:
'
would', 'should', 'could', 'may', 'might', 'ought to', and 'must'

As can be seen from the translations in the preceding section, devoir, pouvoir, savoir and falloir can be translated in a number of ways depending on the context. The most frequent translations are 'would', 'should', 'can', 'could', 'may',
'might', 'ought to', and 'must'. The problems which arise in this area for English
speakers are mainly to do with errors in establishing how these forms relate to
the English modal verbs which express many of the same meanings.

The English modal verbs also, however, express a number of other mean­
ings. For correct usage, it is essential that learners should be able to distinguish
the meanings of the English modals in order to know which French forms to
use. In some cases one of the French modal verbs is appropriate; in other cases,
a sentence with si, a conditional tense, an imperfect tense, a present or future
tense or a subjunctive may be the appropriate form.

11.3.1 'would'

'would' has three main meanings:

(a) 'would' may be used in English to express possible future behaviour which
is dependent on some condition. It will usually be rendered by the conditional
form of the verb in French:

Je viendrais à ton anniversaire si j'avais assez d'argent pour me payer le train
'I would come to your birthday party if I had enough money to pay the train fare
(the conditional form viendrais is used to denote a possible future action
envisioned IF certain other events take place)

(b) 'would' may be used to indicate something which is desired or not desired.
In this case it is often rendered by a form of the verb vouloir.

Elle n'a pas voulu me dire où le trouver
'She wouldn't tell me where to find him
(the 'wouldn't' in English is quite close in meaning to 'did not want to': it is
therefore rendered as n'a pas voulu)

(c) 'would' may also indicate an habitual action in the past. This is generally
rendered by the imperfect form of the verb in French:

Ces événements avaient souvent lieu pendant les vacances d'été
'These events would often take place during the summer holidays
(The imperfect tense is used to indicate an habitual action in the past - see
Chapter 10.3.1.)

11.3.2 'should'

'should' has four main meanings:

(a) 'should' may indicate a moral obligation. This is usually rendered by the
use of devoir.

Tu devrais téléphoner chez toi plus souvent
'You should phone home more often
(devoir in the conditional form to indicate the moral duty)

Note also that the English 'should have' is rendered by aurait dû plus an infini­
tive and not by a participle form of the main verb:
The subjunctive, modal verbs, exclamatives and imperatives

Tu aurais dû me dire (not *avoir dit) cela plus tôt
You should have told me that before

falloir is also possible here:

Il aurait fallu me le dire plus tôt

(b) 'should' may convey a conditional. This is usually rendered by a conditional form of the verb in French:

Si j’avais su cela, je ne serais pas venu
If I had known about that I should not have come

(c) 'should' may express a probable future action. Depending on the degree of probability, this may be rendered by a form of devoir or by a future tense:

Le livre devrait sortir le mois prochain
Le livre devra sortir le mois prochain
Le livre sortira le mois prochain
The book should be coming out next month

These three sentences indicate an increasing degree of probability going from top to bottom.

(d) 'should' can also indicate a chance event. This may be translated by some means of expression other than the verb:

Si par hasard vous entendez parler d’un appartement à louer, dites-le moi
If you should hear of a flat to let, do let me know
(a present tense plus an adverb expressing the idea of chance conveys the meaning of 'should')

Sometimes a simple present tense will convey the meaning of 'should':

Si Jean téléphone, dis-lui que je le rappellerai
If John should telephone, tell him I’ll call him back

Where one wants to stress the improbability of the chance event occurring, a form of devoir can be used:

Si Jean devait téléphoner, il faudrait lui dire que je le rappellerai
In the unlikely event of John telephoning, tell him I’ll call him back

(For more on the use of tenses with si see Chapter 10.8 and Chapter 17.3.6.)

11.3.3 'could'
'could' has four main meanings:

(a) 'could' may be a simple past tense of the verb 'can' i.e. 'was able to'. This is particularly frequent in reported speech. There is little difficulty here in using pouvoir:

Malgré tout le mal qu'on s'est donné, il n’a quand même pas pu venir
After all the trouble we had taken he still couldn’t come
Il a dit: 'Je peux venir'
He said: 'I can come'

and in reported speech:

Il a dit qu'il pouvait venir
He said he could come

(See Chapter 10.7.)

(b) 'could' may indicate a possibility. This will normally be a conditional or a form of the impersonal verb il se peut que:

Il faut que tu fasses attention; cela pourrait être un piège
You must be careful; it could be a trap

Cela fait plusieurs jours que je ne le vois plus: il se peut qu'il soit parti
I haven't seen him for a few days: he could have left

(c) 'could' may indicate that permission has been given. This may be rendered by the use of pouvoir or by another verb, such as permettre:

Sa mère a dit qu'il pouvait venir
Sa mère lui a permis de venir
Her mother said he could come

(d) 'could' may imply that something should be done or should have been done: this can be rendered by a suitable tense of pouvoir:

Elle aurait pu me dire qu'elle ne pourrait pas le faire
She could have told me that she couldn't do it

11.3.4 'may'

'may' has four main meanings:

(a) 'may' indicates something which is simply envisaged. Sometimes, especially in informal speech, an adverb will suffice. Or the impersonal forms cela se peut, il se peut que + subjunctive:

Peut-être qu'elle viendra, ou peut-être qu'elle ne viendra pas
She may come or she may not

Cela se peut mais nous ne pouvons en être certains
That may be the case but we can't be sure

Il se peut que ce soit lui le coupable mais cela reste à prouver
He may be the guilty party but it has yet to be proved

The subjunctive on its own is used very often when possible consequences are feared:

Je fais photocopier le certificat de peur que tu ne le perdes
I am photocopying the certificate because I am frightened you may lose it

(b) 'may' can indicate permission. This is most often rendered by the use of pouvoir:
Cendrillon peut aller au bal, dit la méchante belle-mère
'Cinderella may go to the ball', said the wicked stepmother

Vous pouvez rester jusqu'à onze heures
You may stay till eleven

(c) 'may' can be a kind of blessing. This will normally be rendered by a subjunctive in the main clause:

Que Dieu vous bénisse tous
May God bless you all

Que Dieu nous protège
May God protect us

(d) 'may' can indicate an open-ended possibility. This is often rendered by a subjunctive:

Quoi qu'il en soit, je n'ai toujours pas récupéré mon argent
That's as may be, I still haven't got my money back

Quoi qu'il dise, je ne le croirai pas
Whatever he may say I won't believe him

11.3.5 'might'
'might' has three main meanings:

(a) 'might' is sometimes simply a past 'may' as in giving permission in indirect speech. In this case a form of pouvoir is to be expected:

Elle a dit: Vous pouvez y aller
She said: You may go

Elle a dit qu'on pouvait y aller si on finissait nos devoirs d'abord
She said we might go if we finished our homework first

(b) 'might' indicates something which is envisaged. The French equivalents are the same as for 'may' (see 11.3.4.(a)). Sometimes, especially in informal speech, an adverb will suffice. Or the impersonal form il se peut que + subjunctive may be used. Or the subjunctive on its own may be used when possible consequences are feared:

Peut-être qu'elle viendra, ou peut-être pas
She might come or she might not

Il se peut qu'elle vienne, (on ne sait pas)

I kept an eye on the children for fear that they might hurt themselves

(c) 'might' can be a polite form. This usually corresponds to a form of pouvoir, or a use of permettre:

Puis-je vous suggérer d'essayer autre chose?
Might I suggest that you try something else?
Permettez-moi de vous demander pourquoi vous êtes venu?
Might I ask why you have come?

11.3.6 ‘ought to’
‘ought to’ conveys one main meaning:

‘ought to’ expresses a moral obligation. It is usually rendered by *devoir*, often in a conditional form:

- *Vous devriez sortir davantage*
  *You ought to get out more*
- *Tu devrais renouveler ta garde-robe*
  *You ought to buy some new clothes*

*falloir* is also possible:

- *Il faut que tu sortes davantage*
- *Il faut que tu renouvelles ta garde-robe*

11.3.7 ‘must’
‘must’ has two main meanings:

(a) ‘must’ can express moral obligation. This usually requires *devoir* or *falloir*:

- *Vous devez venir: nous ne pourrions pas prendre de décision sans vous*
- *Il faut que vous veniez: nous ne pourrions pas prendre de décision sans vous*
- *Il vous faut venir: nous ne pourrions pas prendre de décision sans vous*
  *You must come: we couldn’t decide without you*

(b) ‘must’ can indicate a logical possibility/certainty. This is usually rendered by *devoir*:

- *Si elle le dit, c'est que ça doit être vrai . . .*
  *If she says so, then it must be the case . . .*
- *Vous avez dû sortir l'atlas de la voiture parce qu'il n'y est plus*
  *You must have got the road map out of the car because it isn't there now*

I 1.4 Exclamatives

Exclamatives are the direct expression of a speaker’s surprise, disgust, anger, fervour and analogous emotions:

- *Comme elle a grandi!*
  *How she's grown!*
- *Que de monde!*
  *What a lot of people!*
- *Que le diable l'emporte!*
  *The devil take him!*
- *Vive la France!*
  *Long live France!*

There are four types of exclamative in French.

I 1.4.1 Exclamatives formed with comme or *que* + the indicative

Sentences can be turned into exclamations simply by putting *comme* or *que* in front of them, and without changing word order. The verb remains in the
The subjunctive, modal verbs, exclamatives and imperatives

indicative:

- **Pierre a changé**  
  Comme Pierre a changé!
  *Pierre has changed*  
  Que Pierre a changé!  
  *How Pierre has changed!*

- **Il se plaignait**  
  Comme il se plaignait!
  *He used to complain*  
  Qu'il se plaignait!  
  *How he used to complain!*

- **C'est dégoûtant**  
  Comme c'est dégoûtant!
  *It's disgusting*  
  Que c'est dégoûtant!  
  *How disgusting it is!*

- **Elle parle vite**  
  Comme elle parle vite!
  *She speaks quickly*  
  Qu'elle parle vite!  
  *How quickly she speaks!*

NB: In informal French, *ce que* and *qu'est-ce que* are common alternatives to *comme* and *que*: *Ce que Pierre a changé!* *Qu'est-ce qu'il se plaignait!*, etc.

When exclamations are reported - that is when they follow verbs like *savoir, raconter, dire*, and so on - *comme/que* are replaced by *combien*:

- Elle sait combien Pierre a changé  
  *She knows how Pierre has changed*

- Ils ont raconté combien il se plaignait  
  *They recounted how he used to complain*

1.4.2 Exclamatives formed with *quel*

Exclamations can bear specifically on nouns. French uses *quel* to perform this function. Where a sentence is involved, the *quel*-phrase is placed at the beginning of the sentence and *quel* agrees in gender and number with the noun:

- **Quel vent!**  
  What a wind!
- **Quelle surprise!**  
  What a surprise!
- **Quels progrès ces étudiants ont faits!**  
  *What progress these students have made!*

Avec *quelle adresse il a résolu*  
*With what skill he solved the problem!*

le problème!

When the direct object is the focus of the exclamation, in formal French it is possible optionally to invert the subject and the verb (in an operation known as 'stylistic inversion' - see Chapter 14.3.7), providing that there is no other material following the verb:

- **Quels progrès ces étudiants ont faits!**  
  *What progress these students have made!*
- **Quels progrès ont faits ces étudiants!**  
  *What progress these students have made!*
I 1.4.3 *que de* + noun meaning 'what a lot of X!'

*que de* followed by a noun is used to create an exclamative of the form 'what a lot of X!', or 'so much/so many X!':

- Que de monde!  *What a lot of people*.  
- Que de difficultés!  *So many difficulties*.  
- Que de problèmes on doit affronter!  *What a lot of problems we have before us!*

I 1.4.4 The subjunctive used in two kinds of main clause exclamative

Although the subjunctive normally only occurs in subordinate clauses, it can be used in main clause exclamations like:

- Vive la Bretagne!  *Long live Brittany*.  
- Dieu soit loué!  *Praise God*.  
- Sauve qui peut!  *Every man for himself*.  
- Puissiez-vous réussir!  *May you succeed*.  

and also those headed by *que*:

- Que la Sainte Vierge vous bénisse!  *May the Holy Virgin bless you*.  
- Que Dieu nous protège!  *May God help us*.  
- Qu'il aille au diable!  *The devil take him*.  
- Qu'il aille se faire voir ailleurs!  *May he get lost*.  

Both of these types of exclamation are remnants from an earlier period in the history of French, and are rather formal and archaic. Only *Vive X!* and *Qu'il/elle/ils/elles V!* are used productively in modern French (Vive les vacances! 'Long live the holidays!', Vive la révolution! 'Long live the revolution!'; Qu'il m'attende! 'Let him wait for me!', Qu'elle cherche ailleurs! 'Let her look elsewhere!', etc.).

I 1.5 Imperatives

Imperatives in French are used very much as they are in English to give orders, express encouragement, give advice, and so on:

- Asseyez-vous  *Sit down*  
- Allez la France!  *Come on, France!*  
- Allons-y  *Let's go*  
- Fais attention!  *Watch out!*  

I 1.5.1 Form of imperatives

Imperatives are formed from the second person, singular and plural, and the first person plural of the present tense forms of verbs. Delete the subject and the final *-s* of any verb that ends in *-es* or *-as*. 

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There are four verbs with irregular imperative forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Imperative Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>être</td>
<td>sois, soyez, soyons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoir</td>
<td>sois, soyez, soyons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>savoir</td>
<td>veuille, veuillez</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verbs which double a consonant in their present tense singular forms (like appeler - tu appelles, jeter - tu jettes) or change a vowel (like acheter - tu achètes, espérer - tu espères, nettoyer - tu nettoies) carry this change over to the imperative: appelle!, jette!, nettoie!, etc. (See Chapter 7.4 for these changes.)

The final -s which disappears from the second person singular of verbs ending in -es or -as reappears when the verb is followed by y or en:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Imperative Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parle</td>
<td>speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g°</td>
<td>speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parlez</td>
<td>speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parlons</td>
<td>let's speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous parlez</td>
<td>speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous parlons</td>
<td>let's speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous allez</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous allons</td>
<td>let's go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu vas</td>
<td>Ko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous ouvrez</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous ouvrons</td>
<td>let's open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu finis</td>
<td>finish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous finissez</td>
<td>finish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous finissons</td>
<td>let's finish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu dors</td>
<td>sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous dormez</td>
<td>sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous dormons</td>
<td>let's sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu reçois</td>
<td>receive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous recevez</td>
<td>receive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous recevons</td>
<td>let's receive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I 1.5.2 Pronominal verbs in imperatives
Pronominal verbs like se lever 'to get up', se réveiller 'to wake up', se servir 'to help (serve) oneself, se taire 'to shut up', etc., drop their subjects in the imperative, but keep their object pronouns:
tu te lèves  lève-toi  get up
vous vous levez  levez-vous  get up
nous nous levons  levons-nous  let's get up

tu te sers  sers-toi  help yourself
vous vous servez  servez-vous  help yourself
nous nous servons  servons-nous  let's help ourselves

I 1.5.3 Location and order of pronouns with imperatives

In affirmative imperatives, direct and indirect object pronouns, and the pronouns *me* and *te* become the stressed forms *moi* and *toi*. Pronouns are linked to their governing verb in written French by hyphens (see also Chapter 3.2.5):

Prends-les  Take them
Suivez-nous  Follow us
Ecoutez-moi  Listen to me
Tais-toi  Shut up

NB: Pronouns governed by an infinitive following an imperative are NOT linked to the imperative by a hyphen:

Monte les chercher  Go up and look for them
(C'est l'object of chercher)
Courez lui téléphoner  Run and phone him
(lui is the indirect object of téléphoner)

When more than one pronoun is present the order is:

verb - direct object - indirect object - *y/en*

*moi* and *toi* become *m', t'* if they are followed by *y* or *en*:

Donne-le-moi  Give it to me
Donnez-le-lui  Give it to him
Donne-m'en  Give me some of it
Accroche-t'y  Hang on to it

(See also Chapter 3.2.31.)

In negative imperatives pronouns precede the verb and the order is the same as in simple non-imperative sentences (see Chapter 3.2.5 and 3.2.31):

Ne me le donne pas  Don't give it to me
Ne le lui donnez pas  Don't give it to him
Ne m'en donne pas  Don't give me any
Ne t'y accroche pas  Don't hang on to it

I 1.5.4 Compound imperatives

Compound imperatives are formed from the imperative of *avoir* or *être*, as appropriate, and a past participle. They are used to express orders to be fulfilled in the future:

Ayez tapé cette lettre avant la fin de la journée
Type the letter before the end of the day
Orders can be toned down by the use of *veuillez*, which is an equivalent of *s'il vous plaît*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sit down</td>
<td>Asseyez-vous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please sit down</td>
<td>Veuillez vous asseoir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit down, please</td>
<td>Asseyez-vous, s'il vous plaît</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or by the use of a non-imperative declarative sentence with a future tense:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close the door, please</td>
<td>Vous fermez la porte, s'il vous plaît</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give me two baguettes (French loaves), please</td>
<td>Vous me donnerez deux baguettes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Infinitives can be used in French as imperatives when the addressee is non-specific (e.g. in road signs addressed to all road users, or in instructions addressed to the purchasers of a food product):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slow down</td>
<td>Ralentir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open carefully</td>
<td>Ouvrir doucement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Third person imperatives which are formed in English by the use of 'let', are formed in French by the use of *que* + a verb in the subjunctive (see 11.4.4):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Let him sit down</td>
<td>Qu'il s'asseye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let her go down and order me a beer</td>
<td>Qu'elle descend me commander une bière</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let them give it to you</td>
<td>Qu'ils te le donnent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12

The infinitive

12.1 Introduction: what are infinitives?

'Infinitive' means 'not expressing tense'. The infinitive forms of the verb are those like aller 'to go', finir 'to finish', descendre 'to go down', recevoir 'to receive'. Whereas in English the infinitive form of the verb is signalled by the presence of 'to': 'to go', in French the infinitive is signalled by an infinitive ending: aller. There are four infinitive endings, and all French verbs take one of these endings in their infinitive form:

- **-er** e.g. aimer, placer, arriver, étudier
- **-ir** e.g. finir, courir, venir, dormir
- **-re** e.g. vendre, rire, être, paraître
- **-oir(e)** e.g. s'asseoir, recevoir, avoir, boire, croire

Most dictionaries, by convention, use the infinitive form of the verb as the headword for the entry for all parts of the verb.

There are FIVE main ways in which infinitives are used in French:

(a) As **complements to other verbs**:

Marie refuse de sortir  
*Marie refuses to come out*

(b) As **complements to adjectives**:

C'est utile à savoir  
*It's useful to know*

(c) As **complements to nouns**:

Défense de fumer  
*No smoking*

(d) As **subordinate infinitive clauses**:

Se détendre le week-end, c'est important pour la santé  
*To relax at weekends is important for one’s health*

(e) As **polite commands**:

Ralentir  
*Slow down*

Soulever, écarter doucement  
*Lift and separate carefully*  
(instructions for opening a packet of coffee)
12.2 Infinitives as complements to other verbs

Infinitives may immediately follow other verbs:

Marie veut partir
*Marie wants to leave*

or they may follow the direct object or the indirect object of another verb:

Christine a encouragé Jean à démissionner
(follows the direct object)
*Christine has encouraged Jean to resign*

Pierre a ordonné à Miguel de revenir
(follows the indirect object)
*Pierre ordered Miguel to come back*

In such cases it is important to know whether there is a linking preposition:
*...a encouragé Jean à démissionner,... a ordonné à Miguel de revenir,* or no preposition at all: *... veut partir.* This is a difficult area for English speakers because in English infinitives are only ever preceded by *to.*

It is not easy to give firm rules because usage is sometimes idiosyncratic. However, rough rules-of-thumb can be given by grouping verbs together into loose meaning classes. Each class tends to select one option or the other - *à, de* or no linking preposition - when followed by an infinitive. The classes are listed in the following sections. Within each section verbs are listed alphabetically, and at the end of the chapter there is a comprehensive, alphabetically ordered, quick reference *index* to all the verbs taking infinitive complements listed in this chapter. There are special rules dealing with the agreement of the past participle in verb + infinitive constructions. These are dealt with as part of the general treatment of the agreement of the past participle in Chapter 9.3.

12.3 Verbs which take infinitive complements without a linking preposition

12.3.1 'Movement' verbs without objects

Movement verbs which do not have objects typically take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition:

aller dîner quelque part
to go and have dinner somewhere
s'en aller vivre ailleurs
to go and live somewhere else
arriver réparer la machine à laver
to come to repair the washing machine
courir téléphoner à la police
to run and phone the police
descendre commander une bière
to go down and order a beer
monter chercher ses lunettes
to go up and look for one's glasses
partir s'installer à Paris
to leave to go to live in Paris
rentrer prendre son maillot de bain
to go home and get one's swimming costume
retourner faire des courses
to go back to do some shopping
revenir ouvrir les fenêtres
to come back to open the windows
sortir acheter un journal
to go out to buy a newspaper
The verb *être* in the past tense, with an infinitive complement, is sometimes used to mean 'go': *nous avons été la voir* 'we went to see her'.

### 12.3.2 'Movement' verbs with objects

Movement verbs with objects typically take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition:

- **amener un copain dîner chez soi** to bring a friend home for dinner
- **emmener ses enfants jouer au square** to take one's children to play in the park
- **envoyer Marie chercher le docteur** to send Marie to fetch the doctor
- **mener son oncle voir le château** to take one's uncle to see the castle

### 12.3.3 'Modal' verbs

Verbs of 'obligation', 'necessity' and 'possibility' - modal verbs - take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition (see also Chapter 11.2):

- **devoir parler au directeur** to have to speak to the director
- **oser critiquer son patron** to dare to criticize one's boss
- **pouvoir persuader son oncle** to be able to persuade one's uncle
- **savoir parler italien** to be able to speak Italian
- **vouloir construire un périphérique** to want to build a ring-road

### 12.3.4 Verbs of saying'

Verbs of saying typically take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition:

- **affirmer connaître le patron** to state that one knows the boss
- **confirmer avoir reçu le paquet** to confirm that one received the package
- **déclarer comprendre ce livre** to declare that one understands this book
- **dire s'intéresser à la psychologie** to say that one is interested in psychology
- **nier avoir brisé l'assiette** to deny having broken the plate
- **prétendre être heureux** to claim to be happy
- **reconnaître s'être trompé** to admit that one was wrong

*dir*<sup>e</sup>, with an indirect object, can also be used as a verb of ordering (see 12.5.16). In this case it takes an infinitive complement preceded by the preposition *de*:

*dir à quelqu'un de fermer la porte* 'to tell somebody to close the door'.

### 12.3.5 Verbs of thinking' and 'imagining'

Verbs of thinking and imagining typically take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition:

- **croire avoir fini** to believe that one has finished
- **estimer pouvoir prendre le train** to reckon to be able to take the train
- **(s')imaginer avoir gagné la partie** to imagine having won the match
- **penser rencontrer un ami** to think one might meet a friend
- **se rappeler avoir visité l'abbaye** to remember having visited the abbey

But *se souvenir* 'to remember' takes infinitive complements with the preposition *de*:

*se souvenir d'avoir visité l'abbaye*. 
12.3.6 Verbs expressing 'personal attitude' to something

Verbs which express 'liking', 'wishing' or 'inclination' typically take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition:

- adorer dîner au restaurant to love eating out
- aimer travailler le soir to like to work in the evenings
- aimer autant rester chez soi to just as soon stay at home
- aimer mieux éviter les embouteillages to prefer to avoid traffic jams
- compter commencer bientôt to count on starting soon
- daigner donner son opinion to deign to give one's opinion
- désirer dormir un peu to want to sleep a little
- entendre être obéi to mean to be obeyed
- espérer partir en vacances to hope to go on holiday
- préférer manger seul to prefer to eat alone
- souhaiter faire la connaissance de quelqu'un to wish to make somebody's acquaintance

aimer can sometimes be found with an infinitive complement preceded by à: aimer à travailler le soir.

12.3.7 Seem

sembler 'to seem', and verbs with similar meaning to sembler take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition:

- s'avérer être efficace to turn out to be effective
- paraître dire la vérité to appear to be telling the truth
- se révéler avoir des conséquences inattendues to turn out to have unexpected consequences
- sembler préférer les légumes to seem to prefer vegetables

12.3.8 'Perception' verbs

Verbs expressing the manner in which an event is perceived take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition:

- écouter les enfants réciter une poésie to listen to the children reciting a poem
- entendre l'horloge sonner trois heures to hear the clock strike three o'clock
- regarder le chien manger to watch the dog eating
- sentir ses pieds s'enfoncer dans la boue to feel one's feet sink into the mud
- voir Paul partir to see Paul leave

12.3.9 faire and laisser

The verbs faire and laisser take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition:

- faire travailler Pierre to make Pierre work
- faire payer les gens to make people pay
- laisser Pierre travailler to let Pierre work
- laisser travailler Pierre to let Pierre work
- laisser tomber le football pour le rugby to drop football and take up rugby instead

(For the placement of object pronouns in these constructions see Chapter 3.2.32.)
Verbs which take infinitive complements preceded by the preposition à

It is possible, but not necessary, to delete se in the verbs se taire 'to be quiet' and s'asseoir 'to sit down' when they follow faire (and sometimes also laisser):

Il a fait (se) taire les enfants  
*He made the children be quiet*

Elle a fait (s’)asseoir tout le monde  
*She got everyone to sit down*

12.4 Verbs which take infinitive complements preceded by the preposition à

12.4.1 Verbs of beginning’ and ‘continuing’

Verbs which signal the beginning or continuation of an action typically take an infinitive complement preceded by à:

- se mettre à rédiger un rapport  
  *to start to draft a report*
- persister à demander une réponse  
  *to persist in asking for a reply*

Commencer and continuer are verbs which take an infinitive complement preceded interchangeably by à or by de:

- commencer à/d’écrire ses mémoires  
  *to begin to write one's memoirs*
- continuer à/de faire des efforts  
  *to continue to make an effort*

The following verbs can take infinitive complements preceded by par:

- commencer par enlever le papier peint  
  *to begin by removing the wallpaper*
- finir par vendre sa maison  
  *to finish by selling one's house*

These are nearly always rendered in English by a construction involving 'by + verb + ing', and contrast with the use of the same verbs with infinitives preceded by à or de:

- commencer à/d'enlever le papier peint  
  *to begin to remove the wallpaper*
- finir de tondre le gazon  
  *to finish mowing the lawn*

12.4.2 Verbs expressing’manner’

Verbs which express the manner in which an action is conducted typically take an infinitive complement preceded by à:

- s’abaisser jusqu’à demander de l’argent à ses proches  
  *stoop to asking one’s family and friends for money*
- s’appliquer à apprendre le russe  
  *apply oneself to learning Russian*
- s’appâter à parler  
  *get ready to speak*
- s’attarder à bavarder dans le restaurant  
  *linger chatting in the restaurant*
- se borner à considérer les points principaux  
  *limit oneself to considering the main points*
- concourir à assurer la défaite de l’ennemi  
  *combine to defeat the enemy*
- condescendre à faire quelque chose  
  *condescend to do something*
- conspirer à produire une catastrophe  
  *to conspire to produce a catastrophe*
- s’entêter à découvrir la vérité  
  *to be bent on discovering the truth*
- se limiter à corriger les plus grosses erreurs  
  *limit oneself to correcting the worst errors*
- s’obstiner à découvrir la vérité  
  *be bent on discovering the truth*
s’oublier à lire un roman
s’en tenir à changer quelques détails
travailler à se faire aimer

12.4.3 Pronominal verbs expressing an 'emotional reaction'
Pronominal verbs which express a subject’s emotional reaction to an event typically take an infinitive complement preceded by à:

s’abêtir à trop travailler
s’abrutir à regarder la télévision
s’affoler à imaginer le pire
s’amuser à mettre le professeur en colère
se délecter à visiter Bruges
s’énerver à rattacher constamment ses lacets
s’ennuyer à faire un travail monotone
s’irriter à expliquer qc
se plaire à tout critiquer

Exceptions:

s’étonner d’être si calme
s’inquiéter de trouver la route bloquée
s’irriter d’avoir à expliquer chaque point 3 fois
se réjouir de/à écrire des contes pour enfants

12.4.4 Pronominal verbs of’effort’
Pronominal verbs which express the effort with which an action is undertaken typically take an infinitive complement preceded by à:

s’acharner à trouver une solution
s’égosiller à appeler les enfants
s’épuiser à travailler
s’éviter à traîner une valise
s’essouffler à monter la côte
s’évertuer à conclure l’affaire
se fatiguer à répéter l’avertissement
se tuer à le dire
s'user à repeindre la maison

12.4.5 Pronominal verbs expressing 'dedication'
Pronominal verbs which express the dedication with which an action is undertaken typically take an infinitive complement preceded by à:
Verbs which take infinitive complements preceded by the preposition à

s'attacher à traduire la pensée du maître  
**to be careful to convey the master's thoughts**

s'aventurer à faire des suggestions  
**to be so bold as to make suggestions**

se décider à prendre sa retraite  
**to persuade oneself to retire**

se hasarder à faire une course en montagne  
**to venture to go up a mountain**

se risquer à jouer en Bourse  
**to take risks by playing the Stock Exchange**

se résoudre à changer d'emploi  
**to accept having to change jobs**

Note the following differences in meaning when some of these verbs are used with à and with de:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>se décider à prendre sa retraite</td>
<td>to persuade oneself to retire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>décider de prendre sa retraite</td>
<td>to decide to retire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s'essayer à gérer un restaurant</td>
<td>to try one's hand at running a restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essayer de gérer un restaurant</td>
<td>to try to run a restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se risquer à investir à l'étranger</td>
<td>to take risks by investing abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>risquer de tout perdre</td>
<td>to risk losing everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se résoudre à changer d'emploi</td>
<td>to accept having to change jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>résoudre de changer d'emploi</td>
<td>to resolve to change jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12.4.6 Verbs expressing 'aspiration' and 'success'

Verbs which express the aspiration to do something, or success in achieving it, typically take an infinitive complement preceded by à:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>arriver à obtenir gain de cause</td>
<td>to manage to get one's way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspirer à dominer sa peur</td>
<td>to aspire to overcome fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chercher à faire fortune</td>
<td>to seek to make one's fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>être disposé à favoriser qn</td>
<td>to be inclined to favour sb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incliner à quitter son emploi</td>
<td>to be inclined to give up one's job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parvenir à battre un adversaire</td>
<td>to succeed in beating one's opponent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>réussir à gagner la course</td>
<td>to succeed in winning the race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tendre à éviter les problèmes</td>
<td>to have a tendency to avoid problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tenir à lire un livre</td>
<td>to be bent on reading a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viser à remporter la victoire</td>
<td>to aim to be victorious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12.4.7 Verbs expressing 'unwillingness'

Verbs which express an unwillingness to do something typically take an infinitive complement preceded by à:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hésiter à critiquer qn</td>
<td>to hesitate to criticize sb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rechigner à vendre ses livres</td>
<td>to baulk at selling one's books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>renoncer à tout relire</td>
<td>to give up on the idea of re-reading everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>répugner à tout faire soi-même</td>
<td>to be very reluctant to do the work oneself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12.4.8 Verbs of forcing'

Verbs which express the pressure put on someone to do something typically take an infinitive complement preceded by à:
The infinitive

condamner qn à vivre sans ressources  
to condemn sb to live in poverty

contraindre Julie à revenir  
to force Julie to come back

forcer une entreprise à baisser ses prix  
to make a company reduce its prices

obliger Pierre à partir  
to make Pierre leave

Note that the following verbs, when used in the passive, take an infinitive complement preceded by _de:_

être contraint de démissionner  
to be obliged to resign

être forcé de rentrer  
to have to go home

être obligé de travailler à l’étranger  
to be forced to work abroad

12.4.9 Verbs of 'inviting'

Verbs which invite someone to do something typically take an infinitive complement preceded by _à:_

appeler un tiers à arbitrer  
to call on a third party to arbitrate

assigner le témoin à comparaître  
to call on the witness to appear

autoriser les clients à s’en servir  
to authorize the clients to make use of it

inviter Robert à donner son avis  
to invite Robert to give his opinion

12.4.10 Verbs of 'training' and 'teaching'

Verbs which train or teach someone to do something typically take an infinitive complement preceded by _à:_

accoutumer un malade à prendre moins de calmants  
to get a sick person used to taking fewer painkillers

apprendre à ses élèves à parler italien  
to teach one’s pupils to speak Italian

dresser un chien à aller chercher le journal  
to train a dog to fetch the newspaper

enseigner à Jacques à jouer au tennis  
to teach Jacques to play tennis

habiter un citadin à travailler en plein air  
to get a town-dweller used to working in the open air

préparer quelqu’un à traverser une période de chômage  
to prepare somebody for a period of unemployment

Note that _apprendre, enseigner_ are the only two verbs in French which take both an indirect object preceded by _à_ and an infinitive preceded by _à:_

apprendre à quelqu'un à faire quelque chose  
to teach somebody to do something

enseigner à quelqu'un à faire quelque chose  
to teach somebody to do something

Verbs which English speakers often think have indirect objects, but which in fact have direct objects, are:

aider quelqu'un à faire quelque chose  
to help somebody to do something

inviter quelqu'un à faire quelque chose  
to invite somebody to do something

obliger quelqu'un à faire quelque chose  
to make somebody do something

12.4.1 Verbs of 'encouragement' and 'cajoling'

Verbs which encourage or cajole someone to do something typically take an infinitive complement preceded by _à:_

amener Jean à reparler de l'accident  
to bring Jean to talk about the accident again
**Verbs which take infinitive complements preceded by the preposition à**

**conduire** quelqu'un à se repentir  
_to bring somebody to repent_

**convier** son frère à réfléchir  
_to suggest that somebody's brother should think something over_

**décider** quelqu'un à changer de cap  
_to make somebody decide to change direction_

déterminer quelqu'un à s'inscrire à l'université  
_to make somebody decide to go to university_

**encourager** sa secrétaire à chercher un nouvel emploi  
_to encourage one's secretary to find another job_

**engager** quelqu'un à repenser un projet  
_to bring somebody to reconsider a plan_

**entraîner** des adolescents à voler des voitures  
_to encourage youngsters to steal cars_

**exhorter** quelqu'un à mener campagne  
_to exhort somebody to campaign_

**inciter** le gouvernement à agir  
_to incite the government to act_

pousser Claudine à se marier  
_to push Claudine into getting married_

Note also the following contrasts involving décider:

**décider** quelqu'un à partir  
_to bring somebody to leave_

**décider de** partir  
_to decide to leave_

**se décider à partir**  
_to decide to leave (after much thought)_

**12.4.12 Verbs expressing 'the dedication of time, money to doing something'**

**consacrer** ses loisirs à faire des croquis  
_to spend one's free time making sketches_

**dépenser** de l'argent à réparer sa voiture  
_to spend money repairing one's car_

**mettre** deux heures à ranger ses affaires  
_to take two hours to tidy one's things_

**occuper** son temps à lire des romans policiers  
_to spend one's time reading crime novels_

**passer** son temps à faire des mots croisés  
_to spend one's time doing crosswords_

**utiliser** ses connaissances à améliorer le sort de ses semblables  
_to use one's knowledge to improve the lot of one's fellow beings_

**12.4.13 Verbs of 'discovering'**

**attraper** qn à pêcher sans permis  
_to catch sb fishing without a licence_

**prendre** qn à fouiller dans un tiroir  
_to catch sb going through a drawer_

**surprendre** qn à voler des livres  
_to catch sb stealing books_
12.5 Verbs which take an infinitive complement preceded by de

There is no real community of meaning in the verbs which take an infinitive complement preceded by *de* but some grouping by meaning is possible.

12.5.1 Verbs of advising somebody to do or not to do something'

- **avertir qn de ne pas recommencer**
  to warn sb not to do it again

- **conjurer qn de laisser les choses comme elles sont**
  to plead with sb to leave things as they are

- **conseiller (à qn) de ne pas intenter de procès**
  to advise sb not to bring something to court

- **convaincre son employeur de hausser les salaires**
  to convince one's employer to raise salaries

- **déconseiller (à qn) de prendre l'autoroute**
  to advise sb not to take the motorway

- **désaccoutumer qn de fumer**
  to encourage sb to lose the habit of smoking

- **déshabituer qn de s'endormir en écoutant la radio**
  to get sb out of the habit of going to sleep whilst listening to the radio

- **dissuader qn de manifester dans la rue**
  to persuade sb not to demonstrate in the street

- **enjoindre à qn de s'inscrire à un parti politique**
  to suggest to sb that they join a political party

- **persuader qn de vendre sa maison**
  to persuade sb to sell his/her/their house

- **recommander (à qn) de ne pas trop insister**
  to suggest to sb not to insist too much

- **suggérer à qn de téléphoner**
  to suggest to sb that they telephone

Note that while *décourager* takes an infinitive complement preceded by *de*, *encourager* takes an infinitive complement preceded by *à*:

- **encourager sa secrétaire à démissionner**
  to encourage one's secretary to resign

12.5.2 Verbs of 'allowing', 'admitting' and 'agreeing'

- **accepter de sortir les poubelles**
  to agree to put the dustbins out

- **choisir de poursuivre ses études à Paris**
  to choose to pursue one's studies in Paris

- **convenir de retrouver qn à 20h**
  to agree to meet up with sb at 8.00 p.m.

- **décider de prendre sa retraite**
  to decide to retire

- **dispenser un étudiant de faire un test**
  to exempt a student from a test
Verbs which take an infinitive complement preceded by de 283

tenprendre de rétablir des liens to undertake to re-establish links
jurer à son père de lui rendre visite to swear to one’s father to visit him
obtenir de pouvoir sortir tôt to get permission to go out early
permettre (à qn) de rembourser sans payer les intérêts to allow somebody to pay back without interest
résoudre de ne plus boire de café to resolve to drink no more coffee

12.5.3 Verbs expressing the idea of anger'
enrager d’avoir perdu son argent to be very angry about having lost one’s money
être furieux d’être exclu du groupe to be furious at being excluded from the group
s’indigner de se voir refuser l’entrée du club to be indignant at being refused entry to the club
menacer les grévistes de les licencier to threaten the strikers with being sacked

12.5.4 Verbs of asking for’ and of attempting to’
demander à Pierre de surveiller les enfants to ask Pierre to keep an eye on the children
essayer de chanter une chanson to try to sing a song
implorer qn de revenir to implore sb to come back
parler de faire le tour du monde to speak of doing a world tour
prier qn de bien vouloir partir to ask sb to kindly leave
proposer à une municipalité de construire un théâtre to put to a town hall the idea of building a theatre
supplier qn de faire attention to beg sb to be careful
tâcher de terminer le travail à temps to try to finish the work on time
tenter de résoudre le problème sans avoir recours à l’extérieur to attempt to resolve the problem without asking for outside help

Note: demander à qn de faire qc ‘to ask somebody to do something’, but demander à faire qc ‘to ask to do something’.

12.5.5 Verbs of blaming’, ‘making responsible for’
accuser qn d’avoir collaboré avec l’ennemi to accuse sb of having collaborated with the enemy
blâmer qn d’avoir été négligent to blame sb for having been careless
charger qn d’apporter à manger tous les jours to make sb responsible for bringing in food every day
gronder son fils d’avoir perdu les clefs de la voiture to tell your son off for having lost the car keys
reprocher à qn d’avoir perdu les clefs to hold it against sb that they lost the keys
soupçonner qn d’avoir dissimulé la vérité to suspect sb of not having told the truth
12.5.6 Verbs of (self-)congratulation'

s’applaudir d’avoir écrit au président
*to be pleased with oneself for having written to the president*

féliciter qn d’avoir terminé sa thèse
*to congratulate sb on finishing their thesis*

se flatter d’être le meilleur joueur
*to imagine that one is the best player*

se glorifier d’avoir monté l’équipe tout seul
*to be very proud of having put together the team unaided*

louer qn d’avoir gagné une course
*to praise sb for having won a race*

mériter de gagner
*to deserve to win*

se vanter d’être le meilleur joueur de l’équipe
*to boast of being the best player in the team*

12.5.7 Verbs of denial

s’abstenir de boire du vin to abstain from drinking wine

se disculper d’avoir voulu supplanter qn
*to exonerate oneself from having wanted to take over from sb*

refuser de s’abaisser à un compromis to refuse to stoop to a compromise

Exception: nier takes an infinitive complement without a linking preposition:

nier être impliqué dans l'affaire to deny being implicated in the affair

12.5.8 Verbs of 'excusing' and 'pardoning'

excuser qn d’être arrivé en retard
*to overlook sb’s late arrival*

pardonner (à qn) d’avoir fait souffrir la famille
*to pardon sb for having caused the family pain*

12.5.9 Verbs of 'forbidding'

défendre à qn d'afficher des avis au mur
*to forbid sb to stick up notices on the wall*

interdire (à qn) de coller des affiches
*to prohibit bill posting*

12.5.10 Verbs of 'being fearful'

apprehénder de devoir se présenter devant un tribunal
*to be fearful of having to appear before a court*

avoir peur de conduire
*to be afraid to drive*

craindre de devoir partir à l’étranger
*to be afraid of having to go abroad*
frémir de penser à ce qui aurait pu arriver
to shudder to think what might have happened

s'inquiéter d'avoir à rentrer
to worry about having to go home

pâlir de voir un collègue promu avant soi
to blanch at seeing a colleague promoted before oneself

redouter de devoir rembourser les billets
to fear having to reimburse the tickets

se soucier de créer une bonne impression
to care about making a good impression

trembler de penser qu'on a failli se faire écraser
to tremble to think that one nearly got run over

12.5.1 Verbs of forgetting'

négliger de fermer la porte à clé
to neglect to lock the door

omettre de préciser à son hôte qu'on arrivera en retard
to forget to tell one's host that one will be late

oublier de signaler une absence
to forget to report an absence

12.5.12 Verbs of hurrying' or 'delaying'

se dépêcher d'aller chez le boulanger avant la fermeture
to hurry to get to the baker's before it shuts

se hâter de mettre en œuvre ses propres idées
to want to quickly put one's own ideas into operation

12.5.13 Verbs of delighting' or 'regretting'

avoir regret de ne pas avoir vu qn avant sa mort
to regret not having seen sb before he died

regretter d'avoir choisi la solution de facilité
to regret having chosen the easy way out

se réjouir d'avoir été élu
to be delighted at having been elected

se repentir d'avoir commis une erreur
to regret having made a mistake

12.5.14 Verbs of pretending'

affecter de ne pas être au courant de ce qui se passe
to pretend not to know what's happening

faire semblant de ne pas avoir entendu
to pretend not to have heard

feindre d'être malade
to pretend to be ill
12.5.15 Verbs of pre-planning'

- **envisager** de vivre sur une île déserte
- **méditer** de changer de métier
- **préméditer** de quitter sa femme
- **projeter** de quitter le pays
- **proposer** de partir tout seul dans le Midi
- **ruminer** d'écrire ses mémoires

12.5.16 Verbs of ordering'

- **chuchoter** à qn de fermer la porte
- **commander** à un bataillon de se préparer
- **dire** à Pierre de rejoindre la compagnie
- **écrire** à Marie d'aller voir sa mère
- **hurler** à qn de passer le ballon
- **ordonner** à qn de quitter les lieux
- **prescrire** à qn de se reposer
- **répondre** à qn de se taire
- **sommer** qn de venir aussi vite que possible
- **téléphoner** à sa mère d'envoyer de l'argent

12.5.17 Verbs of finishing' and of stopping somebody doing something'

- **s'abstenir de** fumer pendant trois mois
- **achever** de construire sa maison
- **arrêter de** faire l'idiot en cours
- **cesser** de participer aux matchs de football
- **empêcher** qn de partir en vacances
- **éviter** de faire les mêmes erreurs
- **finir de** se préparer

12.5.18 Verbs of 'thanking'

- **remercier** qn de vous avoir invité à manger
- **savoir** gré à qn de bien vouloir répondre rapidement

12.5.19 Impersonal verbs expressing 'personal reaction' to an event

Compare some of the impersonal verbs below, which take *de*, with the same verbs used personally, which take *à* (see 12.4.3):

- Ça m'agace de les voir sans occupation
- Ça m'amuse de le voir en colère
- Ça l'attriste d'apprendre qu'elle est malheureuse
- Ça me consterne de l'apprendre
- Ça me dégoûte de voir ce gaspillage

- It annoys me to see them idle
- It amuses me to see him angry
- It saddens him to learn that she is unhappy
- It dismays me to learn that
- It appals me to see this waste
Verbs which take an infinitive complement preceded by de

Ça m’ennuie d’être suivi par des journalistes  I find it wearing to be followed by reporters
Ça la fâche d’avoir à se justifier auprès de toi  It irritates her to have to justify herself to you
Ça les fatigue de faire la navette  It tires them to commute
Ça l’intéresse de voir le manuscrit  It interests him to see the manuscript
Ça l’intrigue de savoir ce qu’ils ont dit  It intrigues him to know what they said
Ça nous irrite d’avoir à refaire le travail  It irritates us to have to do the work again

12.5.20 Other verbs with infinitive complements preceded by de

s’affliger d’avoir causé de la peine à qn  to be sorry to have caused sb pain
ambitionner de paraître dans un film  to have ambitions to appear in a film
avoir droit de donner son avis  to have the right to give one’s opinion
en avoir marre de tout faire à la maison  to be fed up with doing everything in the house
brûler de jouer dans l’équipe du collège  to have a great desire to play in the school team
comploter de renverser le gouvernement  to plot to overthrow the government
consoler qn d’avoir perdu un parent  to console sb for having lost a relative
se contenter de vivre à la campagne  to be happy to live in the country
dédaigner d’accorder un entretien à un journaliste  to be snooty about giving an interview to a journalist
défier qn de dire la vérité  to challenge sb to tell the truth
dégoûter qn de manger des fraises  to put sb off eating strawberries
désespérer de pouvoir sortir de prison  to despair of getting out of prison
douter de pouvoir faire qc  to doubt that one will be able to do sth
s’efforcer de manger du chou  to force oneself to eat cabbage
entreprendre de récupérer l’argent perdu  to undertake to get back the money
envier qn d’avoir démissionné
to envy sb for having resigned

être tenu de remplir ses obligations
to be obliged to meet one’s obligations

se garder de raconter la vérité
to make sure not to tell the truth

gémir d’avoir à payer ses dettes
to groan at having to pay one’s debts

se mêler de monter une affaire
to take it upon oneself to start a business

offrir de dédommager les victimes
to offer to recompense the victims

plaindre qn de ne pas avoir d’enfants
to pity sb because they don’t have children

presser qn de s’acquitter de ses dettes
to put pressure on sb to pay off their debts

prévoir de gagner beaucoup d’argent
to foresee making lots of money

promettre d’emmener toute la famille aux Etats Unis
to promise to take the whole family to the United States

réclamer de pouvoir s’asseoir où on veut
to demand to be allowed to sit where one wishes

se remettre d’avoir été attaqué dans la rue
to recover from having been attacked in the street

se résérer de déterminer soi-même le jour de sa mort
to reserve the right to decide for oneself the day of one’s death

rêver de devenir milliardaire
to dream of becoming a millionaire

rougir de devoir parler en public
to blush at having to speak in public

sourire de voir les enfants s’amuser dans le jardin
to smile at seeing the children playing in the garden

12.6 Omission of objects before infinitives

The direct or indirect objects of verbs with infinitive complements may be omitted in French when they have a non-specific or indefinite interpretation:

Le succès encourage à continuer
Success encourages one to continue

Ce résultat force à repenser le problème
This result forces us to rethink the problem
Dans cette région, c'est l'irrigation qui a permis d'améliorer le rendement agricole  
*The irrigation of the region has allowed farmers to improve crop yield*

L'expérience enseigne à être prudent  
*Experience teaches one to be careful*

Cette déclaration autorise à penser que les dirigeants ont changé d'avis  
*This declaration allows us to think that the leaders have changed their opinion*

### 12.7 Infinitives as complements to adjectives

Adjectives take infinitive complements preceded either by *à* or *de*, never without a preposition.

#### 12.7.1 Infinitives following adjectives in impersonal constructions

Adjectives used in impersonal constructions take an infinitive complement preceded by *de*:

- *Dans ce quartier il est dangereux de sortir le soir*  
  *In this part of the town it is dangerous to go out in the evening*
- *Il ne sera pas évident de récupérer les papiers volés*  
  *It won't be easy to get the stolen papers back*
- *Il serait étonnant de trouver Jules dans une boîte de nuit*  
  *It would be surprising to come across Jules in a night club*
- *Il est nécessaire de demander des explications précises*  
  *It is necessary to ask for precise explanations*
- *Il est rare de voir Jean-Marie jouer au rugby*  
  *It is rare to see Jean-Marie play rugby*
- *Il est regrettable de ne pas avoir de recours contre la pollution par le bruit*  
  *It is unfortunate that there is no redress against noise pollution*

Other common adjectives which can be used impersonally in this way are:

- agréable de faire qc  
  *pleasant to do sth*
- bon de faire qc  
  *good to do sth*
- commode de faire qc  
  *convenient to do sth*
- difficile de faire qc  
  *difficult to do sth*
- facile de faire qc  
  *easy to do sth*
- important de faire qc  
  *(im)possible to do sth*
- intéressant de faire qc  
  *interesting to do sth*
- inutile de faire qc  
  *useless to do sth*
- mauvais de faire qc  
  *bad to do sth*
- merveilleux de faire qc  
  *amazing to do sth*
- pénible de faire qc  
  *irksome to do sth*
- simple de faire qc  
  *simple to do sth*
- utile de faire qc  
  *useless to do sth*

#### 12.7.2 Infinitives following adjectives used personally

When the adjectives in 12.7.1 are used personally (that is to describe a noun or personal pronoun) they take an infinitive complement preceded by *à*. Compare the personal and impersonal constructions in the following:
La pâte à pain est agréable à toucher  
*Dough is nice to handle*

Il est agréable de toucher de la pâte à pain  
*It's nice to handle dough*

Le foie de veau est bon à manger  
*Calf's liver is good to eat*

Il est bon de manger du foie de veau  
*It's good to eat calf's liver*

C'est difficile à faire  
*That's difficult to do*

Il est difficile de le faire  
*It's difficult to do that*

Cette voiture va être difficile à vendre  
*This car will be difficult to sell*

Il va être difficile de vendre cette voiture  
*It will be difficult to sell this car*

Avec tout ce que tu as mis dedans, les poubelles sont difficiles à sortir  
*With all that you've put in them, the dustbins are difficult to put out*

Il est difficile de sortir les poubelles, avec tout ce que tu as mis dedans  
*It's difficult to put out the dustbins with all that you have put in them*

Ces problèmes sont faciles à résoudre  
*These problems are easy to solve*

Il est facile de résoudre ces problèmes  
*It is easy to solve these problems*

Cette machine à laver est impossible à réparer  
*This washing machine is impossible to repair*

Il est impossible de réparer cette machine à laver  
*It is impossible to repair this washing machine*

La défaite est difficile à accepter  
*Defeat is hard to accept*

Il est difficile d'accepter la défaite  
*It is hard to accept defeat*

Since the pronouns *il* and *ce* can be used both impersonally and personally, this means that alternations like the following can be found:

Il est difficile de comprendre Pierre  
*It is difficult to understand Pierre*

Il (i.e. Pierre) est difficile à comprendre  
*He is difficult to understand*

C'est beau de voir tous ces enfants jouer ensemble  
*It's wonderful to see all these children playing together*

C'est beau à voir  
*It's wonderful to see*
(See also Chapter 3.1.22 for discussion of this construction.)

12.7.3 Infinitives following adjectives of ‘manner’ take à

Adjectives which describe the manner in which an action is carried out typically take an infinitive complement preceded by à:

Nous sommes prêts à accepter votre proposition
We are ready to accept your proposal

Vu ses qualifications il est propre à assumer ces fonctions
With his qualifications he is suitable for the job

Other common adjectives which behave in this way are:

- être disposé/enclin/porté à faire qc: to be inclined to do sth
- être habile à faire qc: to be skilful in doing sth
- être prompt à faire qc: to be prompt in doing sth
- être seul à faire qc: to be alone in doing sth

12.7.4 Infinitives following adjectives which take de

Most other adjectives which take an infinitive complement select the preposition de:

Nous sommes très heureux d'apprendre votre mariage
We are very happy to hear the news of your wedding

Nous vous sommes tous reconnaissants d'avoir bien voulu participer à nos activités
We are all grateful to you for having kindly agreed to take part in our activities

Vous êtes libre d'essayer
You are free to try

(but Libre à vous d'essayer
Up to you to try)

Other common adjectives which take de:

- certain/sûr de faire qc: sure to do sth
- content de faire qc: pleased to do sth
- désireux de faire qc: keen to do sth
- désolé de faire qc: sorry to do sth
- étonné de faire qc: astonished to do sth
- fier de faire qc: proud to do sth
- impatient de faire qc: impatient to do sth
- (in)capable de faire qc: (in)capable of doing sth
- susceptible de faire qc: likely to do sth

12.8 Infinitives as complements to nouns

Nouns take infinitive complements preceded either by à or by de, never without a preposition.

12.8.1 Infinitives following nouns related to verbs and adjectives

Nouns related to verbs and adjectives which take an infinitive complement preceded by à or de typically take the same preposition:

- inviter qn à faire qc: l'invitation à faire qc
- disposé à faire qc: la disposition à faire qc
- craindre de faire qc: la crainte de faire qc
défendre à qn de fumer
interdire à qn de faire qc
menacer qn de faire qc
ordonner à qn de faire qc
permettre à qn de faire qc
désireux de faire qc
impatient de faire qc
Défense de fumer
Interdiction de pénétrer en ces lieux
la menace de faire qc
l’ordre de faire qc
la permission de faire qc
le désir de faire qc
l’impatience de faire qc

12.8.2 Infinitives following nouns involved in the event described by an infinitive take à

Nouns which are understood as being involved in the event described by the infinitive (as subject, direct object, indirect object, instrument, or time when the event takes place) typically take an infinitive preceded by à:

une maison à rénover
('maison' is understood as the object of 'rénover')
a house to renovate

C’était un soir à se promener sur la plage
('soir' is understood as the time when walking takes place)
It was an evening for walking on the beach

Other common examples:

un appartement à louer
du bois à brûler
une chambre à coucher
un exemple à ne pas suivre
un fer à repasser
un homme à craindre
une idée à examiner
une maison à vendre
un pays à voir l’hiver
une poêle à frire
une pomme à cuire
des repas à emporter
un roman à lire
une salle à manger
an apartment to rent
firewood
a bedroom
an example not to be followed
an iron
a man to be feared
an idea to explore
a house for sale
a country to see in winter
a frying pan
a cooking apple
take-away meals
a novel to read
a dining room

12.8.3 Some common idioms in which the preposition is à

avoir intérêt à faire qc
avoir du mal à faire qc
avoir plaisir à faire qc
être d’âge à faire qc
Nous sommes cinq à faire qc
être le dernier à faire qc
être d’humeur à faire qc
être le premier à faire qc
être le seul à faire qc
prendre plaisir à faire qc
to have a stake in doing sth
to experience some difficulty in doing sth
to take pleasure in doing sth
to be old enough to do sth
There are five of us doing sth
to be the last to do sth
to be in a mood for doing sth
to be the first to do sth
to be the only one to do sth
to take pleasure in doing sth
12.8.4 Most other nouns take the preposition $de$

- avoir l'air/l'apparence de faire qc  
  to appear to be doing sth
- avoir besoin de faire qc  
  to need to do sth
- avoir de la chance de faire qc  
  to be lucky to do sth
- avoir le droit de faire qc  
  to have the right to do sth
- avoir envie de faire qc  
  to want to do sth
- avoir hâte de faire qc  
  to be quick to do sth
- avoir honte de faire qc  
  to be ashamed to do sth
- avoir raison de faire qc  
  to be right to do sth
- avoir tort de faire qc  
  to be wrong to do sth
- avoir le toupet/le culot de faire qc  
  to have the cheek to do sth
- avoir la veine de faire qc  
  to be lucky to do sth
- la façon/la manière de faire qc  
  the manner of doing sth
- le moment de faire qc  
  the moment to do sth
- les moyens de faire qc  
  the means to do sth
- l'occasion de faire qc  
  the opportunity to do sth
- le temps de faire qc  
  the time to do sth

12.9 Infinitives in subordinate clauses

Infinitives in subordinate clauses may play the role of subjects or objects. The examples we have quoted extensively above where infinitives follow the verb and/or are introduced by $à$ and $de$ mainly show infinitive clauses playing the role of objects in the sentence. They can also be subjects.

In some cases they are linked to the main clause by the use of $c'est$, in other cases they directly precede the main verb. In many cases both $c'est$ and $est$ are possible with minimal stylistic difference. $Voici$ and $voilà$ may also play a linking role:

- Partir c'est mourir un peu
  To leave is to die a little
- Se cacher la vérité, c'est remettre le problème à plus tard
  Hiding the truth from oneself is putting the problem off until later
- Mettre les hommes politiques devant les réalités, voilà le problème
  Getting politicians to face up to reality, that's where the problem is
- S'accorder sur l'essentiel, voilà ce qu'on doit faire
  What we must do is agree on the basics
- Pleurer ne sert à rien
  Crying won't get us anywhere
- Se fâcher dans cette situation ne fera qu'aggraver les choses
  In this situation getting angry will make matters worse
- Manger trop de fraises peut rendre malade
  Eating too many strawberries could make you ill
- Courir chercher un médecin était la seule chose à faire
  To run to get a doctor was the only thing to do
- Habiter Paris est très agréable
  Living in Paris is very pleasant
The infinitive

Jouer Molière était sa plus chère ambition
Acting in a play by Molière was his most cherished hope

Se détendre le weekend, c’est important pour la santé
For health reasons it is important to relax at weekends

12.10 Infinitives as polite commands

In certain cases, instructions are conveyed by means of infinitives rather than the more forceful imperatives. This is particularly the case where the audience is non-specific, as in road-users, consumers or students taking exams:

Ralentir: Enfants (or Attention: Ecole)  Slow down. School
Soulever, écarter doucement Lift and separate carefully
instructions for opening a packet of coffee

Ecrire les réponses au verso Write the answers on the back of this page

Ne répondre qu’à l’une des questions de la section ci-dessous Answer only one question in this section

Ouvrir doucement Be careful when opening
Ne pas renverser Don’t spill
Ne pas retourner Don’t turn over
A manier avec précaution Be careful when handling
Remettre entre les mains de . . . Only to be given to . . . personally
Appuyer sur le bouton Press the button
Agir avant d’ouvrir Shake before opening

12.1 Quick-reference index to verbs taking infinitive complements

s’abaisser à faire qc (12.4.2) to stoop to doing sth
s’abêtir, s’abrutir à faire qc (12.4.3) to become stupid from doing sth
s’abstenir de faire qc (12.5.7,12.5.17) to refrain from doing sth
accepter de faire qc (12.5.2) to agree to do sth
accoutumer qn à faire qc (12.4.10) to get sb used to doing sth
accuser qn d’avoir fait qc (12.5.5) to accuse sb of having done sth
s’acharner à faire qc (12.4.4) to be bent on doing sth
achever de faire qc (12.5.17) to finish doing sth
adorer faire qc (12.3.6) to adore doing sth
affecter d’avoir fait qc (12.5.14) to pretend to have done sth
affirmer avoir fait qc (12.3.4) to be stated that one has done sth
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s’affoler à faire qc (12.4.3) to panic doing sth
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aimer faire qc (12.3.6) to like doing sth
aimer autant faire qc (12.3.6) to just as soon do sth
aimer mieux faire qc (12.3.6) to prefer doing sth
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aller faire qc (12.3.1) to go and do sth
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amener qn faire qc (12.3.2) to bring sb along to do sth
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to agree to do sth
to invite sb to do sth
to run to do sth
to fear to do sth
to believe to have done sth
to deign to do sth
to decide to do sth
to make sb decide to do sth
to make up one's mind to do sth
to declare that one has done sth
not to lower oneself to do sth
to challenge sb not to do sth
to forbid sb to do sth
to put sb off doing sth
to take delight in doing sth
to ask sb to do sth
to deny having done sth
hurry to do sth
to spend money doing sth
to wean sb off doing sth
to go down and do sth
to despair of doing sth
wean sb off doing sth
to want to do sth
to make sb decide to do sth
have to do sth
say that one has done sth
tell sb to do sth
exonerate oneself from having done sth
allow sb not to do sth
dissuade sb from doing sth
doubt that one is able to do sth
train an animal to do sth
listen to sb doing sth
write to sb to do sth
force oneself to do sth
go hoarse saying sth
take sb to do sth
prevent sb from doing sth
encourage sb to do sth
get annoyed doing sth
bring sb to do sth
suggest to sb that they do sth
get bored doing sth
be angry about having done sth
teach sb to do sth
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hear sb doing sth
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to cause sb to do sth
to undertake to do sth

to envy sb for having done sth
to imagine doing sth
to send sb to do sth
to exhaust oneself doing sth
to tire oneself out doing sth
to hope to do sth
to try one's hand at doing sth

to get out of breath doing sth
to reckon to have done sth
to be surprised at doing sth
to be obliged to do sth

to be inclined to do sth
to have to do sth
to be furious at having done sth
to be forced to do sth

to do one's utmost to do sth

to avoid doing sth
to excuse sb for having done sth

to exhort sb to do sth

to make sb do sth
to pretend to do sth
to tire oneself out doing sth
to pretend to have done sth
to congratulate sb on having done sth

to finish doing sth
to finish by doing sth
to imagine oneself doing sth

to make sb do sth
to shudder at doing sth

to make sure not to do sth
to groan at doing sth
to be proud of having done sth

to scold sb for having done sth

to get sb used to doing sth
to venture to do sth
to hasten to do sth
to hesitate to do sth
to shout to sb to do sth

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to invite sb to do sth

to become irritated doing sth

to swear (to sb) to do sth

to let sb do sth

to limit oneself to doing sth

to praise sb for doing sth

to think about doing sth

to be mixed up in doing sth

to threaten to do sth (sb with doing sth)

to take sb to do sth

to deserve to do sth

to take x days to do sth

to start doing sth

to go up and do sth

to neglect to do sth

to deny having done sth

to make sb do sth

to be bent on doing sth

to get permission from sb to do sth

to spend one’s time doing sth

to offer sb (the chance of) doing sth

to omit to do sth

to order sb to do sth

to dare to do sth

to forget to do sth

to become absorbed in doing sth

to blanch at doing sth

to appear to do sth

to pardon sb for having done sth

to speak of doing sth

to leave to do sth

to succeed in doing sth

to spend one’s time doing sth

to think one might do sth

to allow sb to do sth

to persist in doing sth

to persuade sb to do sth

to pity sb for having done sth

to take pleasure in doing sth

to push sb into doing sth

to be able to do sth

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  to try to do sth
  to phone sb to do sth
  to have a tendency to do sth
  to he bent on doing sth
  to stick to doing sth
  to work at doing sth
  to tremble to do sth
  to be sick and tired of doing sth
  to wear oneself out doing sth
  to use one's knowledge in doing sth
  to boast of having done sth
  to aim to do sth
  to see sb doing sth
  to want to do sth
13

Prepositions

13.1 Introduction

Prepositions are forms like de, à, dans, en, sur, par, pour, avec, au-dessus de, du haut de, à cause de, and so on. For many French prepositions one can normally find an English counterpart which is used in the same way in a majority of cases. For example. For example:

- de ~ 'of':
  - une boîte d'allumettes = a box of matches
  - trois kilos de sucre = three kilos of sugar

- à ~ 'at':
  - à trois heures ~ at three o'clock
  - être à l'école = to he at school

- dans ~ 'in':
  - dans sa chambre ~ in her room
  - dans les années trente = in the thirties

However, there are many cases where there is no direct relation between the prepositions used in each language. For example:

- un pichet rempli de cidre
  - a pitcher filled with (NOT *of) cider

- tenir un livre à la main
  - to hold a hook in (NOT *at) one's hand
  - It's kind of you
  - C'est gentil à (NOT *de) vous
  - She is good at languages
  - Elle est bonne en (NOT *aux) langues

This chapter lists the major French prepositions alphabetically, illustrates their main uses and gives their English equivalents in sections 13.2-13.58. English prepositions and their French counterparts are listed in section 13.59.

13.2 à

13.2.1 à = 'at'

Referring to place

- Le camion ralentissait à chaque virage
  - The lorry slowed down at every bend

- Elle est à l'école, au café, au cinéma
  - She is at school, at the café, at the cinema

- à l'église, au restaurant, à la pharmacie
  - at church, at the restaurant, at the chemist's
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Shall we meet at the café?
He was sitting at his mother's bedside
Bottled at the spring
at the edge of the lake

Referring to time
at three o'clock, at midnight, at mida
at nightfall, at dusk

BUT au petit matin is translated by: 'in the early morning'

at breakfast, at dinner
at the end, at the beginning
one thing at a time
at full speed

He died at 26

'au' = 'to'

to the north, to the south, to the east, to the west

Elle va à l'école, au café, au cinéma,
to school, to the café, to the cinema,
at the church, at the restaurant, at the chemist's
monter à sa chambre
to go up to one's room
tourner à droite, à gauche
to turn to the right, to the left

She is going to school, to the café, to the cinema, to church, to the restaurant, to the chemist's

to Japan
to Denmark
to Portugal
to Canada
to the United States, to the USA

(For countries of feminine gender, and most countries of masculine gender beginning with a vowel, 'to' is en: en France, en Grèce, etc., see 13.26.1. See also Chapter 2.2.2. For the gender of countries see Chapter 1.2.6.)

'to' most small islands, and larger islands which are some distance away, is à:

à Malte, à Jersey, à Guernsey, à Chypre, à la Martinique, à la Réunion, à Madagascar, à Tahiti, aux Philippines
to Malta, to Jersey, to Guernsey, to Cyprus, to Martinique, to Reunion, to Madagascar, to Tahiti, to the Philippines

NB: 'to' larger islands close to Europe, and very large islands generally is en: en Sicile, en Sardaigne, en Crète, en Nouvelle-Zélande, etc.
'to' towns and cities is à:

à Paris, à Londres, à Berlin
to Paris, to London, to Berlin
13.2.3 à = 'in'

Referring to place

vivre à Paris to live in Paris
à cet endroit (BUT dans ce lieu) in this place
au village (BUT en ville) in the village (in town)
se reposer au jardin, au parc, au salon to rest in the garden, in the park, in the sitting-room

à in these cases is a simple statement of location; dans is used when the 'containing' properties of the location are given more emphasis, for example:

se promener au parc
to walk in the park (simple statement of location)

perdre ses clefs dans le parc
to lose one's keys in the park (the park is the area within which the keys were lost)

Compare:

Ils sont partis se promener au parc They have gone for a walk in the park
On se promenait dans le parc quand on We were walking in the parc when we lost our keys
a perdu nos clefs
vivre à Paris to live in Paris (simple statement of location)

Il est difficile de se garer dans Paris It's difficult to park in Paris (i.e. within Paris, as opposed to anywhere else)

au deuxième rang du parterre in the second row of the stalls
à l'arrière in the back
à l'intérieur inside
tenir quelque chose à la main to hold something in one's hand
porter une fleur au chapeau to wear a flower in one's hat
au paradis (BUT en enfer) in heaven (in hell)

'in' most countries of masculine gender is à:

au Japon in Japan
au Danemark in Denmark
au Portugal in Portugal
au Canada in Canada
aux Etats-Unis, aux USA in the United States, in the USA

(For countries of feminine gender, and most countries of masculine gender beginning with a vowel, 'in' is en: en France, en Iran, etc. See 13.26.1 and 1.2.6.)

'in' or 'on' most small islands, and larger islands which are some distance away, is à:

à Malte, à Jersey, à Guernsey, à Chypre, à la Martinique, à la Réunion, à Madagascar, à Tahiti, aux Philippines
in Malta, in Jersey, in Guernsey, in Cyprus, in Martinique, in Reunion, in Madagascar, in Tahiti, in the Philippines
prepositions

NB: ‘in’ large islands close to Europe, and very large islands generally, is *en:*
*en Sicile, en Sardaigne, en Crète, en Nouvelle-Zélande,* etc.

‘in’ towns and cities is *à:*

à Paris, à Londres, à Berlin, à Marseille

*in Paris, in London, in Berlin, in Marseille*

Referring to time

la veille au soir
à l’entracte
vivre au 20e siècle
arriver à temps

*in the evening of the day before*
*in the interval*
to live in the 20th century
to arrive in time

13.2.4 *à* = *W*

Je le ramasserai au retour
Il est arrivé à pied
Je l’ai appris au service militaire

*I’ll pick it up on my way back*
*He arrived on foot*
*I learned it when I was on military service*

Elle a essayé de le contacter à plusieurs reprises
à la page 2
à la télévision/à la radio
se mettre à genoux
avoir une cicatrice à la jambe
frapper à la porte, à la vitre
les pommes étaient à terre

*She tried to contact him on several occasions*
*on page 2*
on (the) television/on (the) radio
to get down on one’s knees
to have a scar on one’s leg
to knock on the door, on the window
the apples were on the ground

Modes of transport

à bicyclette
à pied
à cheval
à dos de chameau

*on a bicycle*
*on foot*
*on horseback*
*on a camel*

BUT also: *en vélo, en taxi, en voiture, en ambulance,* etc. (See 13.26.5.)

13.2.5 *à* = ‘*by*’

s’avancer pas à pas
partir un à un
travailler à la lumière d’une bougie
fabriqué à la main
reconnaître quelqu’un à sa voix

*to move forward step by step*
*to leave one by one*
to work by the light of a candle
*made by hand*
to recognize somebody by his/her voice

13.2.6 *à* used where English typically uses compound nouns

une tasse à thé
un livre à couverture de cuir
un moulin à vent, à café
un homme à cheveux gris, aux cheveux gris
un homme à barbe
une fille aux cheveux d’or
un billet à 10 F
une pompe à main
un bateau à roue
une chambre à air

*a tea cup*
a *leather-bound book*
a *windmill, coffee-mill*
a *grey-haired man*
a *bearded man*
a *golden-haired girl*
a *10 franc ticket*
a *hand pump*
a *paddle steamer*
a *inner tube*
une omelette aux champignons
une sauce au vin
de la soupe à l'oignon

13.2.7 à = no preposition in English
La falaise était à pic
Les volets étaient à demi fermés
avoir mal à la tête
Rennes est à 348 kilomètres de Paris
un restaurant à deux pas d'ici

Ils se sont arrêtés à mi-chemin
La voiture roulait à cent trente kilomètres à l'heure
à l'envers
rentrer à la maison

In the case of sports: au, à la is used:

jouer au tennis, au football, au rugby, au billard, etc.
to play tennis, football, rugby, billiards, etc.

But in the case of musical instruments: du, de la is used:

jouer du piano, du violon, de la flûte, etc.
to play the piano, the violin, the flute, etc.

13.2.8 à = other uses
monter/descendre à l'étage
to go upstairs/to go downstairs
C'est à vous de décider
It's up to you to decide
C'est gentil à vous de m'aider
It's kind of you to help me
C'est aimable à lui
That's nice of him
un oncle à lui (also un de ses oncles)
an uncle of his
un livre à moi (also un de mes livres)
a book of mine
boire à la bouteille, à la source
to drink from the bottle, from the spring
emprunter de l'argent à la banque
to borrow money from the bank
un repas à la française
a meal in the French style
des pâtes à l’italienne
Italian style pasta

13.3 après/d’après
après la fin du film
after the end of the film
après le repas
after the meal
après avoir acheté une glace
after buying an ice-cream
après être arrivé
after arriving
Il n’arrête pas de crier après tout le monde
He shouts at everyone
demander après quelqu’un
(to both these uses of après are informai)
to ask after somebody

d’après les journaux
according to the newspapers
d’après ce qu’on m’a dit
from what I’ve been told
D’après leur tête, ils ont perdu le match
From the look on their faces, they lost the match
In your view, which is the better?
a painting in the style of Van Gogh

**13.4 après de**

Auprès de ces héros, nous sommes peu de chose (formai)
Compared with these heroes, we are as nothing

se plaindre auprès des autorités
to complain to the authorities

un ambassadeur auprès de la République française
an ambassador to France

**13.5 autour de**

autour de l’aéroport
around the airport
tourner autour de la question
to go around the question
Nous arriverons autour de huit heures
We will arrive around eight

**13.6 avant**

s'arrêter juste avant le tournant
to stop just before the bend
avant le mois de juin
before June
avant l'entreacte
before the interval
avant l'aube
before dawn
avant le weekend
before the weekend
arriver avant qn
to arrive ahead of sb
faire passer qn avant les autres
to let someone go first

NB: ‘ahead of in the sense of ’outstripping’ one’s rivals is en avant de: Il est en avant de ses contemporains ’He is ahead of his contemporaries’.

**13.7 avec**

Il devait venir avec moi au garage
He was to come with me to the garage
une voiture avec des banquettes de cuir
a car with leather seats
elle est arrivée avec son père et sa mère
She arrived with her father and mother
s'entendre bien avec quelqu'un
to get on well with somebody
parler avec quelqu'un
to speak with somebody
remplir un verre avec de l'eau
to fill a glass with water
mouiller un ragoût avec du vin blanc
to thin a stew with white wine
Ce Calvados est fait avec nos propres pommes
This Calvados is made with our own apples

NB: In some of these examples it is also possible to use de: remplir un verre d'eau, mouiller un ragoût de vin blanc:

se raser avec un rasoir électrique
to shave with an electric razor
epousseter les meubles avec un plumeau
to dust with a feather duster
On s'est moqué d'eux, avec Alain
Alain and I made fun of them
On a fini l'article, avec Pierre
Pierre and I have finished the article
(informai)
aller quelque part avec la voiture
to go somewhere by car

(For modes of transport also see 13.26.5.)
13.8 **bout: au bout de**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>au bout de mon jardin</td>
<td>at the bottom of my garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au bout de trois heures</td>
<td>after three hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13.9 **cause: à cause de, pour cause de, pour raison de**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A cause de sa maladie, il n'a pas pu venir</td>
<td>Because of his illness, he couldn't come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le restaurant est fermé pour cause de décès</td>
<td>The restaurant is closed due to a bereavement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il a démissionné pour raison de santé</td>
<td>He resigned for health reasons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13.10 **chez**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je suis chez moi samedi</td>
<td>I am at home on Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils l'ont ramené chez eux</td>
<td>They brought him back to their house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle est venue chez nous en pleine nuit</td>
<td>She came to our house in the middle of the night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est-il vrai que chez les Anglais on boit du thé avec chaque repas?</td>
<td>Is it true that, among the English, tea is drunk with every meal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu coucheras chez nous</td>
<td>You'll sleep at our house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chez Camus, le décor est très important</td>
<td>In Camus, the setting is very important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13.11 **contre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je n'ai rien contre lui</td>
<td>I have nothing against him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protéger ses plantes contre le froid</td>
<td>to protect one's plants against the cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une table posée contre le mur</td>
<td>a table placed against the wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agir contre qn</td>
<td>to act against sb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>changer des francs contre des dollars</td>
<td>to change francs for dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>livraison contre remboursement</td>
<td>cash on delivery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13.12 **côté: à côté de, du côté de**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La boucherie est à côté de la pharmacie</td>
<td>The butcher's is next to the chemist's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle s'est assise à côté de moi</td>
<td>She sat down next to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A côté de ses œuvres précédentes, celle-ci est moins impressionnante</td>
<td>Compared with his earlier works, this one is less impressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rouler du côté de Brive</td>
<td>to travel in the direction of Brive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arriver du côté de Brive</td>
<td>to arrive from the direction of Brive;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habiter du côté de Brive</td>
<td>to be coming from Brive;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to live around Brive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NB:** *Du Côté de chez Swann* (the title of one of the volumes of Proust's *[A La Recherche du temps perdu]*) literally means 'around where Swann lives', and has been translated by Proust's English translator as *Swann's Way*. 
13.13 **cours:** **au cours de**

- au cours de la semaine **during the week**
- au cours de sa carrière **in the course of his career**

13.14 **dans**

13.14.1 **dans** = **«in'**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J'ai aperçu la ferme dans la vallée</td>
<td>I saw the farm in the valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle était assise dans son fauteuil</td>
<td>She was sitting in her armchair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BUT</strong></td>
<td><strong>to sit on a chair, on a bench, on a seat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s'asseoir sur une chaise, sur un banc, sur un siège</td>
<td>Il y avait de la pluie dans l'air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous l'avons croisé dans la rue, dans l'allée, dans l'avenue</td>
<td>We passed him in the street, in the alley, in the avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BUT</strong></td>
<td><strong>in the square, on the road, on the track, on the boulevard, in the road (as opposed to pavement), on the pavement</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NB:** When streets are named, there is usually no preposition in French for 'in':

*Je l'ai rencontré rue de Rivoli 'I met him in the rue de Rivoli', NOMS l'avons croisé boulevard Montparnasse 'We passed him in the boulevard Montparnasse', Il y avait un accident place du Châtelet 'There was an accident in the place du Châtelet'.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Il est dans sa chambre</td>
<td>He is in his room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle habite dans une belle maison</td>
<td>She lives in a fine house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je l'ai lu dans un journal, dans un livre</td>
<td>I read it in a paper, in a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans tous les sens</td>
<td>in every direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans les années trente</td>
<td>in the thirties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il vit dans la misère</td>
<td>He lives in poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cela l'a laissé dans le doute</td>
<td>That left him in doubt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**dans** with the meaning 'in' is used with French départements, English counties and American states:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dans le Calvados</td>
<td>dans le Yorkshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans la Marne</td>
<td>dans l'Essex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans le Finistère</td>
<td>dans le Lancashire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans la Haute-Garonne</td>
<td>dans le Nevada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans l'Aveyron</td>
<td>dans l'Arizona</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**dans** is also used with the meaning 'in' with countries and towns modified by adjectives, quantifiers or other expressions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dans toute la France</td>
<td>in all France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans la Pologne ravagée</td>
<td>in war-torn Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans le sud de l'Espagne</td>
<td>in southern Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans le Mexique d'aujourd'hui</td>
<td>in today's Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans le vieux Paris</td>
<td>in old Paris</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BUT** **en France, en Italie, en Espagne, à Paris etc.** (See 13.26.1.)
**13.14.2 dans = ‘in(side)’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Le manteau est dans l'armoire</td>
<td>The coat is in the wardrobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mettez le couteau dans le tiroir</td>
<td>Put the knife in the drawer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un petit navire dans une bouteille</td>
<td>a ship in a bottle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Modes of transport**

Nous sommes venus dans (or par) le bus, dans (or par) le train, dans un taxi, dans une ambulance

_We came by bus, by train, by taxi, in an ambulance_

*dans* is used when the 'containing' properties of the vehicle are given prominence e.g.:

- Elle a perdu son porte-monnaie dans le bus
  *She lost her purse on the bus*

- Il est décédé dans l'ambulance
  *He died in the ambulance*

*BUT also*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>en auto, en voiture</td>
<td>by car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en vélo, à bicyclette</td>
<td>by bike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à cheval</td>
<td>on horseback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en navire</td>
<td>by ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en avion</td>
<td>by plane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en hélicoptère</td>
<td>by helicopter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en ambulance</td>
<td>by ambulance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en taxi</td>
<td>by taxi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See section 13.26.5.)

**13.14.3 dans = ‘(in)to’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elle est allée dans la cour</td>
<td>She went into the yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emmener quelqu’un dans un restaurant</td>
<td>to take somebody to a restaurant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**13.14.4 dans = 'in' (after a certain period of time has elapsed)**

Je reviendrai dans une heure

*I'll come back in an hour’s time* (i.e. after an hour has elapsed)

Il peut le faire dans quinze jours

*He can do it in a fortnight’s time*

Je l'attends dans deux jours

*I expect him in two days*

Nous le ferons dans un instant

*We'll do it in a moment* (i.e. after a moment has elapsed)

This use of *dans* contrasts with *en* 'in' (within a certain period of time - see 13.26.3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je l'aurai lu en une heure</td>
<td>I'll have read it (within) an hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il peut le faire en quinze jours</td>
<td>He can do it (within) a fortnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ça se fait en un instant</td>
<td>That's done in an instant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**13.14.5 dans = 'during’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Je le ferai dans la semaine</td>
<td>I'll do it during the week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle a écrit sa rédaction dans la journée</td>
<td>She finished her essay during the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il était tombé malade dans la nuit</td>
<td>He became ill during the night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je l'avais vu dans la semaine</td>
<td>I had seen him during the week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
310  Prepositions

13.14.6 *dans* = 'around', 'or so'

Nous avons gagné dans les mille francs  
We won around a thousand francs

Ça pèse dans les 500 grammes  
That weighs around 500 grams

Il avait dans les 26 ans (informal)  
He was around 26

13.14.7 *dans* = 'among'

Il a disparu dans les sapins  
He disappeared among the firs

Y ai cherché dans mes papiers  
I looked among my papers

*parmi* is also possible with non-human objects:  
Il a disparu parmi les sapins, J'ai cherché parmi mes papiers.  
BUT in talking of people, 'among' can only be *parmi* or *entre*:

Il n'était pas parmi les spectateurs  
He wasn't among the spectators

Elle se faufilait parmi les manifestants  
She threaded her way among the demonstrators

Nous pourrons en discuter entre nous  
We will be able to discuss it among ourselves

13.14.8 *dans* = 'on'

Nous l'avons rencontré dans l'escalier  
We met him on the stairs

Il bricolait dans des fermes  
He did odd jobs on farms

13.14.9 *dans* = 'from'

Elle a pris le portefeuille dans le tiroir  
She took the wallet from the drawer

Il a pris son mouchoir dans sa poche  
He took his handkerchief from his pocket

Nous avons découpé des photos dans un journal  
We cut photos from a newspaper

Il boit son café dans un bol  
He drinks his coffee from a bowl

J'ai copié cela dans un livre  
I copied that from a book

BUT *sortir, retirer un portefeuille du tiroir.*

13.15  *de*

13.15.1 *de* = 'of'

une tasse de thé  
a cup of tea

une boîte d'allumettes  
a box of matches

un verre de vin  
a glass of wine

un bol de café  
a bowl of coffee

NB: There is a contrast between *une tasse de thé* 'a cup of tea' and *une tasse à thé* 'a tea-cup'. The first describes a cup which happens to have tea in it, the second describes a cup designed for drinking tea from. Tea cups can hold substances other than tea, so one can say *une tasse à thé de sucre* 'a tea-cup of sugar' (NOT *une tasse de thé de sucre*). Similarly *une boîte de lettres* 'a box of letters'
contrasts with *une boîte aux lettres* 'a letter box', and *un verre de vin* 'a glass of wine' contrasts with *un verre à vin* 'a wine glass'. (See 13.2.6.)

- une route pleine de virages
- J'entendais le bruit des campeurs
- le Tour de France
- le bombardement de Marseille en 1944
- la moitié des spectateurs
- la plupart de la population
- un tiers des concurrents
- trois de mes amis
- le plus grand joueur de tous
- le plus intelligent de nous tous

**13.15.2 de = 'with'**

- une rue bordée de platanes
- un mur couvert d'affiches
- un vestibule encombré de chaussures
- un pichet rempli de cidre

par is a less frequently used equivalent of *de* in these cases, with an indefinite article: *une rue bordée par des platanes, un mur couvert par des affiches*, etc.

- rougir de honte
- tomber de fatigue
- trembler de peur
- piétiner d'impatience
- crier de colère
- sauter de joie

**13.15.3 de = 'in'**

- vêtu de noir
- habillé d’un complet bleu

After a superlative ('best in ...', 'biggest in ...', etc.) or after seul, dernier, premier, jamais:

- le bâtiment le plus haut du monde
- le train le plus rapide d'Europe
- la seule fois de ma vie
- Jamais de ma vie je n'ai eu aussi peur
- d'une certaine manière, façon
- trois dimanches de suite
- boire un whisky d'un trait
- Il est paralysé des jambes, court de jambes
- large d'épaules

**13.15.4 de = 'from'**

- regarder quelqu'un d'en haut
- le train de Paris
- Elle venait de Marseille
- Il est sorti de derrière la maison
- regarder les choses d'un même œil

- a road full of bends
- *I heard the noise of the campers*
- *the Tour of France*
- *the bombing of Marseilles in 1944*
- *half of the spectators*
- *most of the population*
- *a third of the competitors*
- *three of my friends*
- *the greatest player of all*
- *the most intelligent of all of us*

- a street lined with plane trees
- *a wall covered with posters*
- *a hall cluttered with shoes*
- *a pitcher filled with cider*

- to go red with shame
- to drop with tiredness
- to tremble with fear
- to dance with impatience
- to shout with anger
- to jump with joy

- dressed in black
- dressed in a blue suit

- the tallest building in the world
- *the fastest train in Europe*
- *the only time in my life*
- *Never in my life have I been so scared*
- in a certain manner, fashion
- *three Sundays in a row*
- to drink a whisky in one go
- *He is paralysed in the legs, short in the leg, broad in the shoulders*

- to watch somebody from above
- *the train from (also for) Paris*
- *She came from Marseilles*
- *He came out from behind the house*
- to see things from the same perspective
aller de Londres à Paris  
to go from London to Paris
passer du rouge au vert  
to go from red to green
citer quelque chose de mémoire  
to cite something from memory
faire quelque chose de colère  
to do something from anger

NB: *le train de Paris* is ambiguous between 'the train from Paris' and 'the train for Paris'; *le train en provenance de Paris* is unambiguously 'the train from Paris', and *le train à destination de Paris* is unambiguously 'the train for Paris'.

13.15.5 *de* = 'by'

Je le connais de vue, de réputation  
*I know him by sight, by reputation*
un film de François Truffaut  
a film by François Truffaut

de often corresponds to 'by' when a state is being described:

Il est connu de tous, détesté de certains, adoré de beaucoup  
*He is known by everyone, detested by some, adored by many*
Il était accablé de fatigue, de sommeil, de douleur  
*He was overcome by tiredness, by sleep, worn down by pain*
Le ciel est couvert de nuages  
The sky is covered by cloud

When 'by' introduces an agent, and an event rather than a state is involved, *par* is usually used (as for example in passives: see Chapter 8.6):

Il a été effrayé par l'orage  
*He was frightened by the storm*
Jean a été mordu par mon chien  
*Jean was bitten by my dog*

But when a passive can be understood as a state, rather than an event, *de* may be used:

Quand il est arrivé au commissariat, il était accompagné de sa femme  
*When he arrived at the police station, his wife was with him*
Les enfants ne sont autorisés que s'ils sont accompagnés d'un adulte  
*Children are not allowed in unless accompanied by an adult*

13.15.6 *de* = 's (possessive)

la sœur de sa mère  
*his mother's sister*
le vélo de mon oncle  
*my uncle's bike*
la maison de mes parents  
*my parents' house*
le nom de son chien  
*his dog's name*

13.15.7 *de* = 'than' (plus *de*, moins *de*)

Elle gagne plus de 30 000 FF par mois  
*She earns more than 30,000 francs a month*
Moins d'une dizaine de personnes assistaient au cours  
*Fewer than ten people were at the lecture*
Cela est arrivé il y a plus de trente ans  
*That happened more than thirty years ago*
Interdit aux moins de 15 ans  
*No children under 15*

NB: *plus de*, *moins de* contrast with *plus que*, *moins que*. Whereas *plus de*, *moins de* are typically followed by a numeral, *plus que*, *moins que* introduce an implied clause:
Elle gagne plus de 30 000 FF BUT Elle gagne plus que sa sœur (ne gagne)  
She earns more than her sister (earns)

Il travaille moins de 2 heures par jour  
He works less than 2 hours a day
Il travaille moins que son frère (ne travaille)  
He works less than his brother (works)

13.15.8 de = no preposition in English

Linking nouns to make them compound nouns

un vieux tronc d'acacia  
an old acacia trunk
un homme d'affaires  
a businessman
la boîte de vitesses  
the gear-box
un vélo de course  
a racing bike

Introducing parts of countries, states, towns, etc., in relation to the points of the compass

L'Afrique du Sud  
South Africa
le Sud de l'Afrique  
southern Africa
L'Italie du Sud  
southern Italy
La France du Nord  
northern France
les pays de l'ouest  
western countries
La Gare du Nord
La Gare de l'Est

With many quantifiers

la plupart des gens  
most people (also 'most of the people')
beaucoup de gens  
many people
bien des gens  
many people
la moitié des gens  
half the people (also 'half of the people')

For more on these quantifiers see Chapter 6.9.

With the following adjectival construction used frequently in informal French

une journée de libre  
a free day
encore un problème de réglé  
one more problem solved
il y avait trois passants de blessés  
three passers-by were injured

Linking indefinite or negative nouns and adjectives

quelqu'un d'important  
someone important
personne d'intéressant  
nobody interesting
rien d'autre  
nothing else
quelque chose de drôle  
something funny

After ce que ...

Ce qu'il y a de plus beau dans l'exposition, c'est le tableau de Constable  
What's most beautiful in the exhibition is the painting by Constable
Ce qu'il y a de moins intéressant dans les livres que j'ai lus cet été, c'est ce roman d'aventures  
What's least interesting among the books I read this summer is this adventure novel
Ce qu'ils produisent de bon, c'est le vin  
What they produce that is good is wine
Measurements

un mur épais d'un mètre  
a wall one metre thick

une rivière longue de 200 kilomètres  
a 200-kilometre long river

une clôture haute de cinq mètres  
a five-metre high fence

Elle est âgée de 15 ans  
She is 15

Le train est en retard de 20 minutes  
The train is 20 minutes late

(For measurements see also Chapter 6.5.1.)

13.15.9 de = other uses

Je ne me nourris que de pommes de terre  
I live on potatoes

être de permanence  
to be on duty, on call

On n'a plus revu Bernard de l'après-midi  
We didn't see Bernard again for the rest of the afternoon

traiter quelqu'un de voleur  
to call somebody a thief

Quoi de neuf?  
What's new?

Quoi de plus éprouvant?  
What can be more harrowing?

13.16 dehors: en dehors de

une randonnée en dehors de la ville  
a hike outside the town

En dehors de ses cousins, elle ne connaît personne  
Apart from her cousins, she knows no-one

13.17 delà: au-delà de

au-delà de la frontière  
beyond the frontier

13.18 dépit: en dépit de

En dépit de mes conseils, elle s'est mariée  
In spite of my advice, she got married

13.19 depuis

depuis longtemps  
for a long time

depuis toujours  
from time immemorial

Elle joue du piano depuis un très jeune âge  
She has been playing the piano since she was very young

Je suis là depuis trois jours  
I have been here for three days

Je ne l'ai pas vu depuis trois jours  
I haven't seen him for three days

(For tenses with depuis see Chapter 10.4.4.)

depuis ... (jusqu'à) can be used as an alternative to de ... à when distance is being emphasized:

Il a marché depuis le port jusqu'au parc  
He walked right from the harbour to the park

Elle a crié depuis le jardin  
She shouted from the garden
Le bruit nous arrivait depuis la terrasse depuis le haut jusqu'en bas
Je vous parle depuis Poitiers

13.20 derrière

une rue derrière la grande place
derrière chez lui
Allez vous mettre par-derrière la cloison

NB: 'behind' in the sense of 'not keeping up with' is en retard: Il est en retard par rapport aux autres enfants de sa classe 'He is behind the other children in his class'.

13.21 dès
dès la nuit tombée, dès l'aube
dès son arrivée
Dès que je suis entré, j'ai compris que quelque chose ne tournait pas rond
dès maintenant
dès lors
dès l'enfance

13.22 dessous: au-dessous delpar-dessous

Au-dessous de la salle à manger il y a une piscine
La température est tombée au-dessous de zéro
Il a rampé par-dessous la barrière

13.23 dessus: au-dessus delpar-dessus

J'ai regardé le ciel au-dessus du village
Au-dessus de la porte d'entrée il y avait un panneau
porter un manteau par-dessus sa veste

13.24 devant

devant l'église
devant chez lui
mettre un pied devant l'autre
Je l'ai laissé devant un chemin obscur
marcher devant qn to walk in front of sb
comparaître devant le tribunal to appear before the court

13.25 **durant**
durant la nuit, durant l’été during the night, during the summer

**NB:** *durant* is an equivalent of *pendant*, but typically restricted to written French. Unlike *pendant*, it can follow the noun it modifies: Elle s’est reposée la semaine *durant* 'She rested throughout the week'.

13.26 **en**

13.26.1 **en = ‘in’**
en, rather than *dans*, is used where there is no definite or indefinite article:

- en plein air in the open air
- en bonne santé in good health
- en terminale in the upper sixth year
- une région riche en forêts a region rich in forests
- une thèse pauvre en idées a thesis poor in ideas
- en cas d’urgence in an emergency
- avoir confiance en quelqu’un to have confidence in somebody

Il est sorti en tenue de soirée, en maillot de bain, en bras de chemise
*He went out in evening dress, in his swimming costume, in shirt sleeves*

Elle est en ville, en prison, en province
*She is in town, in prison, out of town (i.e. 'in the provinces’)*

**BUT** where an article is used, *dans* is usual:

- être transporté dans une prison lointaine to be taken to a distant prison

**Months**
en Janvier, en février, en mars, ... en novembre, en décembre
*in January, in February, in March, ... in November, in December*

**Seasons**
en automne, en été, en hiver . . . BUT au printemps
*in autumn, in summer, in winter . . . in spring*

**Years**
en 1992, en 1485, etc.
en l’an 1992, en l’an 1485, etc.
in the year 1992, in the year 1485.

**BUT:**
daus les années 90
au 20e siècle
*in the 90s in the 20th century*

**Languages**
en allemand, en anglais, en français, en espagnol, en flamand, etc.
in German, in English, in French, in Spanish, in Flemish, etc.

*en* is used for ‘in’ or ‘to’ countries and continents of feminine gender:
en is also used for ‘in’ or ‘to’ countries of masculine gender which begin with a vowel:

en Afghanistan
en Israël
en Iran

‘in’ or ‘to’ masculine countries not beginning with a vowel is usually au or aux:

au Japon au Canada
au Portugal au Danemark

NB: aux États-Unis, aux USA. See 13.2.3.

en is used for ‘in’ or ‘to’ French regions of feminine gender:

en Normandie
en Bretagne
en Provence
en Touraine

BUT dans is normally used with French regions of masculine gender:

dans le Berry
dans le Périgord
dans le Forez

dans is normal for ‘in’ or ‘to’ with French départements, British counties and American states. (See 13.14.1.)

en is used for ‘in’ or ‘to’ large islands:

en Sicile en Crète
en Sardaigne en Nouvelle-Zélande

See also 13.2.3.

13.26.2 en = ‘in’ used with articles in fixed expressions

regarder en l’air to took up
des idées en l’air unrealistic ideas
en la circonstance in the circumstances
en l’occurrence as it turns out
en l’espèce in this particular case
en ce cas in this case
en son for intérieur in his heart of hearts

13.26.3 en = ‘in’ (within a certain period of time)

Il a fait des progrès en deux ans He has made progress in two years
Je l’aurai lu en une heure I’ll have read it in an hour
Ça se fait en un instant
le tour du monde en 80 jours
It's done in a second
around the world in 80 days

This contrasts with *dans* = 'in' (after a certain period of time has elapsed):

Il peut le faire dans quinze jours
Je l'attends dans deux jours
Je le ferai dans un instant
He can do it in two weeks' time
I expect him in two days
I'll do it in a minute

13.26.4 *en* = 'made from'

une statue en bronze
a bronze statue
une robe en velours rouge
a red velvet dress
une montre en or
a gold watch
une robe en soie
a silk dress
un pont en ciment
a concrete bridge

13.26.5 *en* = modes of transport

The following are common in informal French:

voyager en taxi, en vélo
to travel by taxi, by bike
en bicyclette, en moto
by bicycle, on a motorbike
en avion, en car
by plane, on a coach
en train, en voiture
by train, by car
en ambulance
in an ambulance
en skis
on skis
en bateau
by boat

The expressions you are more likely to encounter in formal French are: *dans un taxi, à vélo, à bicyclette, dans l'avion, par avion, dans le car, dans le train, avec la voiture, dans une ambulance, par bateau.*

13.26.6 *en* = 'on'

en vacances, en congé
on holiday, on leave
en vente
on sale
en route
on the way,
en voyage
on a trip
en moyenne
on average
en feu
on fire

13.26.7 *en* = 'with'

une maison en briques
a house built with bricks
alimenter un restaurant en vin
to supply a restaurant with wine
ravitailler des terroristes en armes
to supply terrorists with arms

13.26.8 *en* = 'at'

en fin de semaine
at the end of the week
en haut de page
at the top of the page
en mer
at sea
en plein sommet
right at the summit
en même temps
at the same time
Les deux pays étaient en guerre
The two countries were at war
Sa vie est en jeu
Her life is at stake
être fort en langues, en maths
to be good at languages, maths
en vitesse (informal)
at speed
13.26.9 en = 'from'
aujourd’hui en huit
lundi en quinze

13.26.10 en = 'as'
parler en spécialiste
s’habiller en marin
recevoir qc en cadeau

agir en lâche
en signe de deuil

13.26.11 en = 'into'
transformer la maison en hôtel
changer une défaite en victoire
traduire un texte en allemand

13.26.12 en = no preposition
se mettre en colère
une télévision en couleur
un film en noir et blanc

13.27 entrel’d’entre
la distance entre deux points
une dispute entre eux
J’ai le rapport entre les mains
la frontière entre deux pays

la plupart d’entre eux
beaucoup d’entre eux amis
une dizaine d’entre les serveurs
le moins beau d’entre nous
Lequel d’entre vous le fera?

chacun d’entre eux OR chacun d’eux
personne d’entre les invités OR personne des invités
aucun d’entre les spectateurs OR aucun des spectateurs

13.28 envers
ressentir de la haine envers qn
être bien disposé envers qn
ma gratitude envers votre oncle

13.29 excepté
Excepté les grands-parents, tous étaient partis
Apart from the grandparents, everyone had left

NB: hormis ‘with the exception of is also possible, but rather formal.
13.30 **face: en face de**
Le parc est en face du bureau de poste  
The park is opposite the post office

13.31 **faute de**
Faute d’argent, l’entreprise a fait faillite  
*Through lack of money, the company went bankrupt*

l’accepterai le poste, faute de mieux  
*TU accept the job, for want of anything better*

13.32 **force: à force de**
A force de travail, il a réussi  
*Through working, he succeeded*

13.33 **grâce à**
Grâce à ton aide, je pourrai l’acheter  
*Thanks to your help, I will be able to buy it*

C’est grâce à toi que j’ai pu le faire  
*It’s thanks to you that I could do it*

**NB:** *grâce à* is always positive, so cannot be used to translate sentences like: ‘Thanks to you we lost the contract’. Here *à cause de* is required: *A cause de toi nous avons perdu le contrat.*

13.34 **haut: du haut de**
sauter du haut de la falaise  
*to jump from the cliff*

**NB:** ‘from’ tall objects like cliffs, towers, buildings is usually *du haut de*, rather than *de* alone.

13.35 **hors de**
hors de danger  
*out of danger*
hors de saison  
*out of season*
hors de lui  
*beside himself with anger*
hors d’haleine  
*out of breath*
sauter hors de son lit  
*to jump out of one’s bed*
une randonnée hors de la ville  
*a hike outside the town*

13.36 **jusqu’à**
jusqu’à demain  
*until tomorrow*
jusqu’au bout  
*right to the end*
depuis Paris jusqu’à la Manche  
*from Paris to the Channel*

**NB:** ‘not … until’ is *pas avant: Je ne viendrai pas avant demain ‘I won’t come until tomorrow’.*

(For the conjunction **jusqu’à ce que** see Chapter 17.3.8.)

13.37 **lieu: au lieu de**
au lieu de son frère  
*instead of his brother*
13.38 **long:** le long de
rouler le long du quai  
to travel along the river bank
(as in Paris or London)

Tout au long du boulevard il y avait des marchands forains
All along the boulevard there were market traders

13.39 **lors de**
lors de mon séjour en France  
at the time of my stay in France

13.40 **malgré**
malgré son enthousiasme, ses défauts, le mauvais temps, sa promesse
in spite of his enthusiasm, his faults, the bad weather, his promise

13.41 **par**

13.41.1 **par** = 'through'
regarder par la fenêtre  
to look through the window
passer par la forêt  
to go through the forest
aspirer l'air par la bouche  
to breathe through the mouth
Je l'ai eu par un boulanger de Tours  
I got it through a baker from Tours

13.41.2 **par** = 'by', 'per'
Le village était coupé par la neige  
The village was cut off by the snow
Par bonheur, il s'est évadé  
By good fortune, he escaped
Il tenait son fils par la main  
He held his son by the hand
prendre qn par surprise  
to catch sb by surprise
travailler par groupes de quatre  
to work in groups of four
heure par heure  
hour by hour
Ils sortaient un par un  
They came out one by one
La chambre coûte 100 F par personne  
The room is 100 francs per person
par nuit  
per night

*L'Étranger,* par Albert Camus, est l’un des romans français les plus étudiés

*‘The Outsider’,* by Albert Camus, is one of the most widely studied French novels

NB: **par** is used after a pause, **de** otherwise:

un roman d’Albert Camus  
a novel by Albert Camus

When 'by' introduces an agent, **par** is usually used:

Il a été effrayé par l'orage  
He was frightened by the storm
Jean a été mordu par mon chien  
Jean was bitten by my dog

But when a passive can be understood as a state, rather than an event, **de** may also be used:

Quand il est arrivé au commissariat, il était accompagné de sa femme

*When he arrived at the police station, his wife was with him*

(See also 13.15.5.)
### 13.41.3 *par* = 'on'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>se rouler par terre</td>
<td>to roll oneself on the ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se jeter par terre</td>
<td>to throw oneself on the ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par une belle journée de printemps</td>
<td>on a fine day in spring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 13.41.4 *par* = 'from', 'out of'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>faire qc par crainte</td>
<td>to do sth out of fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par orgueil, par respect de qn</td>
<td>from pride, from respect for sb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par amitié, par honte</td>
<td>out of respect for friendship, from shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par jalousie, par pudeur</td>
<td>from jealousy, from modesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par ignorance</td>
<td>out of ignorance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 13.41.5 *par* = 'in(to)'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>par temps de pluie</td>
<td>in wet weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sortir par beau temps</td>
<td>to go out in fair weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par milliers</td>
<td>in (their) thousands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par ordre alphabétique</td>
<td>in alphabetical order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par endroits</td>
<td>in places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par écrit</td>
<td>in writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 13.42 *parmi*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parmi les spectateurs</td>
<td>among the spectators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parmi la foule</td>
<td>among the crowd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une rumeur courait parmi les gens de la ville</td>
<td>a rumour was spreading among the townspeople</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parmi mes papiers</td>
<td>among my papers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See also 13.14.7.)

### 13.43 *port*: de la part de

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parler de la part des étudiants</td>
<td>to speak on behalf of the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C'est de la part de qui?</td>
<td>Who's calling? Who's it from?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 13.44 *partir*: à partir de

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>à partir de demain</td>
<td>from tomorrow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 13.45 *passé*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passé le pont, on s'est arrêté un instant</td>
<td>Once passed the bridge, we stopped a minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passé minuit il n'y a plus de taxis</td>
<td>After midnight there are no more taxis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 13.46 *pendant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pendant la guerre</td>
<td>during the war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous avons dansé pendant une éternité</td>
<td>We danced for ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je t'écrirai pendant la semaine</td>
<td>I'll write to you during the week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13.47 pour

Pour ma part, je suis heureux
For my part, I'm happy

Elle le faisait exprès pour attirer l’attention
She did it on purpose (in order) to attract attention

donner un cadeau à qn pour son anniversaire
to give a present to sb for his/her birthday

elle se prend pour une star
She considers herself to be a star

s’en aller pour de bon
to go away for good

passer pour intelligent
to be considered intelligent

être bon pour qn, dur pour qn, gentil pour qn, (in)juste pour qn, sévère pour qn
to be good to (or for) sb, hard on sb, kind to sb, (un)just to sb, severe on sb

NB: The verb payer ‘to pay for’ is not usually followed by pour.

payer la tournée
On ne voulait pas que je paie ma place
to pay for a round (of drinks)
They didn’t want me to pay for my seat

Unless money is involved, or a person is being paid for:

payer 500 francs pour un micro-ondes
Je ne paie pas pour toi!
to pay 500 francs for a micro-wave oven
I’m not paying for you!

NB: Expressions like: ‘for two days’, ‘for three weeks’, ‘for several years’ are usually translated by the time expression alone (i.e. without pour) when they refer to events in the past:

Elle est restée deux jours
Il est resté trois semaines
She stayed for two days
He stayed for three weeks

When the time expression refers to a period in the future in relation to the time of speaking, pour is used:

Elle partira pour deux jours
Il voulait s’absenter pour trois semaines
She’ll be away for two days
He wanted to be away for three weeks

When the events that take place during the time period are stressed, pendant is the usual form:

Il a été malade pendant la nuit
Elle va travailler pendant deux jours
He was ill during the night
She is going to work for two days

I 3.48 près de

Il s’est assis près de moi
He sat down next to me

Je l’ai aperçu près du pont
I spied him near the bridge
13.49 quant à
Quant à moi, je suis heureux
For my part, I'm happy
Quant à son roman, il est loin de l'avoir fini
As for his novel, he is a long way from finishing it

13.50 sans
sans moi    without me
sans sel    without salt
sans rien dire without saying anything
sans me regarder without looking at me

13.51 sauf
Sauf ma mère, toute la famille était là
With the exception of my mother, all the family was there

13.52 selon
selon l'opinion générale according to the common view
selon la loi by law, under the law

13.53 sous
sous la table under the table
s'abriter sous un arbre to shelter under a tree
nager sous l'eau to swim under the water
sous l'ancien régime under the 'ancien régime'
sous le règne de Louis XIV in the reign of Louis XIV
sous clef under lock and key
sous les verrous under lock and key
sous la table under the table
sous la pluie, sous le soleil in the rain, in the sun

Sous prétexte de se renseigner pour les trains, elle a vite téléphoné à sa copine
On the pretext of finding out about trains, she quickly got on the phone to her friend

promettre sous serment to promise on oath
interdire qc sous peine d'amende to prohibit sth on pain of a fine
vendre qc sous conditions to sell sth on condition
J'ai un annuaire sous la main I have a phone directory to hand
passer l'affaire sous silence to keep quiet about the matter
manifester sous les fenêtres de la mairie to demonstrate in front of the town hall

13.54 suite: par suite de
par suite d'un accident following an accident

13.55 suivant
suivant son habitude as was his custom
13.56 **sur**

J’ai mis ma main sur son épaule  
Il me regardait, appuyé sur les coudes  
Elle était assise sur un vieux tronc d’arbre  
Elle attendait sur les marches de la mairie  

lire qc sur une affiche  
Je l’ai vu sur la place  
sur la route, sur le chemin  
sur le boulevard, sur la chaussée  
sur le trottoir  

Il a laissé la clef sur la porte  
Les garçons étaient assis sur trois rangées de fauteuils  
marcher sur les pas de quelqu’un  
aller sur le terrain de football  
sur la patinoire  
revenir sur ses pas  

un salon qui donne sur la rivière  
Elle va sur ses vingt-six ans  
deux sur trois  
Sur dix, trois étaient partis  
Sur mon salaire, il ne restait que 5 francs  
Quatre chats sur cinq le préfèrent  
Sur la fin, j’étais fatigué  

13.57 **travers:** *à travers! au travers del en travers de*

Il me parla à travers la porte fermée  
He talked to me through the closed door  

L’arbre était tombé en travers de la route  
The tree had fallen across the road  

Ils y sont finalement arrivés au travers d’un champ labouré  
They finally got there across a ploughed field  

13.58 **vers**

se diriger vers la maison  
vers le haut du col  
vers 10 heures  
vers la fin de mars  
Il avait vers 26 ans  

to head for the house  
towards the top of the pass  
around 10 o’clock  
towards the end of March  
He was around 26 years old  

13.59 **French translations for common English prepositions**

Figures refer to the sections where the French prepositions are dealt with.

**Across:** *de l’autre côté de; en travers de; au-dessus de*  
*across the room*  
de l’autre côté de la pièce
**Prepositions**

*The barricade had been erected across the street*  
La barricade avait été érigée en travers de la rue  
*(13.57)*

*They will have to build a bridge across the motorway*  
Ils devront construire un pont au-dessus de l’autoroute  
*(13.23)*

**After:** après; derrière

- after the meal  
  après le repas  
  *(13.93)*

- after arriving  
  après être arrivé  
  *(13.73)*

- to ask after sb  
  demander après qn  
  *(13.10)*

- to come after sb (e.g. in a race)  
  arriver derrière qn  
  *(13.20)*

- to clean up after sb  
  nettoyer derrière qn  
  *(13.10)*

**Among:** dans; parmi; entre; d’entre; chez

- to disappear among the firs  
  disparaître dans les sapins  
  *(13.14.7)*

- to search among one’s papers  
  chercher dans/parmi ses papiers  
  *(13.14.7)*

- among the spectators  
  parmi les spectateurs  
  *(13.10)*

- among the crowd  
  parmi la foule  
  *(13.27)*

- among friends  
  entre amis  
  *(13.10)*

- several among you  
  plusieurs d’entre vous  
  *(13.27)*

- among the English  
  chez les Anglais  
  *(13.10)*

**Around (approximately):** dans; vers; environ, autour de

*He was around 26 years old*  
il avait vers 26 ans, il avait 26 ans environ  
*(13.58)*

*Also: Il avait dans les 26 ans (informal), il avait autour de 26 ans*  
gagner dans les 1,000 francs  
*(13.14.6)*

*to win around 1,000 francs*  
gagner dans les 1,000 francs  
*(13.14.6)*

**As:** en; en tant que; comme

- to speak as an expert  
  parler en spécialiste  
  *(13.2.1)*

- to dress as a sailor  
  s’habiller en marin  
  *(13.2.1)*

- to receive sb as a present  
  recevoir qc en cadeau  
  *(13.2.1)*

- to act as the representative of  
  agir en tant que représentant de  
  *(13.2.1)*

- to act as an intermediary  
  servir comme intermédiaire  
  *(13.2.1)*

**At:** à; en; par; chez

- to slow down at every bend  
  ralentir à chaque virage  
  *(13.2.1)*

- to be at school  
  être à l’école  
  *(13.2.1)*

- at the cinema, at church  
  au cinéma, à l’église  
  *(13.2.1)*

- at 3 o’clock  
  à 3 heures  
  *(13.2.1)*

- at the beginning, at the end  
  au début, à la fin  
  *(13.2.1)*

- one thing at a time  
  une chose à la fois  
  *(13.2.1)*

- at the same time  
  en même temps  
  *(13.26.8)*

- at odd moments  
  par instant(s)  
  *(13.26.8)*

- at his house, at my house  
  chez lui, chez moi  
  *(13.10)*

- at the weekend  
  en fin de semaine  
  *(13.26.8)*

- at the top of the page  
  en haut de page  
  *(13.26.8)*

- at sea  
  en mer  
  *(13.26.8)*

- right at the summit  
  en plein sommet  
  *(13.26.8)*

- at war  
  en guerre  
  *(13.26.8)*

- at stake  
  en jeu  
  *(13.26.8)*

- at speed  
  en vitesse  
  *(13.26.8)*

- to be good at languages  
  être bon en langues  
  *(13.26.8)*
### French translations for common English prepositions

**By: de; par; à; avant; selon**

- to know sb by sight: connaître qn de vue
- to be known by everyone: être connu de tous
- a film by François Truffant: un film de François Truffaut
- to be accompanied by one's wife: être accompagné de sa femme
- to be frightened by the storm: être effrayé par l'orage
- to be bitten by a dog: être mordu par un chien
- to recognize sb by his/her voice: reconnaître qn à sa voix
- to move forward step by step: s'avancer pas à pas
- to leave one by one: partir un à un (or un par un)
- to work by the light of a candle: travailler à la lumière d'une bougie
- to hold sb by the hand: tenir qn par la main
- to work in groups: travailler par groupes
- hour by hour: heure par heure
- by night: par nuit
- cut off by the snow: coupé par la neige
- by the weekend: avant le weekend
- by the rules: selon les règles
- by law: selon la loi

**by taxi, by bicycle, by train, by plane, by car, by ambulance, by boat, by bus:**

- en taxi (or dans un taxi), en vélo (or à vélo)
- en train (or dans le train), en avion (or par avion)
- en voiture (or avec la voiture), en ambulance (or dans une ambulance)
- en bateau (or par bateau), en bus (or dans le bus)

### During: dans, pendant, durant, au cours de

- Fil do it during the week
- Je le ferai dans (or pendant or au cours de) la semaine

### From: de; depuis; du haut de; à; dans; en; d'après; sur

- to watch sb from above: regarder qn d'en haut
- to cite sth from memory: citer qc de mémoire
- from afar: de loin
- from close by: de près
- to go from London to Paris: aller de Londres à Paris
- He complained all the way from London to Paris: Il s'est plaint depuis Londres jusqu'à Paris
- to jump from the cliff: sauter du haut de la falaise
- to borrow sth from sb: emprunter qc à qn
- to drink from the bottle: boire à la bouteille
- to take a wallet from the drawer: prendre un portefeuille dans le tiroir
- to cut photos from the newspaper: découper des photos dans le journal
- a week from today: aujourd'hui en huit
- a fortnight from Monday: lundi en quinze

---

(13.15.5)  
(13.2.5)  
(13.41.2)  
(13.6)  
(13.26.9)
to do sth from fear, from shame, from ignorance
faire qc par (or de) crainte, par (or de) honte, par (or d’)ignorance

from what I’m told
d’après ce qu’on me dit

from the look on his face
d’après son expression
d’après la tête qu’il faisait

They selected five from ten
Ils en ont sélectionné cinq sur dix

In: de; à; en; dans; par; sur; sous; no preposition used in French

dress in black
vêtu, or habillé de noir

to go out in evening dress
sortir en tenue de soirée

in a swimming costume
en maillot de bain

in shirt sleeves
en bras de chemise

the first, last, only time in my life
la première, dernière, seule fois de ma vie

the fastest train in Europe
le train le plus rapide d’Europe

two Sundays in a row
trois dimanches de suite

paralysed in the arms, legs
paralysé des bras, des jambes

broad in the shoulders, short in the legs
large d’épaules, court de jambes

to live in Paris
vivre à Paris

in the shade
à l’ombre

in the back, in one’s hand, in paradise
à l’arrière, à la main, au paradis

in the garden, in the cinema
au jardin, au cinéma

in the restaurant, in school
au restaurant, à l’école

in the village, in the park
au village, au parc

BUT in town
en ville

in hell
en enfer

in Japan, in Denmark, in the United States, in Malta, in Jersey
au Japon, au Danemark, aux Etats-Unis, à Malte, à Jersey

in France, in Spain
en France, en Espagne

in the evening, in the morning
au soir, au matin

in the 20th century
au 20e siècle

in the interval
à l’entracte

to glimpse sth in the valley
apercevoir qc dans la vallée

to meet sb in the rue de Rivoli, on the boulevard Montparnasse
rencontrer qn rue de Rivoli, boulevard Montparnasse

to meet sb in Yorkshire, to meet sb in Nevada, in the Calvados region
rencontrer qn dans le Yorkshire, rencontrer qn dans le Nevada, dans le Calvados

I’ll come back after an hour
Je reviendrai dans une heure

I’m expecting him in two days
Je l’attends dans deux jours
French translations for common English prepositions 329

I'll have read it within an hour  Je l’aurai lu en une heure (13.26.3)
He can do it in (under) two weeks  Il peut le faire en quinze jours

in January, in February  en janvier, en février (13.26.1)
in the autumn, in the summer, in the winter  en automne, en été, en hiver

in the spring  au printemps
dans les années 50
in German, in Spanish  en allemand, en espagnol

in wet weather  par temps de pluie (13.41.5)
in their thousands  par milliers
in alphabetical order  par ordre alphabétique
para endroits

to see sb in the square  voir qn sur la place
être assis sur trois rangées de fauteuils

to be sitting in three rows of seats  sous le règne de Louis XIV (13.53)
in the reign of Louis XIV

Into: dans; en; à

allé dans la cour

to go into the yard

to turn the house into a hotel  transformer la maison en hôtel (13.26.11)

éclater en larmes

to burst into tears

to go into the office  aller au bureau (13.2.2)
to get into bed

Of: de; à; sur; d’entre

une tasse de thé (13.15.1)
la moitié des spectateurs

It's kind of you, nice of you  C’est gentil à vous, aimable à vous (13.2.8)
un oncle à moi (un de mes oncles)

Of ten, three had left  Sur dix, trois étaient partis (13.56)

most of them  la plupart d’entre eux (13.27)

chacun d’entre eux

each of them

On: de; à; dans; en; par; sur; sous; no preposition

I live just on potatoes  Je ne me nourris que de pommes de terre (13.15.9)

Je ne me nourris que de pommes de terre

I live just on potatoes

to be on duty or on call  être de permanence

voir les choses du bon côté

to look on the bright side

à plusieurs reprises (13.2.4)

à la page 2

à la télévision/à la radio

frapper à la porte

to knock on the door

être à terre

to be on the ground

au retour
	on one’s return
### Prepositions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>on a bicycle, on foot, on horseback</td>
<td>à bicyclette, à pied, à cheval</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on military service</td>
<td>au service militaire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to meet sb on the stairs</td>
<td>rencontrer qn dans l’escalier</td>
<td>(13.14.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do odd jobs on farms</td>
<td>bricoler dans des fermes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on fire</td>
<td>en feu</td>
<td>(13.26.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on holiday</td>
<td>en vacances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on leave</td>
<td>en congé</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on sale</td>
<td>en vente</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the way</td>
<td>en route</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on a trip</td>
<td>en voyage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on average</td>
<td>en moyenne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to throw things on the ground on a fine spring day</td>
<td>jeter des choses par terre</td>
<td>(13.41.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on fire</td>
<td>par une belle journée de printemps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to put one's hand on his shoulder</td>
<td>mettre la main sur son épaule</td>
<td>(13.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leaning on one's elbows</td>
<td>appuyé sur les coudes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to sit on a chair, a bench, a seat</td>
<td>s'asseoir sur une chaise, un banc, un siège</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the road, on the pavement</td>
<td>sur la route, sur le trottoir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to promise on oath</td>
<td>promettre sous serment</td>
<td>(13.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to sell sth on condition</td>
<td>vendre qc sous conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Mondays</td>
<td>le lundi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They're on mel</td>
<td>C’est ma tournée!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Out of:** de; en dehors de; hors de; sur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>(Page)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to pull a rabbit out of a hat</td>
<td>sortir un lapin d’un chapeau</td>
<td>(13.15.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get out of here!</td>
<td>Sortez d’ici!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of the town</td>
<td>en dehors de la ville</td>
<td>(13.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of the question</td>
<td>hors de question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>five out of ten</td>
<td>cinq sur dix</td>
<td>(13.56)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Than:** de; que

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>(Page)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She earns more than 30,000 francs a month</td>
<td>Elle gagne plus de 30 000 FF par mois</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She earns more than me/than I do</td>
<td>Elle gagne plus que moi</td>
<td>(13.15.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He works less than 2 hours a day</td>
<td>Il travaille moins de 2 heures par jour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Through:** par; à travers; au travers de; par moyen de

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>(Page)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to look through the window</td>
<td>regarder par la fenêtre</td>
<td>(13.41.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go through the forest</td>
<td>passer par la forêt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to breathe through the mouth</td>
<td>aspirer l’air par la bouche</td>
<td>(13.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go through fields</td>
<td>passer à travers champs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go through difficulties</td>
<td>passer au travers des problèmes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through an advert</td>
<td>par moyen d’une annonce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**To:** à; en; dans; sous; jusqu’à; pour; avec

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>(Page)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to the north, to the south</td>
<td>au nord, au sud</td>
<td>(13.2.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go to school, to the cinema, to the café</td>
<td>aller à l’école, au cinéma, au café</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go up to one's room</td>
<td>monter à sa chambre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the right, to the left</td>
<td>à droite, à gauche</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
French translations for common English prepositions

- to Japan, to Denmark: au Japon, au Danemark
- to Malta, to Jersey: à Malte, à Jersey
- to Paris, to London: à Paris, à Londres
- to Sicily, to New Zealand: en Sicile, en Nouvelle-Zélande
- to France, to Spain: en France, en Espagne
- to Europe, to Africa: en Europe, en Afrique
- to Normandy, to Brittany: en Normandie, en Bretagne
- to Essex, to Massachusetts: dans l’Essex, dans le Massachusetts

- to have a phone directory to hand: avoir un annuaire sous la main
- to go up to 2,000 francs: aller jusqu’à 2,000 francs
- a cheque to the value of ...: un chèque de la valeur de ...
- to keep something to oneself: garder quelque chose pour soi
- to be kind to sb: être gentil avec qn

Under: sous; moins de; inférieur à; selon

- under the table: sous la table
- under water: sous l’eau
- under twenty francs: moins de vingt francs
- a price under a thousand francs: un prix inférieur à mille francs
- under the law: selon la loi

With: de; à; avec

- a street lined with plane trees: une rue bordée de platanes
- to fill with water: remplir d’eau (or avec de l’eau)
- to cover with posters: couvrir d’affiches (or avec des affiches)
- to go red with shame: rougir de honte
- to tremble with cold: trembler de froid

- a man with a grey beard: un homme à la barbe grise
- to water the garden with a watering can: arroser le jardin avec un arrosoir
- to speak with sb: parler avec qn
- to arrive with sb: arriver avec qn
14.1 Introduction

There are two main types of question: yes/no questions, to which it is possible to answer simply 'yes' or 'no':

Aimez-vous la musique pop? Oui
Do you like pop music? Yes
Est-ce que tu as fait tes devoirs? Non
Have you done your homework? No

and information questions, to which it is impossible to answer simply 'yes' or 'no', but which require a piece of information in response:

Quand partira Jean? Demain
When will Jean leave? Tomorrow
Qui a-t-il rencontré? Jeanette
Who did he meet? Jeanette

Information questions involve the use of a question word or phrase like qui, que, quand, comment, où, pourquoi, pour quelle raison, avec quel ami, de quoi, and so on.

14.2 Yes/no questions

There are three ways in which yes/no questions can be asked in French. Each is characteristic of a particular style of French, ranging from the informal to the formal.

14.2.1 Yes/no questions formed with rising intonation

The simplest way to form a yes/no question in French is to add rising intonation to the final syllables of a declarative sentence:

Tu as quelque chose à dire?
Do you have anything to say?
Elle va rester ici?
Is she going to stay here?
Pierre est venu?
Has Pierre come?
Je peux mettre mes photos au mur?
Can I put my photos on the wall?

This kind of yes/no question is very common in informal spoken French, but less common in more formal spoken French and not normally used in written French (unless direct speech is being recorded, or an informal style is being imitated).

14.2.2 Yes/no questions formed with est-ce que

Yes/no questions may also be formed by placing the question formula est-ce que at the beginning of a declarative sentence:
Yes/no questions may be formed by inverting the subject and the verb which agrees with it. Such inversion takes two forms, depending on whether the subject is an unstressed pronoun or not.

Subject is an unstressed pronoun
If the subject is an unstressed pronoun, it changes places with the verb which agrees with it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Est-ce tu content?</td>
<td>Are you happy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est-ce le facteur?</td>
<td>Is it the postman?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avez-vous bien compris?</td>
<td>Have you really understood?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peut-on se changer dans les vestiaires?</td>
<td>Can you change in the changing rooms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avaient-ils reçu de ses nouvelles?</td>
<td>Had they had news of him?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avait-il pu réunir les actionnaires?</td>
<td>Had he been able to assemble the shareholders?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such subject-verb inversion is possible with all verbs in French, whereas in English it is only possible with 'auxiliary' verbs like 'have', 'be', 'can', 'will', 'do', etc.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aime-t-il le Roquefort?</td>
<td>Does he like Roquefort?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descend-elle en ville?</td>
<td>Is she going down into town?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fumez-vous depuis longtemps?</td>
<td>Have you smoked for long?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prennent-ils le train?</td>
<td>Are they taking the train?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject is not an unstressed pronoun
If the subject is anything other than an unstressed pronoun, i.e. a proper noun, noun phrase or stressed pronoun, then the subject is placed first, followed by the verb and an unstressed subject pronoun agreeing with the subject is inserted to the right of the verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pierre est-il content?</td>
<td>Is Pierre happy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les joueurs peuvent-ils se changer dans les vestiaires?</td>
<td>Can the players change in the changing rooms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cela est-il vrai?</td>
<td>Is that true?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personne ne veut-il m'accompagner?</td>
<td>Doesn't anyone want to come with me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les élèves avaient-ils reçu les résultats?</td>
<td>Had the pupils received the results?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie viendra-t-elle demain?</td>
<td>Will Julie come tomorrow?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: It is impossible to invert a subject which is not an unstressed pronoun with an agreeing verb:
Yes/no questions formed with inversion are typically used in more formal spoken and in written French.

14.2.4 Insertion of -t- between inverted verb and subject

When the inversion of subject and verb results in two vowels becoming adjacent, the consonant -t- is inserted between them:

A-t-il 17 ans? Is he 17?
Aura-t-elle faim? Will she be hungry?

This rule also applies where the verb ends in -e, even though in the spoken language the -e is not pronounced:

Epouse-t-il Marie? Is he marrying Marie?
Dîne-t-elle au palais ce soir? Is she dining at the palace this evening?

Where a verb already ends in a -I or a -d in the written language, it is pronounced as 't' in questions:

Est-elle contente? Is she happy?
Boivent-ils du cidre? Are they drinking cider?
Vos amis sont-ils partis? Have your friends left?
David vend-il sa voiture? Is David selling his car?
Le voyage te rend-il malade? Is the journey making you feel ill?

14.2.5 Inversion of the verb and je in yes/no questions

Inversion of the verb with first person je to form a yes/no question is characteristic of only the most formal French. Many speakers and writers these days would avoid it and use est-ce que. Furthermore, there are idiosyncratic restrictions on its use.

In the present tense, inversion between je and some very common verbs of one syllable is frequent:

Ai-je le droit? (avoir) Am I allowed to?
Dois-je vous téléphoner? (devoir) Should I phone you?
Puis-je vous déranger? (pouvoir) May I disturb you?
Suis-je heureux? (être) Am I happy?
Vais-je me laisser tromper? (aller) Am I going to let myself be deceived?

Ne dis-je pas la vérité? (dire) Am I not telling the truth?

but with most other verbs such inversion is impossible:

NOT *Mens-je? Am I lying?
NOT *Prends-je le bus? Am I taking the bus?

In future and conditional tenses, however, inversion with these same verbs is more acceptable (but again only in the most formal styles):

Mentirais-je? Would I lie?
Prendrai-je le bus? Shall I take the bus?
Yes/no questions

Some grammars suggest that where a verb ends in -e and it is inverted with je, the -e becomes -é:

Demandé-je? Am I asking?

This, however, is extremely rare in modern French.

14.2.6 n’est-ce pas?
n’est-ce pas? is the invariable French equivalent of English 'tag' question forms like 'doesn’t he?', 'haven't you?', 'mustn’t I?', etc.:

Il habite à Paris, n’est-ce pas? He lives in Paris, doesn't he?
Vous avez vendu le terrain, n’est-ce pas? You've sold the land, haven't you?
Je dois m’adresser au sous-directeur, n’est-ce pas? I must speak to the assistant director, mustn't I?

14.2.7 Use of jamais, rien, aucun, personne in yes/no questions

In questions, jamais, rien, aucun and personne may mean 'ever', 'anything', 'any' and 'anyone':

Est-ce que vous avez jamais visité le Louvre? Have you ever been to the Louvre?
A-t-il rien fait de meilleur? Has he done anything better?
A-t-elle eu aucune réponse? Has she received any reply?
Est-ce que vous avez vu personne? Have you seen anyone?

NB: qui que ce soit 'anyone' is more used than personne:

Est-ce qu'il confie à qui que ce soit ce qu'il fait? Does he tell anyone what he is doing?

14.2.8 oui, si, non and merci as responses to yes/no questions

non is the normal way of saying 'no' to yes/no questions, both affirmative and negative:

Tu viens? - Non
Tu ne viens pas? - Non

oui is used to say 'yes' to affirmative yes/no questions, but si is used to say 'yes' to negative questions:

Tu viens? - Oui
Tu ne viens pas? - Si

In each case the force of the response may be increased by adding mais, or bien sûr que:

Tu viens? - Mais oui - Mais non
- Bien sûr que oui - Bien sûr que non
Tu ne viens pas? - Mais si - Mais non
- Bien sûr que si - Bien sûr que non

merci 'thank you' used alone as a response to a yes/no question is normally treated as a response of 'No, thank you':

Voulez-vous du fromage? - Merci
Would you like some cheese? - No, thank you
336 Question formation

To reply 'Yes, please' one can say (Oui), je veux bien, S'il vous (te) plaît or Volontiers:

Voulez-vous du fromage? - Je veux bien
- S'il vous plaît
- Volontiers

Would you like some cheese? - Yes, -please

14.3 Information questions

There are four ways of asking information questions in French. Each is appropriate to a particular level of formality of style.

14.3.1 Information questions formed with rising intonation

The simplest way to form an information question is to replace an item in a declarative sentence by a question word or phrase, and add rising intonation to the final syllables of the sentence. (For question words and phrases see 14.6.) For example, taking a declarative sentence such as:

L'étudiant téléphonera à son député demain
The student will telephone his MP tomorrow

Information questions can be formed related to demain, à son député or l'étudiant simply by replacing the relevant words with a question word:

L'étudiant téléphonera à son député quand?  
When will the student telephone his MP?

L'étudiant téléphonera à qui demain?  
Who will the student telephone tomorrow?

Qui téléphonera à son député demain?  
Who will telephone his MP tomorrow?

This kind of information question is very common in informal spoken French. The last example above involving qui? (where the subject is questioned) is also normal in formal styles (see 14.3.6). But the other types are less common in formal spoken and in written styles (unless direct speech is being reported, or an informal style is being imitated).

The full range of question words and phrases (see 14.6) may be used in this way, except que? 'what'. Instead, the stressed form of que? - quoi? - is used:

Vous avez vu quoi?  
What did you see?

Elle a dit quoi?  
What did she say?

Marcel a écrit à qui?  
Who did Marcel write to?

Elle parle de quoi?  
What is she talking about?

Tu recommanderais quel film?  
Which film would you recommend?

Ils ont invité combien de gens?  
How many people did they invite?

Vous l'avez vu où?  
Where did you see it?

Bernard reviendra quand?  
When will Bernard come back?
14.3.2 Information questions formed by ‘fronting’ a question word or phrase

Another common way of forming information questions in very informal spoken styles of French involves replacing an item in a declarative sentence by a question word or phrase, and then moving the question word or phrase to the front of the sentence, without making any other changes:

- Qui vous avez vu?
- Qui c'est, celui là?
- A qui Marcel a écrit?
- Quel film tu recommanderais?
- Combien de gens ils ont invités?
- De quoi tu voulais me parler?
- Où vous l'avez vu?
- Pourquoi la police l'a arrêté?

Who did you see?
Who's he?
Who did Marcel write to?
Which film would you recommend?
How many people did they invite?
What did you want to speak to me about?
Where did you see it?
Why did the police arrest him?

Nearly all question words can be used in this way except direct object que?, quoi? ‘what?’ Instead qu'est-ce que? is used (see 14.3.3):

- Qu'est-ce qu'elle a dit?
- Qu'est-ce que tu faisais dans ma chambre?

What did she say?
What were you doing in my room?

14.3.3 Information questions formed with est-ce quel

Information questions may be formed by ‘fronting’ a question word or phrase, as described in 14.3.2, and in addition inserting est-ce que? between the question word or phrase and the rest of the sentence. Questions of this type may be used in all styles of French, formal and informal. The full range of question words and phrases (see 14.6) may be used in this construction except quoi? ‘what?’ - the unstressed variant que? is required instead:

Qui est-ce que vous avez vu?
Qui est-ce qu'elle a dit?
Quel film est-ce que tu recommanderais?
A qui est-ce que Marcel a écrit?
Combien de gens est-ce qu'ils ont invités?
Où est-ce que vous l'avez vu?
Quand est-ce que Bernard reviendra?
Pourquoi est-ce que la police l'a arrêté?

Who did you see?
What did she say?
Which film would you recommend?
To whom did Marcel write?
How many people did they invite?
Where did you see it?
When will Bernard come back?
Why did the police arrest him?

14.3.4 qui est-ce qui?, qui est-ce que?, qu'est-ce qu'il, and qu'est-ce quel

qui est-ce qui? is used to form questions dealing with animate subjects:

Qui est-ce qui a pris mon crayon?
Qui est-ce qui va avoir le prix?

Who took my pencil?
Who will get the prize?

qu'est-ce qui? is used to form questions dealing with non-animate subjects:

Qu'est ce qui a abîmé mon pneu?
Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé?
Qu'est-ce qui a effrayé le facteur?
Qu'est-ce qui lui est arrivé, à Paul?

What punctured my tyre?
What happened?
What frightened the postman?
What happened to Paul?
Qui est-ce que? is used to form questions dealing with animate direct objects:

Qui est-ce que vous avez vu?  
Who did you see?

Qui est-ce qu'ils ont invité à la fête?  
Who did they invite to the party?

Qu'est-ce que? is used to form questions dealing with non-animate direct objects:

Qu'est-ce que vous avez dit?  
What did you say?

Qu'est-ce que Marie va acheter?  
What is Marie going to buy?

Qu'est-ce qu'elle a pris dans la grange?  
What did she take from the barn?

Qu'est-ce que c'était, ce bruit, dehors?  
What was that noise, outside?

Compare the following uses of qu'est-ce?, qu'est-ce que? and qu'est-ce que c'est?:

Qu'est-ce? (very formal)  
What is it?

Qu'est-ce que c'est?  
What is it?

Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?  
What on earth is that?

Qu'est-ce qu'une 'jonque'?  
What's a 'jonque'?

Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'une 'jonque'?  
What on earth is a 'jonque'?

Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire 'jonque'?  
What does 'jonque' mean?

14.3.5 Information questions formed by the inversion of verb and subject

Information questions may be formed by 'fronting' a question word or phrase (as described in 14.3.2), and in addition inverting the subject and the verb which agrees with the subject. This kind of question is usually found in formal spoken and in written French. It takes two forms depending on whether the subject is an unstressed pronoun or not.

Subject is an unstressed pronoun

If the subject is an unstressed pronoun, it changes places with the verb which agrees with it:

Qui avez-vous vu?  
Who did you see?

Qui est-ce?  
Who is it?

A qui a-t-elle écrit?  
To whom did she write?

Quel film recommanderais-tu?  
Which film would you recommend?

Combien de personnes ont-ils invitées?  
How many people have they invited?

Où l'avez-vous vu?  
Where did you see it?

Quand reviendra-t-il?  
When will he come back?

Pourquoi l'ont-ils arrêté?  
Why have they arrested him?

(For inversion with je see 14.2.5.)

Subject is not an unstressed pronoun

If the subject is not an unstressed pronoun, i.e. if it is a proper noun, noun phrase or stressed pronoun, then the subject is placed first after the question word, followed by the verb and an unstressed subject pronoun agreeing with the subject is inserted to the right of the verb:

Qui Robert a-t-il rencontré?  
Who did Robert meet?

A qui Jean donnera-t-il l'argent?  
To whom will Jean give the money?

Quelle robe Madame préfère-t-elle?  
Which dress does madam prefer?

Combien de romans Camus a-t-il écrits?  
How many novels did Camus write?

Où Marie va-t-elle faire ses courses?  
Where is Marie going to do her shopping
Quand le train arrivera-t-il à Limoges?  When will the train arrive at Limoges?

Pourquoi les examens ont-ils toujours lieu en juin?  Why do the exams always take place in June?

(For insertion of -r- see 14.2.4.)

14.3.6 Exceptional behaviour of subject qui, and subject and object quel in information questions

When the subject is animate and questioned by qui? 'who', there is no inversion with the verb:

Qui parle?  Who is speaking?
Qui a tourné ce film?  Who made this film?
NOT *Qui parle-t-il?
NOT *Qui a-t-il tourné ce film?

que? 'what' can never be used directly as non-animate subject 'what', and nor can its stressed form quoi?. Instead, qu'est-ce qui? must be used:

Qu'est-ce qui brille dans le ciel?  What's shining in the sky?
Qu'est-ce qui a grignoté les gâteaux dans le placard?  What has eaten the cakes in the cupboard?
Qu'est-ce qui plait à Pierre?  What does Pierre like?
Qu'est-ce qui a été donné à Marie?  What was given to Marie?

and

NOT *Que brille dans le ciel?
NOT *Qu'a gringoté les gâteaux?
NOT *Quoi plait à Pierre?
NOT *Quoi a été donné à Marie?

When que? 'what' is a direct object, it may be used with verb and subject inversion, providing that the subject is a pronoun:

Que dit-il?  What does he say?
Que pense-t-elle?  What does she think?
Qu'ont-ils décidé?  What have they decided?

But it may not be used with inversion when the subject is a proper noun, noun phrase or stressed pronoun:

NOT *Que le docteur dit-il?  What does the doctor say?
NOT *Que Marie pense-t-elle?  What does Marie think?
NOT *Que le conseil municipal a-t-il décidé?  What has the council decided?

Instead, either qu'est-ce que? must be used:

Qu'est-ce que le docteur dit?  What does the doctor say?
Qu'est-ce que Marie pense?  What does Marie think?
Qu'est-ce que le conseil municipal a décidé?  What has the council decided?

Or a different kind of inversion must be used involving the subject and the whole verb group, but without the insertion of an unstressed pronoun:
Que dit le docteur? What does the doctor say?
Que pense Marie? What does Marie think?
Qu'a décidé le conseil municipal? What has the council decided?
Que va faire Marie? What is Marie going to do?
Qu'aurait dû déclarer le ministre? What should the minister have declared?

This kind of inversion is known by linguists as 'stylistic inversion'.

14.3.7 'Stylistic inversion* in information questions

In formal spoken and in written French, as an alternative to subject-verb inversion of the kind: Où Christine est-elle allée? 'Where did Christine go?', it is also possible (with many question words and phrases) to invert the subject with the whole verb group, but without insertion of an unstressed pronoun:

Où est allée Christine?

Notice that Christine and est allée have inverted, but without insertion of an agreeing unstressed pronoun. Stylistic inversion of this kind is possible with:

Object *que?*

Qu'avait dit le docteur? What had the doctor said?
Qu'a décidé le conseil municipal? What has the council decided?

Prepositional object *qui (à qui?, de qui?, avec qui?, etc.)*

A qui s'est adressé Jacques? To whom did Jacques go and speak?
De qui aura parlé le professeur? Who will the professor have spoken about?

Prepositional object *quoi (à quoi?, de quoi?, avec quoi?, etc.)*

A quoi aurait dû penser Marie? What ought Marie to have thought about?
De quoi dépend la décision? What does the decision depend on?

Object and prepositional object *quel?, quand?, combien?*

quel
Quel plat a commandé Pierre? Which dish did Pierre order?
A quelle heure partira Thomas? At what time will Thomas leave?
Par quelle porte est sortie la vedette? Which door did the star come out of?

quand
Quand est entré François? When did François come in?
Depuis quand travaille Pierre? How long has Pierre been working?

combien
Combien de kilos a perdu Philippe? How many kilos has Philippe lost?
Combien de cidre produit ce verger? How much cider does this orchard produce?

Stylistic inversion is not possible with *pourquoi*:

NOT *Pourquoi travaille Pierre? Why does Pierre work?
NOT *Pourquoi est partie Marie? Why did Marie leave?

Stylistic inversion is also quite restricted by the type of verb with which it can be used. It occurs fairly freely with intransitive verbs which do not have complements:

Depuis quand travaille Pierre? How long has Pierre been working?
And when the questioned phrase is itself a direct object:

Quel vin recommande le patron?  
Which wine does the patron recommend?

But it is not acceptable when an intransitive verb has an adverbial complement:

NOT *Depuis quand travaille Pierre dans la cuisine?  
How long has Pierre been working in the kitchen?

or with transitive verbs when the direct object is present:

NOT *Depuis quand connaît Pierre Marie?  
How long has Pierre known Marie?
NOT *Où va manger Pierre des escargots?  
Where is Pierre going to eat snails?
NOT *A qui a donné Paul ce livre?  
To whom did Paul give this book?

14.4 Order of object pronouns in questions involving inversion

The order of unstressed object pronouns is unaffected by the inversion of the subject and verb in questions:

Elle en a parlé à Charley  
She spoke of it to Charley
En a-t-elle parlé à Charley?  
Did she speak of it to Charley?
Il le lui avait prêté  
He lent it to her
Le lui avait-il prêté?  
Did he lend it to her?
Jean te le dira  
Jean will tell you so
Jean te le dira-t-il?  
Will Jean tell you so?
Ils me l'ont donné  
They gave it to me
Pourquoi me l'ont-ils donné?  
Why did they give it to me?

14.5 Order of negative particles in questions involving inversion

The position of negative particles is unaffected by the inversion of the subject and verb in questions:

Tu n'as jamais fait cela  
You have never done that
N'as-tu jamais fait cela?  
Have you never done that?
Vous n'avez pas vu cet homme  
You haven't seen this man
Qui n'avez-vous pas vu?  
Who haven't you seen?
Ils ne leur écrivent plus  
They don't write to them any more
Pourquoi ne leur écrivent-ils plus?  
Why don't they write to them any more?

14.6 Use of question words and phrases: qui?, que?, quoi?, quel?, de qui?, avec combien de? etc.

14.6.1 qui?
qui? typically translates English 'who?', 'whom?' whether subject, direct object or object of a preposition:
Subject
Qui a pris le tire-bouchon?  
Who took the corkscrew?

Direct object
Qui Robert invite-t-il à dîner?  
Who is Robert inviting to dinner?

Object of a preposition
À qui la journaliste a-t-elle posé la question?  
Who did the reporter put the question to?

De qui parlez-vous?  
Who are you talking about?

Contre qui avait-il joué?  
Who had he played against?

Sur qui peut-on compter?  
Who can one count on?

14.6.2 que?, quoi?

*que?, quoi? typically translate English *what*. *Que?* is used to question direct objects which are moved to the front of the sentence:

Que dit-il?  
What does he say?

Qu'est-il arrivé?  
What's happened?

Que sont-ils devenus?  
What's become of them?

Que boiront les invités?  
What will the guests drink?

*que?* cannot be used to question subjects, rather *qu'est-ce qui?* is used (see 14.3.6):

Qu'est-ce qui lui est arrivé?  
What happened to him?

NOT *Que lui est arrivé?*

Qu'est-ce qui a taché le mur?  
What made that mess on the wall?

NOT *Qu'a fait cela?*

*quoi?* is used to question direct objects which are not moved to the front of the sentence. It is also used to form questions related to the objects of prepositions; in this use it can be moved to the front of the sentence:

Direct object
Elles cherchent quoi?  
What are they looking for?

Ça ouvre quoi, ça?  
What does that thing open?

Tu seras quoi dans un an?  
What will you be a year from now?

Object of a preposition
À quoi pensent-elles?  
What are they thinking about?

Avec quoi a-t-il coupé le pain?  
What did he cut the bread with?

On peut miser sur quoi?  
What can one bank on?

Contre quoi est-ce que les gens manifestent?  
What are people demonstrating against?

De quoi elle a parlé si longtemps?  
What did she speak about for such a long time?

*que?* and *quoi?* can both be used with infinitives to form questions. *Que?* is used at the front of main clauses:

Que faire?  
What is to be done?

Que faire de ces valises?  
What shall we do with these suitcases?

Que dire?  
What can I say?
**Use of question words and phrases**

*quoi?* is used in subordinate clauses, and in main clauses where the question word is not fronted:

- Elle a demandé *quoi faire de ses valises*
- *She asked what she should do with her suitcases*
- *je rentre tout de suite* - *Faire quoi?*
- *I’m going home immediately* - *To do what?*

**NB:** *Quoi de neuf?* 'What's new?'

### 14.6.3 quel?, quelle?, quels?, quelles?

*quel?, quelle?,* etc are used to form questions based on nouns and noun phrases:

*quel livre?, quelle page?, quels manuscrits?, quelles jolies fleurs?* Notice that *quel?* agrees in gender and number with the noun. Question phrases involving *quel?* can be subjects, direct objects or objects of prepositions:

**Subject**

- Quelle écrivaine n’a pas rêvé d’être célèbre?
  - *What writer hasn’t dreamt of being famous?*
- Quel bruit a effrayé les oiseaux?
  - *What noise frightened the birds?*

**Object**

- Quel film tu recommanderais?
  - *Which film would you recommend?*
- Quel film est-ce que tu recommanderais?
  - *Which film would you recommend?*
- Quel film recommanderais-tu?
  - *Which film would you recommend?*
- Quelles fleurs fosette a-t-elle cueillies?
  - *Which flowers did Josette pick?*

**Object of a preposition**

- A quelle heure part Pierre?
  - *What time does Pierre leave?*
- De quelle ville est-ce que vous parlez?
  - *Which town are you talking about?*
- Il était arrivé dans quel train?
  - *Which train did he arrive on?*
- Sous quel arbre vous avez planté les jonquilles?
  - *Which tree did you plant the daffodils under?*
- Par quelle route les cyclistes sont-ils partis?
  - *By which road did the cyclists leave?*

With the verb *être*, *quel?* is separated from the noun phrase with which it agrees:

- Quels sont les atouts de votre équipe?
  - *What are the strengths of your team?*
- Quels sont vos favoris?
  - *Which are your favourites?*
- Quelle est la région que tu préfères?
  - *Which is the region you prefer?*

**NB:** *Quel est cet homme?* 'Who is this man?', *Quelle est cette femme?* 'Who is this woman?' are alternatives to *Qui est cet homme?, Qui est cette femme?*
**Question formation**

14.6.4 *lequel?*, *laquelle?*, *lesquels?*, *lesquelles?*

*lequel?*, *laquelle?* ... etc. ask ‘which’ noun or noun phrase when there is a choice of more than one. The form used agrees in gender and number with the noun or noun phrase it questions, whether this is present in the same sentence, or is understood from the context:

- **Laquelle de ces couleurs préférez-vous?**
  - Which of these colours do you prefer?
- **Laquelle préférez-vous?**
  - Which do you prefer?
- **Lesquels des élèves avez-vous choisis pour l’équipe?**
  - Which of the pupils have you chosen for the team?
- **Lesquels avez-vous choisis?**
  - Which have you chosen?
- **Elle a enfin décidé quelle robe elle va acheter.**
  - She has finally decided which dress she is going to buy.
- **Laquelle?**
  - Which one?

When the phrase involving *lequel?* is the direct object, and sometimes when it is the subject of an intransitive verb, it is possible to separate *lequel?* from the noun phrase it modifies:

- **Laquelle préférez-vous de ces couleurs?**
  - Which of these colours do you prefer?
- **Lequel chante le mieux de ces deux solistes?**
  - Which of these two soloists sings the best?

NB: When a *lequel?* phrase is the subject of a sentence, it is not possible to use *est-ce que?* or to invert subject and verb:

- **NOT *Lequel des deux solistes est-ce qu’il chante le mieux?***
- **NOT *Lequel des deux solistes chante-t-il le mieux?***

14.6.5 *combien?*

*combien?* ‘how much?’, ‘how many?’ may be used on its own:

- **Combien est-ce que ça coûte?**
  - How much does that cost?
- **Combien sont déjà arrivés?**
  - How many have already arrived?

Or it may be used with a following prepositional phrase:

- **Combien de pain nous reste-t-il?**
  - How much bread do we have left?
- **Combien de spectateurs assistaient au match?**
  - How many spectators were there at the match?

*combien (de)?* can be used to question subjects, direct objects and objects of prepositions:

**Subject**

- **Combien d’invités sont déjà arrivés?**
  - How many guests have already arrived?

**Direct object**

- **Combien d’enfants ont-ils?**
  - How many children do they have?

**Object of a preposition**

- **Avec combien d’argent est-il parti à l’étranger?**
  - How much money did he go abroad with?
When *combien?* is used alone and functions as a direct object, the pronoun *en* is required:

- Combien en as-tu vu?  
  *How many did you see?*
- Combien est-ce qu’ils en ont tués?  
  *How many did they kill?*

**NB:** When *combien?* is the subject of the sentence, it is not possible to use *est-ce que* or invert the subject and the verb:

- NOT "Combien de joueurs est-ce qu’ils ont participé au concours?"
- NOT "Combien de joueurs ont-ils participé au concours?"

Although *combien?* translates 'how much', 'how many', it cannot be used to translate English 'how + adjective/adverb' like 'how big?', 'how tall?', 'how often?', etc. (For these see 14.6.8.)

### 14.6.6 comment?

*comment?* usually translates English 'how?' when it is not followed by an adjective or adverb (i.e. not 'how big?', 'how often?', etc.):

- Comment allez-vous?  
  *How are you?*
- Comment va votre mère?  
  *How is your mother?*
- Comment est-ce qu’elle va?  
  *How is she?*
- Comment s’étaient-ils comportés?  
  *How had they behaved?*
- Comment allez-vous réparer le moteur?  
  *How are you going to repair the engine?*
- Comment cela se prononce-t-il?  
  *How is this pronounced?*

*comment?* also translates 'what?' with the verb *appeler*:

- Comment tu t’appelles?  
  *What’s your name?*
- Comment appelez-vous ce monument? or Comment ce monument s’appelle-t-il?  
  *What is this monument called?*

### 14.6.7 où?, quand?, pourquoi?

*où?* and *quand?* translate English 'where?' and 'when?' respectively, and are used in the same range of information question constructions as the other question words:

- Où vous habitez?  
  *Where do you live?*
- Où habitez-vous?  
  *Where do you live?*
- Où est-ce que vous habitez?  
  *Where do you live?*
- Où Pierre habite-t-il?  
  *Where does Pierre live?*
- Quand vous partez?  
  *When are you leaving?*
- Quand partez-vous?  
  *When are you leaving?*
- Quand est-ce que vous partez?  
  *When are you leaving?*
- Quand Pierre partira-t-il?  
  *When will Pierre leave?*

When the verb is *être*, 'stylistic inversion' of the subject is normal with *où?* and *quand?* (see 14.3.7):

- Où est le portefeuille?  
  *Where’s the wallet?*
- Quand est son anniversaire?  
  *When’s his birthday?*

*pourquoi?* 'why?' is used in the same way as the other two question words except that it cannot be used with stylistic inversion:
Pourquoi il a déménagé?  Why has he moved?
Pourquoi a-t-il déménagé?  Why has he moved?
Pourquoi est-ce qu'il a déménagé?  Why has he moved?
Pourquoi Pierre a-t-il déménagé?  Why has Pierre moved?

but NOT  *Pourquoi a déménagé Pierre?

14.6.8 Translating 'how big?','how fast?','how often?', etc.
Whereas English 'how?' can question adjectives and adverbs directly, in French there is no simple equivalent. For 'How big is the table?' you CANNOT say things like:

*Comment grande est la table?
*Combien grande est la table?

Instead, alternative expressions have to be found:

De quelle taille est la table?  How big is the table?
Avec quelle fréquence y allez-vous?  How often do you go there?
Est-ce souvent que vous y allez?  How often do you go there?
Dans quelle mesure en êtes-vous certain?  How certain are you?
Dans quelle mesure accepteriez-vous de faire cela?  How happy would you be to do that?

14.7 Indirect questions
Indirect questions are questions which are reported as having already been asked. They are introduced by verbs like comprendre, demander, se demander, dire, expliquer, savoir.

Qui est venu?  (direct question)
Elle a demandé qui était venu  (indirect question)
She asked who came

Quel piège est-ce qu'on lui tend?  (direct question)
Il n'arrive pas à comprendre quel piège on lui tend  (indirect question)
He hasn't grasped what kind of trap they are setting for him

Quand arrivera-t-il?  (direct question)
Dites-moi quand il arrivera  (indirect question)
Tell me when he will arrive

14.7.1 Word order in indirect questions
There is no subject-verb inversion in indirect questions:

Où sont-ils?
fe ne sais pas où ils sont
I don't know where they are

NOT  *Je ne sais pas où sont-ils

Pourquoi Marie est-elle revenue?
Dites-moi pourquoi Marie est revenue
Tell me why Marie came back

NOT  *Dites-moi pourquoi Marie est-elle revenue
14.7.2 *si* in indirect questions

Direct yes/no questions are introduced by *si* 'if, whether' when they become indirect questions:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Est-ce que Julie viendra demain?} & \quad \text{I wonder if Julie will come tomorrow} \\
\text{Je me demande si Julie viendra demain} & \quad \text{I wonder if Julie will come tomorrow}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A-t-il bien compris?} & \quad \text{One never knows whether he has understood properly} \\
\text{On ne sait jamais s'il a bien compris} & \quad \text{One never knows whether he has understood properly}
\end{align*}
\]

NB: This use of *si* should not be confused with *si* used to introduce hypothetical clauses like: *Si elle m’aimait, elle m’écrirait* 'If she loved me, she would write to me’. In hypothetical *si* clauses the verb cannot appear in future or conditional tenses (see Chapter 10.8). In indirect questions introduced by *si* it may do so.

14.7.3 *ce qui* and *ce que* in indirect questions

*qu’est-ce qui?* in a direct question becomes *ce qui* in an indirect question; *que?* or *qu’est-ce que?* becomes *ce que* in an indirect question:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Qu’est-ce qui a ravagé les champs des Dupont?} & \quad \text{They don’t know what ruined the Duponts’ fields} \\
\text{On ne sait pas ce qui a ravagé les champs des Dupont} & \quad \text{They don’t know what ruined the Duponts’ fields}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Qu’est-ce qui est arrivé?} & \quad \text{She wonders what happened} \\
\text{Elle se demande ce qui est arrivé} & \quad \text{She wonders what happened}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Que dit-il?} & \quad \text{I don’t understand what he’s saying} \\
\text{Je ne comprends pas ce qu’il dit} & \quad \text{I don’t understand what he’s saying}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Qu’est-ce que Pierre fera?} & \quad \text{He explained what Pierre would do} \\
\text{Il a expliqué ce que Pierre ferait} & \quad \text{He explained what Pierre would do}
\end{align*}
\]

All other question words remain the same:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Elle lui demande à qui il écrivait} & \quad \text{She is asking him who he was writing to} \\
\text{Je ne sais plus de quoi elle parlait} & \quad \text{I no longer know what she was talking about} \\
\text{Je ne sais pas laquelle lui plaît le plus} & \quad \text{I don’t know which he likes more}
\end{align*}
\]

14.7.4 Tense in indirect questions

The tense of a verb in a direct question may change if it becomes an indirect question (see Chapter 10.7). This depends on the tense of the verb which introduces the indirect question (i.e. the tense of *comprendre, demander, dire*, etc.). If the introducing verb is in the present, future or conditional, the tense of the verb in the indirect question remains the same as in the direct question:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Chante-t-il?} & \quad \text{Is he singing?} \\
\text{Quand a-t-il chanté?} & \quad \text{When did he sing?} \\
\text{Qui avait chanté?} & \quad \text{Who had sung?}
\end{align*}
\]
348 *Question formation*

Elle ne sait pas s’il chante/quand il a chanté/qui avait chanté  
*She doesn’t know if he sings/when he sang/who sang*

When the introducing verb is in the past, however, the verb in the indirect question becomes imperfect or pluperfect if in the direct question it is in the present or past:

Elle ne savait pas s’il chantait/quand il avait chanté/qui avait chanté  
*She didn’t know if he sang, when he had sung, who had sung*

and it becomes conditional in the indirect question if it is in the future or conditional in the direct question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chantera-t-il?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Qui chanterait?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Will he sing?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Who would sing?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle ne savait pas s’il chanterait/qui chanterait</td>
<td><em>She didn’t know if he would sing/who would sing</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15

Relative clauses

15.1 Introduction

Clauses within a sentence which modify noun phrases or pronouns are known as 'relative clauses'. The noun phrases/pronouns in italics in the following examples are modified by relative clauses in bold:

Il y avait deux hommes qui sortaient une armoire à glace du camion
Two men were getting a wardrobe out of the lorry

C'est lui qui me l'a donné
He is the one who gave it to me

La clef qu'il a utilisée pour ouvrir la porte est un vieux double
The key he used to open the door is an old spare

C'est là qu'on creusera le trou
There's where we will dig the hole

Elle a acheté une vieille boutique dont il ne restait plus que les quatre murs
She bought an old shop of which only the four walls remained

C'est le moment où la locomotive se remet en marche
It's the moment when the train starts off again

Il y a plusieurs arbres sur lesquels on a cloué des pancartes
There are several trees on which notices have been nailed

Relative clauses are introduced by relative pronouns like qui, que, dont, où, sur lesquels, … To choose the right relative pronoun you need to know the implied grammatical role played by the 'head' noun phrase/pronoun (those in italics above) in the relative clause.

In La clef qu'il a utilisée pour ouvrir la porte est un vieux double the noun phrase la clef is understood as the object of utiliser in the relative clause: il a utilisé la clef pour ouvrir la porte. This determines the choice of que as the linking relative pronoun. In C'est lui qui me l'a donné the pronoun lui is understood as the subject of donner in the relative clause: il me l'a donné. This determines the choice of qui as the linking relative pronoun.

Noun phrases/pronouns have a range of implied grammatical roles in the relative clause, each requiring a different form of relative pronoun:
Understood as subject

On l'entend ouvrir la porte d'entrée qui se referme en claquant
(la porte d'entrée se referme)
He can be heard opening the front door which closes behind him with a bang

Understood as direct object

Elle découpe la tarte qu'elle a sortie du four
(elle a sorti la tarte du four)
She is cutting up the pie which she got out of the oven

Understood as object of a preposition

La vedette à qui j'ai écrit ne m'a jamais répondu
(j'ai écrit à la vedette)
The star to whom I wrote has never replied to me

J'ai acheté le texte auquel il a fait référence
(il a fait référence au texte)
I bought the text he was referring to

Ils habitaient un appartement derrière lequel il y avait un abattoir
(il y avait un abattoir derrière l'appartement)
They lived in a flat behind which there was an abattoir

Voici l'hôtel dans lequel il a passé les dernières années de sa vie
(il a passé les dernières années de sa vie dans l'hôtel)
This is the hotel where he spent the last years of his life

15.2 Use of relative qui

qui is the relative pronoun used when the noun phrase or pronoun heading a relative clause is the implied subject of that relative clause, whether animate or inanimate:

Il y avait deux hommes qui sortaient une armoire à glace du camion
(deux hommes sortaient une armoire . . .)
Two men were getting a wardrobe out of the lorry

Quand on voit quelqu'un qui se noie il faut essayer de le sauver
(quelqu'un se noie)
When you see someone drowning you should try to save them

Je l'ai croisé dans l'escalier qui mène à la cave
(l'escalier mène à la cave)
I passed him on the stairs which lead to the cellar

C'est un ouvrage qui allie histoire, suspense et qualité
(l'ouvrage allie histoire, suspense et qualité)
It's a book which marries history, suspense and quality

NB: voilà and voici may also head subject relative clauses:

Voilà/voici qui complique les choses
That's something which complicates matters

15.2.1 Je l'ai vu qui ...

With perception verbs like voir, regarder, entendre, apercevoir, etc., a construction involving relative qui can translate an English present participle construction:
Je l’ai vu qui sortait
I saw him leaving

Elle l’a entendu qui chantait dans son bain
She heard him singing in his bath

15.2.2 Use of relative qui for celui qui, celle qui, ceux qui, celles qui
Sometimes relative qui may be used alone with the same meaning as celui qui/que, celle qui/que, ceux qui/que, celles qui/que. Such constructions are known as ‘free’ relative clauses (see also 15.9):

Tout est possible à qui sait ménager son effort
Everything is possible for he who knows how to harness his energies

J’ai invité qui vous savez
I invited you know who

15.3 Use of relative que
que is the relative pronoun used when the noun phrase or pronoun heading the relative clause is the implied direct object of the relative clause, whether animate or inanimate:

L’homme qu’on vient d’appeler Rossi se lève
(on appelle l’homme Rossi)
The man who has just been called Rossi gets up

Elle est née dans le village qu’on a détruit pour faire le barrage
(on a détruit le village)
She was born in the village which they destroyed to build the dam

Elle découpe la tarte qu’elle a sortie du four
(elle a sorti la tarte du four)
She is cutting up the pie which she got out of the oven

J’ai toujours souffert du nom que je porte
(je porte ce nom)
I have always suffered because of my name

C’est un poste que j’aurais aimé avoir
(j’aurais aimé avoir ce poste)
It’s a job that I would have liked to have had

Unlike English, the relative pronoun in French may never be omitted:

NOT *C’est un poste j’aurais aimé
NOT *Elle est née dans le village on a détruit pour faire le barrage etc.

NB: The past participle agrees with feminine and plural noun phrases or pronouns which head object relative clauses, as in:

... la tarte qu’elle a sortie du four

This is because la tarte is an instance of a preceding direct object, and past participles agree with preceding direct objects (see Chapter 9.3.4).
15.4 Preposition plus qui

When the noun phrase or pronoun heading a relative clause is the implied object of a preposition in that relative clause, and is furthermore animate, the normal relative pronoun to use is qui (except when the preposition is de - see 15.6 below):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{à} & \quad \text{Le touriste à qui j’ai parlé vient du Québec} \\
& \quad (j’ai parlé au touriste) \\
& \quad \text{The tourist I spoke to comes from Québec} \\
\text{en} & \quad \text{C’est un commerçant en qui on peut avoir confiance} \\
& \quad (on peut avoir confiance en ce commerçant) \\
& \quad \text{He’s a shopkeeper in whom one can have confidence} \\
\text{sur} & \quad \text{L’intermédiaire sur qui on comptait s’est avéré malhonnête} \\
& \quad (on comptait sur l’intermédiaire) \\
& \quad \text{The go-between we were counting on turned out to be dishonest} \\
\text{par} & \quad \text{Je recommanderais le garagiste par qui j’ai eu cette voiture} \\
& \quad (j’ai eu cette voiture par le garagiste) \\
& \quad \text{I would recommend the garage I got this car from} \\
\text{avec} & \quad \text{Il n’a jamais revu le camarade avec qui il jouait quand ils étaient petits} \\
& \quad (il jouait avec ce camarade) \\
& \quad \text{He has never again seen the friend he used to play with when they were little} \\
\text{pour} & \quad \text{Elle a invité son professeur, pour qui elle a beaucoup de respect, à dîner} \\
& \quad (elle a beaucoup de respect pour son professeur) \\
& \quad \text{She has invited her teacher, for whom she has a great deal of respect, to dinner} \\
\text{près de} & \quad \text{Le jeune homme près de qui il est assis le reconnaît} \\
& \quad (il est assis près du jeune homme) \\
& \quad \text{The young man next to whom he’s sitting recognizes him} \\
\end{align*}
\]

NB: When objects of the prepositions parmi and entre are animate, the normal relative pronoun to use is lesquels or lesquelles (see 15.5), and not qui:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Un groupe d’enseignants parmi lesquels on compte des Américains} \\
& \quad \text{A group of academics amongst whom there are Americans} \\
\text{Des collègues entre lesquelles il n’y avait aucune rivalité} \\
& \quad \text{Colleagues between whom there was no rivalry} \\
\end{align*}
\]

15.5 Use of lequel in relative clauses

When the noun phrase or pronoun heading a relative clause is the implied object of a preposition, and is inanimate, the normal relative pronoun to use is one of the forms of lequel (except in the case of de: see 15.6).

Lequel has the following forms:
Use of *lequel* in relative clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masculine</strong></td>
<td>lequel</td>
<td>lesquels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feminine</strong></td>
<td>laquelle</td>
<td>lesquelles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the *le-, la-* etc. components combine with a preceding *à* or *de* to form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masculine</strong></td>
<td>auquel</td>
<td>auxquels</td>
<td>duquel</td>
<td>desquels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feminine</strong></td>
<td>à laquelle</td>
<td>auxquelles</td>
<td>de laquelle</td>
<td>desquelles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*à* Le texte auquel il a fait référence ...

*The text he referred to ...

La conférence à laquelle je vais participer ...

*The conference in which I shall be taking part ...

*dans* Cela illustre les contradictions dans lesquelles s'enferme la Grande-Bretagne

*That illustrates the contradictions within which Great Britain is locked*

*autour* Elle habite une maison autour de laquelle il y a une haie de lauriers

*She lives in a house around which there is a laurel hedge.*

*durant* Des weekends interminables, durant lesquels je ne savais quoi faire

*Interminable weekends during which I didn’t know what to do*

**NB:** English ‘The reason why …’ is translated in French by *La raison pour laquelle* ... **and NOT** *La raison pourquoi***

The prepositions *parmi* and *entre* are followed by *lesquels/lesquelles* whether the implied object is animate or inanimate:

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Un groupe d'universitaires parmi lesquels on compte des Américains | *A group of academics amongst whom there are Americans*

|                |                        |                        |
| Des collègues entre lesquelles il n'y avait aucune rivalité | *Colleagues between whom there was no rivalry*

|                |                        |                        |
| Des papiers parmi lesquels j'ai trouvé notre arbre généalogique | *Papers among which I found our family tree*

|                |                        |                        |
| Des haies entre lesquelles il avait planté des rosiers | *Hedges between which he had planted rose bushes*

**15.5.1 Use of *lequel* as a subject and object relative pronoun**

The use of *lequel* as a relative pronoun where the head of the relative clause is an implied subject or object is literary and extremely rare (it is also used in French legal texts). It is usually said that *lequel* is used in this way either to avoid ambiguity, or to avoid the repetition of *qui*:
Il allait se marier avec la sœur d’un collègue de travail, laquelle avait fait ses études en Autriche

He was going to marry the sister of a colleague from work who had studied in Austria

`laquelle` is used here to make it clear that the person who had studied in Austria is the `sœur`, rather than the `collègue` - `laquelle` can only refer to `sœur`, whereas `qui` could refer to either `sœur` or `collègue`.

15.6 Use of `dont`, de `qui`, `duquelle`, `desquels`, `desquelles`

15.6.1 `dont`

When the noun phrase or pronoun heading a relative clause is the implied object of `de` in that relative clause, `dont` is the normal relative pronoun to use, whether the object of the preposition is animate or inanimate:

Cela représente un effort dont je suis parfaitement capable
(je suis capable de l’effort)

That is an effort I am capable of

La maladie dont il est mort
(il est mort de cette maladie)

The illness from which he died

The `de` phrase which is turned into `dont` may itself be the complement of another noun phrase:

Une collègue dont le frère est en Amérique du Sud
(le frère de ma collègue est en Amérique du Sud)

A colleague whose brother is in South America

Une maison dont les volets étaient fermés
(les volets de la maison étaient fermés)

A house whose shutters were closed

When the `de` phrase which turns into `dont` is the complement of an object, `dont` is separated from the object, unlike in English:

Une collègue dont j’ai rencontré le frère pendant mes vacances
(j’ai rencontré le frère de cette collègue . . .)

A colleague whose brother I met on holiday

Une maison dont on avait fermé les volets
(on avait fermé les volets de cette maison)

A house whose shutters had been closed

NB: `dont` can be used to translate English ’including’ and ’of which’ in sentences like:

Il y a 30 moulins dans la région, dont 28 désaffectés

There are 30 mills in the region, including 28 out of commission

Trois personnes sont arrivées, dont Pierre

Three people arrived, including Pierre

Ils en ont acheté presque une centaine, dont plusieurs valaient très cher

They bought almost a hundred of them, some of which were worth a lot of money
J'en ai vu trois hier, dont une verte
I saw three of them yesterday, one of which was green

15.6.2 Cases where dont may not be used
Where a *de* phrase is itself the complement of a prepositional phrase - as in *il s'intéresse à la vie de cet écrivain* - _dont_ may _not_ be used. _Nor_ may _dont_ be used after a complex preposition which ends in _de_ such as _à l'intérieur de, au bout de, auprès de, autour de, à côté de, en face de, en dehors de, au delà de, en dépit de, près de_. Instead either _de qui_ (for animates) or _duquel_ etc. (for both animates and inanimates) must be used. Speakers have a strong preference for using _duquel_ etc.:  

un écrivain à la vie duquel (or, possibly, de qui) il s'intéresse
_a writer in whose life he is interested_

une voiture sur le capot de laquelle était assis un mannequin
_a car on whose bonnet was sitting a model_

Elle portait un blazer dans la poche duquel il y avait une lettre
_She was wearing a blazer in whose pocket there was a letter_

Nous avons dû vendre la maison à l'intérieur de laquelle se trouvaient nos plus belles moquettes
_We had to sell the house in which were our most beautiful carpets_

Le cheval blanc se trouve dans le champ à côté duquel nous avons pique-niqué
_The white horse is in the field near which we had a picnic_

NB: _duquel_, etc. agrees with the head of the relative clause in gender and number: _une voiture sur le capot de laquelle_ (de laquelle agrees with _voiture_ and _not_ _capot_), _un blazer dans la poche duquel_ (duquel agrees with _blazer_ and _not_ _poche_).

15.7 The use of où as a relative pronoun

15.7.1 To refer to place
_ où_ is used as a relative pronoun where the noun phrase or pronoun heading a relative clause is understood to be a place adverb in that relative clause:

La station balnéaire où j'ai passé mes vacances
_(j'ai passé mes vacances dans cette station balnéaire)_
_The seaside resort where I spent my holidays_

Un ponton où des bateaux sont amarrés
_(des bateaux sont amarrés au ponton)_
_A pier to which boats are moored_

Là où j'ai rangé ma voiture
_(j'ai rangé ma voiture là)_
_The place where I've parked my car_

Since many prepositional phrases describing a place also function as place adverbs (see Chapter 5.6.16) relative clauses involving _ où_ may be interchangeable with relative clauses involving a preposition plus a form of _lequel_:

La station balnéaire dans laquelle j'ai passé mes vacances
Un ponton auquel des bateaux sont amarrés
Relative clauses

However, où is by far the more frequent in modern French.

 où may itself be preceded by prepositions like de, par:

Le pays d’où il vient
*The country he comes from*

La porte par où elle est entrée
*The door she came through*

15.7.2 To refer to time

 où is also used where the noun phrase or pronoun heading a relative clause is an implied time adverbial in that relative clause, and is definite. This use is usually translated in English by 'when':

C’est le moment où la locomotive se remet en marche
*It’s the moment when the train restarts*

A l’époque où elle était encore étudiante
*At the time when she was still a student*

Similar expressions are:

le jour où ...  the day when ...
à l’heure où ...  at the time (of day) when ...
au temps où ...  in the days when ...
à la saison où ...  during the season when ...

This use of où with definite noun phrases contrasts with the case where the head noun phrase or pronoun is indefinite. Here que is used:

Un jour que je sortais
*One day when I was going out*

Une fois qu’elle rendait visite à sa tante
*Once when she was visiting her aunt*

In modern spoken French, que is often also used where the head is definite (rather than où):

A l’heure qu’il est, on ne sait toujours pas s’il va se rétablir
*At the time of speaking, we still don’t know if he is going to recover*

NB: Although English uses 'when' in constructions like these, quand cannot be used in French:

NOT *C’est le moment quand la locomotive se remet en marche*
NOT *Un jour quand je sortais*

15.8 Use of relative quoi

quoi is found as a relative pronoun mainly in written French. Where the head of the relative clause is rien, quelque chose, ce or a clause, and is understood as the object of a preposition in the relative clause, quoi is used:

Il n’y a rien sur quoi on puisse se baser
(on ne peut se baser sur rien)
*There is nothing on which one can rely*
C'est quelque chose à quoi on peut s'intéresser
(s'intéresser à quelque chose)
*It's something you can get interested in*

**Ce à quoi** tu fais référence
(tu fais référence à quelque chose)
*The thing you are referring to*

Finissez votre travail, après quoi on peut dîner
(on peut dîner après que vous avez fini votre travail)
*Finish your work, after which we can have dinner*

de quoi used as the subject of an infinitive means 'something':

On a ramené de quoi boire
*We brought back something to drink*

### 15.9 Free relative clauses and the use of *ce qui*, *ce que*, *ce dont*, *ce à quoi*, *ce sur quoi*, etc.

Ordinary relative clauses are headed by noun phrases or pronouns present in the main clause:

Elle a vu les congressistes qui assistaient à la réunion
*She saw the delegates who were present at the meeting*

In 'free' relative clauses the head is non-specific:

Elle a vu ceux qui assistaient à la réunion
*She saw who was present at the meeting*

Ils avaient remarqué celui que Jo préférait
*They had noticed who Jo preferred*

When the non-specific head is understood to be human, *celui qui/que*, *celle qui/que*, etc., are the appropriate relative pronouns, as in the above examples. When the non-specific head is understood to be non-human, *ce qui* and *ce que* are used: *ce qui* where the non-specific head is understood as the subject of the relative clause; *ce que* where the non-specific head is understood as the object:

**Subject**

On a réparé ce qui était cassé
(quelque chose était cassé)
*They repaired what was broken*

Je ferai ce qui me plaira
(quelque chose me plaira)
*VU do what I please*

**Direct object**

Je crois ce qu'il dit
(il dit quelque chose)
*I believe what he says*

On a vu ce que cela a produit
(cela a produit quelque chose)
*We saw what that produced*
Both *ce qui* and *ce que* may be preceded by *tout 'all'*:

- Il s'est mis à détruire tout ce qui était à sa portée
  
  _He began to destroy everything that was within his reach_

- On a vu tout ce que cela a produit
  
  _We saw all that that produced_

**NB:** *ce* is obligatory in these cases: NOT *... tout qu était à sa portée; NOT *... tout que cela a produit.*

Where the non-specific head is non-human and is understood as the object of a preposition in the relative clause, *ce + preposition + quoi* is used:

- Dis-moi ce à quoi tu penses
  
  _Tell me what you are thinking_

- Ne jette pas ce sur quoi j'écrivais
  
  _Don't throw out what I was writing on_

- Je vais te dire ce en quoi j'ai confiance
  
  _I'll tell you what I have confidence in_

When 'what' or 'which' are understood as the object of *de, ce dont* is used:

- Elle a envoyé ce dont on avait besoin
  
  _She sent what we needed_

**15.9.1 Use of *ce qui*, *ce que*, *ce dont*, *ce à quoi*, etc., to refer to events**

Compare the following:

- On a volé le magnétoscope qui était dans l'amphithéâtre
  
  _Someone has stolen the video recorder which was in the lecture hall_

- On a volé ce qui était dans l'amphithéâtre
  
  _Someone has stolen what was in the lecture hall_

- On a volé le magnétoscope, ce qui va interrompre les cours
  
  _Someone has stolen the video recorder, which will disrupt classes_

In the first sentence the relative clause *qui était dans l'amphithéâtre* modifies the noun phrase *le magnétoscope*. In the second sentence there is a 'free relative' where the head is non-specific. In the third sentence the relative clause modifies the whole preceding clause: *on a volé le magnétoscope.*

*ce qui, ce que, ce dont, ce à quoi*, etc. are used not only to introduce free relatives, but also to introduce relative clauses which modify preceding clauses:

- Il a manqué le train, ce qui l'a mis en colère
  
  _He missed the train, which made him angry_ (the missing of the train made him angry, not the train itself)

- On craint un durcissement dans l'attitude officielle, ce qui pourrait accroître les difficultés
  
  _A hardening of the official attitude is feared, which could increase the difficulties_

- Elle a réussi à le persuader, ce que je n'aurais jamais cru possible
  
  _She succeeded in persuading him, which I would never have thought possible_

**NB:** Where a relative clause modifies an event, *qui* and *que* alone cannot be used:

- NOT *Il a manqué le train, qui l’a mis en colère*
- NOT *Elle a réussi à le persuader, que je n’aurais jamais cru possible*

Where the verb is indirectly transitive and ends in *de*, two constructions may be possible: one using *ce dont* and one using *de ce que*. *Ce dont* is used when the head word is present, *de ce que* is used when there is no head word, *ce dont* is normally rendered into English in these constructions by ‘which’; *de ce que* is normally rendered by ‘what’ or ‘that’. This concerns verbs such as: féliciter qn de qc, excuser qn de qc, s’inquiéter de qc, s’irriter de qc, profiter de qc, souffrir de qc, and adjectival constructions such as être reconnaissant de qc, être stupéfait de qc.

**Vous avez réalisé votre projet. Je vous félicite (de qc).**
You have succeeded in your project. I congratulate you (on something)

**Vous avez réalisé votre projet, ce dont je vous félicite**
You have succeeded in your project, on which I congratulate you

**Je vous félicite de ce que vous avez réalisé**
I congratulate you on what you have achieved

**Ils ont fait des bêtises. Ils devront s’excuser (de qc)**
They did some silly things. They will have to apologize (for sth)

**Ils ont fait des bêtises, ce dont ils devront s’excuser**
They did some silly things, for which they will have to apologize

**Ils devront s’excuser de ce qu’ils ont fait**
They will have to apologize for what they did

**Vous avez fait énormément de choses pour nous. Je suis très reconnaissant (de qc)**
You have done a great deal for us. I am very grateful (for sth)

**Vous avez fait énormément de choses pour nous, ce dont je suis très reconnaissant**
You have done a great deal for us, for which I am very grateful

**Je suis très reconnaissant de ce que vous avez fait pour nous**
I am very grateful for what you have done for us

**Vous êtes venu. Je suis stupéfait (de qc)**
You came. I am astonished (about sth)

**Vous êtes venu, ce dont je suis stupéfait**
You came, which astonishes me

**Je suis stupéfait de ce que vous soyez venu**
I am astonished that you should have come

### 15.10 Translating ‘whoever’, ‘whatever’, ‘wherever’, ‘whenever’, ‘however’

**‘whoever’**

‘whoever’, understood as the subject of a relative clause, is *quiconque*, and the verb in the relative clause is in the indicative:
Relative clauses

Ils accueillent quiconque arrive
They welcome whoever comes

'whoever', understood as the direct object of a relative clause, is qui que, and the verb in the relative clause is in the subjunctive:

Qui que vous nommiez, je lui mènerai la vie dure
Whoever you appoint, I'll make his life a misery

NB: quel que may also mean 'whoever' when used with être:

Quel qu'il soit, je l'accueillerai
Whoever he is, I'll let him in

'whatever'

'whatever', understood as the subject of a relative clause, is quoi qui. When it is understood as the object it is quoi que. In both cases the verb in the relative clause is in the subjunctive:

Quoi qui puisse arriver
Whatever may happen

Quoi qu'il fasse
Whatever he does

NB: quoi que, meaning 'whatever', should be distinguished from the conjunction quoique 'although', which is written as a single word.

'whatever X' understood as the subject of a relative clause is translated as in the following examples:

Quel que soit le prix, je l'achèterai
Whatever the price may be, I'll buy it

Quelques que soient ses intentions, méfie-toi
Whatever his intentions are, don't trust him

Note that quel and que are separate words, and that quel agrees with the noun which is the subject of the relative clause.

'whatever X', 'whichever X' understood as the object of a relative clause is quelque(s), and the verb in the relative clause is in the subjunctive:

Quelque livre que vous choissiez, vous bénéficierez d'un rabais
(whatever and whichever book you choose, we'll give you a discount)

Quelques efforts que vous fassiez, on ne vous en accordera aucun crédit
(whatever and whichever efforts you make won't be recognized)

One way of distinguishing between the 'quelque + noun' construction and the 'quel que + être + noun' construction is to see if the verb in the relative clause can be omitted in English. If it can, use quel que, if it cannot use quelque(s):

Quel que soit le prix, je l'achèterai
Whatever the price (may be), I'll buy it
Indicative and subjunctive in relative clauses

Quelque livre que vous choisissiez, vous bénéficierez d'un rabais
Whatever book you *(choose), we will give you a discount

NB: être can never be omitted from the quel que constructions in French, even though 'be' can be omitted in English.

'wherever'
'wherever' is où que, with the verb in the relative clause in the subjunctive:

Où qu'il aille, nous le suivrons
Wherever he goes, we'll follow him

'whenever'
'whenever' is toutes les fois que, à chaque fois que, or simply quand, with the verb in the indicative:

Toutes les fois qu'elle a un moment de libre, elle révise son vocabulaire
Whenever she has a free moment she looks over her vocabulary

'however'
'however' + an adjective heading a relative clause can be translated in five ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>+ adjective</th>
<th>+ verb in the subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>quelque</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aussi</td>
<td>+ adjective</td>
<td>+ verb in the subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tout</td>
<td>+ adjective</td>
<td>+ verb in the indicative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However demanding they may be, we still have to respect our customers' needs

Quelque (invariable) exigeants qu'ils soient, nous devons pourtant satisfaire nos clients
Si exigeants qu'ils soient, nous devons pourtant satisfaire nos clients
Aussi exigeants qu'ils soient, nous devons pourtant satisfaire nos clients
Pour exigeants qu'ils soient, nous devons pourtant satisfaire nos clients
Tout (invariable) exigeants qu'ils sont, nous devons pourtant satisfaire nos clients

NB: the verb and subject may be inverted after si and aussi as an alternative to the que construction, providing that the subject is a pronoun:

Si exigeants soient-ils, ...
Aussi exigeants soient-ils, ...

15.11 Indicative and subjunctive in relative clauses

The verb in relative clauses usually takes the indicative form, but there are some kinds of relative clause where the verb is in the subjunctive.
15.1 1.1 *qui que, quoi que, quel que,* etc.

*qui que, quoi qui, quoi que,* quel que,* quelque,* où que* and* si/aussi/pour* are followed by a verb in the subjunctive (see 15.10 and also Chapter 11.1.12):

Qui que vous nommiez  
Whoever you appoint

Quoi qui puisse arriver  
Whatever may happen

Quoi qu'il fasse  
Whatever he does

Quelque livre que vous choisissiez  
Whichever book you choose

Quelle que soit la réponse  
Whatever the response

Quelque  

Si  

grand qu'il soit  

However big he is

Aussi

Pour

NB: *quiconque* 'whoever' is followed by verbs in the indicative:

Quiconque connaît une langue étrangère aura le poste  
*Whoever can speak a foreign language will get the job*

15.1 1.2 Relative clauses expressing hypothetical states of affairs

Relative clauses which modify indefinite noun phrases and express a hypothetical, rather than real, state of affairs, usually have a verb in the subjunctive (see Chapter 11.1.12):

Elle veut acheter une maison qui ait une piscine  
She wants to buy a house which has a swimming pool

The subjunctive here suggests that she has no particular house in mind - her hypothetically ideal house would be one with a swimming pool. By contrast, a sentence like:

Elle veut acheter une maison qui a une piscine  
She wants to buy a house which has a swimming pool

suggests that she knows of a particular house with a swimming pool which she would like to buy.

15.1 1.3 Relative clauses modifying *le premier, le dernier, le seul* and superlatives

Where a relative clause modifies noun phrases involving *le premier, le dernier, le seul* or a superlative, which can be interpreted as 'the first ever', 'the last one ever', 'the only one ever', etc., then the verb in the relative clause is in the subjunctive (see Chapter 11.1.8):

C'était le premier film qui ait traité de ce sujet  
*It was the first (ever) film that dealt with the topic*

Le dernier roman qu'il ait écrit avant de mourir  
*The last (ever) novel he wrote before he died*

Le seul portrait que j'aie vu d'elle  
*The only (ever) portrait I saw of her*

La femme la plus riche que nous ayons photographiée  
*The richest (ever) woman whom we have photographed*
Where the verb in the relative clause is in the indicative, however, the modified noun phrase is interpreted as just one of a set ('the first (of a set)', 'the last (of a set)', etc.):

C'est le premier film que j'ai vu, et le plus beau de toute ma vie
It's the first film (of the set of those I've seen) that I saw, and the finest one I've seen

C'est le plus grand qui a gagné le prix
It's the tallest of (the set of) them who won the prize

15.1 1.4 Relative clauses in *si* clauses, questions, after negation and in other subjunctive clauses

When relative clauses modify indefinite noun phrases or pronouns in *si* clauses or in questions, or modify noun phrases in negative clauses or clauses which themselves have subjunctive verbs, the verb in the relative clause is usually in the subjunctive:

S'il connaissait un endroit qui convienne il le dirait
If he knew of a place which would be suitable he would say so

Connaisssez-vous un endroit qui convienne?
Do you know of a place which would be suitable?

Je ne connais personne qui puisse m'aider
I know no-one who can help me

Quelles que soient les circonstances qui puissent expliquer son erreur, je ne peux pas la lui pardonner
Whatever the circumstances which might explain his mistake, I can't forgive him
### TABLE 15.A Summary of major relative clause types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head of clause</th>
<th>Function in clause</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>See section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>l'homme</td>
<td>subject (± animate)</td>
<td>qui</td>
<td>l'homme qui conduit</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l'autobus</td>
<td>direct object (± animate)</td>
<td>que</td>
<td>l'autobus que je conduis</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une maladie</td>
<td>object of <em>de</em> (± animate)</td>
<td>dont</td>
<td>une maladie dont il est mort</td>
<td>15.6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une maison</td>
<td>same (± animate)</td>
<td>dont</td>
<td>une maison dont la porte est fermée</td>
<td>15.6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le touriste</td>
<td>object (+ animate) of a preposition</td>
<td>à qui</td>
<td>le touriste à qui j’ai parlé</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le texte</td>
<td>object (-animate) of a preposition</td>
<td>auquel</td>
<td>le texte auquel il fait référence</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un écrivain</td>
<td>object (+ animate) of a preposition in a prepositional phrase</td>
<td>à la vie duquel</td>
<td>un écrivain à la vie duquel il s’intéresse</td>
<td>15.6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un blazer</td>
<td>object (- animate) of a preposition in a prepositional phrase</td>
<td>dans la poche duquel</td>
<td>un blazer dans la poche duquel il y a une lettre</td>
<td>15.6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la ville</td>
<td>place adverb</td>
<td>où</td>
<td>la ville où je vis</td>
<td>15.7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le jour</td>
<td>time adverb (definite)</td>
<td>où</td>
<td>le jour où elle est partie</td>
<td>15.7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un jour</td>
<td>time adverb (indefinite)</td>
<td>que</td>
<td>un jour que je sortais</td>
<td>15.7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rien, ce, quelque chose, clause</td>
<td>object of a preposition</td>
<td>sur quoi</td>
<td>rien, ce, quelque chose sur quoi on peut compter</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-specific head</td>
<td>subject or object (+ animate)</td>
<td>celui qui/que</td>
<td>j’ai vu celui qui est sorti</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-specific head</td>
<td>subject (- animate)</td>
<td>ce qui</td>
<td>je ferai ce qui me plaît</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-specific head</td>
<td>object (- animate)</td>
<td>ce que</td>
<td>je crois ce qu’elle dit</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-specific head</td>
<td>object of a preposition</td>
<td>ce preposition quoi</td>
<td>il se moque de ce en quoi j’ai confiance</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16 Negation

16.1 Introduction

French sentences can be negated by using one of the following expressions:

- ne ... aucun: not any, none
- ne ... guère: hardly
- ne ... jamais: not ever, never
- ne ... ni ... ni: neither ... nor
- ne ... nul: not any, none
- ne ... pas: not
- ne ... personne: not anyone, no-one, nobody
- ne ... plus: not any more, no longer
- ne ... que: only
- ne ... rien: not anything, nothing

Although ne ... guère and ne ... que are not strictly negators - they are adverbs - they have similar distributional properties to the other negators, and so we include them in this chapter.

NB: the expression ne ... point 'not' is no longer used productively in modern French. It is used only in written French by writers who want to create an archaic or regional tone.

Individual words and phrases can be negated by placing the particles pas, aucun, jamais, rien, personne (without ne) in front of them. For example: un après-midi pas comme les autres 'an afternoon unlike others'; jamais de ma vie 'never in my life'; rien d’intéressant 'nothing interesting'; and so on.

16.2 Location of sentence negators

16.2.1 With verbs marked for tense

In all cases where sentences are negated, the element ne (if it is present: see 16.4) comes before the verb which is marked for tense in that sentence, and before any unstressed object pronouns which are in front of the verb:

- Je ne dors pas chez moi ce soir: I'm not sleeping at my place tonight
- Je n'ai pas dormi chez moi hier soir: I didn't sleep at my place last night
- Je ne l'entendais pas: I didn't hear him
- Il ne le lui a jamais envoyé: He didn't ever send it to her
- Elle n'a rien voulu me raconter: She didn't want to tell me anything
The location of the second element - *pas, jamais, rien, personne*, etc. - varies, however. While all these negative particles immediately follow a main verb when no auxiliary is present:

- Il ne me regardait pas (He wasn't watching me)
- La boîte ne contenait que des bonbons (There were only sweets in the box)
- Ça ne donne aucun plaisir (That's not at all enjoyable)
- Il ne mangeait jamais le soir (He never used to eat in the evenings)

In compound tenses (i.e. when the auxiliary *avoir* or *être* is present), *guère, jamais, pas, plus, rien* immediately follow the auxiliary verb:

- Il n'en a pas voulu (He didn't want any of it)
- Je n'ai jamais vu la mer (I have never seen the sea)
- Elle n'a plus voulu continuer (She didn't want to continue)
- Je ne l'ai guère connue (I hardly knew her)
- On ne m'a rien pris (They didn't take anything from me)

By contrast, *personne* behaves just like an object, an indirect object or the object of a preposition:

- Je n'ai vu personne (I didn't see anyone)
- Il n'a parlé à personne (He didn't speak to anyone)
- Elle n'est sortie avec personne (She didn't go out with anyone)

And *aucun* precedes an object, an indirect object or the object of a preposition:

- Ils n'ont vendu aucun tableau (They didn't sell a single picture)
- Je ne le vendrais à aucun prix (I wouldn't sell it at any price)
- Il n'a confiance en aucun autre que lui-même (He doesn't trust anyone else but himself)

**NB:** *nul* is only used in formal French. (See 16.8.)

The location of *que* and *ni* varies depending on the intended meaning:

- Il ne se permet un whisky qu’après avoir fini son travail
  *He only allows himself a whisky after he has finished his work*
- Il ne se permet qu’un whisky après avoir fini son travail
  *He only allows himself one whisky after he has finished his work*
- Elle ne m’a ni vu ni entendu
  *She neither saw me nor heard me*
- Elle n’a vu ni lui ni sa femme
  *She saw neither him nor his wife*
- Je n’ai écrit de lettre ni à sa mère ni à son notaire
  *I wrote a letter neither to her mother nor to her solicitor*

**NB:** *Je ne fais que, tu ne fais que, il ne fait que, etc. mean T do nothing but, you do nothing but, he does nothing but' etc.: Il ne fait que mentir/travailler/se plaindre, etc. 'He does nothing but lie/work/complain', etc.*

### 16.2.2 With infinitives

Where the verb in a negated sentence is an infinitive, *ne and guère, jamais, pas, plus, rien* normally both precede the infinitive:
J'ai dormi au bureau, de manière à ne pas perdre de temps
I slept at the office so as not to waste any time

J'étais le seul à ne jamais boire d'alcool
I was the only one never to drink

Il pense ne plus croire en Dieu
He thinks he doesn't believe in God any more

Elle donnait l'impression de ne guère s'intéresser à mes activités
She gave the impression of hardly being interested in my activities

Il a envie de ne rien faire de la journée
He feels like doing nothing all day

Both elements of the negation also usually precede an infinitive auxiliary verb (avoir or être):

J'étais certain de ne pas avoir laissé de linge à sécher sur le radiateur
I was certain I hadn't left any underwear drying on the radiator

J'espère ne rien avoir oublié
I hope I haven't forgotten anything

For some speakers, however, the second element of the negation in these cases can optionally follow the auxiliary, without any change in the meaning:

J'étais certain de n'avoir pas laissé de linge ...
J'espère n'avoir rien oublié

In the case of ne ... aucun, ne ... nul, ne ... personne, the second component follows the verbal elements:

Je voudrais ne voir personne
I would like to see no-one

Elle me reprochait de n'avoir écrit à personne
She blamed me for not having written to anyone

Ils ont déclaré n'avoir eu aucune intention de le faire
They declared that they had no intention of doing it

Il s'étonnait de n'avoir ressenti nul désir de le faire
He was surprised not to have felt any desire to do it

que and ni ... ni also follow the verb in infinitives, but their location varies depending on the intended meaning:

Je voudrais ne voir que Jean deux ou trois fois par semaine
I would like to see only Jean two or three times a week

Je voudrais ne voir Jean que deux ou trois fois par semaine
I would like to see Jean only two or three times a week

Elle espère ne rencontrer ni lui ni sa sœur
She hopes to meet neither him nor his sister

Elle espère ne rencontrer son voisin ni au marché ni au café
She hopes to meet her neighbour neither at the market nor in the café

NB: Verbs in clauses dependent on negated clauses take the subjunctive:
Ce n’est pas que je suis particulièrement timide
It’s not that I’m particularly shy

Je ne connais personne qui mette autant d’acharnement à réussir
I don’t know anyone (else) who puts so much energy into succeeding

(See Chapter 11.1.8.)

16.3 Order of negators in multiple negation

Two or more of jamais, pas, personne, plus, rien, and so on, may be combined quite acceptably in French to produce a multiple negation. The normal ordering of these elements is as indicated in the following tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ne ...</th>
<th>Pas</th>
<th>Past participle or infinitive</th>
<th>Que</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Il n’y a pas que des héros dans l’armée</td>
<td>There aren’t only heroes in the army</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il n’a pas écrit que des contes de fées</td>
<td>He didn’t only write fairy stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ne ...</th>
<th>Jamais guère</th>
<th>Plus</th>
<th>Rien</th>
<th>Past participle or infinitive</th>
<th>Personne</th>
<th>Que</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On ne le verra jamais plus écrit</td>
<td>We’ll never see him again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On n’en verra jamais rien écrit</td>
<td>We’ll never see anything of it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On n’en verra plus rien écrit</td>
<td>We won’t see anything more of it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On n’en verra jamais plus rien écrit</td>
<td>We won’t see anything more of it ever again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle n’a jamais plus rien écrit qu’une brochure de publicité</td>
<td>She never wrote anything again except an advertising brochure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle n’a jamais personne écrit</td>
<td>She never wrote anything again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle n’a jamais rien écrit</td>
<td>She wrote nothing again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle n’a plus rien écrit</td>
<td>She never wrote anything again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle n’a jamais plus personne écrit</td>
<td>She never wrote anything again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ça n’impressionnera jamais personne</td>
<td>That will never impress anyone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ça n’impressionnera plus personne</td>
<td>That won’t impress anyone any more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ça n’impressionnera jamais plus personne</td>
<td>That will never impress anyone again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il n’a jamais critiqué personne</td>
<td>He never criticized anyone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il n’a plus critiqué personne</td>
<td>He didn’t criticize anyone again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il n’a jamais plus critiqué personne</td>
<td>He didn’t ever criticize anyone again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle n’a guère plus écrit après son deuil</td>
<td>She hardly ever wrote again after her bereavement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Plus jamais! Never again!

16.4 Omission of ne in sentence negation

It is very common in modern spoken French for speakers to omit the ne of ne ... pas, and to a lesser extent the ne of other negative expressions, except in the
most formal of styles:

C'est pas vrai
J'ai pas eu le temps de le faire
Je sais pas
Elle l'avait pas lu

It's not true
I didn't have time to do it
I don't know
She hadn't read it

16.5 Order of negative elements in questions and imperatives

The location and ordering of negative elements in questions and imperatives are the same as in declaratives:

Tu ne dors pas chez toi ce soir
Ne dors-tu pas chez toi ce soir?

Aren't you sleeping at your house tonight?

Il n'a jamais vu la mer
N'a-t-il jamais vu la mer?

Hasn't he ever seen the sea?

On ne lui avait rien appris
Ne lui avait-on rien appris?

Had they taught him nothing?

Elle n'avait vu personne
N'avait-elle vu personne?

Had she seen no-one?

Taquine-le!
Ne le taquine pas!

Don't tease him!

Fais ça!
Ne fais jamais ça!

Never do that!

Touchez quelque chose!
Ne touchez rien!

Don't touch anything!

Présentez-lui quelqu'un!
Ne lui présentez personne!

Don't introduce anyone to him!

(For the ordering of pronouns in affirmative and negative imperatives see Chapter 3.2.31.)

16.6 ne ... pas

16.6.1 Negating sentences

ne ... pas translates English 'not' (for the omission of ne see 16.4):

Ce n'est pas vrai
Je ne me rappelle pas les circonstances
Je n'ai pas eu le temps de comprendre
Ça fait/Voilà longtemps qu'on ne s'est pas vu

It's not true
I don't remember the circumstances
I didn't have time to understand
It's been a long time since we saw each other

NB: ne ..., point 'not' is an archaic form which is still found in some regional varieties of French as an equivalent of ne ... pas. Some writers use it to give a regional or archaic flavour to their writing.
After ne ... pas, any indefinite article (i.e. one of un(e), du, de la, des) preceding a direct object becomes de:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elle a écrit une lettre</td>
<td>She wrote a letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle n'a pas écrit de lettre</td>
<td>She didn't write a letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On lui a fait du mal</td>
<td>They didn't do him any harm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils cultivent les fraises</td>
<td>They didn't grow strawberries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il ne cultive pas de fraises</td>
<td>He doesn't grow strawberries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where un(e) appears before a direct object after ne ... pas it means 'not one', (rather than 'not a'):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On n'entendait pas un bruit dehors</td>
<td>We couldn't hear a single noise outside</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See Chapter 2.5.)

pas un(e) followed by a noun can function as the subject of a negative sentence. Note the presence of ne:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pas un brin d'herbe ne bougeait dans la prairie</td>
<td>Not a blade of grass stirred on the plain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where du, de la, des appear before a direct object after ne ... pas, they are instances of de + definite article (and not indefinite articles):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elle n'a pas parlé du mal qu'on lui a fait</td>
<td>She didn't speak of the harm they did him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il ne s'occupe pas des fraises à présent</td>
<td>He isn't busy with the strawberries at the moment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See Chapter 2.5.)

When adverbs are located sentence-internally in sentences negated by ne ... pas, they usually appear immediately before pas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Il ne savait visiblement pas que faire de son grand corps</td>
<td>You could see that he didn't know what to do with his big frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je ne l'entendais même pas'</td>
<td>I didn't even hear him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je ne l'ai toujours pas compris</td>
<td>I still don't understand him</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: davantage 'more' used in conjunction with ne ... pas has a similar meaning to ne ... plus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J'ai fait un effort pour ne pas dépenser davantage</td>
<td>I made an effort not to spend any more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16.6.2 Omission of pas
In written French the pas of ne ... pas may be omitted with a small number of verbs.

With *cesser de + infinitive*

Elle ne cessait de répéter que c’était de sa faute
She went on repeating that it was her fault

With *savoir followed by a question word like quoi, comment*

Je ne sais comment ils se débrouillent
I don’t know how they manage

Il y avait un je ne sais quoi de douceur dans l’air
There was a hint of mildness in the air

NB: *ne + savoir* in the conditional means 'wouldn’t know how to', 'couldn’t':
*On ne saurait trop vous remercier 'We wouldn’t know how to thank you'. Il ne saurait vous expliquer pourquoi 'He couldn’t explain why to you'.*

With *oser + infinitive*

Il n’osa refuser de le faire
He didn’t dare refuse to do it

Elle n’osa demander un second cognac
She dared not ask for a second brandy

With *pouvoir + infinitive*

Elle ne pouvait se l’expliquer
She couldn’t explain it to herself

Je ne puis accepter cette décision
I can’t accept this decision

*pas* is sometimes also omitted after interrogative *qui, que, quel*, after hypothetical *si*, after some sentence initial adverbs, and in the expressions *n’importe qui, n’importe quoi:*

Qui ne serait ému dans ces circonstances?
Who wouldn’t be moved in these circumstances?

Que ne donnerait-il pour une bière?
What wouldn’t he give for a beer?

Quel homme n’en serait fier?
What man wouldn’t be proud of it?

C’est Pierre, si je ne me trompe
It’s Pierre, unless I’m mistaken

N’importe qui pourrait le faire
Anyone could do it

J’inventerai n’importe quoi pour faire plus vrai
I’ll make up anything to make it sound more realistic

16.6.3 Negating words and phrases
*pas* alone is used to negate words or phrases which do not contain verbs.

Nouns

Je ne garde rien d’elle. Même pas une mèche de cheveux
I keep nothing of hers. Not even a lock of hair

Il lui posa une question. Pas de réponse
He asked her a question. No reply
Je le ferai. Pas de problème
I'll do it. No problem

Adjectives
Les autres la considéraient comme une fille pas bavarde
The others considered her to be a quiet girl
Il avait une intonation chantante pas déplaisante
He spoke in a singsong voice, not unpleasant

Adverbs
J’habite pas loin de la mer
I live not far from the sea
C’était un bel après-midi. Un après-midi pas tout à fait comme les autres
It was a fine afternoon. An afternoon not entirely like the others

Conjunctions
Il me regardait; pas comme un frère, plutôt comme un juge
He watched me; not as a brother, more as a judge

16.6.4 Use of non and non pas to negate words and phrases
non can be an equivalent for pas for negating adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions in formal French (although pas is more often used even in formal styles):

un supplément non compris
something extra which is not included

habiter non loin de la mer
to live not far from the sea

non comme un frère
not as a brother

NB: non or pas are equally likely in formal French in expressions like:
Prêt ou non, je pars/Prêt ou pas, je pars, 'Ready or not, I'm leaving'. But if the negated item is repeated, pas is more usual: Prêt ou pas prêt, je pars.

non is often used when it is combined with mais in the expression non X ... mais (aussi):

Je l’ai fait non (pas) pour arranger quelqu’un d’autre mais pour ma propre convenance
I did it not to suit someone else, but to suit myself

Elle aimerait visiter non seulement le château mais aussi le parc
She would like to visit not only the chateau but also the park

On entendait non plus la mer, mais le chuchotement du vent dans les arbres
One no longer heard the sea, but the rustling in the trees

non or non pas may negate an infinitive which is contrasted with an affirmative infinitive:

Il faut travailler pour vivre, et non (pas) vivre pour travailler
One has to work to live and not live to work

non (pas) que is a conjunction which introduces subordinate clauses in which the verb is in the subjunctive:

Il a parlé de Besançon; non (pas) qu’il veuille y aller
He spoke about Besançon; not that he wants to go there
non, pas and non pas are interchangeable in formal French when a contrast is drawn between a positive and negative statement:

Il est Gallois et non pas non pas [ Anglais

16.7 ne ... que

ne ... que translates English 'only' (for the omission of ne see 16.4):

Ce n’est qu’après qu’il l’a remarqué
He only noticed it afterwards

Je ne le vois qu’une fois par semaine
I only see him once a week

Il n’y avait qu’une explication
There was only one explanation

Les autres n’étaient là que pour lui fournir ce dont il avait besoin
The others were only there to provide him with what he needed

In combination with other negators like pas, jamais, plus, personne, ne ... que can take on various meanings:

Il n’y a pas que des héros dans l’armée
There aren’t just heroes in the army

Elle n’avait jamais parlé à un agent de police que pour demander un renseignement
She had never spoken to a policeman except to ask for directions

Il ne me reste plus que trois traites à payer
I’ve only got three more instalments to pay

16.8 ne ... aucun(e), ne ... nul(le)

ne ... aucun(e), ne ... nul(le) translate English 'no', 'none' (for the omission of ne see 16.4):

Il n’a eu aucune (nulle) hésitation à proposer son aide
He had no hesitation in offering to help

Except for the expression ne ... nulle part ‘nowhere’, ne ... nul(le) is very formal. ne ... aucun(e) is found in both written and spoken French, but tends to be replaced by pas in informal spoken French:

Il n’a pas eu d’hésitation à proposer son aide

Only aucun(e) and not nul(le) may be followed by a prepositional complement:

Je ne connais aucune de ses amies I know none of her friends
Je n’en connais aucune I don’t know any of them
(NOT *Je ne connais nulle de ses amies/Je n’en connais nulle)

Both aucun(e) and nul(le) are rare in the plural. Instead one would use pas de or sans:
Il n'a pas d'amis/Il est sans amis  He has no friends

*aucun(e)* can negate direct objects, indirect objects, objects of prepositions and subjects:

Ça n'avait aucun sens  That made no sense
Il n'a parlé à aucun des trois  He didn't speak to any of the three
Aucune voiture américaine n'était signalée en cavale  No American car had been reported
Aucun de nous n'est entré là-bas  None of us entered there
Aucun n'est entré  None went in

*aucun(e)* may be used alone as a response to a question:

Combien reste-t-il d'oranges sanguines? Aucune
How many Mood oranges are left? None

The adverbs *aucunement, nullement* are formal equivalents of the expression common in spoken French: *pas du tout* 'not at all':

Elle n'en est aucunement/nullement/pas du tout fière
She is not at all proud of it

NB: *null(le)* is also an adjective with the meaning 'zero', 'nil'. In this use it is found in all styles of French:

Les risques sont nuls  The risks are nil
Nuls points  No points
Elle est nulle en orthographe  She is useless at spelling
Match nul  A draw

*Nul* is also used in formal, legal texts, etc.:

Nul n'est censé ignorer la loi
Ignorance of the law is no excuse

16.9  *ne ... jamais*

*ne ... jamais* translates English 'not ever', 'never' (for the omission of *ne* see 16.4):

Il ne mangeait jamais le soir  He never ate in the evenings
Je n'ai jamais vu la mer  I have never seen the sea

Like English 'never', *jamais* may sometimes be located at the beginning of the sentence, but without the subject-verb inversion of English:

Jamais je n'ai vu autant d'algues
Never have I seen so much seaweed
Jamais plus elle ne serait tout à fait elle-même
Never again would she be quite herself

After *ne ... jamais* any indefinite article (i.e. one of *un(e), du, de la, des*) preceding a direct object becomes *de*:

Y ai de la monnaie  I have change
Je n'ai jamais de monnaie  I never have change
Elle porte un casque  Elle ne porte jamais de casque  
She wears a helmet  She never wears a helmet  

(See Chapter 2.5.)

*jamais* can be used without *ne* with the meaning 'never':

C'est maintenant ou jamais

Es-tu allé à Rennes? *Jamais*

In formal French it can also be interpreted as 'ever' in questions, hypothetical sentences or comparisons:

As-tu jamais envisagé le suicide?

*Je n'ai d'ailleurs jamais parlé à personne*  
*What's more, I've never spoken to anyone*  

Je ne la vois pratiquement jamais  
*I hardly ever see her*

16.10 *ne ... plus*

*ne ... plus* translates English 'no longer', 'not any more' (for the omission of *ne* see 16.4):

Elle ne savait plus pourquoi elle était sur cette route  
*She no longer knew why she was on this road*  

Soudain, je n'en peux plus  
*Suddenly I can't take any more*  

Elle n'a plus travaillé après la naissance de sa fille  
*She didn't work again after the birth of her daughter*  

**NB:** *ne ... pas plus* is NOT the French for 'not any more', *ne ... pas plus* means 'not more than'. Compare:

Elle ne semblait pas avoir plus de vingt ans  
*She didn't appear to be more than 20*  

Elle ne semblait plus avoir vingt ans  
*She didn't seem to be 20 any more*  

After *ne ... plus*, any indefinite article (i.e. one of *un(e)*, *du*, *de la*, *des*) preceding a direct object becomes *de*:

J'ai un crayon  
*I have a pencil*  

Je n'ai plus de crayon  
*I don't have a pencil any more*
Elle vend du lait  Elle ne vend plus de lait
She sells milk  She doesn't sell milk any more

When adverbs are located sentence-internally in sentences negated by *ne ... plus*, they usually appear immediately before *plus*:

Je ne me rappelle même plus ce qu'il racontait
I don't even remember what he was saying

*plus de* + noun can mean 'no more':

plus de pain, **merci**  no more bread, thanks
plus de place!  no (more) room
Je me suis retournée: plus de valise  I turned round: my suitcase had disappeared

non *plus* is typically used in conjunction with one of the other negators to translate English 'either', 'neither' or 'nor':

Il ne mangeait jamais le soir, ni sa femme non plus
He never ate in the evenings, and neither did his wife

Ce n'est pas non plus que je sois particulièrement timide
It's not that I'm particularly shy either

Il ne pouvait pas non plus reporter son rendez-vous avec ce client-là
Nor could he postpone his meeting with that particular customer

Il n'avait jamais non plus levé la main sur qui que ce soit
Neither had he ever raised his hand to anyone

Elle fouilla dans la boîte à gants. Rien non plus
She rummaged in the glove compartment. Nothing there either

Pour son fils non plus, ça n'allait pas fort
Things weren't going well for his son either

**16.1 ne ... guère**

*ne ... guère* translates English 'hardly', and is an equivalent of the adverb *à peine*, which is used without a preceding *ne*:

On ne parlait guère
On hardly spoke

Cette histoire n'avait guère semblé croyable
This story had hardly seemed credible

After *ne ... guère* any indefinite article (i.e. one of *un(e), du, de la, des*) preceding a direct object becomes *de*:

Il y a des visiteurs  II n'y a guère de visiteurs
There are visitors  There are hardly any visitors

NB: *à peine* cannot be followed by a plural noun phrase: NOT *il y a à peine des visiteurs.*
guère may stand alone as a response to a question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many did you buy?</td>
<td>Combien en avez-vous acheté?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly any</td>
<td>Guère (à peine quelques-uns)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16.12 ne ... rien

ne ... rien translates English 'nothing', 'not anything' (for the omission of ne see 16.4). rien itself may be a direct object, the object of a preposition, or the subject of the sentence. When it is a direct object it is located immediately after the verb marked for tense:

- On ne m’a rien pris
  - Nothing was taken from me
- Je ne sais rien prévoir
  - I am incapable of planning anything

When it is the object of a preposition it is located in the normal position for prepositional phrases:

- Cela n’a abouti à rien
  - That led to nothing
- Je n’avais besoin de rien
  - I needed nothing
- Je ne serais retourné chez moi pour rien au monde
  - I wouldn’t have gone back for anything

When it is a subject it appears in subject position:

- Rien ne lui faisait mal
  - Nothing did him any harm
- Rien ne différenciait ce jour des autres
  - Nothing distinguished that day from the others
- Rien ne m’avait échappé
  - Nothing had escaped me

NB: Je n’en sais rien means 'I haven’t a clue'.

Expressions like 'nothing interesting', 'nothing else' are rendered in French by rien + de + adjective:

- Il n’y a là rien d’important
  - It’s nothing important

When rien + de + adjective functions as a direct object with a verb in a compound tense, rien follows the verb marked for tense:

- Il ne dit rien d’intéressant
  - He doesn’t say anything interesting
- Je n’ai rien trouvé d’intéressant
  - I found nothing interesting
- Il ne m’a rien dit de surprenant
  - He said nothing surprising to me

However, when the rien + de + adjective functions as anything other than a direct object, it is not split in this way:

- Je n’ai pensé à rien d’intéressant à faire
  - I didn’t think of anything interesting to do
- Rien d’autre n’est arrivé
  - Nothing else happened

NB: the adjective remains invariably masculine in these constructions.
When adverbs are located sentence-internally in sentences negated by *ne ... rien*, and where *rien* is the direct object, they usually appear immediately in front of *rien*:

Il n’y aura probablement rien pour moi à la maison

*There would probably be nothing for me at home*

*rien* can stand alone (without *ne*) with the meaning 'nothing':

*Qu’est-ce que vous voyez? Rien*  
*What do you see? Nothing*

*C'est mieux que rien*  
*It's better than nothing*

*C’est un rien*  
*It's nothing*

In formal French it can also be interpreted as 'anything' in questions or hypothetical sentences:

*Avez-vous rien d’intéressant à lire?*  
*Have you anything interesting to read?*

*Elle est partie avant que j’aie rien dit*  
*She left before I said anything*

16.13  *ne ... personne*

*ne ... personne* translates English 'no-one', 'not anybody' (for omission of *ne* see 16.4). Like *rien*, *personne* can function as a direct object, the object of a preposition or the subject of the sentence. Unlike *rien*, when it is a direct object it appears in the normal position for direct objects:

*Elle ne rencontre personne en dehors du bureau*  
*She doesn’t meet anyone outside the office*

*Je n’ai vu personne*  
*I saw no-one*

*Ça, vous ne pourrez le faire croire à personne*  
*As far as that goes, you won’t be able to make anyone believe it*

*Ils ne l’ont fait avec personne*  
*They didn’t do it with anyone*

*Personne n’était en vacances, sauf moi*  
*Nobody was on holiday except me*

*personne* may take an adjective complement preceded by *de*:

*Je n’ai vu personne de louche*  
*I saw nobody suspicious*

*Personne d’étranger ne s’était présenté au bureau*  
*Nobody foreign had come to the office*

**NB:** the adjective is invariably masculine in these constructions.

*personne* can stand alone (without *ne*) with the meaning 'no-one', 'nobody':

*Qui a frappé? Personne*  
*Who knocked? Nobody*

In formal French it can also be interpreted as 'anyone' in questions, hypothetical sentences or comparisons:
As-tu rencontré personne?
*Did you meet anyone?*

Je le sais mieux que personne
*I know it better than anyone*

**16.14 ne ... ni ... ni**

*ne ... ni ... ni* translates English 'neither ... nor'. The *ni ... ni* elements can range over subjects:

Ni le cafetier ni sa femme n’étaient au courant
*Neither the café owner nor his wife knew about it*

over direct objects:

Elle n’a apporté ni bloc-notes ni stylo
*She brought neither note pad nor pen*

over prepositional phrases:

Il n’avait posé de question ni à son père ni à sa mère
*He had asked neither his mother nor his father a question*

Elle n’a répondu ni d’un mot ni d’un signe
*She replied neither verbally nor with a gesture*

over participles and adjectives:

Je n’ai ni vu ni entendu la querelle
*I neither saw nor heard the argument*

Elle n’est ni heureuse ni malheureuse
*She is neither happy nor unhappy*

Where two verbs marked for tense are involved, the phrase *ne ... ni ne ...* is used:

Je ne comprends ni n’accepte un tel comportement
*I neither understand nor accept such behaviour*

Where, in English, a negation is followed by 'or', or 'nor', or 'and', *ni* is used in French:

Ils ne voulaient accepter ni chèque, ni carte, ni liquide
*They wouldn’t take a cheque, a credit card or cash*

Il ne mangeait jamais le soir, ni sa femme
*He never ate in the evenings, nor did his wife*

Rien ni personne n’était encore trahi
*Nothing and no-one had yet been betrayed*

*ni* is similarly used with the meaning 'or' or 'nor' after *sans*:

Le voyage aurait été impossible sans carte ni boussole
*The journey would have been impossible without a map or a compass*

Je fais ce qu’elle faisait mais sans son talent, ni sa chance
*I do what she did but without her talent or her good luck*
16.15 *sans* used with other negators

Negators like *aucun(e), jamais, plus, rien, personne* take on the meanings 'any', 'ever', 'again', 'anything', 'anyone' when used in conjunction with *sans*:

- *sans aucune hésitation*  
  without any hesitation
- *sans jamais reculer*  
  without ever retreating
- *sans plus se mettre en colère*  
  without getting angry again
- *sans rien dire*  
  without saying anything
- *sans déranger personne*  
  without disturbing anyone

16.16 *ne* used alone

There are a number of contexts in which *ne* can be used alone. All of them are found in only the most formal of written styles. In less formal styles the *ne* is simply absent:

In fixed expressions (found only in formal styles)

- *à Dieu ne plaise!*  
  God forbid!
- *Il n'a eu garde de se montrer*  
  He carefully refrained from showing his face

In clauses dependent on comparatives

- *Il se porte moins bien que je (ne) pensais*  
  His health is less good than I thought
- *Il est tout autre qu'on (ne) croit*  
  He is quite different from what one imagines
- *La vie est plus chère qu'elle (n')était il y a un an*  
  The cost of living is higher than it was a year ago

In clauses dependent on verbs which express fear, like *craindre, avoir peur que, redouter que, appréhender que*

- *Je crains qu'il (ne) vienne*  
  I'm afraid that he will come

NB: when the verb of fearing is itself negated, *ne* is possible in the dependent clause only if the main clause is a question: *Je ne crains pas qu'il vienne* 'I'm not afraid that he'll come'; *Ne craignez-vous pas qu'il (ne) vienne?* 'Aren't you afraid that he will come?'

In clauses dependent on verbs which express some kind of prevention, like *empêcher que, éviter que, prendre garde que*

- *Mets-lui un bonnet pour éviter qu'il (ne) prenne froid*  
  Put his bonnet on to stop him catching cold

After the conjunctions *à moins que, avant que, sans que*

- *Sans qu'ils (ne) sachent*  
  Without them knowing

In clauses dependent on some verbs expressing doubt or denial which are themselves negated or questioned, like *douter que, ignorer que, nier que*

- *Je ne doute pas qu'il (ne) soit intelligent*  
  I don't doubt that he's intelligent
Personne n'ignore qu'elle (n')ait été la cause de ses malheurs  
*Nobody is unaware that she has been the cause of her own misfortunes*

Niera-t-on qu'il (n')ait commis une faute?  
*Will it be denied that he has made a mistake?*

In clauses dependent on the expressions *il s'en faut que, peu s'en faut que*

Il s'en faut de beaucoup qu'il (n')ait réussi  
*He is far from having succeeded*
Conjunctions and other linking constructions

17.1 Introduction
All languages have devices for linking words, phrases and clauses into more complex structures. This chapter deals with the linking function of conjunctions, past participles, present participles and gerunds.

17.2 Coordinating conjunctions

| Table 17.A |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Conjunction | Translation | Comments |
| et | and | Where coordinating conjunctions link two clauses, the verb in the second clause is always in the indicative, e.g. il y avait des bals, mais on ne pouvait pas danser 'There were dances, but we weren’t able to dance'. |
| et ... et | both ... and | |
| mais | but | |
| ou | or | |
| ou ... ou soit ... soit | either ... or | |
| puis | then | means ‘(first) X then Y’ |
| car | for (because) | mainly used in written French |
| or | now | a logical connector (mainly used in written and formal spoken French) - see 17.2.1 |

Coordinating conjunctions link words, phrases or clauses into more complex structures:

Le concours est ouvert aux garçons et aux filles
*The competition is open to boys and girls*

l’inviterai et lui et sa sœur
*I’ll invite both him and his sister*
Il y avait des bals, mais on ne pouvait pas danser
There were dances, but we weren't able to dance

Laisse-moi tranquille ou je te reprends ton argent de poche
Give me some peace or I'll take your pocket money back

Il arrivera soit demain soit après-demain
He will arrive either tomorrow, or the day after

J'ai allumé une cigarette, puis je suis descendu à l'étage du dessous
I lit a cigarette, then went down to the floor below

Je ne comprenais pas sa question, car cela ne correspondait guère à sa personnalité
I did not understand his question, for it was hardly in keeping with his character

Or, il se trouve que le connaissais déjà
Now, it so happened that I already knew him

Coordinating conjunctions differ from subordinating conjunctions (see 17.3) in that they, and the word, phrase or clause they introduce, cannot be placed at the front of the sentence, whereas subordinating conjunctions usually can. Compare car 'for' (a coordinating conjunction) with parce que 'because' (a subordinating conjunction close in meaning):

Il est heureux, car il est riche  
He is happy, for he is rich  

*Car il est riche, il est heureux
For he is rich, he is happy

Il est heureux, parce qu'il est riche
He is happy because he is rich

Parce qu'il est riche, il est heureux
Because he is rich, he is happy

Coordinating conjunctions never introduce clauses in which the verb is in the subjunctive, whereas a number of subordinating conjunctions do (see 17.3.8).

17.2.1 or

or 'now' is a conjunction which marks the next step in a narrative or a logical argument:

Or, Jean était déjà marié lorsqu'il a rencontré Suzanne
Now, Jean was already married when he met Suzanne

Tous les hommes sont mortels; or, le Roi est un homme; donc le Roi est mortel
All men are mortal; (now,) the King is a man; therefore the King is mortal

'now' in English can function as a coordinating conjunction (as above), a subordinating conjunction of time, and a time adverb. The subordinating conjunction of time function is fulfilled in French by maintenant que (see 17.3.1). The time adverb function is translated in French by maintenant (or alors if 'now' refers to an event in the past):

Jean est maintenant marié
Jean is now married

Jean était alors marié
Jean was now (= then) married
17.3 Subordinating conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions introduce an item (usually a clause) which is dependent on another clause (for the use of subordinating conjunctions with infinitives see 17.6):

Il est heureux, parce qu'il est riche  
*He is happy because he is rich*

Je continue à dire 'chez nous', bien que la maison ne nous appartienne plus  
*I continue to say 'at our house', although the house no longer belongs to us*

Comme il n'arrête pas de se plaindre, je l'évite le plus possible  
*As he does nothing but complain, I avoid him as much as possible*

Some introduce clauses in which the verb is in the indicative (as *parce que* and *comme* above). Others introduce verbs in the subjunctive (like *bien que*).

### 17.3.1 Subordinating conjunctions of time followed by the indicative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>après que</td>
<td>after</td>
<td><em>après que</em> may sometimes be heard followed by a verb in the subjunctive, by analogy with <em>avant que</em> (see 17.3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aussitôt que</td>
<td>as soon as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dès que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sitôt que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dès lors que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aussi longtemps que</td>
<td>as long as</td>
<td>Substitute another adverb for <em>longtemps</em> to create similar conjunctions: <em>aussi vite que</em>, <em>aussi peu que</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chaque fois que</td>
<td>every time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toutes les fois que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depuis que</td>
<td>since</td>
<td>Understood as 'from the time when'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maintenant que</td>
<td>now</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pendant que</td>
<td>while, as</td>
<td>Understood as 'during the time when'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quand lorsque</td>
<td>when</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tant que</td>
<td>while, as</td>
<td>Understood as 'the whole time while'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une fois que</td>
<td>once</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subordinating conjunctions

Après que sa femme est morte, il a déménagé
After his wife died, he moved house

Sitôt que je serai rentré, je te téléphonerai
As soon as I get home, I will phone you

On jouera aussi longtemps que tu veux
Well play as long as you wish

Toutes les fois que nous lui téléphonons, elle est sortie
Every time we phone her, she's out

Depuis qu'il est chez nous, il est de plus en plus épanoui
Since he has been at our house, he seems more and more fulfilled

Maintenant que je suis installé, je peux me mettre au travail
Now I have settled in, I can start work

On a eu le temps de prendre un café pendant que les autres se préparaient
We had time for a coffee while the others were getting ready

Elle était déjà malade quand je l'ai connue
She was already ill when I first knew her

Tant qu'on n'aurait pas touché les dividendes de la paix, rien ne sera acquis
For as long as we haven't tasted the fruits of peace, nothing will have been achieved
(For the use of aurait touché in this context, see 17.3.2.)

Une fois qu'il a eu fait ses valises, il est descendu au bar boire une bière
Once he had packed his bags, he went down to the bar for a beer

17.3.2 Future and conditional tenses in clauses introduced by quand, lorsque, aussitôt que, dès que, sitôt que, dès lors que, tant que, après que

When subordinate clauses introduced by quand, lorsque, aussitôt que, dès que, sitôt que, dès lors que, tant que or après que are linked to main clauses in which the verb is in a future or conditional tense, the verb in the quand, lorsque, etc. clause is also in the future or conditional. This is different from English where the verb in a 'when', 'as soon as', etc. clause is usually in the present or past:

Est-ce que tu me téléphoneras quand il arrivera?
Will you telephone me when he arrives?

Dès qu'elle reviendra, j'allumerai le feu
As soon as she comes back, I will light the fire

Si on partait à midi, il ferait encore jour quand on arriverait
If we left at midday, it would still be daylight when we arrived

Where the event in the quand, lorsque, etc. clause would be translated by the perfect or pluperfect tense in English, French has the compound future or compound conditional:

Il arrivera quand je serai parti
He will arrive when I have left

S'il ne prenait pas l'avion avant mardi, il arriverait après que je serais parti
If he didn't catch the plane until Tuesday, he would arrive after I had left
**Conjunctions and other linking constructions**

Je remplirai le formulaire, aussitôt que je l’aurai reçu  
*I will fill in the form as soon as I have received it*

J’aurais rempli le formulaire aussitôt que je l’aurais reçu  
*I would have filled in the form as soon as I had received it*

More generally, when an event described in a *quand, lorsque*, etc. clause has not yet taken place, the verb is in a future or conditional tense:

Dès qu’il aura dit ‘oui’, faites-le signer  
*As soon as he says ‘yes’, get him to sign*

**17.3.3 Double compound past and compound pluperfect tenses in clauses introduced by *quand, lorsque, aussitôt que, dès que, sitôt que, dès lors que, tant que, après que***

When clauses introduced by *quand, lorsque*, etc. describe an event which takes place prior to an event described by a past-tense verb in the main clause, French can use the double compound past or the compound pluperfect in the *quand, lorsque*, etc. clause (although it is not obligatory to do so - see Chapter 10.5.3):

avoir eu + past participle  
avoir été + past participle

Aussitôt que j’ai eu fini le livre, j’ai commencé à rédiger le rapport  
*As soon as I finished the book I began to draft the report*  
(My reading of the book took place prior to my writing the report)

Quand elle a été revenue, il lui a présenté ses excuses  
*When she came back, he offered her his apologies*

When the verb in the main clause is in the compound past tense, the verb in the *quand, lorsque*, etc. clause is in the double compound past tense (as in the above examples); when the verb in the main clause is in the pluperfect, the verb in the *quand, lorsque*, etc. clause is in the compound pluperfect:

Aussitôt que j’avais eu fini le livre, j’avais commencé à rédiger le rapport  
*As soon as I had finished the book I began to draft the report*

Alternatively, one can simply use the ordinary compound past and pluperfect tenses in the *quand, lorsque, etc. clause*: *Aussitôt que j’avais fini le livre, j’ai commencé ... , Quand elle est revenue, il lui a présenté ...*

**NB:** The double compound past can also be used in main clauses when adverbs expressing urgency or speed accompany a past event:

J’ai eu vite fini le livre  
*I quickly finished the book*

Il a eu bientôt fait de lui dire ce qu’il pensait d’elle  
*He had soon told her what he thought of her*

The use of the double compound tense emphasizes the idea that the event is over and done with.

In formal styles of written French where the dominant tense is the simple past (see Chapter 10.5.2), a form of the verb called the 'past anterior' is used in the
contexts described above. The past anterior consists of the simple past forms of *avoir* or *être* and the past participle:

- Aussitôt que j'eus fini le livre, je commençai à rédiger le rapport
  - As soon as I had finished the book I began to draft the report
- Après qu'elle fut sortie, il emballa son cadeau d'anniversaire
  - After she went out he wrapped her birthday present
- l'eus vite fini le livre
  - I had quickly finished the book

### 17.3.4 Tenses with *depuis que*, *voilà/voici* . . . *que*, *il y a* . . . *que*

When *depuis que* 'since', 'for' introduces a clause describing an event whose consequences are ongoing at the time it is being reported, the tense of the verb in that clause differs systematically from English as follows:

- English perfect: French present
- English pluperfect: French imperfect

- Depuis que nous vivons ensemble, je la vois travailler tard le soir
  - *Ever since we have been living together, I have seen her working late into the evening*
  (We are still living together at the time I am reporting that she works late into the evening)

- Depuis que nous vivions ensemble, je la voyais travailler tard le soir
  - *Ever since we had been living together, I saw her working late into the evening*
  (We were still living together at the time I was reporting that she worked late into the evening)

But when *depuis que* introduces a clause describing an event which has been completed by the time it is reported, without ongoing consequences, the tenses are the same as in English:

- Depuis qu'il a fini ses études, je le vois beaucoup plus
  - *Since he has finished his studies, I see a lot more of him*
  (His studies are over at the time I am reporting seeing a lot more of him)

- Depuis qu'il avait fini ses études, je le voyais beaucoup plus
  - *Since he had finished his studies, I saw a lot more of him*
  (His studies were over at the time I was reporting that I was seeing a lot more of him)

*voilà/voici* . . . *que* and *il y a* . . . *que* which also mean 'since', 'for' when used with time expressions - *voilà plusieurs années que* . . . 'it's been several years since . . . ', *il y a/avait un mois que* . . . 'it has/had been a month since ...' — behave just like *depuis que*. When the clause introduced by these expressions describes an event whose consequences are ongoing at the time it is being reported, either the present tense or the imperfect tense is used in French where English uses, respectively, the perfect and the pluperfect:

- Voilà/voici plusieurs années qu'elle travaille tard le soir
  - *For several years now she has been working late into the evening*

- Il y avait un mois que je la connaissais
  - *I had known her for a month/It was a month since I had known her*
But when the clause describes an event which has been completed at the time it is reported, the compound past tense or the pluperfect is used:

- Voilà/voici deux ans qu'elle a arrêté de fumer  
  *It's been two years since she stopped smoking*

- Il y avait un mois qu'il avait disparu  
  *It was a month since he had disappeared*

For tenses with *depuis* as a preposition see Chapter 10.4.4.

### 17.3.5 Non-time subordinating conjunctions normally followed by the indicative

**TABLE 17.C**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ainsi</td>
<td><em>just as</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de même que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(au fur et) à mesure que à proportion que</td>
<td><em>as</em></td>
<td>With the meaning: 'all the while'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attendu que vu que étant donné que dès lors que</td>
<td><em>seeing that, given that, since</em></td>
<td><em>dès lors que</em> also has a time meaning: <em>Dès lors qu'elle a su la vérité, elle a cessé de lui faire confiance</em> 'As soon as she knew the truth, she lost confidence in him'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pour) autant que</td>
<td><em>as far as</em></td>
<td>Is sometimes followed by the subjunctive to express uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plutôt que</td>
<td><em>rather than, more than</em></td>
<td><em>ne</em> can be optionally inserted in front of the subordinate verb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Je regardais la lune de même qu'elle devait la regarder  
*I looked at the moon just as she must have been looking at it*

A mesure qu'il parlait, il s'animait  
*As he spoke he became more animated*

Vu qu'il est déjà midi, je propose qu'on reprenne après le déjeuner  
*Seeing that it is already midday, I propose that we restart after lunch*

Je délègue autant que je peux  
*I delegate as much as I can*

Pour autant que je sache, ils sont partis lundi  
*As far as I know, they left on Monday*

(My knowledge is uncertain, and so a subjunctive is used)

Il sommeille plutôt qu'il ne dort  
*He is dozing rather than sleeping*
TABLE I7.C (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>comme</td>
<td>as, like</td>
<td>Also has a time meaning: Il arrivait comme midi sonnait 'He arrived as midday was chiming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comme si</td>
<td>as if</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puisque</td>
<td>since</td>
<td>Not to be confused with depuis que - see 17.4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excepté que</td>
<td>except that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sinon que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outre que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sauf que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parce que</td>
<td>because</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comme il n'arrête pas de se plaindre, je l'évite le plus possible  
As he does nothing but complain, I avoid him as much as possible

On a eu un été comme on n'en a jamais vu  
We had a summer like we have never seen before

Elle a baissé la tête comme si elle avait honte  
She lowered her head as if she had was ashamed of something

Elle parle français puisque sa mère est Française  
She speaks French since her mother is a Frenchwoman

Elle n'avait rien à dire, sinon qu'elle avait faim  
She had nothing to say except that she was hungry

Il est resté ici parce qu'il n'avait pas l'argent du billet  
He stayed here because he didn't have the money for a ticket

TABLE I7.C (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>selon que suivant que</td>
<td>depending on whether</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si même si quand même</td>
<td>if, even if</td>
<td>For tenses with si see 17.3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tandis que alors que</td>
<td>while, whereas</td>
<td>alors que also has a time meaning: Alors qu'il se promenait dans le parc, il a rencontré un vieil ami 'While he was walking in the park, he met an old friend'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conjunctions and other linking constructions

Je prends le bus ou j'y vais en vélo, selon qu'il pleut ou qu'il fait beau
I take the bus or go on my bike, depending on whether it is raining or is fine

Si on le branche là-dessus, on peut tenir jusqu'à demain matin
If you get him going on that subject, we'll be here until tomorrow morning

Même s'il était arrivé, je n'aurais pas pu lui parler
Even if he had arrived, I couldn't have spoken to him

Quand même il m'aurait dit le contraire, ça n'aurait rien changé
Even if he had said the exact opposite, it wouldn't have changed anything

Il est blond, alors que nous deux, nous sommes bruns
He is blond, while the two of us are dark-haired

17.3.6 si and the tense to use in si clauses

There are two sz's in French which function like conjunctions. One introduces indirect questions, and can always be translated by 'whether':

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Etait-elle venue?</th>
<th>Je ne savais pas si elle était venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had she come?</td>
<td>I didn't know if/whether she had come</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Indirect questions are introduced by verbs like comprendre, demander, se demander, dire, expliquer, savoir - see Chapter 14.7). In this usage the verb in the si clause can appear in all the tenses, including future and conditional tenses:

| Je ne sais pas si elle viendra | I don't know if/whether she will come |
| On se demande si elle l'achèterait | We wonder if/whether she would buy it |

The other sz introduces hypothetical clauses:

| Je n'aurais pas écrit si j'avais pu la joindre par téléphone | I wouldn't have written if I had been able to reach her by phone |

Here sz cannot be translated by 'whether', and describes what might have happened but didn't.

The verb in hypothetical sz clauses can never appear in future or conditional tenses. Typical sequences of tenses are illustrated in Table 17.D:
TABLE 17.D  **Sequence of tenses in si clauses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main clause</th>
<th>si clause</th>
<th>si clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present, future, conditional</td>
<td>Present, imperfect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je le fais</td>
<td><em>I do it</em></td>
<td>si je peux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je le ferai</td>
<td><em>I'll do it</em></td>
<td>si je peux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je le ferais</td>
<td><em>I would do it</em></td>
<td>si je pouvais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect, compound conditional</td>
<td>Imperfect pluperfect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je le faisais</td>
<td><em>I used to do it</em></td>
<td>si je pouvais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je l’aurais fait</td>
<td><em>I would have done it</em></td>
<td>si je pouvais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>si j’avais pu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 17.3.7 Alternatives to (mêne) si in written French for constructing hypothetical clauses

One alternative to hypothetical si clauses in very formal written French is a verb in the conditional tense or in the past subjunctive tense inverted with the subject:

- Devrait-il en mourir, il n'y consentirait jamais
- Dût-il en mourir, il n'y consentirait jamais

Both mean: *'Even if he were to die as a result, he would never consent to doing it'*.

Another is to use *quand (même)* followed by a verb in the conditional:

- Quand (mêne) il me le jurerait sur l'honneur, je ne le croirais pas
  
  *(Even) if he were to swear to me on his honour that it was so, I wouldn't believe him*

or a conditional clause followed by *que*:

- Il me le jurerait sur l'honneur que je ne le croirais pas
  
  *(Same meaning as the sentence above)*

### 17.3.8 Subordinating conjunctions normally followed by the subjunctive

### TABLE 17.E  **Time conjunctions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>avant que</td>
<td><em>before</em></td>
<td><em>ne</em> can be optionally inserted in front of the subordinate verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en attendant que</td>
<td><em>waiting for</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jusqu’à ce que</td>
<td><em>until</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Avant que personne (n’)ait pu lui demander d’explication, il a dit ‘C’est moi le coupable’
Before anyone could ask him to explain himself, he said ‘I am the guilty one’

En attendant que le beau temps revienne, on passait les soirées à lire au coin du feu
Waiting for the fine weather to return, we spent the evenings reading by the fireside

Attendez pour prendre la photo jusqu’à ce que le soleil soit plus bas dans le ciel
Wait to take the photo until the sun is lower in the sky

NB: ‘not until’, where it means ‘not before’, is translated by pas avant que:
Je ne partirai pas avant que vous (ne) me payiez
I won’t leave until you pay me

TABLE 17.F Non-time conjunctions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bien que</td>
<td>although</td>
<td>encore que is found only in formal written French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quoique</td>
<td></td>
<td>malgré que is found in informal spoken French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encore que</td>
<td>in order that, so that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malgré que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afin que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pour que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Je continue à dire ‘chez moi’, bien que la maison ne nous appartienne plus
I continue to say ‘at our house’ although the house no longer belongs to us

Il promenait la poussette le long du lac, pour que le bébé prenne l’air
He was pushing the push-chair along beside the lake for the baby to get some fresh air

Qu’est-ce qu’elle t’a dit pour que tu sois si malheureux?
What did she say to you to make you so unhappy?

TABLE 17.F (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>de façon que</td>
<td>so that</td>
<td>Followed by the indicative these describe something which has happened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de manière que</td>
<td></td>
<td>Followed by the subjunctive they express a wish that something might happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de sorte que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si bien que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tel que</td>
<td>such as</td>
<td>tel in tel que agrees with the noun it refers to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elle riait de telle façon qu’on remarquait ses jolies dents blanches
She laughed so that her beautiful white teeth could be seen
(Her teeth were seen, so the verb introduced by de telle façon que is in the indicative)
Elle parlait **de façon que** tout le monde la **comprenne**  
*She spoke so that everyone might understand her*  
(her wish was that everyone might understand her)

**Telle que** vous l'avez décrite, la statue sera trop grande pour la galerie du rez-de-chaussée  
*Such as you have described it, the statue will be too big for the ground floor gallery*

Et s'il avait créé un scandale **tel que** vous ayez été obligé de céder, vous auriez perdu beaucoup d'argent  
*And if he had created such a scandal that you had been obliged to give in, you would have lost a lot of money*

**TABLE 17.F** (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(soit/ou) que ... (soit/ou) que</td>
<td>whether ... or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à moins que</td>
<td><strong>unless</strong></td>
<td><em>ne</em> can be optionally inserted in front of the subordinate verb - it is most likely in formal French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pour peu que</td>
<td><strong>however little</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si peu que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pourvu que</td>
<td><strong>providing that</strong></td>
<td>Conditional and future are possible in informal spoken French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à condition que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qu'elle ait perdu l'argent **ou** qu'elle l'ait dépensé, la caisse est vide  
*Whether she lost the money or whether she spent it, the coffers are empty*

**A moins** qu'elle ne vende la maison de son vivant, en principe c'est nous qui héritons  
*Unless she sells the house in her lifetime, in principle we will inherit*

**Pour peu** qu'on habite dans une zone où la réception est bonne, on peut capter une cinquantaine de chaînes  
*You just have to live in an area where the reception is good and you can pick up fifty TV stations*

**Pourvu que** tout le monde soit d'accord, je commence tout de suite  
*Providing that everyone agrees, I'll start straight away*

**A supposer que** la réponse soit favorable, qu'est-ce que vous allez faire?  
*Supposing that the reply is positive, what will you do?*

Je lui ai demandé de modifier le manuscrit; **non que** je sois déçu, mais je voudrais qu'il y ait plus de dialogue  
*I asked her to change the manuscript; it's not that I am disappointed, but I would like there to be more dialogue*

Elle aurait bien pu quitter le village **sans que** je m'en aperçoive  
*She could easily have left the village without me noticing*

Elle s'enfermait ainsi **de crainte** qu'on (ne) vienne la surprendre  
*She shut herself away like that for fear that someone would come and surprise her*
TABLE 17.F (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>à supposer que en supposant que</td>
<td>supposing that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supposé que en admettant que</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non que ce n’est pas que</td>
<td>not that</td>
<td>ne can be optionally inserted in front of the subordinate verb in formal French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sans que</td>
<td>without</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de peur que de crainte que</td>
<td>for fear that</td>
<td>ne can be optionally inserted in front of the subordinate verb in formal French</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17.4 Conjunctions sometimes confused by English speakers

Some conjunctions have several functions which only partially overlap between English and French.

17.4.1 'since'

(a) meaning 'from the time when' = depuis que

Depuis qu’elle habite la même rue que moi, on ne se voit presque plus
Since she has lived in the same street as me, we hardly see each other any more

(b) meaning 'given that' = puisque, comme, vu que, étant donné que

Puisqu’elle a de l’expérience dans la matière, je pense qu’il serait bon de la consulter
Since she has experience in this area, I think it would be a good idea to consult her

Comme mes frères l’énervent, elle les évite le plus possible
Since my brothers annoy her, she avoids them as much as possible

17.4.2 'while'

(a) meaning 'during the time that' = pendant que

J’ai téléphoné à ma mère pendant qu’il préparait du thé
I telephoned my mother while he made some tea

(b) meaning 'for as long as' = tant que

Tant qu’elle faisait tout ce qu’il voulait, son frère était satisfait
"While she did everything he wanted, her brother was satisfied"

(c) meaning 'whereas' = alors que, tandis que

Il est blond alors que nous deux, nous sommes bruns
He is blond whereas the two of us are brown-haired

Elle s’occupe du bébé tandis que, moi, je fais tout le travail
She looks after the baby while I do all the work
Repeated subordinating conjunctions

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NB: *alors que* can sometimes mean 'while' in the sense of 'during the time that':

*Alors qu'il se promenait dans le parc, il a rencontré un vieil ami* 'While he was walking in the park, he met an old friend'.

17.4.3 'as'

(a) meaning 'all the while' = *à mesure que*

\[\text{À mesure qu'il parlait, une idée se formait dans mon esprit} \]
\[\text{As he spoke, an idea formed in my mind} \]

(b) meaning 'at the same time as' = *comme*

\[\text{Il arrivait comme midi sonnait} \]
\[\text{He arrived as midday was striking} \]

(c) meaning 'in the manner of' = *comme*

\[\text{Les footballeurs s'embrassaient comme ils l'avaient vu faire à la télévision} \]
\[\text{The footballers kissed each other as they had seen it done on the television} \]

17.4.4 'when'

(a) meaning 'at the time when' = *quand, lorsque*

\[\text{Quand sa femme est morte, il a déménagé} \]
\[\text{When his wife died, he moved house} \]

(b) meaning 'whereas' = *alors que, tandis que*

\[\text{Je me demandais pourquoi il venait chez nous, alors qu'il habitait de l'autre côté de la frontière} \]
\[\text{I wondered why he was coming our way when he lived on the other side of the border} \]

17.5 Repeated subordinating conjunctions

When clauses introduced by subordinating conjunctions are themselves linked together, *que* replaces the first conjunction (and is obligatory in French, while the repeated conjunction in English is often omitted):

\[\text{Quand je suis pressé et que je sors la voiture du garage, elle cale} \]
\[\text{When I'm in a hurry and (when) I get the car out of the garage, it stalls} \]

The form of the verb in the clause introduced by *que* is in most cases the same as that of the verb in the first clause (indicative or subjunctive):

\[\text{Même quand j'étais gosse, et que je vivais à la campagne, je ne jouais pas dehors} \]
\[\text{Even when I was a child, and (when) I lived in the country, I didn't play outside} \]

\[\text{Bien qu'il plaisante et qu'il feigne l'indifférence, en réalité il est très touché} \]
\[\text{Although he is joking and pretending it doesn't matter, in fact he is really moved} \]

However, when *si* is repeated by *que*, the verb in the clause introduced by *que* is in the subjunctive:

\[\text{S'il fait beau demain, et que nous ayons lé temps, nous pourrions aller à la plage} \]
\[\text{If it is fine tomorrow, and (if) we have time, we could go to the beach} \]

(See also Chapter 11.1.10.)
17.6 Subordinating conjunctions used with infinitive clauses

A number of the conjunctions which introduce clauses with finite verbs can also be used without *que* to link infinitive clauses to a main clause as shown in Table 17.G.

**TABLE 17.G Subordinating conjunctions without *que***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Followed by <strong>de</strong></th>
<th>in order to (finish first)</th>
<th>before (going upstairs)</th>
<th>for fear of (disturbing the neighbours)</th>
<th>subject to (making a profit)</th>
<th>unless (I/you/we etc. get a pay rise)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>afin de (finir le premier)</td>
<td>in order to (finish first)</td>
<td>before (going upstairs)</td>
<td>for fear of (disturbing the neighbours)</td>
<td>subject to (making a profit)</td>
<td>unless (I/you/we etc. get a pay rise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avant de (monter à l'étage)</td>
<td>in order to (finish first)</td>
<td>before (going upstairs)</td>
<td>for fear of (disturbing the neighbours)</td>
<td>subject to (making a profit)</td>
<td>unless (I/you/we etc. get a pay rise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de crainte de/de peur de (déranger les voisins)</td>
<td>in order to (finish first)</td>
<td>before (going upstairs)</td>
<td>for fear of (disturbing the neighbours)</td>
<td>subject to (making a profit)</td>
<td>unless (I/you/we etc. get a pay rise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à condition de (faire des bénéfices)</td>
<td>in order to (finish first)</td>
<td>before (going upstairs)</td>
<td>for fear of (disturbing the neighbours)</td>
<td>subject to (making a profit)</td>
<td>unless (I/you/we etc. get a pay rise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à moins d'(avoir une augmentation)</td>
<td>in order to (finish first)</td>
<td>before (going upstairs)</td>
<td>for fear of (disturbing the neighbours)</td>
<td>subject to (making a profit)</td>
<td>unless (I/you/we etc. get a pay rise)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Followed by <strong>à</strong></th>
<th>(to go) as far as (stating the opposite)</th>
<th>so as to (be certain of victory)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(aller) jusqu’à (déclarer le contraire)</td>
<td>(to go) as far as (stating the opposite)</td>
<td>so as to (be certain of victory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de manière à/de façon à/de sorte à (assurer la victoire)</td>
<td>(to go) as far as (stating the opposite)</td>
<td>so as to (be certain of victory)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not followed by another preposition</th>
<th>in order to (finish first)</th>
<th>without (making a noise)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pour (finir le premier)</td>
<td>in order to (finish first)</td>
<td>without (making a noise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sans (faire du bruit)</td>
<td>in order to (finish first)</td>
<td>without (making a noise)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Je m'étais arrêté afin de/pour vérifier le niveau de l'huile  
  *I had stopped to check the oil level*

- Avant de payer j'ai passé l'addition au peigne fin  
  *Before paying I scrutinized the bill*

- Il ne peut pas rencontrer quelqu'un sans lui parler de ses problèmes sentimentaux  
  *He can't say hallo to someone without talking about his emotional problems*

**NB:** *plutôt que* 'rather than', 'more than’ exceptionally keeps the *que*, but also adds *de* when it introduces an infinitive: *Plutôt que de chercher partout, on devrait commencer par les tiroirs du bureau* 'Rather than searching everywhere, we should start with the desk drawers'.

Where the subject of a main clause is the same as the subject of a subordinate clause linked to it, it is more natural in French to use an infinitive than a finite clause:

- Il a sorti le paquet de café avant d'allumer le chauffe-eau  
  *He took out his packet of coffee before he switched on the water-heater*  
  (it is the subject both of *a sorti* and *allumer*)

  rather than: *Il a sorti le paquet de café avant qu'il (n')ait allumé le chauffe-eau.*

- Je n'irai pas à moins d'être certain d'avoir une place  
  *I won't go unless I'm certain of getting a seat*  
  (je is the subject both of *irai* and *être certain*)

  rather than: *Je n'irai pas à moins que je (ne) soit certain d'avoir une place.*
A number of other conjunctions which are not capable of introducing finite clauses in modern French can introduce infinitive clauses:

- faute d'(avoir assez d'argent)
  through lack of (having enough money)
- à force de (s'entraîner)
  by dint of (training)
- au lieu de (dormir)
  instead of (sleeping)
- loin de (chercher à vous tromper)
  far from (seeking to cheat you)
- près de (renoncer)
  close to (giving up)
- quant à (proposer de vous accompagner)
  as for (proposing to go with you)

17.7 après avoir/être + past participle linking an infinitive clause to a main clause

A frequently used construction translating English 'having V-ed', 'after V-ing' is après + the infinitive form of avoir or être and a past participle:

- Après avoir mangé sa glace à la fraise, elle s'est essuyé la bouche sur sa manche
  Having bought/after buying her strawberry ice-cream, she wiped her mouth on her sleeve
- Après avoir expliqué à ses hôtes comment arriver au centre ville, elle s'est retirée dans sa chambre
  After having explained to her guests how to get into the centre of town, she retired to her bedroom
- Après être allé consulter son médecin, elle a constaté qu'elle avait moins mal
  Having gone/after going to see her doctor, she found that it didn't hurt so much

17.8 Past participle phrases used as linkers

The past participles of verbs which are conjugated with être in compound tenses (see Chapter 8.2.2) can be used without après to link subordinate clauses to main clauses, where English usually uses 'having V-ed':

- Arrivé à la gare, il a acheté un journal
  Having arrived at the station he bought a paper
- Couché de bonne heure, j'ai lu
  Having gone to bed early I read
- Partie pour de bon, elle n'a plus l'intention de revenir
  Having left for good, she no longer intends to return

The past participles of verbs referring to bodily posture are used where English uses 'V-ing': assis 'sitting', appuyé 'leaning', agenouillé 'kneeling', couché 'lying', etc.:
Conjunctions and other linking constructions

Je suis resté debout toute la séance, _appuyé_ contre le mur
*I remained standing throughout the showing, leaning against the wall*

Assis sur un banc, on a parlé longtemps
*They were sitting on a bench, they talked for a long time*

### 17.9 Present participles and gerunds

This section concerns French verb forms ending in _-ant_. They are formed from the stem of the first person plural (*nous*) of the present tense by deleting _-ons_ and replacing it with _-ant:_ *donnons/donnant, finissons/finissant, dormons /dormant._ They can also have a compound form composed of the _-ant_ form of the auxiliary _and the past participle_ of the verb: *ayant donné, ayant fini, ayant dormi, étant devenu._

*-ant* forms have three main roles: they can function as _adjectives_, in which case they agree with the noun to which they refer, they can function as _present participles_, in which case they do not agree with any noun, and they can function as _gerunds with the added_ form _en_ (*en donnant, en finissant, en dormant_).

#### 17.9.1 -ant forms as adjectives

Like all adjectives, _-ant_ forms can occur close to a noun or be linked to it by a verb like _être, devenir, paraître_ (see Chapter 4.1.1). In both cases they agree with the noun.

- *une histoire passionnante*  
  *This story is fascinating*
- *Cette histoire est passionnante*  
  *This story is fascinating*
- *une eau de toilette séduisante*  
  *This perfume is seductive*
- *Cette eau de toilette est séduisante*  
  *This perfume is seductive*
- *une femme plaisante*  
  *This woman is agreeable*
- *Cette femme est plaisante*  
  *This woman is agreeable*
- *une chaise roulante*  
  *A wheelchair*
- *une ferme avoisinante*  
  *A neighbouring farm*
- *une injustice criante*  
  *A flagrant injustice*
- *Cette grange, avoisinant les bâtiments principaux, pourrait être transformée en maison d’habitation*

#### 17.9.2 -ant forms as present participles

*-ant* forms can be used to form subordinate clauses. When they do so, they are called present participles. Used in this way, they are invariable (i.e. they do not agree with any noun):

- *Les circonstances aidant, ils ont terminé le projet à la date prévue*  
  *Given the favourable conditions, they finished the project on the agreed date*
- *Voyant arriver sa sœur, elle s'est éloignée*  
  *Seeing her sister arrive, she left*
- *Sachant qu’ils allaient perdre, ils ont néanmoins fait de leur mieux*  
  *Knowing they were going to lose, they nonetheless did their best*
- *Il était heureux d’y aller, reconnaissant ce qu’il devait à son ancien collège*  
  *He was pleased to go there, recognizing what he owed to his old school*
- *Attirant un public international, l’exposition a atteint un million de visiteurs*  
  *Attracting an international audience, the exhibition reached a million visitors*

Cette grange, _avoisinant_ les bâtiments principaux, pourrait être transformée en maison d’habitation
This barn, adjoining the main buildings, could be converted into living accommodation.

Les contes de Roald Dahl, passionnant les enfants de toutes les nations, ont été traduites en plusieurs langues.

The stories of Roald Dahl, fascinating the children of every nation, have been translated into several languages.

Roulant à soixante-dix à l'heure, le conducteur n’a pas pu éviter un piéton.

Driving at seventy kilometres an hour, the driver was unable to avoid a pedestrian.

In some cases, where the present participle follows a noun, it may be difficult to decide whether it is an adjective or a present participle. In the following examples, the -ant forms are all present participles, and hence invariable:

- un editorial ridiculisant le gouvernement
  - an editorial poking fun at the government

- une voiture roulant lentement est moins dangereuse
  - a car driving slowly is less dangerous

- des manifestants hurlant des slogans passaient sous ses fenêtres
  - demonstrators shouting slogans passed below his windows

- la belle au bois dormant
  - Sleeping Beauty

Je les ai surpris dans la clairière, dormant profondément

I came across them in the clearing, fast asleep

You can usually tell if an -ant form is an adjective (and hence must agree with a noun) if you can replace it by an ordinary adjective and still have a grammatical phrase. Compare:

- un editorial passionnant
  - a fascinating editorial
- un editorial ennuyeux
  - a boring editorial (OK - adjective)
- une chaise roulante
  - a wheelchair
- une chaise haute
  - a highchair (OK - adjective)
- un editorial ridiculisant le gouvernement
  - *un editorial ennuyeux le gouvernement (not OK - present participle)
- une voiture roulant lentement
  - *une voiture haute lentement (not OK - present participle)
- des manifestants hurlant des slogans
  - *des manifestants délicats des slogans (not OK - present participle)

The decision depends on whether the action described by the -ant form is seen mainly as a state (=adjective) or as an action (=verb).

NB: As with a number of other tenses, French marks tense sequences more precisely than English (see Chapter 10). Where English has a simple -ing form, French may require a compound present participle:

- Étant partis à l’aube, nous sommes arrivés avant la nuit.
  - Having left at dawn, we arrived before nightfall

- Ayant ramassé ses vêtements en hâte, il sauta par la fenêtre.
  - Having picked up his clothes in a hurry, he jumped out of the window.
Ayan repéré un gendarme plus loin dans la rue, elle a pris la fuite
*Spotting a policeman further up the street, she ran away*

### 17.9.3 Set expressions with invariable present participles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Expression</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>argent comptant</td>
<td><em>in cash</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils veulent être payés en argent comptant</td>
<td><em>They want to be paid in cash</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ne pas avoir un sou vaillant</td>
<td><em>not to have a red cent</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’admet que je n’ai pas un sou vaillant</td>
<td><em>I admit I am totally broke</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ce disant</td>
<td><em>in so saying</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ce disant il a fait un geste maladroit</td>
<td><em>In so saying he made a clumsy gesture and knocked over a glass</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et a renversé un verre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chemin faisant</td>
<td><em>on the way</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemin faisant on a chanté des chansons</td>
<td><em>We sang songs on the way</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donnant donnant</td>
<td><em>a fair exchange, swop</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous sommes d’accord si c’est</td>
<td><em>We agree as long as it's a fair exchange</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donnant donnant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strictement parlant</td>
<td><em>strictly speaking</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictement parlant je ne devrais pas</td>
<td><em>Strictly speaking I should not say</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous le répéter</td>
<td><em>this to you</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tambour battant</td>
<td><em>in an energetic manner</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La droite a mené la campagne tambour</td>
<td><em>The right led a thoroughly energetic campaign from the beginning to the end</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>battant d’un bout à l’autre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 17.9.4 -ant forms used as gerunds with en

Where present participles are preceded by *en* they are known as 'gerunds'. By using *en*, a speaker or a writer may be emphasizing the fact that the event described in the main clause and the event described in the gerundive clause take place simultaneously. This is often translated into English by 'while' or 'as':

En attendant Philippe, je me suis installé au café d’en face
*While waiting for Philippe, I took up position in the café opposite*

Je l’avais vue dans la semaine, en rentrant de l’école
*I had seen her during the week, as I came back from school*

Il est passé en faisant un appel de phares
*He passed by, as he did so flashing his lights*

Comment est-ce que tu arrives à tant bavarder en conduisant?
*How do you manage to talk so much when you are driving?*

Alternatively, the use of *en* with a gerund may emphasize a link of cause and effect between the gerundive clause and the main clause; this is translated by 'in' or 'by' in English:

En déclarant que vous étiez sur place vous vous êtes incriminé
*In admitting that you were there you have incriminated yourself*
Present participles and gerunds

En gérant une boutique comme si c'était un supermarché, on s'expose à l'échec
In managing a small shop as if it were a supermarket, you are running the risk of failure

Marianne a indiqué qu'elle ne voulait plus sortir avec lui en refusant son invitation
Marianne showed that she no longer wanted to go out with him by refusing his invitation

En augmentant le prix de vente vous risquez de voir chuter le nombre d'acheteurs
By increasing the retail price you run the risk of reducing the number of buyers

On a décoré la pièce en mettant des fleurs partout
We fixed up the room by putting flowers everywhere

When a gerund is preceded by tout en, it suggests that the event described in the gerundive clause is going on all the while the event described in the main clause takes place:

Tout en me parlant, elle nettoyait les vitres
All the while she was speaking, she wiped the windows

Tout en discutant de la pluie et du beau temps, il regardait discrètement dans le rétroviseur
Whilst chatting about this and that, he was keeping a discreet eye on the rear-view mirror

Les deux sœurs se sont quittées tout en sachant qu'elles avaient peu de chances de se revoir
The two sisters took leave of one another knowing that there was little possibility of them seeing each other again

When present participles are used without en, they can refer to any of the participants in the main clause: subject, direct object, object of a preposition:

Je l'avais vue dans la semaine, rentrant de l'école
I had seen her during the week as I (or she) came back from school

When en is present, however, the gerund can only refer to the subject of the main clause:

Je l'avais vue dans la semaine, en rentrant de l'école
I had seen her during the week as I (NOT *she) came back from school

NB: Gerunds may also be formed from compound present participles. These are frequently translated into English by a simple -ing form:

En ayant refusé de poursuivre des études supérieures, elle s'est privée de bien des possibilités
By refusing to undertake higher education, she cut herself off from a number of possibilities

En ayant contesté nos méthodes, il s'est exclu de notre groupe
By questioning our methods, he has excluded himself from our group
Appendix

Capital letters, lower-case letters and representing speech in written French

We note here briefly some of the differences between written English and written French in the conventions relating to the use of capital and lower-case letters, and in representing direct speech.

**Small letters for days of the week, months, seasons**

English uses capital letters, French uses lower-case letters:

- Il arrive lundi (mardi, mercredi, …)
  - He arrives on Monday (Tuesday, Wednesday, …)
- Nous partirons en janvier (en février, en mars, …)
  - We shall leave in January (February, March, …)

English can optionally use capital or lower-case letters with seasons, French always uses lower-case letters:

- Elle travaille dix-huit heures par jour en été (au printemps, …)
  - She works eighteen hours a day in Summer (in Spring, …)

**Small letters for streets, roads, avenues, etc.**

English uses capitals, French uses lower-case letters:

- 11, place de la République
  - 11 Russell Square
- Je l’ai vue rue de Rivoli
  - I saw her in Regent Street

**Small letters for titles**

English uses capitals, French uses lower-case letters:

- Le professeur Bouvier
  - Professor Bouvier
- Le docteur Picot
  - Doctor Picot

**Small letters for adjectives indicating origin, but capital letters for nouns**

English always uses capital letters to introduce adjectives and nouns...
describing the origin or religious affiliation of a person or entity. French uses lower-case letters to introduce adjectives describing origin, lower-case letters to introduce adjectives and nouns describing religious affiliation, but capital letters to introduce nouns describing origin:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un touriste français (adj)</td>
<td>a French tourist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a French tourist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un livre américain (adj)</td>
<td>an American book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an American book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un prêtre catholique (adj)</td>
<td>a Catholic priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Catholic priest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Small letters for languages**

English always uses capital letters to introduce adjectives and nouns describing languages, French always uses lower-case letters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>la langue française (adj)</td>
<td>the French language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the French language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle parle bien le français (noun)</td>
<td>She speaks French well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She speaks French well</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Capitals and lower-case letters in citing book titles**

Although there are different conventions for the use of capitals and lower-case letters in citing book titles, one common convention in French is to capitalize every word up to and including the first noun:

- L’Etranger
- L’Art de vivre
- Le Grand Meaulnes
- Les Petits Enfants du siècle

In English common conventions are to capitalize the first letter of every word, or to capitalize the first word and the 'content' words (and not the function words), or to treat the title like an ordinary sentence:

- The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire
- The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire
- The decline and fall of the Roman empire

**Representing direct speech**

Direct speech can be opened and closed by *guillemets*. Unlike English, where speech marks enclose only the speech itself, in French guillemets enclose dialogues, and are only closed when the whole dialogue is at an end:

«Et voilà, dit le père, filant sur la route. En voilà encore une de tirée. - Eh, oui», répliqua la mère.
(From Christiane Rochefort, *Les Petits Enfants du siècle*)

'Well,' said our father, belting along the road. 'That's another one [holiday] over with.'
'Yes,' our mother replied.
Appendix

Alternatively, speech can be introduced by dashes ('tirets') in both languages:

- Etes-vous prêt?
- Pas encore.
- Are you ready?
- Not yet.

Verbs reporting who said what are always inverted with the subject in French:

«C'est plus fort en goût», précise Vincent
«C'est plus fort en goût», précise-t-il
'It has a stronger taste,' Vincent adds/He adds

«Le moulin, clef de l'économie», annonce un panneau
'Mills are the key to economic success,' a sign announces

«Ce n'est pas vrai», répondirent les autres tranquille
'It's not true,' the others replied calmly
Cited works and main works consulted in the preparation of the text.

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