

*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 OUVERTE* '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 PRÊTE/A PARTIR* 'She is ready to leave' - two clauses



(in *à partir* the subject is implied: She is ready, and she will leave); *LES CIRCONSTANCES AIDANT/LE PARTI GAGNERA CES ÉLECTIONS* 'If the conditions are right, the party will win this election' - two clauses; *II 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 comparison between one entity and another: // *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 pronoun = *celui, celle, ceux, celles*.

**determiner** - an **article** (*un, une/le, la, les/des, etc.*), **demonstrative** determiner (*ce, cette, etc.*) or **possessive** determiner (*mon, ma/ton, ta, etc.*) which **modifies 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* 'I spoke'; *Je SAIS parler français* 'I can speak French'.

**formal French** - in this grammar 'formal French' refers to a style used by speakers 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 appropriate 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 ...'), retention 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 adjectives 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*<sup>^</sup>. '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'.
- indicative** - 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*.
- infinitive** - 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* (1<sup>er</sup>), *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, les* 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'.

**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. *AIME-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'.

# 1

## *Nouns*

### I.1 Types of noun

#### I.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:

##### Typical concrete nouns

bière (f)	<i>beer</i>
bonbon (m)	<i>sweet</i>
cadeau (m)	<i>present</i>
carte (f)	<i>card</i>
disque (m)	<i>record</i>
église (f)	<i>church</i>
livre (m)	<i>book</i>
mannequin (m)	<i>(fashion) model</i>

##### Typical abstract nouns

beauté (f)	<i>beauty</i>
bonheur(m)	<i>happiness</i>
bonté (f)	<i>goodness</i>
patience (f)	<i>patience</i>
mœurs (f pi)	<i>customs, morals</i>
savoir (m)	<i>knowledge</i>
silence (m)	<i>silence</i>
soif (f)	<i>thirst</i>

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):

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### Typical count nouns

une bouteille	<i>a bottle</i>
des bouteilles	<i>bottles</i>
un chien	<i>a dog</i>
des chiens	<i>dogs</i>
une personne	<i>a person</i>
des personnes	<i>people</i>

### Typical mass nouns

de l'air	<i>air</i>
du beurre	<i>butter</i>
de l'eau	<i>water</i>
du gâteau	<i>cake</i>
des gens	<i>people</i>
du sable	<i>sand</i>

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'aiment 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	<i>the wines of France</i>
les Eaux et Forêts	<i>the French Forestry Commission</i>
les fromages de Normandie	<i>the cheeses of Normandy</i>
un pain	<i>a loaf of bread</i>
un petit pain	<i>a bun</i>

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.

**Typical collective nouns**

assistance (f)	<i>audience</i>
comité (m)	<i>committee</i>
équipe (f)	<i>team</i>
foule (f)	<i>crowd</i>
gouvernement (m)	<i>government</i>
linge (m) de maison	<i>household linen</i>
main-d'œuvre (f)	<i>workforce</i>
peuple (m)	<i>people</i>
vaisselle (f)	<i>dishes, crockery</i>

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 advertizing*

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:



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le petit Jules  
le gros Henri

*little Jules*  
*fat 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.)

#### 1.15 Use of *anlannée, 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	<i>at the start of the morning/the evening/the day</i>
en fin de matinée/ soirée/journée	<i>at the end of the morning/ the evening/the day</i>
par une belle matinée tôt le matin	<i>on a beautiful morning early in the morning</i>
Un beau matin il est parti	<i>One fine morning he up and left</i>
tous les jours/matins/ans	<i>every day/morning/year</i>
l'an 2000	<i>the year 2000</i>
le jour de l'an	<i>New Year's Day</i>
le nouvel an	<i>the New Year</i>
souhaiter la bonne année à qn	<i>to wish so a Happy New Year</i>
les années 70	<i>the 70s</i>
l'année précédente/suivante	<i>the previous/following year</i>

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

Il a cinq ans	<i>He is five</i>
trois fois par jour	<i>three times a day</i>

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

trois bonnes années	<i>three good years</i>
six longues journées	<i>six long days</i>

## 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	<i>a house</i>
une cuiller	<i>a spoon</i>
la mer	<i>the sea</i>
une tour	<i>a tower</i>
une fois	<i>one time</i>
une dent	<i>a tooth</i>
une nuit	<i>a night</i>
une jument	<i>a mare</i>
une croix	<i>a cross</i>

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)ion*, *-Hon* or *-xion* are usually feminine:

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

**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:

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la chaleur	<i>the heat</i>
une couleur	<i>a colour</i>
une erreur	<i>a mistake</i>
une fleur	<i>a flower</i>
la largeur	<i>the width</i>
la longueur	<i>the length</i>
la peur	<i>fear</i>
la profondeur	<i>the depth</i>

**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	<i>a time limit</i>
un essai	<i>an attempt (a 'try' in rugby)</i>
un emploi	<i>a job</i>
un roi	<i>a king</i>

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

le café	<i>the café or coffee</i>
un fossé	<i>a ditch</i>
le marché	<i>the market</i>
le thé	<i>tea</i>

**Exception: une clé *a key***

**-eau**

un couteau	<i>a knife</i>
un marteau	<i>a hammer</i>
le niveau	<i>the level</i>
le réseau	<i>the network</i>
un tableau	<i>a picture</i>

**Exceptions: l'eau *water*, la peau *skin***

**-i**

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

**-ou**

un bijou	<i>a jewel</i>
un caillou	<i>a pebble</i>
un clou	<i>a nail</i>
un genou	<i>a knee</i>
le hibou	<i>the owl</i>

**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 candle*, 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, -ege, -eme*

Nouns with these endings are usually masculine:

un intermède	<i>an interlude</i>
un cortège	<i>a procession</i>
un piège	<i>a trap</i>
un stratège	<i>a strategist</i>
un poème	<i>a poem</i>
le système	<i>the system</i>
le thème	<i>the theme or translation into a foreign language</i>

*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:

le courage	<i>courage</i>
un garage	<i>a garage</i>
un message	<i>a message</i>
un stage	<i>a work placement</i>
un voyage	<i>a journey</i>

**Exceptions:** *une cage a cage*, *une image a picture*, *une page a page*, *une plage a beach*, *la rage rabies*.

**Other common exceptions:**

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

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

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	<i>an adult</i>
un/une adversaire	<i>an adversary</i>
un/une artiste	<i>an artist</i>
un/une bibliothécaire	<i>a librarian</i>
un/une camarade	<i>a comrade</i>
un/une célibataire	<i>a bachelor/spinster (an unmarried person)</i>
un/une chimiste	<i>a chemist (scientist)</i>
un/une collègue	<i>a colleague</i>
un/une compatriote	<i>a compatriot</i>
un/une complice	<i>an accomplice</i>
un/une concierge	<i>a porter</i>
un/une convive	<i>a guest</i>
un/une dentiste	<i>a dentist</i>
un/une élève	<i>a (school) pupil</i>
un/une enfant	<i>a child</i>
un/une esclave	<i>a slave</i>
un/une fonctionnaire	<i>a civil servant</i>
un/une gosse	<i>a kid (a word for a child in informal French)</i>
un/une interprète	<i>an interpreter</i>
un/une journaliste	<i>a journalist</i>
un/une libraire	<i>a bookseller</i>
un/une locataire	<i>a tenant</i>
un/une malade	<i>a person who is ill</i>
un/une partenaire	<i>a partner</i>
un/une patriote	<i>a patriot</i>
un/une pensionnaire	<i>a boarder (as in boarding school)</i>
un/une philosophe	<i>a philosopher</i>
un/une photographe	<i>a photographer</i>
un/une pianiste	<i>a pianist</i>
un/une pique-assiette	<i>a sponger</i>
un/une secrétaire	<i>a secretary</i>
un/une touriste	<i>a tourist</i>

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.

### 1.23 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:

un ami	une amie	<i>a friend</i>
un employé	une employée	<i>an employee (worker)</i>
un rival	une rivale	<i>a rival</i>

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

un marchand	une marchande	<i>a trader</i>
un candidat	une candidate	<i>a candidate</i>
un avocat	une avocate	<i>a lawyer</i>
un bourgeois	une bourgeoise	<i>a bourgeoisie)</i>
un boulanger	une boulangère	<i>a baker</i>
un berger	une bergère	<i>a shepherd</i>
un fermier	une fermière	<i>a farmer</i>
un caissier	une caissière	<i>a checkout operator</i>
un romancier	une romancière	<i>a novelist</i>

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*:

un chien	une chienne	<i>a dog/a bitch</i>
un lion	une lionne	<i>a lion/a lioness</i>
un paysan	une paysanne	<i>a farmer</i>
un gitan	une gitane	<i>a gypsy (pejorative)</i>
un voisin	une voisine	<i>a neighbour</i>
un Africain	une Africaine	<i>an African</i>

Some nouns add *-esse*.

un âne	une anesse	<i>a donkey</i>
un chanoine	une chanoinesse	<i>a canon/canoness (religious)</i>
un comte	une comtesse	<i>a count / countess</i>
un diable	une diablesse	<i>a devil/she-devil</i>
un drôle	une drôlesse	<i>someone a little odd</i>
un hôte	une hôtesse	<i>a host/hostess</i>
un ivrogne	une ivrognesse	<i>a drunkard</i>
un maître	une maîtresse	<i>a master/mistress</i> (in the school context)
un ogre	une ogresse	<i>an ogre</i>
un pauvre	une pauvre	<i>a poor person</i>
un prêtre	une prêtresse	<i>a priest/priestess</i>
un prince	une princesse	<i>a prince/princess</i>
un Suisse	une Suisse	<i>a Swiss person</i>
un tigre	une tigresse	<i>a tiger/tigress</i>

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Nouns ending in *-eur* which are not derived from a French verb, change *-eur* to *-rice*:

un ambassadeur	une ambassadrice	<i>an ambassador</i>
un directeur	une directrice	<i>a director</i>
un empereur	une impératrice	<i>an emperor/empress</i>

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

un chanteur	une chanteuse	<i>a singer</i>
un menteur	une menteuse	<i>a liar</i>
un voleur	une voleuse	<i>a thief</i>

### Irregular patterns

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

un héros	une héroïne	<i>a hero/heroine</i>
un époux	une épouse	<i>a husband/wife</i>
un neveu	une nièce	<i>a nephew/niece</i>
un homme	une femme	<i>a man/woman</i>
un fils	une fille	<i>a son/daughter</i>
un garçon	une fille	<i>a boy/girl</i>

### 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:

un aide	<i>a helper</i>	l'aide (f)	<i>help</i>
un chèvre	<i>a goat's cheese</i>	une chèvre	<i>a goat</i>
un crème	<i>a white coffee</i>	la crème	<i>cream</i>
le crêpe	<i>crêpe (cloth)</i>	une crêpe	<i>a pancake</i>
un critique	<i>a critic</i>	une critique	<i>a criticism</i>
un espace	<i>a space</i>	une espace	<i>a space (in printing)</i>
un laque	<i>artwork</i>	une laque	<i>a hair lacquer or gloss paint</i>
un livre	<i>a book</i>	une livre	<i>a pound (money or weight)</i>
un manche	<i>a handle</i>	une manche	<i>a sleeve</i>
un manœuvre	<i>an unskilled worker</i>	La Manche	<i>the English Channel</i>
un mémoire	<i>a dissertation</i>	une manœuvre	<i>a manoeuvre</i>
un merci	<i>a thank you</i>	la mémoire	<i>memory (faculty of)</i>
un mode	<i>a way of . . .</i>	la merci	<i>mercy</i>
(un mode de vie)	<i>(a way of life)</i>	une mode	<i>a fashion</i>
un moule	<i>a mould</i>	une moule	<i>a mussel</i>
un pendule	<i>a pendulum</i>	une pendule	<i>a clock</i>
le physique	<i>appearance</i>	la physique	<i>physics</i>
un poêle	<i>a stove</i>	une poêle	<i>a frying pan</i>
un poste	<i>a job, TV or radio set</i>	la poste	<i>the Post Office</i>
le solde	<i>balance</i>	la solde	<i>pay (usually with reference to soldier's pay)</i>
	<i>(in an account)</i>		
un somme	<i>a nap</i>	une somme	<i>a sum (of money)</i>
un tour	<i>a turn, trick</i>	une tour	<i>a tower</i>

le Tour de France	<i>bicycle race</i>	La Tour Eiffel	<i>the Eiff?/ Tower</i>
un vase	<i>a vase</i>	la vase	<i>mud</i>
un voile	<i>a veil</i>	une voile	<i>a sail</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 <b>arrivé</b>	versus	Cette chose est arrivée
<i>Something happened</i>		<i>This thing happened</i>

(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 <b>vieilles</b> gens sont <b>heureux</b>	<i>Those old people are happy</i>
certaines gens	<i>some people</i>
<b>tous</b> les gens	<i>everyone</i>

**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:

un cal	<i>a callus</i>	une cale	<i>a wedge</i>		
un faîte	<i>a summit</i>	une fête	<i>a party</i>		
le foie	<i>the liver</i>	la foi	<i>the faith</i>		
le maire	<i>the mayor</i>	la mer	<i>the sea</i>	une mère	<i>a mother</i>
un pet	<i>a fart</i>	la paie	<i>the pay</i>	la paix	<i>peace</i>
le poids	<i>weight</i>	la poix	<i>pitch</i>	un pois	<i>a pea</i>
un rai	<i>a ray of light</i>	une raie	<i>a parting (in hair) or a skate (fish)</i>		
le sel	<i>salt</i>	une selle	<i>a saddle</i>		
le sol	<i>earth</i>	une sole	<i>a sole (fish)</i>		
un tic	<i>a tic (nervous)</i>	une tique	<i>a tick (insect)</i>		
le vice	<i>vice (crime)</i>	une vis	<i>a screw</i>		

### 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:

le Canada	<i>Canada</i>	la Chine	<i>China</i>
le Danemark	<i>Denmark</i>	la Finlande	<i>Finland</i>
le Japon	<i>Japan</i>	la Libye	<i>Libya</i>
le Koweït	<i>Kuwait</i>	la Norvège	<i>Norway</i>
le Liban	<i>Lebanon</i>	la Mauritanie	<i>Mauritania</i>
le Maroc	<i>Morocco</i>	la Roumanie	<i>Romania</i>



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le Nigeria	<i>Nigeria</i>	la Suisse	<i>Switzerland</i>
le Portugal	<i>Portugal</i>	la Syrie	<i>Syria</i>

NB: Les Etats-Unis (m pi).

**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 *-e*:

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	<i>Sardinia</i>
la Crète	<i>Crete</i>
la Nouvelle-Zélande	<i>New Zealand</i>

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

le Rhin	<i>the Rhine</i>	la Sône	<i>the Sône</i>
le Tarn	<i>the Tarn</i>	la Seine	<i>the Seine</i>
le Cher	<i>the Cher</i>	la Tamise	<i>the Thames</i>

**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:

un architecte	<i>an architect</i>
un auteur	<i>an author</i>
un chef	<i>a chef</i>
un compositeur	<i>a composer</i>
un forçat	<i>a convict</i>
un ingénieur	<i>an engineer</i>
un juge	<i>a judge</i>
un magistrat	<i>a magistrate</i>
un médecin	<i>a doctor</i>
un peintre	<i>a painter</i>
un professeur	<i>a teacher</i>
un sculpteur	<i>a sculptor</i>
un témoin	<i>a witness</i>
un vampire	<i>a vampire</i>

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:

personne	<i>person</i>
recrue	<i>recruit</i>
sentinelle	<i>sentry</i>
star/vedette	<i>star (in the entertainment business)</i>
victime	<i>victim</i>

*personne* meaning 'person' is feminine: *la/une personne*, *personne* in *ne ... personne* meaning 'nobody' (see Chapter 16.13) is masculine:

Personne n'est venu  
*Nobody came*

Cette personne est venue  
*That person came*

### 1.2.10 Nouns with genders which English speakers often get wrong

The following nouns are **masculine**:

e caractère	<i>character/temperament</i>	un légume	<i>a vegetable</i>
rn choix	<i>a choice</i>	le manque	<i>lack, lacuna</i>
e crime	<i>crime</i>	le mérite	<i>merit</i>
'espace	<i>space</i>	un parachute	<i>a parachute</i>
'exode	<i>exodus</i>	un parapluie	<i>an umbrella</i>
m groupe	<i>a group</i>	le silence	<i>silence</i>

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

The following nouns are **feminine**:

une croix	<i>a cross</i>	une forêt	<i>a forest</i>
une espèce	<i>a type, kind</i>	une noix	<i>a nut</i>
la fin	<i>the end</i>	une vis	<i>a screw</i>

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

**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	<i>a driving school</i>
un bateau-mouche	<i>a Parisian tourist boat</i>
un bateau-citerne	<i>a tanker (ship)</i>

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

### **Adverb + noun compounds**

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

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

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

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	<i>a lampshade</i>
un accroche-cœur	<i>a (kiss) curl</i>
un appui-tête	<i>a headrest</i>
des casse-noisettes	<i>nutcrackers</i>

un cache-nez	<i>a scarf</i>
un coupe-papier	<i>a paper-knife</i>
un couvre-lit	<i>a bedspread</i>
un cure-dents	<i>a toothpick</i>
un essuie-mains	<i>a hand towel</i>
un gratte-ciel	<i>a skyscraper</i>
un ouvre-boîtes	<i>a tin-opener</i>
un pare-brise	<i>a windscreen</i>
un pare-chocs	<i>a bumper</i>
un porte-avions	<i>an aircraft carrier</i>
un porte-bagages	<i>a luggage rack</i>
un porte-monnaie	<i>a wallet</i>
un soutien-gorge	<i>a bra</i>
un taille-crayons	<i>a pencil sharpener</i>
un tire-bouchon	<i>a corkscrew</i>
un trompe-l'œil	<i>a "trompe l'œil" (art)</i>

### Verbal phrase compounds

Compounds constructed from verbal phrases are masculine:

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

## 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).

### 1.3.1 Regular plurals

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

une loi	des lois	<i>law(s)</i>
un drap	des draps	<i>sheet(s)</i>
une voiture	des voitures	<i>car(s)</i>
une remarque	des remarques	<i>remark(s)</i>
un chat	des chats	<i>cat(s)</i>
un enfant	des enfants	<i>child(ren)</i>
une maison	des maisons	<i>house(s)</i>
un chandail	des chandails	<i>cardigan(s)</i>
un éventail	des éventails	<i>fan(s)</i>

(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	des pois	<i>spot(s)</i>
une croix	des croix	<i>cross(es)</i>

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un nez	des nez	<i>nose(s)</i>
un as	des as	<i>ace(s)</i>
un prix	des prix	<i>price(s)</i>
un corps	des corps	<i>body(ies)</i>
un bras	des bras	<i>arm(s)</i>

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	<i>hair(s)</i>
un tuyau	des tuyaux	<i>pipe(s)</i>
un manteau	des manteaux	<i>coatis</i>
l'eau	des eaux	<i>water(s)</i>

**Exceptions:**

un bleu	des bleus	<i>brui(s)</i>
un pneu	des pneus	<i>tyre(s)</i>
un landau	des landaus	<i>pram(s)</i>

### 1.3.4 Plurals of nouns ending in *-ou*

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

un fou	des fous	<i>madman/men or jester(s)</i>
un trou	des trous	<i>hole(s)</i>

*àère* are seven words which form their plural with *-x*:

un bijou	des bijoux	<i>jewel(s)</i>
un caillou	des cailloux	<i>stone(s)</i>
un chou	des choux	<i>cabbage(s)</i>
un genou	des genoux	<i>knee(s)</i>
un hibou	des hiboux	<i>owl(s)</i>
un joujou	des joujoux	<i>toy(s)</i>
un pou	des poux	<i>louse(lice)</i>

### 1.3.5 Plurals of nouns ending in *-al*

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

un bocal	des bocaux	<i>jam jar(s)</i>
un cheval	des chevaux	<i>horse(s)</i>
un idéal	des idéaux	<i>ideal(s)</i>
un journal	des journaux	<i>newspaper(s)</i>
un mal	des maux	<i>evil(s)</i>
un terminal	des terminaux	<i>terminal(s)</i>
un val	des vaux	<i>valley(s)</i>

*(limited to poetic language)*

; are, however, a number of exceptions which form t

un bal	des bals	<i>dance(s)</i>
un cal	des cals	<i>callus(es)</i>

un carnaval	des carnivals	<i>carnival(s)</i>
un cérémonial	des cérémonials	<i>ceremony des)</i>
un chacal	des chacals	<i>jackal(s)</i>
un festival	des festivals	<i>festival(s)</i>
un récital	des récitals	<i>recital(s)</i>
un régal	des régals	<i>feast(s)</i>

### 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	<i>lease(s)</i>
un corail	des coraux	<i>coral(s)</i>
un émail	des émaux	<i>enamel(s)</i>
un soupirail	des soupiraux	<i>window(s)</i>
le travail	les travaux	<i>work(s)</i>
un vitrail	des vitraux	<i>stained glass window(s)</i>

### 1.3.7 Nouns which exist only in plural form

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

### 1.3.8 Nouns with irregular plurals

These are most notably:

un os	des os (pronounced as 'eau')	<i>bone(s)</i>
un œil	des yeux	<i>eye(s)</i>
un ciel	des cioux	<i>sky(ies)</i>
un œuf	des œufs (pronounced as 'œu')	<i>egg(s)</i>
un bœuf	des bœufs (pronounced as 'bœu')	<i>bullock(s)</i>



### 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 bonshommes
BUT un bonjour	des bonjours

#### 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'oeuvre	des chefs d'oeuvre
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)	<i>coat peg(s)</i>
le(s) portefeuille(s)	<i>wallet(s)</i>

(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:

English singular	French plural
<i>applause</i>	les applaudissements
<i>darkness</i>	les ténèbres
<i>sb's funeral</i>	les funérailles de qn
<i>hair</i>	les cheveux
<i>information</i>	des informations, des renseignements
<i>knowledge</i>	les connaissances
<i>to make progress</i>	faire des progrès
<i>to do research/my research</i>	faire des recherches/mes recherches
<b>English plural</b>	French singular
<i>economics</i>	l'économie
<i>grapes</i>	du raisin
( <i>grape</i> = un grain de raisin)	
<i>linguistics</i>	la linguistique
<i>physics</i>	la physique
<i>pyjamas</i>	un pyjama
<i>shorts</i>	un short
<i>stairs</i>	l'escalier
<i>tights</i>	un collant
<i>trousers</i>	un pantalon
<i>underpants</i>	un slip

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

un fruit	<i>a piece of fruit</i>
un pain	<i>a loaf of bread</i> (NOT *a bread)
un raisin	<i>a type of grape</i>

# 2

## *Determiners*

### 2.1 Articles

TABLE 2.A Summary table of articles

	<b>Definite</b>	<b>Indefinite</b>	<b>Partitive</b>
masc	le, l' <i>the</i>	un <i>a</i>	du, de l' <i>some/no article</i>
fem	la, l' <i>the</i>	une <i>a</i>	de la, de l' <i>some/no article</i>
plur	les <i>the</i>	des	<i>some/no article</i>

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

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

l'univers (m)	<i>the universe</i>
l'électricité (f)	<i>electricity</i>
de l'acier (m)	<i>steel</i>
de l'eau (f)	<i>water</i>
l'ancien régime (m)	<i>the Ancien Regime</i>

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)	<i>winter</i>
l'histoire (f)	<i>history</i>
de l'héroïsme (m)	<i>heroism</i>
de l'herbe (f)	<i>grass</i>
l'horrible silence (m)	<i>the terrible silence</i>

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 *l'* or *de V* in spoken French:

le hibou (m)	<i>the owl</i>
la haine (f)	<i>hate</i>

du hachis (m)	<i>minced beef</i>
de la honte	<i>shame</i>
la haute montagne	<i>high up in the mountains</i>

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)	<i>owl</i>
histoire [istwar] (f)	<i>story, history</i>

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	<i>children</i>	BUT	les hérissons	<i>hedgohogs</i>
des [z] amis	<i>friends</i>	BUT	des haricots	<i>beans</i>
des [z] héroïnes	<i>heroines</i>	BUT	des héros	<i>heroes</i>

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	<i>a hotel</i>	BUT	un homard	<i>a lobster</i>
un [n] honnête homme	<i>a decent man</i>	BUT	un haut fonctionnaire	<i>a senior civil servant</i>

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>I live in London</i>	Je hais Londres <i>I hate London</i>
Je l'héberge <i>I am letting him stay with me</i>	Je la heurte dans son orgueil <i>I hurt her pride</i>

## 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:

Achetez une nouvelle Panthéra GT6. La Panthéra GT6 vous va!  
*Buy a new Panthéra GT6. The Panthéra GT6 suits you!*

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*:

du (= de + le) pain	au (= à + le) cinéma
de l'effort	à l'école
des (= de + les) épices	aux (= à + les) animaux

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* 'I 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*

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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  
*I 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	<i>in winter</i>
en été	<i>in summer</i>
en automne	<i>in autumn</i>

(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	<i>Mr Mayor</i>
Madame le Maire	<i>Madam Mayor</i>
Monsieur le Président-Directeur-Général	<i>Mr Chairman</i>

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!	<i>Hi, guys!</i>
Allez les bleus!	<i>Come on, you blues!</i>
Au lit, les enfants!	<i>Off to bed, kids!</i>

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

François I (François premier)	<i>François the first</i>
Henri III (Henri trois)	<i>Henry the third</i>
Elizabeth I (Elizabeth première)	<i>Elizabeth the first</i>
Elizabeth II (Elizabeth deux)	<i>Elizabeth the second</i>

(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	<i>The most exciting moment of my life</i>
Les virages les plus dangereux de la région	<i>The most dangerous bends in the region</i>

### 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	<i>Apples? They are 4.50 francs a kilo</i>
Les bonbons sont à 5,40 F les 100 grammes	<i>Sweets are 5.40 francs for a 100 grammes</i>
Ces chaises sont vendues à 500 F la pièce (or 500 F pièce)	<i>These chairs are sold for 500 francs each</i>

### 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	<i>His eyes are blue</i>
Elle a les cheveux coupés court	<i>She has her hair cut short</i>



(b) When people activate parts of their own bodies, French also uses a definite article with the body part:

Il a plissé les yeux	<i>He screwed up his eyes</i>
Elle a agité le bras	<i>She waved</i>
J'ai baissé la tête en y entrant	<i>I lowered my head as I went in</i>
Elle a hoché /secoué la tête	<i>She nodded/shook her head</i>

(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	<i>I broke my leg</i>
Elle s'est fait couper les cheveux	<i>She had her hair cut</i>
Je lui serre la main	<i>I shake his hand</i>
On lui a coupé la tête	<i>They cut his head off</i>
Elle lui essuie les yeux avec un mouchoir	<i>She wipes his eyes with a handkerchief</i>

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

Je prends sa main	<i>I take her hand</i>
Elle caresse mes cheveux	<i>She strokes my hair</i>
J'appuie mes deux mains sur sa poitrine	<i>I press with both my hands on his chest</i>

(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	<i>My heart stopped for an instant</i>
Ma tête me fait mal	<i>My head hurts</i>
Ses paupières se sont abaissées	<i>His eyelids lowered</i>
Leurs regards se sont croisés	<i>Their eyes met</i>

(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	<i>the man with the turned-up nose</i>
le comédien au chapeau de paille	<i>the actor in the straw hat</i>
Il parlait, le sourire aux lèvres	<i>He spoke, with a smile</i>
Elle est partie, les mains dans les poches	<i>She left with her hands in her pockets</i>
Il s'est agenouillé, le chapeau à la main	<i>He knelt down with his hat in his hands</i>
Il a avoué son crime, les yeux abaissés	<i>He confessed his crime, looking down</i>

### 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:

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):

Il a déjeuné de fruits  
*His lunch consisted of fruit*  
(versus Il a mangé **des** fruits)

Elle parlait de choses oubliées depuis longtemps  
*She spoke of things long since forgotten*  
(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*:

Il y a un bon nombre de participants au tournoi  
*There are a good many participants at the tournament*

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

Beaucoup de personnes ont déjà remarqué ton absence  
*Many people have already noticed your absence*

*J'ai déjà entendu assez d'excuses de ta part; je n'en accepterai plus*  
*I have heard enough excuses from you; I won't accept any more*

Où as-tu mis la boîte de sardines?  
*Where did you put the tin of sardines?*

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

Bien **des** personnes ont déjà remarqué ton absence  
*Many people have already noticed your absence*

J'ai encore **des** questions à vous poser  
*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:

Elle mangeait **des coquillages**  
*She was eating shellfish*

Elle mangeait **les coquillages qu'elle avait achetés au marché**  
*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):

Elle déjeunait de coquillages  
*She dined on shellfish*

Elle déjeunait des coquillages qu'elle avait achetés au marché  
*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*

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	<i>a lot of wood</i>
une bouteille de lait	<i>a bottle of milk</i>
une tête d'ail	<i>a bulb of garlic</i>
J'ai besoin d'argent	<i>I need money</i>

### **1A.1 Use of *faire* + partitive: *faire dulce la***

Many constructions exist with *faire* + noun, introduced by the partitive:

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

## **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*

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	<i>a toothbrush</i>
un couteau à pain	<i>a bread knife</i>
une corbeille à papiers	<i>a waste-paper basket</i>
une cuiller à café	<i>a tea (coffee) spoon</i>
une planche à roulettes	<i>a skateboard</i>
une planche à voile	<i>a sailboard</i>
une tasse à café	<i>a coffee cup</i>
une tasse à thé	<i>a tea cup</i>
un verre à vin	<i>a wine glass</i>
un verre à pied	<i>a stemmed glass</i>

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

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

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	<i>a map of mainland France</i>
Il va être question de l'argent que je t'ai prêté	<i>There'll be a discussion about the money I lent you</i>
un arrêt du bus no 25	<i>a stop for the number 25 bus</i>

### 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	<i>covered with mud</i>
rempli de rancune	<i>filled with rancour</i>
dépourvu de sens	<i>lacking any meaning</i>
comblé de bonheur	<i>overwhelmed with happiness</i>
entouré d'imbéciles	<i>surrounded by idiots</i>

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

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



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

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

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
<i>in theory</i>		<i>in Einstein's theory</i>
en pratique	BUT	dans la pratique
<i>in practice</i>		<i>in practice</i>

### 2.6.5 Omission of the article in set phrases and verbal constructions

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

### 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 aînée 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:

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

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

Depuis, il est devenu un architecte innovateur  
*Since then, he has become an innovatory architect*

Pierre a été nommé le premier Directeur des Achats  
*Pierre was appointed as the first Purchasing Director*

**2.6.8 Omission of the article in lists**

In lists of nouns the article is frequently omitted:

Hommes, femmes et enfants sont tous invités à la fête  
*Men, women and children are all invited to the party*

J'ai acheté pommes de terre, tomates, courgettes, prunes et navets chez le même marchand de primeurs  
*I bought potatoes, tomatoes, courgettes, plums and turnips at the same greengrocer's*

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*

		<b>Proximate</b>	<b>Non-proximate</b>
<b>masc</b>	ce, cet <i>this, that</i>	ce, cet ... ci <i>this ... (here)</i>	ce, cet ... là <i>that ... (there)</i>
<b>fern</b>	cette <i>this, that</i>	cette ... ci <i>this ... (here)</i>	cette ... là <i>that... (there)</i>
<b>plur</b>	ces <i>these, those</i>	ces ... ci <i>these ... (here)</i>	ces ... là <i>those ... (there)</i>

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):

cet enfant	<i>this child</i>
cet ancien marin	<i>that ex-sailor</i>
cet héroïsme	<i>that heroism</i>

### 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/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

<b>First person</b>	<b>masc</b>	mon	<i>my</i>	notre	<i>our</i>
	<b>fem</b>	ma	<i>my</i>		
	<b>plur</b>	mes	<i>my</i>	nos	<i>our</i>
<b>Second person</b>	<b>masc</b>	ton	<i>your</i>	votre	<i>your</i>
	<b>fem</b>	ta	<i>your</i>		
	<b>plur</b>	tes	<i>your</i>	vos	<i>your</i>
<b>Third person</b>	<b>masc</b>	son	<i>his, her, its</i>	leur	<i>his, her, its</i>
	<b>fem</b>	sa	<i>his, her, its</i>		
	<b>plur</b>	ses	<i>his, her, its</i>	leurs	<i>their</i>

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

Elle a levé son verre	<i>She raised her (or his) glass</i>
Il a rempli sa tasse	<i>He filled his (or her) cup</i>
Il a cassé ses lunettes	<i>He broke his (or her) glasses</i>

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	<i>my class</i>	BUT	mon école	<i>my school</i>
sa permission	<i>her permission</i>	BUT	son approbation	<i>her approval</i>
ta hardiesse	<i>your audacity</i>	BUT	ton hésitation	<i>your hesitation</i>

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*

Person	Singular		Plural	
First person	je	<i>I</i>	nous	<i>we</i>
Second person	tu	<i>you</i>	vous	<i>you</i> (plural, polite)
Third person masculine feminine non-specific	il elle on	<i>he, it</i> <i>she, it</i> <i>one, we,</i> <i>people, they</i>	ils elles	<i>they</i> <i>they</i>
neutral	ce, cela, ça	<i>it, that</i>		
impersonal	il, ce, cela, ça	<i>it, that,</i> <i>there</i>		

#### 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*

Vous ne le ferez pas  
*You won't do it*

Unlike in English, subject pronouns cannot normally be separated from the verb by adverbials or parenthetical expressions:

NOT \*Je souvent dîne avec Laura  
*I often dine with Laura*

NOT \*Il, paraît-il, ne prend pas de café  
*He, it seems, isn't having coffee*

versus the grammatical *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?	<i>Can he swim?</i>
Est-elle arrivée?	<i>Has she arrived?</i>
Ont-ils mangé?	<i>Have they eaten?</i>

(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?	<i>Don't you believe it?</i>
Ne le lui avez-vous pas donné?	<i>Didn't you give it to him?</i>
Dînent-ils souvent ensemble?	<i>Do they often dine together?</i>

### 3.1.2 The use of *vous* and *tu*

*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, *tu* is used only to address one person when there is no social distance between speaker and addressee.

In its plural use, *vous* refers simply to more than one addressee, whether social intimates or not:

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

Vous allez me refaire ce devoir  
*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 *tu* and when to use the polite *vous*. Generally, one can say that the non-native speaker would be well advised to use *vous* from the outset, and to allow the native speaker to take the initiative about any change to *tu*. The following table (Table 3.B) illustrates some uses of *tu* and polite *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 *tu* or polite *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*

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

### 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 *Mils* and *ellelles*

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:

Il a chanté et (il a) dansé  
 (NOT \*Il a chanté et a dansé)  
*He sang and danced*

### 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 coeur  
 que du cancer  
*It is 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*, *ils/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:

J'ai astiqué mes casseroles. 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	<i>It's raining</i>
Il neige	<i>It's snowing</i>
Il fait du vent	<i>It's windy</i>

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:

Quelle heure est-il?	Il est 6 heures
<i>What time is it?</i>	<i>It's 6 o'clock</i>
Il est midi	
<i>It's noon</i>	

As do the related time expressions:

Il est temps de, que ...	<i>It's time to, that ...</i>
Il est tard	<i>It's late</i>

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 // 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	<i>It's raining</i>
Il neige, ça neige	<i>It's snowing</i>
Il gèle, ça gèle	<i>It's freezing</i>
Il limine, ça bruine	<i>It's drizzling</i>

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:

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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*

<i>Cela/ça attriste Antoine de/que ...</i>	<i>... saddens ...</i>
<i>Cela/ça effraie Véronique de/que ...</i>	<i>... frightens ...</i>
<i>Cela/ça énerve Joël de/que ...</i>	<i>... annoys ...</i>
<i>Cela/ça épuise Fabien de/que ...</i>	<i>... exhausts ...</i>
<i>Cela/ça étonne Jérôme de/que ...</i>	<i>... astonishes ...</i>
<i>Cela/ça fatigue Charlotte de/que ...</i>	<i>... tires ...</i>
<i>Cela/ça gêne Violette de/que ...</i>	<i>... embarrasses ...</i>
<i>Cela/ça inquiète Maud de/que ...</i>	<i>... worries ...</i>
<i>Cela/ça intéresse Rachel de/que ...</i>	<i>... interests ...</i>
<i>Cela/ça irrite Sophie de/que ...</i>	<i>... irritates ...</i>

### 3.1.21 *illça* 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 apparaissez comme étant le dindon de la farce  
*It seems that you have been made a fool of*

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	<i>He is a doctor</i>
Elle est devenue professeur	<i>She became a teacher</i>
Elles sont avocates	<i>They are lawyers</i>
Elle est toujours restée femme au foyer	<i>She always was a housewife</i>
Ils restent hollandais, bien qu'ils aient quitté les Pays-Bas il y a 20 ans	<i>They remain Dutch, although they left the Netherlands 20 years ago</i>

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

C'est un Russe	<i>He's a Russian</i>
C'est un avocat	<i>He's a lawyer</i>

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

C'est un médecin connu	<i>He's a famous doctor</i>
C'est un boxeur professionnel	<i>He's a professional boxer</i>
C'est une avocate qui connaît le droit anglais	<i>She's a lawyer who knows English law</i>
C'est un professeur de Toulouse	<i>He's a teacher from Toulouse</i>

*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)
<i>It's a pleasure</i>	
C'est Marie	(NOT *il, *elle est Marie)
<i>It's Marie</i>	
C'était en été	(NOT *il était en été)
<i>It was in summer</i>	
Ce sera pour elle	
<i>It'll be for her</i>	

*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	<i>He is stupid</i>
C'est stupide	will normally mean	<i>That's silly</i>
Il est curieux	will normally mean	<i>He's inquisitive</i>
C'est curieux	will normally mean	<i>That's odd</i>



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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:

agréable	<i>fun</i>	intéressant	<i>interesting</i>
bon	<i>good</i>	inutile	<i>useless</i>
commode	<i>convenient</i>	mauvais	<i>bad</i>
dangereux	<i>dangerous</i>	nécessaire	<i>necessary</i>
difficile	<i>difficult</i>	pénible	<i>tiresome</i>
étrange	<i>odd</i>	périlleux	<i>perilous</i>
évident	<i>obvious</i>	possible	<i>possible</i>
facile	<i>easy</i>	peu probable	<i>unlikely</i>
important	<i>important</i>	utile	<i>useful</i>
impossible	<i>impossible</i>	vrai	<i>true</i>
insupportable	<i>intolerable</i>		

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  
(Leur politique), c'est difficile à accepter

Ce document est intéressant à analyser  
(Ce document), il est intéressant à analyser  
(Ce document), c'est intéressant à analyser

Here *il*, *elle* and *ce* refer to something mentioned elsewhere in the conversation or text (in this case to *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.

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**TABLE 3.C** *Summary table of object pronouns*

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

**TABLE 3.D** *y and en*

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

**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	<i>phoned him</i>
... lui a survécu	<i>outlived her</i>
... lui a (dés)obéi	<i>(dis)obeyed her</i>
... lui a nui	<i>disadvantaged him</i>
... lui ressemble	<i>looks like him</i>

Verbs followed by: ... *quelque chose* à *quelqu'un*:

... lui a passé le sel	<i>passed her the salt</i>
... lui a permis du repos	<i>allowed him some rest</i>
... lui a promis une lettre	<i>promised her a letter</i>
... lui a reproché son attitude	<i>criticized her attitude</i>
... lui a enseigné le chant	<i>taught him to sing</i>
... lui a donné un cadeau	<i>gave her a present</i>
... lui a envoyé un colis	<i>sent her a package</i>
... lui a offert un whisky	<i>offered her a whisky</i>

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

lui a ordonné de signer	<i>ordered him to sign</i>
lui a dit de se taire	<i>told him to shut up</i>
lui a demandé de partir	<i>asked him to leave</i>
lui a permis de l'acheter	<i>allowed her to buy it</i>

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	<i>. forced him to stay</i>
l'a dissuadée	<i>. dissuaded her</i>
l'a empêché de courir	<i>. stopped him from running</i>
l'a forcée à rester	<i>. forced her to stay</i>

l'a invité à dîner	. invited him to dinner
l'a menacée	. threatened her
l'a obligé à parler	. forced him to talk
l'a remerciée	. thanked her

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

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

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 <b>lui</b> téléphoner	<i>He can always be reached by phone</i>
Il pourra te voir demain	<i>He will be able to see you tomorrow</i>
Nous irons leur raconter l'histoire demain	<i>We will go and tell them what happened tomorrow</i>

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!	<i>Take them!</i>
Suivez-nous!	<i>Follow us!</i>
Arrêtez-les!	<i>Stop them!</i>

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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 mange pas! *Don't eat it!*  
Ne me fais 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 I 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*



(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

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*

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'admire **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      He is referring to her*

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 Juliens                      This bag is his*

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	<i>appeal to</i>
faire appel à	<i>appeal to</i>
avoir recours à	<i>have recourse to</i>
recourir à	<i>have recourse to</i>
faire attention à	<i>pay attention to</i>
faire allusion à	<i>allude to</i>
s'habituer à	<i>get used to</i>
revenir à	<i>come back to</i>

rêver à	<i>dream of</i>
songer à	<i>think of</i>
tenir à	<i>be fond of</i>
venir à	<i>come to</i>

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)	
<i>He is thinking of himself</i>	
Elles auront affaire les unes aux autres	
<i>They will have to deal with each other</i>	

### 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	
<i>They broke his arm</i>	
Elle s'était coupé le doigt	
<i>She had cut her finger</i>	
La sueur me coulait dans le dos	
<i>Sweat was running down my back</i>	

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

Elle lui lave le visage	
<i>She is washing his face</i>	

BUT NOT:

*Elle lui aime le visage	
<i>She likes his face</i>	

RATHER:

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	
<i>She broke his video recorder</i>	

(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 <i>I am going to Paris tomorrow</i>	J'y vais demain <i>I'm going there tomorrow</i>
Elle vit dans une grande maison <i>She lives in a large house</i>	Elle y vit <i>She lives there</i>
Il a écrit son nom sur le cahier <i>He wrote his name on the book</i>	Il y a écrit son nom <i>He wrote his name there</i>

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>I often think about retirement</i>
J'y pense souvent
Elle est fidèle à ses principes <i>She is faithful to her principles</i>
Elle y est fidèle
Nous sommes entrés dans le débat <i>We joined in the debate</i>
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!	<i>Think about it!</i>
Je n'y suis pour rien	<i>It's nothing to do with me</i>
J'y suis, j'y reste	<i>Here I am and here I stay</i>
Il y a ...	<i>There is ... there are ...</i>

### 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 With a pronoun: J'y pense	<i>I'm thinking of the war</i> <i>I'm thinking of it</i>
Je tiens à mes idées J'y tiens	<i>I'm sticking to my ideas</i> <i>I'm sticking to them</i>
Je ferai très attention à vos affaires J'y ferai très attention	<i>I'll look after your belongings very carefully</i> <i>I'll look after them carefully</i>

*y* can also be found on rare occasions referring to people with such verbs: /'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:

Il a déjà parlé de son idée  
*He has already spoken about his idea*

Il en a déjà parlé  
*He has already spoken about it*

Il a empêché Jean-Pierre de travailler  
*He stopped Jean-Pierre working*

Il l'en a empêché  
*He stopped him doing it*

Mémère s'occupe des enfants  
*Grandma is looking after the children*

Mémère s'en occupe  
*Grandma is looking after them*

Christine est fière de son frère  
*Christine is proud of her brother*

Christine en est fière  
*Christine is proud of him*

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  
*I bought a dozen roses*

J'en ai acheté une douzaine  
*I bought a dozen*

Il a commandé une douzaine d'huîtres  
*He ordered a dozen oysters*

Il en a commandé une douzaine  
*He ordered a dozen*

Elle produit beaucoup de documents  
*She produces a lot of papers*

Elle en produit beaucoup  
*She produces a lot*

J'ai acheté dix roses  
*I bought ten roses*

J'en ai acheté dix  
*I bought ten*

Elle a cueilli plusieurs tomates  
*She picked several tomatoes*

Elle en a cueilli plusieurs  
*She picked several*

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*

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 . . .	<i>there is/are ...</i>	Il y avait trois hommes
s'en aller	<i>go away</i>	Yvette s'en va
en imposer	<i>impress</i>	Elle en impose
s'en prendre à	<i>lay into</i>	Il s'en est pris à Jacques
en revenir	<i>get over</i>	Je <b>n'en</b> reviens pas
s'en tenir à	<i>stick to</i>	Tenez-vous-en aux faits
en vouloir à	<i>hold a grudge</i>	Je lui en veux
en voilà un	<i>there's someone</i>	En voilà un qui m'énerve
c'en est fait	<i>that's the end of</i>	C'en est fait de nos espoirs
en découdre	<i>to get into a fight</i>	Il est toujours prêt à en découdre
Où en sommes-nous?	<i>Where did we get to?</i>	

### 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*

*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 renoncerais

*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*

POSITION				
First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
me te se nous vous	le la les	lui leur	y	en

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 <i>/ will introduce Eve-Marie to you</i>
can, with two pronouns, become:	Je vous la présenterai <i>I will introduce her to you</i>
the sentence	Je vous présenterai à Eve-Marie <i>/ will introduce you to Eve-Marie</i>
cannot become	*Je vous lui présenterai <i>I will introduce you to her</i>
Instead, you would use:	Je vous présenterai à elle
Whilst:	Je vous recommande Jean-Paul <i>/ recommend Jean-Paul to you</i>

can, with two pronouns, become:	Je vous le recommande <i>/ recommend him to you</i>
the sentence	Je vous recommande à Jean-Paul <i>/ recommend you to Jean-Paul</i>
cannot become	*Je vous lui recommande <i>I will recommend you to him</i>
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:

\*Il se nous est joint

NOR \*Il 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

## 70 Personal and impersonal pronouns

the last pronoun in the sequence, but become *m* , *t'* before *y* or *en*:

Donne-le-moi	<i>Give it to me</i>
Donne-m'en	<i>Give me some</i>

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	<i>Talk to me about it</i>
Accroche-toi-z-y	<i>Hang on to it</i>

In negative imperatives pronouns precede the verb, and the order of multiple pronouns is as indicated in the table:

Ne me le donne pas	<i>Don't give it to me</i>
Ne me les nettoyez jamais!	<i>Don't you ever clean them for me! (i.e. I forbid you to ...)</i>

### 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* etc 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>I shall make him eat them</i>	<i>I made him eat them</i>

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?
<i>Will you let her read them?</i>	<i>Will you let her read them?</i>
Je le leur ai entendu dire	Je les ai entendus le dire
<i>I heard them say so</i>	<i>I heard them say so</i>
Elle me l'envoya chercher	Elle m'envoya le chercher
<i>She sent me to fetch it or</i>	<i>She sent me to fetch it</i>
<i>She had it fetched for me</i>	

(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>I must admit it to you immediately</i>
Ils peuvent nous le signaler dès son arrivée
<i>They can tell us about it as soon as he arrives</i>

### 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  
*I 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*

Person	Singular	Plural
First person	moi <i>me</i>	nous <i>us</i>
Second person	toi <i>you</i>	vous <i>you</i> (plural or polite)
Third person masculine feminine neutral non-specific	lui <i>him</i> elle <i>her</i> cela, ça <i>that</i> soi <i>oneself</i>	eux <i>them</i> elles <i>them</i>

#### 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**, rais 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:

Qui est là?	Moi (NOT *je)
Qui tu as vu?	Lui (NOT *il)
C'est elle qui t'aidera, pas moi (NOT *pas je)	

### 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):

Je suis venu malgré lui	<i>I came in spite of him</i>
J'ai agi comme elle	<i>I acted as she did</i>
Ne le dites pas devant eux	<i>Don't say it in front of them</i>
Elle s'est assise à côté de moi	<i>She sat down next to me</i>
Je n'ai rien contre elles	<i>I have nothing against them</i>

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.):

Les enfants avaient préparé la salade eux-mêmes  
*The children had prepared the salad themselves*

Lui aussi aura des problèmes  
*He too will have problems*

Eux seuls pourraient la convaincre  
*They alone could persuade her*

Nous autres Européens, on se comprend  
*We Europeans understand one another*

**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 nouns 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

		Proximate	Non-proximate
masc sing	celui <i>the one</i>	celui-ci <i>this one; the latter</i>	celui-là <i>that one; the former</i>
fern sing	celle <i>the one</i>	celle-ci <i>this one; the latter</i>	celle-là <i>that one; the former</i>
masc plur	ceux <i>the ones</i>	ceux-ci <i>these ones; the latter</i>	ceux-là <i>those ones; the former</i>
fern plur	celles <i>the ones</i>	celles-ci <i>these ones; the latter</i>	celles-là <i>those ones; the former</i>

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'écoutent 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 3.H *Summary table of possessive pronouns*

<b>First person</b>	<b>msg</b>	le mien	<i>mine</i>	le nôtre	<i>ours</i>
	<b>fsg</b>	la mienne		la nôtre	
	<b>mpl</b>	les miens		les nôtres	
		<b>fpl</b>			
<b>Second person</b>	<b>msg</b>	le tien	<i>yours</i>	le vôtre	<i>yours</i>
	<b>fsg</b>	la tienne		la vôtre	
	<b>mpl</b>	les tiens		les vôtres	
	<b>fpl</b>	les tiennes			
<b>Third person</b>	<b>msg</b>	le sien	<i>his hers</i>	le leur	<i>theirs</i>
	<b>fsg</b>	la sienne		la leur	
	<b>mpl</b>	les siens		les leurs	
	<b>fpl</b>	les siennes			

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 <i>a grey coat</i>	une souris grise <i>a greymouse</i>
un gazon vert <i>a green lawn</i>	une veste verte <i>a green jacket</i>
un nuage noir <i>a black cloud</i>	une robe noire <i>a black dress</i>

#### **Adjectives of nationality**

*français* 'French', *britannique* 'British', *américain* 'American', *grec* 'Greek', *tunisien* 'Tunisian', etc.:

un livre français <i>a French book</i>	de la bière française <i>French beer</i>
du vin algérien <i>Algerian wine</i>	une ville algérienne <i>an Algerian town</i>
du fromage grec <i>Greek cheese</i>	une antiquité grecque <i>a Greek antique</i>

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.:

un bureau carré <i>a square desk</i>	une boîte carrée <i>a square box</i>
un plateau rond <i>a round tray</i>	une table ronde <i>a round table</i>
un cadre rectangulaire <i>a rectangular frame</i>	une cour rectangulaire <i>a rectangular courtyard</i>

### Adjectives describing religious affiliation

*icon* 'Anglican', *catholique* 'Catholic', *musulman* 'Muslim', *protestant* 'Protestant', *orthodoxe* 'Orthodox', *juif* 'Jewish', etc.:

un prêtre catholique <i>a Catholic priest</i>	une jeune fille catholique <i>a Catholic girl</i>
un père juif <i>a Jewish father</i>	une mère juive <i>a Jewish mother</i>
un garçon musulman <i>a Muslim boy</i>	une jeune fille musulmane <i>a Muslim girl</i>

### Adjectives which relate to a time or place of origin

une église médiévale	<i>a medieval church</i>
une ambiance citadine	<i>an urban atmosphere</i>
un paysage rural	<i>a rural landscape</i>
un accent campagnard	<i>a rustic accent</i>

### Past and present participles

un mariage forcé <i>a forced marriage</i>	une grille rouillée <i>a rusty gate</i>
un élève brillant <i>a brilliant pupil</i>	une étoile brillante <i>a brilliant star</i>
un voyage fatigant <i>a tiring journey</i>	une voiture puissante <i>a powerful car</i>

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:

Verb in subordinate clause		Adjective	
convainquant	<i>convincing</i>	convaincant	<i>convincing</i>
différant	<i>differing</i>	différent	<i>different</i>
équivalant	<i>being equivalent to</i>	équivalent	<i>equivalent</i>
fatigant	<i>tiring</i>	fatigant	<i>tiring</i>
négligeant	<i>neglecting</i>	négligent	<i>negligent</i>
précédant	<i>preceding</i>	précédent	<i>previous</i>

#### 4.1.2 Adjectives which normally occur before the noun

autre	une autre histoire	<i>another story</i>
beau/bel/belle	un bel homme	<i>a good-looking man</i>
bon/bonne	un bon professeur	<i>a good teacher</i>
bref/brève	un bref épisode	<i>a brief episode</i>
double	un double whisky	<i>a double whisky</i>
haut/e	de hautes montagnes	<i>high mountains</i>
joli/e	une jolie femme	<i>a pretty woman</i>
mauvais/e	une mauvaise odeur	<i>a bad smell</i>
nouveau/nouvel/nouvelle	une nouvelle maison	<i>a new house</i>
petit/e	un petit problème	<i>a small problem</i>
vaste	une vaste enceinte	<i>a vast arena</i>
vieux/vieil/vieille	un vieux château	<i>an old castle</i>

#### 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	<i>an old boy/girl i.e. (ex-)pupil</i>
	une maison ancienne	<i>an old house</i>
brave	un brave type	<i>a nice guy</i>
	un homme brave	<i>a courageous man</i>
certain	d'un certain âge	<i>middle-aged</i>
	une vérité certaine	<i>a certain truth</i>
cher	mon cher ami	<i>my dear friend</i>
	une robe chère	<i>an expensive dress</i>

chic	un chic type une robe chic	<i>a nice guy</i> <i>a smart dress</i>
curieux	une curieuse histoire une personne curieuse	<i>an odd story</i> <i>an inquisitive person</i>
dernier	son dernier livre la semaine dernière	<i>his last book (latest)</i> <i>last week</i>
drôle	une drôle d'histoire une histoire drôle	<i>an odd story</i> <i>a funny story</i>
fameux	ton fameux problème un vin fameux	<i>the problem you keep on going on</i> <i>a delicious wine</i>
franc	une franche idiote une personne franche	<i>a real idiot</i> <i>a frank person</i>
grand	un grand homme un homme grand	<i>a great man</i> <i>a tall man</i>
gros	un gros effort un homme gros	<i>a big effort</i> <i>a fat man</i>
jeune	une jeune femme une femme jeune	<i>a young woman</i> <i>a woman who is not old</i>
méchant	une méchante histoire une fille méchante	<i>a nasty business</i> <i>an unpleasant girl</i>
même	toujours les mêmes histoires le jour même	<i>always the same stories /problems</i> <i>that very day</i>
pauvre	un pauvre homme un homme pauvre	<i>a man you feel sorry for</i> <i>a man who isn't rich</i>
propre	ma propre chambre une serviette propre	<i>my own bedroom</i> <i>a clean towel</i>
pure	une pure illusion de race pure	<i>a complete illusion</i> <i>pure bred</i>
rare	un rare moment de paix un moment rare de l'histoire	<i>a precious moment of peace</i> <i>an exceptional moment in history</i>
sale	une sale histoire une nappe sale	<i>a nasty business</i> <i>a dirty tablecloth</i>
seul	le seul inconvénient ... un homme seul	<i>the only disadvantage ...</i> <i>a lonely man</i>
simple	une simple question de ... une question simple	<i>simply a matter of...</i> <i>an easy question</i>
triste	une triste histoire une histoire triste	<i>a sorry story</i> <i>a sad story</i>
véritable	un véritable problème un problème véritable	<i>a real problem (serious)</i> <i>a genuine problem (not invented)</i>
vert	une verte réprimande une voiture verte	<i>a real dressing-down</i> <i>a green car</i>
vilain	une vilaine action un enfant vilain	<i>a bad deed</i> <i>an ugly (or naughty) child</i>

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 feu 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	<i>a slight cold</i>
une charmante soirée	<i>a delightful evening</i>
une forte odeur	<i>a strong smell</i>
un misérable repas	<i>a measly meal</i>
une importante augmentation	<i>a large increase</i>

#### 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	<i>the first two weeks</i>
les quatre dernières jolies phrases	<i>the last four pretty sentences</i>
au bon vieux temps	<i>in the good old days</i>
une autre nouvelle maison	<i>another new house</i>
un vrai beau grand château	<i>a really beautiful large castle</i>
ce pauvre cher homme	<i>that poor dear man</i>

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*

des milieux politiques américains	<i>American political circles</i>
des feuilles mortes humides	<i>damp dead leaves</i>
un agent commercial français	<i>a French business agent</i>

#### 4.1.6 Adjectives modified by adverbs and prepositional phrases

When adjectives which normally precede the noun are modified by adverbs or prepositional phrases, they may appear after the noun. The longer the modifying expression, the more likely this is:

un bel homme	<i>a handsome man</i>
un très bel homme	<i>a very handsome man</i>
un homme vraiment beau	<i>a really handsome man</i>
un gros effort	<i>a great effort</i>
un effort démesurément gros	<i>an inordinately large effort</i>
une jolie figure	<i>a pretty face</i>
une figure un peu trop jolie	<i>a face which is a bit too pretty</i>
un grand jardin	<i>a large garden</i>
un jardin grand comme un mouchoir de poche	<i>a garden the size of your hand</i>

This also applies to superlatives (see 4.12.2):

un bref aperçu	<i>a brief outline</i>
le plus bref aperçu	<i>the briefest outline</i>
un aperçu des plus brefs	<i>the briefest of outlines</i>

#### 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:



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avoir l'air	<i>to seem, appear</i>
être	<i>to be</i>
être considéré comme	<i>to be thought of as</i>
devenir	<i>to become</i>
se montrer	<i>to show oneself to be</i>
paraître	<i>to appear</i>
passer pour	<i>to be considered to be</i>
sembler	<i>to seem</i>

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**  
*AU 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	<i>to believe</i>	traiter qn de	<i>to call sb sth</i>
considérer	<i>to consider</i>	trouver	<i>to find</i>
deviner	<i>to guess</i>	voir	<i>to see</i>
imaginer	<i>to imagine</i>	se voir	<i>to see oneself</i>
s'imaginer	<i>to imagine oneself</i>		

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 **lâches**  
*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:

quelque chose de bon	<i>something,</i>
quelqu'un d'intéressant	<i>someone interesting</i>
rien de plus facile	<i>nothing easier</i>
Quoi de neuf?	<i>What's new?</i>

#### 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:

Je ne veux que les mûrs	<i>/ only want the ripe ones</i>
Nous prendrons les grands	<i>We'll take the big ones</i>
Les petits sont déjà partis	<i>The small ones have already gone</i>
Les gentils gagnent à la fin	<i>The goodies win in the end</i>
Les méchants sont punis	<i>The baddies are punished</i>
J'adore le rustique	<i>I love rural styles</i>
Elle aurait préféré du moderne	<i>She would have preferred something up-to-date</i>
Le plus énervant, c'est sa voix	<i>It's her voice that is the most annoying thing</i>
Le rouge te va bien	<i>Red suits you</i>
L'important c'est de partir tôt	<i>The important thing is to leave early</i>

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:

Nous prendrons les grands	<i>We'll take the big ones</i>
Nous en prendrons deux	<i>We'll take two</i>
Nous avons acheté des ovales	<i>We bought some oval ones</i>
Nous en avons acheté plusieurs	<i>We bought several</i>

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:

Elle est américaine	<i>C'est une Américaine</i>
<i>She is American</i>	<i>She is an American</i>
Tout Français qui se respecte aime le fromage	<i>Every true French person loves cheese</i>
Elle est de nationalité française	<i>She is of French nationality</i>

## 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):

bas	Ils parlent bas	<i>They're talking very quietly</i>
bon	Le café sent bon	<i>The coffee smells good</i>
cher	Cela coûte trop cher	<i>That's too expensive</i>
clair	Je n'arrive pas à y voir clair dans son raisonnement	<i>I can't make much sense of his argument</i>
droit	Ils marchent droit	<i>They are walking straight</i>
dur	Ils travaillent dur	<i>They work hard</i>
faux	Elles chantent faux	<i>You sing out of tune</i>
fin	Il faut couper le jambon très fin	<i>You must slice the ham very thinly</i>
fort	Ils parlent trop fort	<i>They're talking too loudly</i>
grand	Ils ont vu trop grand	<i>They attempted too much</i>
jeune	Ils s'habillent jeune	<i>They dress in a youthful manner</i>
juste	Tu as vu juste dès le début	<i>You understood from the beginning</i>
lourd	Cet acte pèse lourd sur ma conscience	<i>That act weighs heavily on my conscience</i>
menu	de la viande hachée menu	<i>meat cut up finely</i>
vieux	Ils font vieux	<i>They look old</i>

## 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:

	Masculine	Feminine	
-u	absolu	absolue	<i>absolute</i>
	aigu	aiguë	<i>high (sound)</i>
	ambigu	ambiguë	<i>ambiguous</i>
	contigu	contiguë	<i>contiguous</i>

NB: In the case of *aigu*, *ambigu*, *contigu*, a diresis (ë) is added to the feminine -e in written French to indicate that the -u sound is maintained in spoken French (*aigue* would be pronounced rather like English 'egg' otherwise; compare *long/longue*).

-é	fermé	fermée	<i>closed</i>
-er	fier	fière	<i>proud</i>
	cher	chère	<i>expensive</i>
	amer	amère	<i>bitter</i>

NB: In these cases, where the final *r* is pronounced in the masculine, a grave accent is added to the first written *e*.

-i	hardi	hardie	<i>bold</i>
NB: Exception:	favori	favorite	<i>favourite</i>
-c	public turc	publique turque	<i>public</i> <i>Turkish</i>
NB: <i>c</i> is maintained in:	grec	grecque	<i>Greek</i>
-ct	direct	directe	<i>direct</i>
-r	sûr pur	sûre pure	<i>certain</i> <i>pure</i>
-al	national général hivernal final	nationale générale hivernale finale	<i>national</i> <i>general</i> <i>winter</i> <i>final</i>
-el	personnel professionnel passionnel	personnelle professionnelle passionnelle	<i>personal</i> <i>professional</i> <i>emotive</i>
-ul	cruel nul	cruelle nulle	<i>cruel</i> <i>no-</i>

NB: In these cases, it is *-le* which is added and not just *-e*.

espagnol	espagnole	<i>Spanish</i>
puéril	puéri <sup>l</sup> e	<i>cMdish</i>
«vil	civile	<i>civil</i>

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]	<i>kind</i>
pareil [-ej]	pareille [-ej]	<i>similar</i>
vermeil [-ej]	vermeille [-ej]	<i>bright red</i>

#### 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	<i>small</i>
cuit	cuite	<i>cooked</i>
gris	grise	<i>grey</i>
mauvais	mauvaise	<i>bad</i>

##### Addition of *-e* and doubling of the final consonant

<sup>nas</sup>	bas	basse	<i>low</i>
	g <sup>ras</sup>	grasse	<i>fatty</i>
	épais	épaisse	<i>thick</i>
	l <sup>as</sup>	lasse	<i>tired</i>
-et	muet	muette	<i>mute</i>
	coquet	coquette	<i>cute</i>
-ot	sot	sotte	<i>stupid</i>

**Addition of -e and a grave accent**

-et	complet	complète	<i>complete</i>
	inquiet	inquiète	<i>worried</i>
	secret	secrète	<i>secret</i>
	discret	discrète	<i>discreet</i>
	concret	concrète	<i>concrete</i>
	replet	replète	<i>plump</i>

**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:

grand	grande	<i>big</i>
paysan	paysanne	<i>peasant</i>
partisan	partisane	<i>biased</i>
ancien	ancienne	<i>old</i>
enfantin	enfantine	<i>childlike</i>
européen	européenne	<i>European</i>
féminin	féminine	<i>feminine</i>
fin	fine	<i>fine</i>
mignon	mignonne	<i>pretty</i>
bon	bonne	<i>good</i>
brun	brune	<i>brown</i>
opportun	opportune	<i>opportune</i>

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:

-ais/aîche	frais	fraîche	<i>fresh</i>
-aux/ausse	faux	fausse	<i>false</i>
-er/ère	premier	première	<i>first</i>
	dernier	dernière	<i>last</i>
	étranger	étrangère	<i>foreign</i>
-eux/euse	heureux	heureuse	<i>happy</i>
	amoureux	amoureuse	<i>in love</i>
	nerveux	nerveuse	<i>nervous</i>
	affreux	affreuse	<i>frightful</i>
	peureux	peureuse	<i>frightened</i>
-eux/-eille	vieux	vieille	<i>old</i>
-eur/euse	voleur	voleuse	<i>dishonest</i>
	flatteur	flatteuse	<i>flattering</i>
	trompeur	trompeuse	<i>misleading</i>
	moqueur	moqueuse	<i>likes to make fun of others</i>
	joueur	joueuse	<i>playful</i>
-eur/eresse	vengeur	vengeresse	<i>vengeful</i>

-eur/rice	consolateur observateur créateur conservateur	consolatrice observatrice créatrice conservatrice	<i>consoling</i> <i>observant</i> <i>creative</i> <i>conservative</i>
-eau/elle	nouveau beau jumeau	nouvelle belle jumelle	<i>new</i> <i>beautiful</i> <i>twin</i>
-c/che	sec blanc franc	sèche blanche franche	<i>dry</i> <i>white</i> <i>frank</i>
-f/ve	neuf actif bref créatif vif	neuve active brève créative vive	<i>new</i> <i>active</i> <i>brief</i> <i>creative</i> <i>lively</i>
-in/igne	bénin malin	bénigne maligne	<i>benign</i> <i>sharp, clever</i>
-ong/ongue	long	longue	<i>long</i>
-ou/olle	mou fou	molle folle	<i>soft</i> <i>mad</i>
-oux/ouce/ouss <sup>Ê</sup> <sup>1</sup>	doux roux	douce rousse	<i>gentle</i> <i>red-haired</i>

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	<i>a fine effect</i>
un fol espoir	<i>a vain hope</i>
un nouvel homme	<i>a new, a changed man</i>
un mol effort	<i>a weak effort</i>
un vieil hélicoptère	<i>an old helicopter</i>

#### 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	<i>obvious</i>
sale	masculine and feminine	<i>dirty</i>
tranquille	masculine and feminine	<i>calm</i>
utile	masculine and feminine	<i>useful</i>

## 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 <i>She is happy</i>	Elles sont contentes <i>They (f) are happy</i>
Il est content <i>He is happy</i>	Ils sont contents <i>They (m) are happy</i>

La veste est rouge  
*The jacket is red*

Les vestes sont rouges  
*The jackets are red*

Le sac est rouge  
*The bag is 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*

Nos fils sont heureux  
*Our sons are happy*

Le cahier est gris  
*The exercise book is grey*

Les cahiers sont gris  
*The exercise books are grey*

#### 4.8.2 Adjectives which end in **-eau** add **x** rather than **s**

Un nouveau magnéto  
*A new video-tape recorder*

De nouveaux magnétoscopes  
*New video-tape recorders*

Un beau cadre  
*A beautiful setting*

De beaux cadres  
*Beautiful settings*

#### 4.8.3 Adjectives which end in **-al** generally change to **-aux**

Le chanteur principal  
*The principal singer*

Des chanteurs principaux  
*Principal singers*

Le principe général  
*The general principle*

Des principes généraux  
*General principles*

Un homme marginal  
*A man on the margins (of society)*

Des hommes marginaux  
*Men on the margins (of society)*

Un point de vue normal  
*A normal point of view*

Des points de vue normaux  
*Normal points of view*

**Exceptions:** *banal, bancal, fatal, glacial, naval, natal*

Un discours banal  
*A banal speech*

Des discours banals  
*Banal speeches*

Un buffet bancal  
*A sideboard with a damaged leg*

Des buffet bancals  
*Sideboards with damaged legs*

Un revirement fatal  
*A fatal change of heart*

Des revirements fatals  
*Fatal changes of heart*

Un vent glacial  
*A very cold wind*

Des vent glacials  
*Very cold winds*

Un chantier naval  
*A naval dockyard*

Des chantiers navals  
*Naval dockyards*

Mon pays natal  
*My home country*

Des pays natals  
*Home countries*

Adjectives which alternate:

idéal  
matinal  
pascal  
astral

idéals *and* idéaux  
matinals *and* matinaux  
pascals *and* pascaux  
astrals *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	<i>in a faltering voice</i>
ce fameux dimanche	<i>that famous Sunday</i>
L'eau était froide	<i>The water was cold</i>
Il lançait aux passants	<i>He shot rapid and</i>
des regards rapides et insistants	<i>insistent glances at the passers-by</i>

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	<i>a table and a blue chair</i>
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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	<i>a blue table and chair</i>
Il ne portait ni de veste ni de pantalon bleus	<i>He was wearing neither a blue jacket nor a blue pair of trousers</i>
un stylo ou un cahier bleus	<i>a blue pen or exercise book</i>

### 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	<i>a group of talented female singers</i>
une bande de voyous agressive	<i>an aggressive gang of layabouts</i>
des baignades fréquentes	<i>frequent dips in the sea</i>
un geste de générosité déplacée	<i>an act of misplaced generosity</i>

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	une jupe marron	des chaussures marron
<i>a brown pullover</i>	<i>a brown skirt</i>	<i>brown shoes</i>
un carton orange	une voiture orange	des rideaux orange
<i>an orange box</i>	<i>an orange car</i>	<i>orange curtains</i>



un chemisier crème <i>a cream blouse</i>	une jupe crème <i>a cream skirt</i>	des sous-vêtements crème <i>cream underwear</i>
un lecteur de cassettes <b>bon</b> marché		<i>a cheap cassette player</i>
une planche à roulettes <b>bon</b> marché		<i>a cheap skateboard</i>
des fruits <b>bon</b> marché		<i>cheap fruit</i>
un pull cerise		<i>a cherry pullover</i>
une tapisserie cerise		<i>cherry-coloured wallpaper</i>
des uniformes cerise		<i>cherry-coloured uniforms</i>

Other invariable adjectives:

angora	<i>angora</i>
baba	<i>flabbergasted</i>
bath	<i>great</i>
cucu	<i> twee</i>
gaga	<i>nuts</i>
gnagnan	<i>childish, immature</i>
kaki	<i>khaki</i>
pop	<i>pop</i>
porno	<i>pornographic</i>
riquiqui	<i>inadequate (too small, too poor etc. depending on context)</i>
rococo	<i>rococo</i>
snob	<i>snobbish</i>
sympa	<i>friendly</i>

NB: *chic* is invariable for gender **but** agrees for number:

un tailleur <b>chic</b>	une robe <b>chic</b>	des vêtements <b>chics</b>
<i>a smart suit</i>	<i>a smart dress</i>	<i>smart clothes</i>

## 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 <i>deaf-mute</i>	Les enfants sourds-muets ont fait des progrès exceptionnels <i>The deaf-mute children have made exceptional progress</i>
aigre-doux <i>sweet and sour</i>	J'adore les sauces aigres-douces <i>I adore sweet and sour sauces</i>
nouveau-né <i>new-born</i>	Les bébés nouveaux-nés sont très fatigants pour leurs parents <i>New-born babies are very exhausting for their parents</i>
dernier-né <i>last-born</i>	Les filles dernières-nées profitent de la présence de leurs frères et sœurs <i>Last-born girls take advantage of the presence of their brothers and sisters</i>
grand-ouvert <i>wide open</i>	Ils dorment la bouche grande-ouverte <i>They sleep with their mouths wide open</i>

**Exception:** where the first adjective ends in *-i*, *-o*, only the second part agrees:

tragi-comique <i>tragi-comedy</i>	Toutes ses pièces étaient tragi-comiques <i>All her plays were tragi-comédies</i>
--------------------------------------	--

franco-allemand	Dans le cadre de l'union européenne, les accords franco-allemands ont duré plus de trente ans
<i>Franco-German</i>	<i>Within the European framework, the Franco-German agreements have lasted for more than thirty years</i>

#### 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
<i>highly placed</i>	<i>I know some highly placed civil servants who could help us</i>
bien intentionné	Ce sont toujours les personnes bien intentionnées qui créent le plus de problèmes
<i>well-intentioned</i>	<i>It's always the well-intentioned people who cause the most problems</i>
avant-coureur	Voilà les signes avant-coureurs d'une maladie grave
<i>early-warning</i>	<i>There are the early-warning signs of a serious illness</i>

#### 4.11.3 Colour adjective compounds

Combinations of colour adjectives remain invariable:

des cheveux châtain clair	<i>light-brown hair</i>
une veste bleu foncé	<i>a dark-blue jacket</i>
une mer vert-bouteille	<i>a bottle-green sea</i>
une couverture gris-rouge	<i>a red-grey cover</i>

#### 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
<i>a half-hour</i>		<i>an hour and a half</i>
une demi-page		une page et demie
<i>a half-page</i>		<i>a page and a half</i>
nu-tête		sortir tête nue
<i>bareheaded</i>		<i>to go out without a hat</i>
nu-pieds		sortir pieds nus
<i>barefoot</i>		<i>to go out barefooted</i>

*mi-* can only occur before the noun and is invariable:

à mi-temps	<i>part-time (e.g. work)</i>
la mi-juin	<i>halfway through June</i>
la mi-saison	<i>middle season (Spring, Autumn)</i>
la mi-journée	<i>the middle of the day</i>
mi-américain	<i>half-American</i>
mi-clos	<i>half-open, half-closed</i>

## 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	<i>better</i> (comparative of <i>bon</i> 'good')
pire	<i>worse</i> (comparative of <i>mauvais</i> '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)	<i>the best</i> (superlative of <i>bon</i> 'good')
le/la/les pire(s)	<i>the worst</i> (superlative of <i>mauvais</i> 'bad')
le/la/les moindre(s)	<i>the least</i> (superlative of <i>petit</i> '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 *or* l'aperçu le plus bref  
*a brief outline            the briefest outline*

un jeune homme        le plus jeune homme *or* l'homme le plus jeune  
*a young man                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:

Adjective		Feminine		Adverb	
affreux	<i>awful</i>	affreuse	<i>awful</i>	affreusement	<i>awfully</i>
clair	<i>clear</i>	claire	<i>clear</i>	clairement	<i>clearly</i>
distinct	<i>distinct</i>	distincte	<i>distinct</i>	distinctement	<i>distinctly</i>
doux	<i>gentle</i>	douce	<i>gentle</i>	doucement	<i>gently</i>
mou	<i>soft</i>	molle	<i>soft</i>	mollement	<i>softly</i>
naturel	<i>natural</i>	naturelle	<i>natural</i>	naturellement	<i>naturally</i>
public	<i>public</i>	publique	<i>public</i>	publiquement	<i>publicly</i>
professionnel	<i>professional</i>	professionnelle	<i>professional</i>	professionnellement	<i>professionally</i>
sec	<i>dry</i>	sèche	<i>dry</i>	sèchement	<i>dryly</i>
sûr	<i>sure</i>	sûre	<i>sure</i>	sûrement	<i>surely</i>
vif	<i>alive</i>	vive	<i>alive</i>	vivement	<i>lively</i>

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 *-l* (not *-oi*), *-é*, or *-u* (not *-eau* or *-ou*), the adverb is formed from the masculine form:

Adjective		Feminine		Adverb	
absolu	<i>absolute</i>	absolue	<i>absolute</i>	absolument	<i>absolutely</i>
ambigu	<i>ambiguous</i>	ambiguë	<i>ambiguous</i>	ambigument	<i>ambiguously</i>
aisé	<i>easy</i>	aisée	<i>easy</i>	aisément	<i>easily</i>
joli	<i>pretty</i>	jolie	<i>pretty</i>	joliment	<i>prettilly</i>
	<i>true</i>	vraie	<i>true</i>	vraiment	<i>truly</i>

Exception:

gai	<i>cheerful</i>	gaie	<i>cheerful</i>	gaiement	<i>cheerfully</i>
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Seven adjectives which end in *-u* but add a circumflex accent in the adverbial form are:

assidu	<i>assiduous</i>	assidue	<i>assiduous</i>	assidûment	<i>assiduously</i>
continu	<i>continuous</i>	continue	<i>continuous</i>	continûment	<i>continuously</i>
cru	<i>crude</i>	crue	<i>crude</i>	crûment	<i>crudely</i>
dû	<i>owed</i>	due	<i>owed</i>	dûment	<i>duly</i>
goulu	<i>greedy</i>	goulue	<i>greedy</i>	goulûment	<i>greedily</i>
incongru	<i>incongruous</i>	incongrue	<i>incongruous</i>	incongrûment	<i>incongruously</i>
indu	<i>inappropriate</i>	indue	<i>inappropriate</i>	indûment	<i>inappropriately</i>

### 5.2.3 Adverbs ending in *-amment* and *-emment* derived from adjectives ending in *-ant* or *-ent*

Adjectives ending in *-ant* and *-ent* form the adverb with *-amment* and *-emment*, respectively:

Adjective		Adverb	
abondant	<i>abundant</i>	abondamment	<i>abundantly</i>
apparent	<i>apparent</i>	apparemment	<i>apparently</i>
brillant	<i>brilliant</i>	brillamment	<i>brilliantly</i>
constant	<i>constant</i>	constamment	<i>constantly</i>
courant	<i>current</i>	couramment	<i>fluently</i>
précédent	<i>preceding</i>	précédemment	<i>beforehand</i>
prudent	<i>prudent</i>	prudemment	<i>prudently</i>
violent	<i>violent</i>	violemment	<i>violently</i>
vaillant	<i>valorous</i>	vaillamment	<i>with valour</i>

There are three forms which do not follow this pattern exactly:

lent	<i>slow</i>	lentement	<i>slowly</i>
présent	<i>present</i>	présentement	<i>presently</i>
véhément	<i>vehement</i>	véhémentement	<i>vehemently</i>

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:

précipiter <i>to precipitate</i> (précipitant - old French)	précipitamment <i>precipitately</i>
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noter <i>to note</i> (notant - old French)	notamment <i>notably</i>
(scire - old French/Latin)	sciemment <i>knowingly</i>

### 5.2.4 Adverbs ending in *-(é)ment* derived from past participles

Adverbs can also be formed in a similar way from the masculine form of past participles:

Verb		Past participle	Adverb	
aveugler	<i>to blind</i>	aveuglé	aveuglément	<i>blindly</i>
conformer	<i>to conform</i>	conformé	conformément	<i>in order</i>
forcer	<i>to force</i>	forcé	forcément	<i>necessarily</i>
préciser	<i>to make precise</i>	précisé	précisément	<i>precisely</i>

In a similar, **but** irregular, vein we find:

impuni	<i>unpunished</i>	impunément	<i>with impunity</i>
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### 5.2.5 Adverbs ending in *-ément* derived from adjectives ending in *-e*

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*

Adjective		Adverb	
énorme	<i>enormous</i>	énormément	<i>enormously</i>
immense	<i>immense</i>	immensément	<i>immensely</i>
intense	<i>intense</i>	intensément	<i>intensely</i>
uniforme	<i>uniform</i>	uniformément	<i>uniformly</i>
commode	<i>useful</i>	commodément	<i>usefully</i>

Exceptions

probable	<i>probable</i>	probablement	<i>probably</i>
véritable	<i>real</i>	véritablement	<i>really</i>

#### Feminine forms

Adjective		Feminine	Adverb	
commun	<i>common</i>	commune	communément	<i>commonly</i>
confus	<i>embarrassed</i>	confuse	confusément	<i>embarrassedly</i>
importun	<i>disagreeable</i>	importune	importunément	<i>disagreeably</i>
obscur	<i>obscure</i>	obscur	obscurément	<i>obscurely</i>
opportun	<i>appropriate</i>	opportune	opportunément	<i>appropriately</i>
profond	<i>deep</i>	profonde	profondément	<i>deeply</i>
profus	<i>profuse</i>	profuse	profusément	<i>profusely</i> (literary)

### 5.2.6 Adverbs ending in *-ment* derived from words no longer in the language

Some adverbs ending in *-ment* are derived from words which no longer exist in the language:

Adjective		Feminine	Adverb	
bref <i>brief</i> (brief - old French)		brière	brièvement	<i>briefly</i>

grave <i>serious</i> (grief - old French)	grave	grièvement	<i>seriously</i>
traître <i>treacherous</i> (traîtreux - old French)	traîtresse	traîtreusement	<i>treacherously</i>
(journal - old French)		journellement	<i>daily</i>
(nuitantre - old French)		nuitamment	<i>nightly</i>

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 bougrement difficile	<i>It's bloody difficult</i>
diablement	Cette voiture est diablement lourde	<i>This car is hellishly heavy</i>
vachement	Elle est vachement jolie	<i>She's bloody good-looking</i>

## 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:

Adjective	Used in expressions such as	
bas	parler bas	<i>to talk quietly</i>
	voler bas	<i>to fly low</i>
bon	sentir bon	<i>to smell nice</i>
	tenir bon	<i>to hold on</i>
chaud	servir chaud	<i>to serve hot</i>
cher	coûter cher	<i>to cost a lot</i>
	payer cher	<i>to pay a lot (for sth)</i>
clair	voir clair	<i>to see clearly</i>
court	tourner court	<i>to come to an abrupt end</i>
	couper court à qch	<i>to cut sth short</i>
	s'habiller court	<i>to wear one's skirts/dresses short</i>
creux	sonner creux	<i>to ring hollow</i>
doux	filer doux	<i>to keep a low profile</i>
droit	aller droit	<i>to go straight on</i>
dru	tomber dru	<i>to fall in stair-rods (rain)</i>
dur	travailler dur	<i>to work hard</i>
faux	chanter faux	<i>to sing out of tune</i>
ferme	tenir ferme	<i>to hold out</i>
fort	parler fort	<i>to talk loudly</i>
frais	servir frais	<i>to serve cool</i>
franc	parler franc	<i>to say what you think</i>
gras	manger gras	<i>to eat rich food</i>
gros	parier gros	<i>to bet heavily</i>
	risquer gros	<i>to take big risks</i>
haut	être haut placé	<i>to be in a position of authority</i>
juste	viser juste	<i>to aim correctly</i>
	deviner juste	<i>to guess right</i>

lourd	peser lourd	<i>to weigh heavily</i>
mauvais	sentir mauvais	<i>to smell bad</i>
net	s'arrêter net	<i>to stop dead</i>
	casser net	<i>to make a clean break</i>
pareil	penser pareil (informai)	<i>to think the same</i>
profond	creuser profond	<i>to dig deep</i>
serré	jouer serré	<i>to play a close game</i>

The fact that some of these adjectives are used as adverbs has allowed the creation of related forms ending in *-ment* with different meanings:

bon: bonnement

*bonnement* is used almost always with *tout* to give *tout bonnement*: 'quite simply'

cher: chèrement

*chèrement* is used with the verb *vendre* in the set phrase: *vendre chèrement sa vie*: 'to sell one's life dearly'.

bas: bassement

*bassement* has taken the meaning: 'in a mean or despicable way' and is used in the set phrase *agir bassement*: 'to act in a mean or despicable way'.

## 5.4 Phrases used as adverbs

A number of adverbs are composed of invariable phrases. The following are a sample:

au maximum	<i>to the utmost</i>
à bon escient	<i>advisedly</i>
au fur et à mesure	<i>as we go along</i>
à brûle-pourpoint	<i>point blank</i>
à côté	<i>beside</i>
à l'heure	<i>on time</i>
à tire-larigot (informai)	<i>non-stop</i>
à tue-tête	<i>at the top of one's voice</i>
à plat ventre	<i>on one's belly</i>
à qui mieux mieux	<i>each one more than the next</i>
à peu près	<i>nearly</i>
à la fois	<i>at the same time</i>
à part	<i>separately</i>
d'ores et déjà	<i>from this time onwards</i>
d'habitude	<i>usually</i>
d'emblée	<i>straightaway</i>
de plus belle	<i>with renewed vigour</i>
d'arrache-pied	<i>flat out (to work)</i>
de bonne heure	<i>early</i>
de temps en temps	<i>from time to time</i>
en haut	<i>up(stairs)</i>
en bas	<i>down(stairs)</i>

en arrière	<i>behind</i>
en avant	<i>in front</i>
en retard	<i>late</i>
en avance	<i>early</i>
en amont	<i>upstream</i>
en aval	<i>downstream</i>
en dehors	<i>outside</i>
en vain	<i>in vain</i>
en catimini	<i>in secret</i>
en général	<i>in general</i>
en particulier	<i>in particular</i>
en définitive	<i>finally</i>

n'importe où	<i>anywhere</i>
n'importe quand	<i>anytime</i>
n'importe qui	<i>anybody</i>

par hasard	<i>by chance</i>
par monts et par vaux	<i>over hill and dale</i>
par ailleurs	<i>in addition</i>
par devant	<i>in the front</i>
par dessus	<i>over and above</i>
par contre	<i>on the other hand</i>

dans la suite	<i>in what followed</i>
et ainsi de suite	<i>and so on</i>
de suite	<i>immediately</i>
par la suite	<i>in what followed</i>

sans cesse	<i>continuously</i>
sans détour	<i>straight, to the point</i>
sur ces entrefaites	<i>and with that</i>

tout à fait	<i>completely</i>
tout de suite	<i>immediately</i>
tout à l'heure	<i>in a moment, later</i>
tout d'un coup	<i>suddenly</i>
tout de go	<i>straight out</i>

côte à côte	<i>side by side</i>
ça et là	<i>here and there</i>
petit à petit	<i>little by little</i>
sur-le-champ	<i>immediately</i>
vaille que vaille	<i>somehow or other</i>

Borrowings from Latin, frequently heard, are:

grosso modo	<i>more or less</i>
a fortiori	<i>even more so</i>
a priori	<i>a priori</i>
a posteriori	<i>a posteriori</i>
vice versa	<i>vice versa</i>
in extremis	<i>at the last moment</i>

## 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	<i>angrily</i>
d'une manière concise, avec concision	<i>concisely</i>
avec charme, d'une manière charmante	<i>charmingly</i>
avec beaucoup de talent/d'imagination	<i>creatively</i>
sur le ton de la plaisanterie	<i>jokingly</i>
de façon possessive	<i>possessively</i>
de façon réfléchie	<i>reflectively</i>
avec tristesse	<i>sadly</i>
avec entêtement	<i>stubbornly</i>
de façon surprenante, à ma/ta grande surprise	<i>surprisingly</i>
sur un ton vengeur	<i>vengefully</i>

When colours are used as adverbs they are preceded by *en*:

le colorier en bleu	<i>to colour it blue</i>
le peindre en rouge	<i>to paint it red</i>

When shapes are used as adverbs, they have to be turned into an expression involving a noun in French:

lui donner une forme ronde	<i>to make it round</i>
le couper au carré	<i>to cut it square</i>

## 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>I sleep well</i>
Les choses tournent mal	<i>Things are turning out badly</i>

TABLE 5.A *Typical manner adverbs*

Typical manner adverbs	Ending in <i>-ment</i>
ainsi <i>like this/that, so, thus</i> (can also be a sentence-modifying adverb - see 5.6.17)	affectueusement <i>affectionately</i>
bien <i>well</i> (can also be a degree adverb - see 5.6.2)	autrement <i>differently</i> (can also be a degree adverb - see 5.6.2)
debout <i>standing</i>	clairement <i>clearly</i>
ensemble <i>together</i>	confusément <i>in a confused manner</i>
exprès <i>purposely, on purpose</i>	correctement <i>correctly</i>
mal <i>badly</i>	facilement <i>easily</i>
mieux <i>better</i> (for a comparison with <i>meilleur</i> see 5.6.6)	lentement <i>slowly</i>
vite <i>quickly</i>	précautionneusement <i>cautiously</i>
	soigneusement <i>carefully</i>
	vaguement <i>vaguely</i>
	<b>Invariable phrases</b>
	à dessein <i>purposely</i> à genoux <i>on one's knees</i> à pied <i>on foot</i> à la fois <i>at the same time</i> à tort <i>wrongly</i> de travers <i>crookedly</i>

## Representative examples:

Il s'est toujours comporté **ainsi**  
 Tu chantes **bien**  
 Mets-toi **debout**  
 Il a **mal** lu l'étiquette

*He always behaved like that*  
*You sing well*  
*Stand up*  
*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 5.B** *Typical degree adverbs*

Typical degree adverbs	Ending in <i>-ment</i>
assez <i>sufficiently</i>	autrement <i>much more</i> (can also be a manner adverb - see 5.6.1)
aussi <i>as</i> (modifies adjectives and adverbs; <i>autant</i> modifies verb - can also be a sentence-modifying adverb - see 5.6.17)	complètement <i>completely</i>
autant <i>as much</i> (modifies verbs)	démesurément <i>inordinately</i>
beaucoup <i>much</i>	modérément <i>moderately</i>
bien <i>really</i> (can also be a manner adverb - see 5.6.1)	particulièrement <i>particularly</i>
davantage <i>more</i> (can only modify verbs)	tellement <i>so; so much</i>
encore <i>again; still; another</i>	terriblement <i>terribly</i>
juste <i>just</i>	vraiment <i>truly</i>
même <i>even</i> (when it follows a noun it may correspond to English <i>very</i> )	
moins <i>less</i> (see 5.6.5)	<b>Invariable phrases</b>
peu <i>little</i>	au moins <i>at least</i> (expresses a concrete estimate of a quantity: <i>au moins dix personnes blessées</i> ; <i>du moins</i> expresses the speaker's view of an event: <i>du moins, il n'est pas blessé</i> - see 5.6.17)

TABLE 5.B (continued)

Typical degree adverbs	Invariable ahrases
plus <i>more</i> (can modify verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions - see 5.6.5)	à peine <i>hardly</i>
plutôt <i>rather</i>	à peu près <i>nearly</i>
presque <i>almost</i> (does NOT contract to * <i>presqu'</i> in front of a vowel: <i>presque à la fin</i> )	de loin <i>by far</i>
si <i>so</i>	par trop <i>by far</i>
tant <i>so much</i>	tout à fait <i>completely</i>
tout <i>completely; quite</i> (see 5.6.7)	un peu <i>a little</i>
très <i>very</i>	
trop <i>too</i>	

## Representative examples

C'est un acteur assez connu	<i>He is quite a well-known actor</i>
La route tue autant que la guerre	<i>Road accidents are the cause of as many deaths as war</i>
Elle est autrement intelligente que sa soeur	<i>She is much more intelligent than her sister</i>
Ils ont beaucoup discuté pendant le weekend	<i>They spent a lot of time discussing over the weekend</i>
C'est bien bête	<i>That's really stupid</i>
Il y en a davantage qu'on ne le pense	<i>There are more than you think</i>
Elle a acheté un billet juste avant de prendre le train	<i>She bought a ticket just before catching the train</i>
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	<i>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</i>

A number of degree adverbs also function as quantifiers modifying nouns (see Chapter 6.9):

assez d'excuses	<i>enough excuses</i>
autant d'argent	<i>as much money</i>
beaucoup de clients	<i>many customers</i>



bien des problèmes  
tellement de travail

*many problems*  
*so much work*

### 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:

These days I can remember it	easily more easily (than I used to) less easily (than I used to) as easily (as I used to)
This window opens	the most easily (of all of them) the least easily (of all of them)

A small set of English adverbs, however, have special comparative and superlative forms:

She finishes	fast faster the fastest
She sings	well better the best
He behaves	badly worse the worst

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:

De nos jours je m'en souviens	, facilement plus facilement (qu'auparavant) moins facilement (qu'auparavant) ' aussi facilement (qu'auparavant)
Cette fenêtre-ci ouvre	le plus facilement (de toutes) le moins facilement (de toutes)

### 5.6.4 bien 'well', mieux 'better', mal 'badly', pis 'worse'

One adverb in French has special comparative and superlative forms:

bien <i>well</i>	mieux <i>better</i>	le mieux <i>the best</i>
	moins bien <i>less well</i>	le moins bien <i>the least well</i>

	bien		<i>well</i>
	mieux		<i>better</i>
Elle chante	moins bien	<i>She sings</i>	<i>less well</i>
	le mieux		<i>the best</i>
	le moins bien		<i>the least well</i>

The adverb *mal* 'badly' has two sets of comparative and superlative forms, one regular and one irregular:

Regular		
mal <i>badly</i>	plus mal <i>worse</i>	le plus mal <i>the worst</i>
	moins mal <i>less badly</i>	le moins mal <i>the least badly</i>
Irregular		
pis <i>worse</i>		le pis <i>the worst</i>

*pis* and *le pis* only occur these days in fixed expressions like:

tant pis	<i>too bad</i>
Les choses vont de mal en pis {or de pis en pis}	<i>Things are going from bad to worse</i>
qui pis est, . . .	<i>what's worse, . . .</i>
au pis aller	<i>if the worse comes to the worst</i>
en mettant tout au pis, . . .	<i>at the worst, . . .</i>

### 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*:

Elle mange	[ beaucoup plus [s] le plus [s] (de toutes)	<i>She eats</i>	<i>a lot more the most (of all)</i>
	1 autant (que moi)		<i>as much (as me)</i>
Elle mange	( peu moins le moins (de toutes)	<i>She eats</i>	<i>little less the least (of all)</i>
	1 aussi peu (que moi)		<i>as little (as me)</i>

*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*

**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/lalles meilleur(e)(s)* and *le mieux*

*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':

<b>Adjective</b>	bon	<i>good</i>	meilleur(s) meilleure(s)	<i>better</i>	le meilleur la meilleure les meilleur(e)s	<i>the best</i>
<b>Adverb</b>	bien	<i>well</i>	mieux	<i>better</i>	le mieux	<i>the best</i>

Il désire avoir une <b>meilleure</b> place	<i>He wants to have a better seat</i>
Ces marchandises sont <b>meilleures</b>	<i>These goods are better</i>
Elle s'habille <b>mieux</b> que les autres	<i>She dresses better than the others</i>
Elle s'habille <b>le mieux</b> de toutes	<i>She dresses the best of all</i>

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*

*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 désemparées 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

Typical time adverbs			
alors (can also be a sentence-modifying adverb - see 5.6.17)	<i>then, at that time</i>	soudain	<i>suddenly</i>
aujourd'hui	<i>today</i>	souvent	<i>often</i>
auparavant	<i>beforehand</i>	tantôt tantôt . . . tantôt	<i>this afternoon one minute . . . the next . . .</i>
aussitôt	<i>immediately</i>	tard	<i>late</i>
autrefois	<i>in the past</i>	tôt	<i>early</i>
bientôt	<i>soon</i>	toujours	<i>always; still</i>
déjà	<i>already</i>		
demain	<i>tomorrow</i>	<b>Ending in -ment</b>	
depuis	<i>since then</i>	actuellement	<i>currently</i>
désormais	<i>henceforth</i>	dernièrement	<i>recently</i>
dorénavant	<i>henceforth</i>	fréquemment	<i>frequently</i>
encore (can also be a sentence-modifying adverb - see 5.6.17)	<i>again; still; yet</i>	précédemment	<i>previously</i>
enfin	<i>finally</i>	prochainement	<i>soon</i>
ensuite	<i>afterwards</i>	récemment	<i>recently</i>
entre-temps	<i>meanwhile</i>		
hier	<i>yesterday</i>	<b>Invariable phrases</b>	
		à présent	<i>at present</i>
jadis (the final -s is always pronounced)	<i>in the (distant) past</i>	dès lors	<i>from then on</i>
jamais	<i>ever</i>	d'un instant à l'autre	<i>at any moment</i>
longtemps	<i>a long time</i>	en ce moment	<i>at the moment</i>
maintenant	<i>now</i>	par la suite	<i>subsequently</i>
naguère	<i>in the recent past</i>	tout à coup	<i>suddenly</i>
parfois	<i>sometimes</i>	tout à l'heure	<i>just now; presently</i>
quelquefois	<i>sometimes</i>	tout de suite	<i>immediately</i>

## Representative examples:

Actuellement il sort avec ma sœur	<i>Currently, he's going out with my sister</i>
Il l'avait rencontrée deux ans auparavant	<i>He had met her two years before</i>
Dès lors il voulait passer sa vie avec elle	<i>From then on he wanted to spend his life with her</i>
Elle s'en est rendu compte aussitôt	<i>She realized immediately</i>
Ensuite il ne s'est rien passé	<i>Afterwards nothing happened</i>
Entre-temps elle avait rencontré quelqu'un d'autre	<i>Meanwhile she had met someone else</i>
Son sourire n'a plus été le même par la suite	<i>His smile was never the same afterwards</i>
Nous avons parlé longtemps	<i>We spoke for a long time</i>
Le bureau occupe deux étages, naguère habités	<i>The office occupies two floors, formerly living accommodation</i>
Quelquefois on me conduisait à Roubaix	<i>Sometimes they took me to Roubaix</i>
J'ai souvent voulu le faire	<i>I've often wanted to do it</i>
Sors tout de suite	<i>Get out of here immediately</i>

**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':

Il a encore perdu sa clef *He has lost his key again*  
 (His losing of the key is a completed action)

J'ai peur de m'évanouir encore *I am afraid of fainting again*  
 (Although I haven't done so yet, fainting has the potential for being a completed action)

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 *More bread, please*  
 Ils ont roulé encore dix ou vingt kilomètres  
*They travelled a further ten or twenty kilometres*

Elle est encore plus douée que sa sœur  
*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*

*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*

On s'efforçait depuis toujours de me le cacher  
*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*  
 Il n'est pas **toujours** arrivé *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*

### 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*

Il a payé l'addition, puis il est parti  
*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*:



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 'late' 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*

More distant past	Recent past	Concurrent with the time of speaking	Near future	More distant future
avant-hier <i>the day before yesterday</i>	hier <i>yesterday</i>	aujourd'hui <i>today</i>	demain <i>tomorrow</i>	après-demain <i>the day after tomorrow</i>
	alors <i>then</i>	maintenant <i>now</i>	bientôt <i>soon</i>	
	hier matin hier midi hier après-midi  hier soir  <i>yesterday morning, midday, etc.</i>	ce matin ce midi cet après-midi/ tantôt ce soir  <i>this morning, midday, this afternoon, this evening</i>	demain matin demain midi demain après-midi demain soir  <i>tomorrow morning, midday, etc.</i>	
autrefois jadis (literary) <i>formerly</i>	tout à l'heure <i>just now</i>  récemment dernièrement naguère <i>recently</i>	actuellement <i>currently</i>	tout à l'heure ( 'tantôt' in parts of France, in Belgium and Quebec) <i>presently</i>	à l'avenir <i>in the future</i>

**TABLE 5.E** *Adverbs and time reference 2*

<b>More distant past</b>	<b>Recent past</b>	<b>Prior to the time of speaking</b>	<b>Near future</b>	<b>More distant future</b>
l'avant-veille <i>the day before</i> <i>the day before</i>	la veille <i>the day before</i>	ce jour-là <i>that day</i>	le lendemain <i>the day after</i>	le surlendemain <i>the day after the day after</i>
	la veille au matin <i>the morning of the day before</i>	ce matin-là <i>that morning</i>	le lendemain matin <i>the morning of the day after</i>	
	la veille à midi <i>midday of the day before</i>	ce midi-là <i>that midday</i>	le lendemain midi <i>midday of the day after</i>	
	dans l'après-midi de la veille <i>the afternoon of the day before</i>	cet après-midi-là <i>that afternoon</i>	dans l'après-midi du lendemain <i>the afternoon of the day after</i>	
	la veille au soir <i>the evening of the day before</i>	ce soir-là <i>that evening</i>	le lendemain soir <i>the evening of the day after</i>	

**5.6.16 Place adverbs**

Adverbs which describe the place where an event occurs are place adverbs:

J'entends des pas précipités dehors  
*/ hear hurried steps outside*

On m'a tiré en arrière  
*J was pulled backwards*

Representative examples:

Nous voulons habiter ailleurs  
Vous entrez dedans  
Quelqu'un, dehors, s'est inquiété  
Derrière il y a un champ de betteraves  
Vous trouverez l'étiquette dessous  
L'adresse est marquée dessus  
bras dessus bras dessous  
On a laissé des papiers un peu partout

*We want to live elsewhere*  
*You go inside*  
*Someone, outside, got nervous*  
*Behind there is a beet field*  
*You'll find the label on the bottom*  
*The address is written on the top*  
*arm in arm*  
*Papers were left almost everywhere*

TABLE 5.F *Typical place adverbs*

Typical place adverbs			
ailleurs	<i>elsewhere</i>	en amont	<i>upstream</i>
		en aval	<i>downstream</i>
dedans	<i>inside</i>	en avant	<i>in/at the front</i>
en dedans	<i>inwardly; facing inwards</i>	en arrière	<i>in/at the back</i>
au-dedans	<i>on the inside</i>		
là-dedans	<i>in there</i>		
dehors	<i>outside</i>	ici	<i>here</i>
en dehors	<i>outwardly; facing outwards</i>		
au-dehors	<i>on the outside</i>		
derrière	<i>behind</i>	là	<i>there (used a lot to mean here: T'm here' Je suis là)</i>
par derrière	<i>from behind</i>		
dessous	<i>underneath, on the bottom</i>	loin	<i>far away</i>
en dessous	<i>underneath, on the back</i>		
au-dessous	<i>below</i>		
par-dessous	<i>underneath (implying motion: passer par-dessous 'to go underneath')</i>		
dessus	<i>over, on the top</i>	partout	<i>everywhere</i>
en dessus	<i>on the top, on the front</i>		
au-dessus	<i>above</i>		
par-dessus	<i>across (sauter par-dessus 'to jump across')</i>		
ci-contre	<i>opposite (on a page)</i>	près	<i>nearby</i>
ci-dessous	<i>below (in a piece of writing: voir ci-dessous 'see below')</i>		
ci-dessus	<i>above (voir ci-dessus 'see above')</i>		
ci-après	<i>later</i>		
ci-devant	<i>earlier</i>		
en bas	<i>(down) below</i>		
en haut	<i>(up) above</i>		

### 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*  
(*donec* 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  
*I 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 devons 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 préférerait-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*

Typical sentence-linking adverbs	Typical speaker-oriented adverbs
ainsi <i>so, in the same way</i> (can also be a manner adverb - see 5.6.1)	alors <i>so</i> (can also be a time adverb - see 5.6.8)
au contraire <i>conversely</i>	assurément <i>surely</i>
aussi <i>so, thus</i> (can also be a degree adverb - see 5.6.2)	bien sûr <i>of course</i>
cependant <i>yet</i>	certainement <i>certainly</i>
d'ailleurs <i>moreover, what's more</i>	certes <i>certainly</i>
encore <i>for all that</i> (can also be a time adverb - see 5.6.8)	du moins <i>at least</i> (expresses the speaker's reservation - <i>au moins</i> is a degree adverb (see 5.6.2) used when 'at least' is concrete: <i>au moins dix fois</i> 'at least ten times')
en effet <i>indeed</i>	en général <i>in general</i>
en revanche <i>on the contrary</i>	évidemment <i>evidently</i>
en somme <i>in sum, briefly</i>	heureusement <i>fortunately</i>
néanmoins <i>nonetheless</i>	peut-être <i>perhaps</i>
par conséquent <i>consequently</i> en conséquence	probablement <i>probably</i>
par contre <i>on the other hand</i>	sans doute <i>doubtlessly</i>
plutôt <i>rather</i>	seulement <i>only</i>
pourtant <i>yet</i>	soit <i>so be it</i>
quand même <i>all the same</i>	sûrement <i>surely</i>
toutefois <i>nevertheless</i>	vraisemblablement <i>in all likelihood</i>

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 (modifying an adjective)  
*I'm not really bad*

Nous irons **loin** au-delà de la frontière (modifying a preposition)  
*We'll go far beyond the frontier*

Il y a **au moins** dix ans (modifying a noun phrase)  
*At least ten years ago*

Je suis ici depuis très longtemps (modifying an adverb)  
*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	<i>He took the file away on purpose</i>
Ici tout le monde fait la vaisselle	<i>Everybody does the washing-up here</i>
Nous voulons habiter ailleurs	<i>We want to live elsewhere</i>
Derrière il y a un champ de betteraves	<i>Behind there is a beet field</i>
Vous trouverez l'étiquette dessous	<i>You'll find the label on the bottom</i>
On a laissé des papiers un peu partout	<i>Papers were left almost everywhere</i>

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:



La porte de la pièce est fermée. Je l'ai pourtant laissée ouverte derrière moi/Pourtant je l'ai laissée ouverte derrière moi/Je l'ai laissée ouverte derrière moi pourtant

*The door to the room is closed. Yet I left it open behind me*

Il s'ensuit donc que nous devons la suivre de près/Donc il s'ensuit que nous devons la suivre de près/Il s'ensuit que nous devons la suivre de près donc

*It follows, therefore, that we should follow it closely*

Malheureusement, je n'ai pas pu venir/Je n'ai malheureusement pas pu venir/Je n'ai pas pu venir malheureusement

*Unfortunately, I wasn't able to come*

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 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  
*They left papers covered in doodles lying about everywhere*

#### 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

## 6<sup>^</sup>

### *Numbers, measurements, time and quantifiers*

#### 6.1 Cardinal numbers

Numbers like *un, deux, trois*, etc., are called cardinal numbers:

0	zéro	
1	un	<i>un</i> (masculine) is used in contexts like the following: <i>il porte le numéro 'un'</i> , 'He is wearing the number "one"'; <i>à la page un</i> , 'on page one'; <i>la partie un</i> , 'part one'. It is also used as a masculine pronoun: <i>As-tu un stylo?</i> <i>Pierre en a un</i> 'Have you got a pen? Pierre has one'. <i>une</i> (feminine) is used as a feminine pronoun: <i>Il ne m'en reste qu'une (carte postale)</i> , 'I've only got one left (postcard)'. NB: <i>à la une</i> 'on the front page'.
2	deux	
3	trois	
4	quatre	<i>quatre</i> is invariable and never takes a plural -s: <i>les quatre chats</i> 'the four cats'.
5	cinq	The final <i>q</i> of <i>cinq</i> is always pronounced [k], except when it precedes <i>cent</i> , where it is not pronounced: <i>cinq cents</i> .
6	six	<i>six</i> is pronounced with a final [s] when it is at the end of a phrase: <i>j'en ai vu six</i> 'I saw six'; it is pronounced with a final [z] when it precedes a noun beginning with a vowel: <i>six hommes</i> 'six men'. When it precedes a noun beginning with a consonant the <i>x</i> is not pronounced: <i>six joueurs</i> 'six players'.
7	sept	
8	huit	<i>huit</i> is pronounced with a final [t] when it is at the end of a phrase: <i>j'en ai vu huit</i> 'I saw eight', and when it precedes a noun beginning with a vowel: <i>huit entreprises ont fermé</i> 'eight firms have closed'. When it precedes a noun beginning with a consonant the <i>t</i> is not pronounced: <i>huit semaines plus tard</i> 'eight weeks later'.

9	neuf	The final / of <i>neuf</i> is always pronounced [f], except in <i>neufans</i> 'nine years' and <i>neufhemes</i> 'nine hours, nine o'clock' where it is pronounced [v].
10	dix	The pronunciation of <i>dix</i> is the same as for <i>six</i> .
11	onze	
12	douze	<i>douze</i> is invariable, and never takes a plural -s: <i>douze hommes</i> 'twelve men'.
13	treize	
14	quatorze	
15	quinze	
16	seize	
17	dix-sept	
18	dix-huit	The pronunciation of <i>dix-huit</i> is the same as for <i>huit</i> .
19	dix-neuf	The pronunciation of <i>dix-neuf</i> is the same as for <i>neuf</i> .
20	vingt	<i>vingt</i> is pronounced like <i>vin</i> , with the following exceptions: it is pronounced with a final [t] when it precedes a noun beginning with a vowel: <i>vingt exercices</i> 'twenty exercises', and also in the numbers 22-29 inclusive.
21	vingt et un	<i>vingt et unie</i> ), <i>trente et unie</i> ), <i>quarante et unie</i> ), etc. are used under the same conditions described for <i>unie</i> ).
22	vingt-deux	
23	vingt-trois	
29	vingt-neuf	
30	trente	
31	trente et un	
32	trente-deux	
39	trente-neuf	
40	quarante	
41	quarante et un	
42	quarante-deux	
49	quarante-neuf	
50	cinquante	

51	cinquante et un	
52	cinquante-deux	
59	cinquante-neuf	
60	soixante	
61	soixante et un	
62	soixante deux	
69	soixante-neuf	
70	soixante-dix	In Belgian and Swiss French the word <i>septante</i> is used instead of <i>soixante-dix</i> : <i>septante et un</i> , <i>septante-deux</i> , etc.
71	soixante et onze	
72	soixante-douze	
73	soixante-treize	
79	soixante-dix-neuf	
80	quatre-vingts	
81	quatre-vingt-un	
82	quatre-vingt-deux	
89	quatre-vingt-neuf	
90	quatre-vingt-dix	In Belgian and Swiss French the word <i>nonante</i> is used instead of <i>quatre-vingt-dix</i> : <i>nonante-un</i> , <i>nonante-deux</i> , etc.
91	quatre-vingt-onze	
92	quatre-vingt-douze	
93	quatre-vingt-treize	
99	qua tre-vingt-dix-neuf	
100	cent	'one hundred, a hundred' is simply <i>cent</i> : 'a hundred times' <i>cent fois</i>
101	cent un	<i>cent une réponses</i> 'a hundred and one answers'

102	cent deux	
111	cent onze	The [t] of <i>cent</i> is NOT pronounced in <i>cent un</i> , <i>cent huit</i> , <i>cent onze</i> , but it is pronounced when followed by a non-numeral noun beginning with a vowel: <i>cent ans</i> 'a hundred years'.
200	deux cents	
201	deux cent un	
202	deux cent deux	
1000	mille	'one thousand, a thousand' is simply <i>mille</i> : 'a thousand times' <i>mille fois</i>
1001	mille un	
1 100	onze cents <i>or</i> mille cent	There are two ways of describing numbers between 1100 and 1999: <i>onze cents</i> or <i>mille cent</i> (1100); <i>dix-huit cent soixante</i> or <i>mille huit cent soixante</i> (1860); <i>dix-neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf</i> or <i>mille neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf</i> (1999), etc.
1 101	onze cent un OR mille cent un	
1200	douze cents OR mille deux cents	
1201	douze cent un OR mille deux cent un	
1500	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

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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	<i>7 saw eighty</i>
La capacité de la salle est de huit cents	<i>The room can hold eight hundred</i>

and when they precede non-numeral nouns:

trois cents visiteurs	<i>three hundred visitors</i>
quatre-vingts candidats	<i>eighty applicants</i>

However, when these numbers precede other numerals, there is generally no plural -s:

quatre-vingt-deux
quatre-vingt-trois

deux cent deux  
deux cent trois  
trois cent mille

unless those numerals are *millions* or *milliards*:

deux cents millions d'habitants	<i>two hundred million inhabitants</i>
cinq cents milliards de francs	<i>five hundred billion francs</i>

*mille* never takes a plural -s:

mille personnes	<i>a thousand people</i>
dix mille gagnants	<i>ten thousand winners</i>
deux mille vingt lecteurs	<i>two thousand and twenty readers</i>

### 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:

English	French
1,200	1 200
63,321	63 321
412,633,221	412 633 221
4.25	4,25
.25	0,25
<b>£4.50</b>	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	<i>Think of a number</i>
nombres entiers	<i>whole numbers</i>
un nombre cardinal	<i>a cardinal number</i>

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	<i>a telephone number</i>
le numéro d'une maison	<i>a house number</i>
Il porte le numéro un	<i>He's wearing the number one</i>
un numéro d'immatriculation	<i>a car number plate</i>

### 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	<i>Two (big ones) have disappeared</i>
Une douzaine me suffira	<i>A dozen will be enough for me</i>

*en* must be similarly inserted before the verb when quantifiers like *quelques-uns*, *plusieurs* and *certaines* stand alone as direct objects:

J'en ai encore quelques-uns	<i>I still have a few</i>
J'en ai encore plusieurs	<i>I still have several</i>
J'en ai encore certains	<i>I still have some</i>

(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)	

trois moins un égale deux (trois ôtez un reste deux)	$3 - 1 = 2$
deux fois cinq font dix (cinq multiplié par deux égale dix)	$2 \times 5 = 10$
dix divisé par deux égale cinq	$10 \div 2 = 5$

NB: As in English, the verbs can vary between singular and plural: *trois et quatre fait/ont sept* 'three plus four makes/make seven'.

## 6.2 Ordinal numbers

Numbers like *premier, deuxième, troisième*, etc., are called ordinal numbers:

English	French	
1st	1 <sup>er</sup> /èrè	premier, première
2nd	2 <sup>e</sup>	deuxième <i>or</i> second, seconde, ( <i>deuxième</i> and <i>second</i> are interchangeable except in <i>en seconde</i> 'in second class'; 'in the fifth form')
3rd	3 <sup>e</sup>	troisième
4th	4 <sup>e</sup>	quatrième
5th	5 <sup>e</sup>	cinquième
6th	6 <sup>e</sup>	sixième
7th	7 <sup>e</sup>	septième
8th	8 <sup>e</sup>	huitième
9th	9 <sup>e</sup>	neuvième
10th	10 <sup>e</sup>	dixième
11th	11 <sup>e</sup>	onzième
12th	12 <sup>e</sup>	douzième
13th	13 <sup>e</sup>	treizième
14th	14 <sup>e</sup>	quatorzième
15th	15 <sup>e</sup>	quinzième
16th	16 <sup>e</sup>	seizième
17th	17 <sup>e</sup>	dix-septième
18th	18 <sup>e</sup>	dix-huitième
19th	19 <sup>e</sup>	dix-neuvième
20th	20 <sup>e</sup>	vingtième
21st	21 <sup>e</sup>	vingt et unième
22nd	22 <sup>e</sup>	vingt-deuxième
40th	40 <sup>e</sup>	quarantième
41st	41 <sup>e</sup>	quarante et unième
70th	70 <sup>e</sup>	soixante-dixième
71st	71 <sup>e</sup>	soixante et onzième
80th	80 <sup>e</sup>	quatre-vingtième
81st	81 <sup>e</sup>	quatre-vingt-unième
90th	90 <sup>e</sup>	quatre-vingt-dixième
91th	91 <sup>e</sup>	quatre-vingt-onzième
100th	100 <sup>e</sup>	centième
1000th	1000 <sup>e</sup>	millième

## 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	<i>a half-glass of brandy</i>
une demi-heure	<i>a half an hour</i>
la demi-finale	<i>the semi-final</i>

It is also translated by *demi* in compounds involving *et*, but here it agrees with the preceding noun in gender:

deux heures et demie	<i>two and a half hours</i>
un litre et <b>demi</b>	<i>one and a half litres</i>
deux kilos et <b>demi</b>	<i>two and a half kilos</i>

Some compounds are constructed with invariable *mi*-:

la mi-trimestre	<i>half-term</i>
à mi-chemin	<i>half-way</i>
<b>mi-clos</b>	<i>half-closed</i>

'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 <b>premier</b> janvier	<i>the first of January</i>
le <b>deux</b> février	<i>the second of February</i>
le <b>trois</b> mars	<i>the third of March</i>

In letter headings the normal way of writing dates is:

le 1<sup>er</sup> Janvier 2001  
le 2 février 2001  
le 3 mars 2001

or where the day is included:

le lundi 1 <sup>er</sup> janvier 2001	or	lundi, le 1 <sup>er</sup> 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*.

François I	François premier	Francis <i>the</i> First
Elizabeth I	Elizabeth première	Elizabeth <i>the</i> First
Henri II	Henri deux	Henry <i>the</i> Second
Louis XIV	Louis quatorze	Louis <i>the</i> Fourteenth
lean XXIII	Jean vingt-trois	Pope John <i>the</i> Twenty-third

### 6.4.3 Ordinal number abbreviations

The abbreviated forms of *premier*, *première* are:

1<sup>er</sup> 1<sup>ère</sup>                      1<sup>st</sup>

where <sup>er</sup> and <sup>ère</sup> are superscripts. The abbreviation for all other ordinal numbers is an *e* which can either be a superscript or a simple lower case letter:

2 <sup>e</sup>	2e	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3 <sup>l</sup>	3e	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4 <sup>e</sup>	4e	4 <sup>th</sup> etc

### 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	<i>on page one</i>
Prenez le trente-deux	<i>Catch the number 32</i>
Le train part du quai vingt	<i>The train leaves from platform twenty</i>

### 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:

des centaines <b>de</b> personnes	<i>hundreds of people</i>
des milliers <b>de</b> personnes	<i>thousands of people</i>
un million de dollars	<i>a million dollars</i>
des millions <b>de</b> personnes	<i>millions of people</i>
cinq milliards <b>de</b> dollars	<i>five billion dollars</i>
des milliards <b>de</b> personnes	<i>billions of people</i>
des centaines <b>de</b> milliers de personnes	<i>hundreds of thousands of people</i>
des centaines <b>de</b> millions <b>de</b> personnes	<i>hundreds of millions of people</i>

#### 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:

une fois	<i>once</i>
deux fois	<i>twice</i>
trois fois	<i>three times</i>
quatre fois	<i>four times</i>

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:

tous /toutes les deux	tous/toutes deux	<i>both</i>
tous/toutes les trois	tous/toutes trois	<i>all three</i>
tous/toutes les quatre	tous/toutes quatre	<i>all four</i>
tous/toutes les cinq	NOT *tous/toutes cinq	<i>all five</i>
tous/toutes les six	NOT *tous/toutes six	<i>all six</i>

<b>Tous les deux</b> sont arrivés	<i>Both have arrived</i>
Je les ai invitées <b>toutes les six</b>	<i>I invited all six</i>

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*

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 <b>sur</b> trois	<i>four metres by three</i>
un Français <b>sur</b> sept	<i>one French person in seven</i>
une chose à la fois	<i>one thing at a time</i>
20% <b>par</b> an	<i>20% a year</i>
deux heures <b>par</b> jour	<i>two hours a day</i>



'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	<i>ten or so</i>
une quinzaine	<i>fifteen or so</i>
une vingtaine	<i>twenty or so</i>
une trentaine	<i>thirty or so</i>
une quarantaine	<i>forty or so</i>
une cinquantaine	<i>fifty or so</i>
une soixantaine	<i>sixty or so</i>
une centaine	<i>a hundred or so</i>

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 *'* even before numbers beginning with a vowel: *le huit mars, le onze septembre*):

le 1<sup>er</sup> 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*  
'AD' is *ap. J-C* (*après Jésus-Christ*):              *500 ap. 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*

*an* 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:

onze heures et quart	<i>a quarter past eleven</i>
midi et quart	<i>a quarter past midday</i>
minuit et quart	<i>a quarter past midnight</i>
onze heures et demie	<i>halfpast eleven</i>
midi et demi	<i>halfpast midday</i>
minuit et demi	<i>halfpast midnight</i>

'a quarter to' the hour is *moins le quart* (or *moins un quart*):

onze heures moins le quart	<i>a quarter to eleven</i>
----------------------------	----------------------------

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	<i>at two o'clock precisely</i> (official report)
	justes	<i>exactly two o'clock</i> (looking at watch)
	sonnantes	<i>hang on two o'clock</i> (for effect)
	tapantes	<i>spot on two</i> (for effect, more informal)

vers deux heures/vers les deux heures/autour de deux heures/	<i>about two</i>
à deux heures environ/dans les environs de deux heures	<i>o'clock</i>

Je peux faire mes comptes dans une heure	<i>I can do my accounts in an hour's time</i>
Je peux faire mes comptes en une heure	<i>I can do my accounts within an hour</i>

(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:

assez de	clients (s)	<i>enough</i>	<i>customer(s)</i>
autant de		<i>as many</i>	
beaucoup de		<i>many</i>	
bien des		<i>many</i>	
certains		<i>particular</i>	
chaque		<i>every</i>	
chacun des		<i>each one of the</i>	

une majorité de	clients(s)	<i>a majority of</i>	customer(s)
une minorité de		<i>a minority of</i>	
moins de		<i>fewer</i>	
nombre de		<i>a lot of</i>	
une partie des		<i>a portion of</i>	
peu de		<i>few</i>	
pas mal de (informal French)		<i>quite a lot of</i>	
la plupart des		<i>most</i>	
plus de		<i>more</i>	
plusieurs		<i>several</i>	
quantité de		<i>a lot of</i>	
quelques		<i>some, a few</i>	
le reste des		<i>the rest of the</i>	
tous les		<i>all the</i>	

### 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	<i>I still have some</i>
Ils n'en consomment qu'une partie	<i>They only consume a portion</i>
Il en a vendu la plupart	<i>He has sold most of it</i>

NB: When *quelques* 'some, a few' stands alone, it becomes *quelques-un(e)s*:

Il y avait <b>quelques</b> clients dans le magasin	<i>There were a few customers in the shop</i>
Il y en avait <b>quelques-uns</b> dans le magasin	<i>There were a few in the shop</i>

### 6.9.3 de or du, de la, des after quantifiers

The indefinite article *des* and the partitive articles *du, de la, des* (see Chapter 2.3.1 and 2.4) are omitted when a noun phrase follows one of the quantifiers listed with *de* in 6.9.1:

assez de <i>enough</i>	+	des clients <i>customers</i>	→	assez de clients <i>enough customers</i>
autant de <i>as much</i>	+	de l'argent <i>money</i>	→	autant d'argent <i>as much money</i>
peu de <i>not much</i>	+	du travail <i>work</i>	→	peu de travail <i>not much work</i>

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

certains	d'entre	eux elles nous vous	<i>some</i>	<b><i>of</i></b>	<i>them</i>  <i>them</i>  <i>us</i>  <i>you</i>
beaucoup			<i>many</i>		
peu			<i>few</i>		
plusieurs			<i>several</i>		
la plupart			<i>most</i>		
chacun			<i>each</i>		

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  
*All 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*

*chaque* 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/ **Chacune** 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*, *pas mal 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  
Imperfect  
Simple past (past historic)  
Future  
Conditional  
Present subjunctive  
Imperfect subjunctive

#### Example

Il donn-e  
Il donn-ait  
Il donn-a  
Il donn-era  
Il donn-erait  
Qu'il donn-e  
Qu'il donn-ât

#### Simple non-finite forms

Simple infinitive  
Present participle  
Past participle  
Imperative

donn-er  
donn-ant  
donn-é  
donn-e  
donn-ez  
donn-ons

#### Compound tenses

Compound past (perfect)  
Pluperfect  
Past anterior  
  
Compound future (future perfect)  
Compound conditional (conditional perfect)  
Compound past subjunctive  
Pluperfect subjunctive

Il a donné  
Il avait donné  
Il eut donné  
  
Il aura donné  
Il aurait donné  
Qu'il ait donné  
Qu'il eût donné



## Compound non-finite forms

Compound infinitive	avoir donné
Compound present participle	ayant donné
Compound past participle	eu donné
Compound imperative	aie donné
	ayez donné
	ayons donné

## Double compound tenses

Double compound past	Il a eu donné
Compound pluperfect	Il avait eu donné
Double compound future	Il aura eu donné
Double compound conditional	Il aurait eu donné
Double compound past subjunctive	Qu'il eût eu donné

## Double compound non-finite forms

Double compound infinitive	avoir eu donné
Double compound participle	ayant eu donné

**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 sub-groups:
  - (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:

	<b>je</b>	<b>tu</b>	<b>il/elle</b>	<b>nous</b>	<b>vous</b>	<b>ils/elles</b>
<i>-er</i> verbs	-e	-es	<b>-e</b>	-ons	-ez	-ent
<i>-ir</i> verbs (most verbs - see 7.6.4)	-is	-is	-it	-issons	-issez	-issent
<i>-re</i> verbs	-s	-s	-	-ons	-ez	-ent

For example:

Infinitive	Stem	Present tense
donner	donn-	je donn- e, etc.
finir	fin-	je fin- is, etc.
vendre	vend-	je vend- s, etc.

### 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:

<b>je</b>	<b>tu</b>	<b>il/elle</b>	<b>nous</b>	<b>vous</b>	<b>ils/elles</b>
-ais	-ais	-ait	-ions	-iez	-aient

For example:

Infinitive	First person plural	Stem	Imperfect tense
donner	donnons	donn-	je donn- ais, etc.
commencer	commençons	commenç-	je commenç- ais, etc.
partager	partageons	partage-	je partage- ais, etc.
finir	finissons	finiss-	je finiss- ais, etc.
dormir	dormons	dorm-	je dorm- ais, etc.
vendre	vendons	vend-	je vend- ais, etc.
recevoir	recevons	recev-	je recev- ais, etc.

### 7.3.3 An easy way of generating the simple past (past historic)

For *-er* verbs, take the first person plural *nous* form of the present tense, omit *-ons* and add the following endings: *-ai, -as, -a, -âmes, -âtes, -èrent*.

For *-ir* (both *finir* and *dormir* types - see 7.6.4 and 7.6.5) and *-re* verbs, take the past participle, omit the final vowel, and add the following endings: *-is, -is, -it, -îmes, -îtes, -irent*.

For *-oir* verbs, take the past participle, omit the final vowel, and add the following endings: *-us, -us, -ut, -ûmes, -ûtes, -urent*.

	<b>je</b>	<b>tu</b>	<b>il/elle</b>	<b>nous</b>	<b>vous</b>	<b>ils/elles</b>
<b>-er verbs (most verbs - see 7.6.3)</b>	-ai	-as	<b>-a</b>	-âmes	-âtes	-èrent
<b>-ir verbs -re verbs</b>	-is	-is	-it	-îmes	-îtes	-irent
<b>-oir verbs</b>	<b>-us</b>	<b>-us</b>	<b>-ut</b>	-ûmes	-ûtes	-urent

For example:

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>First person plural</b>	<b>Stem</b>	<b>Simple past tense</b>
donner	donnons	donn-	je donn- ai, etc.
commencer	commençons	commenç-	je commenç- ai, etc.
partager	partageons	partage-	je partage- ai, etc.
	<b>Past participle</b>		
finir	fini	fin-	je fin- is, etc.
dormir	dormi	dorm-	je dorm- is, etc.
vendre	vendu	vend-	je vend- is, etc.
recevoir	reçu	reç-	je reç- us, etc.

### 7.3.4 An easy way of generating the future and conditional

Take the infinitive form of *-er, -ir* and *-re* verbs (deleting the final *e* in the latter case) and add the following endings:

For example:

	<b>je</b>	<b>tu</b>	<b>il/elle</b>	<b>nous</b>	<b>vous</b>	<b>ils/elles</b>
<b>Future</b>	-ai	-as	<b>-a</b>	-ons	<b>-ez</b>	-ont
<b>Conditional</b>	-ais	-ais	-ait	-ions	-iez	-aient

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Stem</b>	<b>Future/conditional</b>
donner	donner-	je donner- ai, etc. je donner- ais, etc.
finir	finir-	je finir- ai, etc. je finir- ais, etc.
dormir	dormir-	je dormir- ai, etc. je dormir- ais, etc.
vendre	vendr-	je vendr- ai, etc. je vendr- ais, etc.

(For the doubling of consonants in verbs like *je jetterai, j'appellerai*, the change

from *e* to *e* in verbs like *j'achèterai*, *il gèlera*, and the change from *é* to *e* in verbs like *j'espèrerai*, *je complèterai*, 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:

je	tu	il/elle	nous	vous	ils/elles
-e	-es	-e	-ions	-iez	-ent

For example:

Infinitive	Third person plural	Stem	Present subjunctive
donner	donnent	donn-	je donn- e, etc.
finir	finissent	finiss-	je finiss- e, etc.
dormir	dorment	dorm-	je dorm- e, etc.
vendre	vendent	vend-	je vend- e, etc.
recevoir	reçoivent	reçoiv-	je reçoiv- e, etc.

NB: The stem *reçoiv-* changes when the ending does not begin with *-e*: *reçoive*, but *recevions*, *recevriez*.

### 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:

je	tu	il/elle	nous	vous	ils/elles
-sse	-sses	- <sup>A</sup> t	-ssions	-ssiez	-ssent

For example:

Infinitive	First person simple past	Stem	Imperfect subjunctive
donner	donnai	donna-	je donna- sse, etc.
commencer	commençai	commença-	je commença- sse, etc.
partager	partageai	partagea-	je partagea- sse, etc.
finir	finis	fini-	je fini- sse, etc.
dormir	dormis	dormi-	je dormi- sse, etc.
vendre	vendis	vendi-	je vendi- sse, etc.
recevoir	reçus	reçu-	je reçu- sse, etc.

### 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:

Infinitive	Present tense	Imperative
donner	tu donnes	donne!
	vous donnez	donnez!
	nous donnons	donnons!
aller	tu vas	va!
	vous allez	allez!
	nous allons	allons!

finir	tu finis	finis!
	vous finissez	finissez!
	nous finissons	finissons!
dormir	tu dors	dors!
	vous dormez	dormez!
	nous dormons	dormons!
vendre	tu vends	vends!
	vous vendez	vendez!
	nous vendons	vendons!
recevoir	tu reçois	reçois!
	vous recevez	recevez!
	nous recevons	recevons!

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:

aller	Va!	Vas-y!
parler	Parle!	Parles-en!

Four exceptions:

Infinitive	Present tense	Imperative
être	tu es	sois!
	vous êtes	soyez!
	nous sommes	soyons!
avoir	tu as	aie!
	vous avez	ayez!
	nous avons	ayons!
savoir	tu sais	sache!
	vous savez	sachez!
	nous savons	sachons. <sup>1</sup>
vouloir	tu veux	veille
	vous voulez	veuillez
	nous voulons	not used

(Both *veille* 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:

<i>appeler</i>	
Present	j'appelle, tu appelles, il/elle appelle, ils/elles appellent
Future	j'appellerai, . . ., nous appellerons, etc.
Conditional	j'appellerais, . . ., nous appellerions, etc.
Present Subjunctive	que j'appelle, que tu appelles, qu'il/elle appelle, qu'ils/elles appellent

<i>jeter</i>	
Present	je jette, . . . etc.
Future	je jetterai, . . . etc.
Conditional	je jetterais, . . . etc.
Present subjunctive	que je jette, . . . etc.

The following verbs, however, do not double the final stem consonant, but change the first *e* to *è*: *acheter*, *celer*, *ciseler*, *corseter*, *crocheter*, *démanteler*, *écarteler*, *fureter*, *geler*, *haleter*, *marteler*, *modeler*, *peler* (together with verbs derived from these like *congeler*, *dégeler*, etc.):

<i>acheter</i>	
<b>Present</b>	j'achète, . . . etc.
<b>Future</b>	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*, *semer*:

<i>mener</i>	
<b>Present</b>	je mène, . . . etc.
<b>Future</b>	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*:

<i>espérer</i>	
<b>Present</b>	j'espère, . . . etc.
<b>Future</b>	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:

<i>employer</i>	
<b>Present</b>	j'emploie, . . . etc.
<b>Future</b>	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 riions (imperfect tense or present subjunctive)  
 etc.

#### 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. *commenc-er*, *rec-evoir*:

commenc-er	nous commenç- ons (present) je commenç- ais (imperfect) nous commenç- âmes (simple past) etc.
rec-evoir	je reç- ois (present) nous reç- unies (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 7.A**

Infinitive: avoir Past participle: eu Present participle: ayant	Compound infinitive: avoir eu Compound present participle: ayant eu
<b>Simple forms</b>  Present:  J'ai                    Nous avons Tu as                Vous avez Il a                    Ils ont	<b>Compound forms</b>  Compound past:  J'ai eu                Nous avons eu Tu as eu            Vous avez eu Il a eu                Ils ont eu
Imperfect:  J'avais                Nous avions Tu avais            Vous aviez Il avait                Ils avaient	Pluperfect:  J'avais eu            Nous avions eu Tu avais eu        Vous aviez eu Il avait eu            Ils avaient eu
Simple past (past historic):  J'eus                    Nous eûmes Tu eus                Vous eûtes Il eut                    Ils eurent	Past anterior:  J'eus eu                Nous eûmes eu Tu eus eu            Vous eûtes eu Il eut eu                Ils eurent eu
Future:  J'aurai                Nous aurons Tu auras            Vous aurez Il aura                Ils auront	Compound future:  J'aurai eu            Nous aurons eu Tu auras eu        Vous aurez eu Il aura eu            Ils auront eu
Conditional:  J'aurais                Nous aurions Tu aurais            Vous auriez Il aurait                Ils auraient	Compound conditional:  J'aurais eu            Nous aurions eu Tu aurais eu        Vous auriez eu Il aurait eu            Ils auraient eu

TABLE 7.A (continued)

Present subjunctive: que j'aie            que nous ayons que tu aies        que vous ayez qu'il ait            qu'ils aient	Compound past subjunctive: que j'aie eu        que nous ayons eu que tu aies eu     que vous ayez eu qu'il ait eu        qu'ils aient eu
Imperfect subjunctive: que j'eusse        que nous eussions que tu eusses     que vous eussiez qu'il eût           qu'ils eussent	Pluperfect subjunctive: que j'eusse eu     que nous eussions eu que tu eusses eu   que vous eussiez eu qu'il eût eu        qu'ils eussent eu
Imperative: aie ayons ayez	Compound imperative: not used

## 7.6.2 The irregular verb être

TABLE 7.B

Infinitive: être Past participle: été Present participle: étant	Compound infinitive: avoir été Compound past participle: eu été Compound present participle: ayant été
<b>Simple forms</b> Present: Je suis            Nous sommes Tu es             Vous êtes Il est             Ils sont	<b>Compound forms</b> Compound past: J'ai été            Nous avons été Tu as été        Vous avez été Il a été            Ils ont été
Imperfect: J'étais            Nous étions Tu étais         Vous étiez Il était            Ils étaient	Pluperfect: J'avais été        Nous avions été Tu avais été     Vous aviez été Il avait été        Ils avaient été
Simple past (past historic): Je fus            Nous fûmes Tu fus            Vous fûtes Il fut             Ils furent	Past anterior: J'eus été         Nous eûmes été Tu eus été        Vous eûtes été Il eut été         Ils eurent été
Future: Je serai          Nous serons Tu seras         Vous serez Il sera            Ils seront	Compound future: J'aurai été        Nous aurons été Tu auras été     Vous aurez été Il aura été        Ils auront été



**TABLE 7.B** (continued)

<p>Conditional:</p> <p>Je serais            Nous serions Tu serais            Vous seriez Il serait              Ils seraient</p>	<p>Compound conditional:</p> <p>J'aurais été        Nous aurions été Tu aurais été        Vous auriez été Il aurait été        Ils auraient été</p>
<p>Present subjunctive:</p> <p>que je sois            que nous soyons que tu sois            que vous soyez qu'il soit              qu'ils soient</p>	<p>Compound past subjunctive:</p> <p>que j'aie été        que nous ayons été que tu aies été        que vous ayez été qu'il ait été        qu'ils aient été</p>
<p>Imperfect subjunctive:</p> <p>que je fusse            que nous fussions que tu fusses        que vous fussiez qu'il fût              qu'ils fussent</p>	<p>Pluperfect subjunctive:</p> <p>que j'eusse été        que nous eussions été que tu eusses été    que vous eussiez été qu'il eût été        qu'ils eussent été</p>
<p>Imperative:</p> <p>sois soyons soyez</p>	<p>Compound imperative:</p> <p>not used</p>

**7.6.3 Conjugation I: verbs whose infinitive ends in -er****TABLE 7.C**

<p>Infinitive:            parler Past participle:      parlé Present participle:    parlant</p>	<p>Compound infinitive: avoir parlé Compound past participle:            eu parlé Compound present participle:            ayant parlé</p>
<p><b>Simple forms</b></p> <p>Present:</p> <p>Je parle                Nous parlons Tu parles              Vous parlez Il parle                Ils parlent</p>	<p><b>Compound forms</b></p> <p>Compound past:</p> <p>J'ai parlé                Nous avons parlé Tu as parlé              Vous avez parlé Il a parlé                Ils ont parlé</p>
<p>Imperfect:</p> <p>Je parlais              Nous parlions Tu parlais              Vous parliez Il parlait                Ils parlaient</p>	<p>Pluperfect:</p> <p>J'avais parlé            Nous avions parlé Tu avais parlé        Vous aviez parlé Il avait parlé            Ils avaient parlé</p>
<p>Simple past (past historic):</p> <p>Je parlai                Nous parlâmes Tu parlas                Vous parlâtes Il parla                Ils parlèrent</p>	<p>Past anterior:</p> <p>J'eus parlé              Nous eûmes parlé Tu eus parlé            Vous eûtes parlé Il eut parlé              Ils eurent parlé</p>

TABLE 7.C (continued)

<p>Future:</p> <p>Je parlerai      Nous parlerons  Tu parleras      Vous parlerez  Il parlera        Ils parleront</p>	<p>Compound future:</p> <p>J'aurai parlé      Nous aurons parlé  Tu auras parlé    Vous aurez parlé  Il aura parlé        Ils auront parlé</p>
<p>Conditional:</p> <p>Je parlerais      Nous parlerions  Tu parlerais      Vous parleriez  Il parlerait        Ils parleraient</p>	<p>Compound conditional:</p> <p>J'aurais parlé      Nous aurions parlé  Tu aurais parlé    Vous auriez parlé  Il aurait parlé      Ils auraient parlé</p>
<p>Present subjunctive:</p> <p>que je parle      que nous parlions  que tu parles      que vous parliez  qu'il parle        qu'ils parlent</p>	<p>Compound past subjunctive:</p> <p>que j'aie parlé      que nous ayons parlé  que tu aies parlé    que vous ayez parlé  qu'il ait parlé      qu'ils aient parlé</p>
<p>Imperfect subjunctive:</p> <p>que je parlasse    que nous parlussions  que tu parlasses    que vous parlassiez  qu'il parlât        qu'ils parlassent</p>	<p>Pluperfect subjunctive:</p> <p>que j'eusse parlé    que nous eussions parlé  que tu eusses parlé    que vous eussiez parlé  qu'il eût parlé        qu'ils eussent parlé</p>
<p>Imperative:</p> <p>parle (but parles-en)  parlons  parlez</p>	<p>Compound imperative:</p>

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 Past participle: fini Present participle: finissant	Compound infinitive: avoir fini Compound past participle: eu fini Compound present participle: ayant fini
<b>Simple forms</b> Present: Je finis                Nous finissons Tu finis                Vous finissez Il finit                 Ils finissent	<b>Compound forms</b> Compound past: J'ai fini                Nous avons fini Tu as fini              Vous avez fini Il a fini                Ils ont fini
Imperfect: Je finissais            Nous finissions Tu finissais            Vous finissiez Il finissait             Ils finissaient	Pluperfect: J'avais fini            Nous avions fini Tu avais fini           Vous aviez fini Il avait fini            Ils avaient fini
Simple past (past historic): Je finis                Nous finîmes Tu finis                Vous finîtes Il finit                 Ils finirent	Past anterior: J'eus fini              Nous eûmes fini Tu eus fini             Vous eûtes fini Il eut fini              Ils eurent fini
Future: Je finirai              Nous finirons Tu finiras              Vous finirez Il finira                Ils finiront	Compound future: J'aurai fini            Nous aurons fini Tu auras fini           Vous aurez fini Il aura fini             Ils auront fini
Conditional: Je finirais             Nous finirions Tu finirais             Vous finiriez Il finirait              Ils finiraient	Compound conditional: J'aurais fini            Nous aurions fini Tu aurais fini           Vous auriez fini Il aurait fini            Ils auraient fini
Present subjunctive: que je finisse        que nous finissions que tu finisses        que vous finissiez qu'il finisse            qu'ils finissent	Compound past subjunctive: que j'aie fini            que nous ayons fini que tu aies fini        que vous ayez fini qu'il ait fini            qu'ils aient fini
Imperfect subjunctive: que je finisse        que nous finissions que tu finisses        que vous finissiez qu'il finît              qu'ils finissent	Pluperfect subjunctive: que j'eusse fini        que nous eussions fini que tu eusses fini      que vous eussiez fini qu'il eût fini            qu'ils eussent fini

TABLE 7.D (continued)

Imperative:	Compound imperative:
finis	aie fini
finissons	ayons fini
finissez	ayez fini

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

Infinitive: dormir	Compound infinitive: avoir dormi
Past participle: dormi	Compound past participle: eu dormi
Present participle: dormant	Compound present participle: ayant dormi
<b>Simple forms</b>	<b>Compound forms</b>
Present:	Compound past:
Je dors            Nous dormons	J'ai dormi            Nous avons dormi
Tu dors            Vous dormez	Tu as dormi            Vous avez dormi
Il dort            Ils dorment	Il a dormi            Ils ont dormi
Imperfect:	Pluperfect:
Je dormais            Nous dormions	J'avais dormi            Nous avions dormi
Tu dormais            Vous dormiez	Tu avais dormi            Vous aviez dormi
Il dormait            Ils dormaient	Il avait dormi            Ils avaient dormi
Simple past (past historic):	Past anterior:
Je dormis            Nous dormîmes	J'eus dormi            Nous eûmes dormi
Tu dormis            Vous dormîtes	Tu eus dormi            Vous eûtes dormi
Il dormit            Ils dormirent	Il eut dormi            Ils eurent dormi
Future:	Compound future:
Je dormirai            Nous dormirons	J'aurai dormi            Nous aurons dormi
Tu dormiras            Vous dormirez	Tu auras dormi            Vous aurez dormi
Il dormira            Ils dormiront	Il aura dormi            Ils auront dormi
Conditional:	Compound conditional:
Je dormirais            Nous dormirions	J'aurais dormi            Nous aurions dormi
Tu dormirais            Vous dormiriez	Tu aurais dormi            Vous auriez dormi
Il dormirait            Ils dormiraient	Il aurait dormi            Ils auraient dormi

TABLE 7.E (continued)

Present subjunctive:  que je dorme            que nous dormions que tu dormes        que vous dormiez qu'il dorme            qu'ils dorment	Compound past subjunctive:  que j'aie dormi        que nous ayons dormi que tu aies dormi     que vous ayez dormi qu'il ait dormi        qu'ils aient dormi
Imperfect subjunctive:  que je dormisse        que nous dormissions que tu dormisses     que vous dormissiez qu'il dormît            qu'ils dormissent	Pluperfect subjunctive:  que j'eusse dormi     que nous eussions dormi que tu eusses dormi   que vous eussiez dormi qu'il eût dormi        qu'ils eussent dormi
Imperative:  dors dormons dormez	Compound imperative:  aie dormi ayons dormi ayez dormi

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

Infinitive:            vendre Past participle:      vendu  Present participle:   vendant	Compound infinitive: avoir vendu Compound past participle:            eu vendu Compound present participle:            ayant vendu
<b>Simple forms</b>  Present:  Je vends                Nous vendons Tu vends                Vous vendez Il vend                  Ils vendent	<b>Compound forms</b>  Compound past:  J'ai vendu                Nous avons vendu Tu as vendu              Vous avez vendu Il a vendu                Ils ont vendu
Imperfect:  Je vendais              Nous vendions Tu vendais              Vous vendiez Il vendait                Ils vendaient	Pluperfect:  J'avais vendu            Nous avions vendu Tu avais vendu        Vous aviez vendu Il avait vendu            Ils avaient vendu

TABLE 7.F (continued)

Simple past (past historic): Je vendis            Nous vendîmes Tu vendis            Vous vendîtes Il vendit            Ils vendirent	Past anterior: J'eus vendu            Nous eûmes vendu Tu eus vendu            Vous eûtes vendu Il eut vendu            Ils eurent vendu
Future: Je vendrai            Nous vendrons Tu vendras            Vous vendrez Il vendra            Ils vendront	Compound future: J'aurai vendu            Nous aurons vendu Tu auras vendu            Vous aurez vendu Il aura vendu            Ils auront vendu
Conditional: Je vendrais            Nous vendrions Tu vendrais            Vous vendriez Il vendrait            Ils vendraient	Compound conditional: J'aurais vendu            Nous aurions vendu Tu aurais vendu            Vous auriez vendu Il aurait vendu            Ils auraient vendu
Present subjunctive: que je vende            que nous vendions que tu vendes            que vous vendiez qu'il vende            qu'ils vendent	Compound past subjunctive: que j'aie vendu            que nous ayons vendu que tu aies vendu            que vous ayez vendu qu'il ait vendu            qu'ils aient vendu
Imperfect subjunctive: que je vendisse            que nous vendissions que tu vendisses            que vous vendissiez qu'il vendît            qu'ils vendissent	Pluperfect subjunctive: que j'eusse vendu            que nous eussions vendu que tu eusses vendu            que vous eussiez vendu qu'il eût vendu            qu'ils eussent vendu
Imperative: vends vendons vendez	Compound imperative: aie vendu ayons vendu ayez vendu

A few verbs follow this pattern in its entirety, especially those ending in *-andre*, *-endre*, *-ondre*, *-erdre*, *-ordre*, e.g. *épandre*, *répandre*, *attendre*, *défendre*, *descendre*, *détendre*, *entendre*, *étendre*, *fendre*, *prétendre*, *rendre*, *tendre*, *vendre*, *confondre*, *correspondre*, *fondre*, *pondre*, *répondre*, *tondre*, *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*, *éteindre*, *étreindre*, *astreindre*, *atteindre*, *ceindre*, *dépeindre*, *déteindre*, *enceindre*, *feindre*, *geindre*, *peindre*, *restreindre*, *teindre*, *joindre*, and verbs ending in *-aître*: *apparaître*, *connaître*, *disparaître*, *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

Infinitive: recevoir Past participle: reçu Present participle: recevant	Compound infinitive: avoir reçu Compound past participle: eu reçu Compound present participle: ayant reçu
<b>Simple forms</b>	<b>Compound forms</b>
<b>Present:</b> Je reçois            Nous recevons Tu reçois            Vous recevez Il reçoit              Ils reçoivent	<b>Compound Past:</b> J'ai reçu              Nous avons reçu Tu as reçu            Vous avez reçu Il a reçu                Ils ont reçu
<b>Imperfect:</b> Je recevais            Nous recevions Tu recevais            Vous receviez Il recevait             Ils recevaient	<b>Pluperfect:</b> J'avais reçu            Nous avions reçu Tu avais reçu        Vous aviez reçu Il avait reçu            Ils avaient reçu
<b>Simple past (past historic):</b> Je reçus                Nous reçûmes Tu reçus                Vous reçûtes Il reçut                 Ils reçurent	<b>Past anterior:</b> J'eus reçu              Nous eûmes reçu Tu eus reçu            Vous eûtes reçu Il eut reçu             Ils eurent reçu
<b>Future:</b> Je recevrai            Nous recevrons Tu recevras            Vous recevrez Il recevra              Ils recevront	<b>Compound future:</b> J'aurai reçu            Nous aurons reçu Tu auras reçu        Vous aurez reçu Il aura reçu            Ils auront reçu
<b>Conditional:</b> Je recevrais            Vous recevriez Tu recevrais            Vous recevriez Il recevrait             Ils recevraient	<b>Compound conditional:</b> J'aurais reçu            Nous aurions reçu Tu aurais reçu        Vous auriez reçu Il aurait reçu            Ils auraient reçu
<b>Present subjunctive:</b> que je reçoive        que nous recevions que tu reçoives      que vous receviez qu'il reçoive         qu'ils reçoivent	<b>Compound past subjunctive:</b> que j'aie reçu         que nous ayons reçu que tu aies reçu      que vous ayez reçu qu'il ait reçu         qu'ils aient reçu
<b>Imperfect subjunctive:</b> que je reçusse        que nous reçussions que tu reçusses      que vous reçussiez qu'il reçût            qu'ils reçussent	<b>Pluperfect subjunctive:</b> 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)

Imperative: reçois recevons recevez	Compound imperative: aie reçu ayons reçu ayez reçu
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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

<b>Infinitive:</b> abattre <i>to knock down</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'abats tu abats il abat nous abattons vous abattez ils abattent	<b>Participles:</b> abattant abattu <b>Future:</b> j'abattrai <b>Simple past:</b> j'abattis <b>Imperfect:</b> j'abattais <b>Subj (près):</b> que j'abatte <b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'abattisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> absoudre <i>to absolve</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'absous tu absous il absout nous absolvons vous absolvez ils absolvent	<b>Participles:</b> absolvant absous/ absoute (f) <b>Future:</b> j'absoudrai <b>Simple past:</b> - <b>Imperfect:</b> j'absolvais <b>Subj (près):</b> que j'absolve <b>Subj (imp):</b>
<b>Infinitive:</b> s'abstenir de <i>to abstain from</i> : see tenir		
<b>Infinitive:</b> abstraire <i>to abstract</i> : see traire		
<b>Infinitive:</b> accourir <i>to run up</i> : see courir		
<b>Infinitive:</b> accroître <i>to increase</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'accrois tu accrois il accroît nous accroissons vous accroissez ils accroissent	<b>Participles:</b> accroissant accru <b>Future:</b> j'accroîtrai <b>Simple past:</b> j'accrus <b>Imperfect:</b> j'accroissais <b>Subj (près):</b> que j'accroisse <b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'accrusse
<b>Infinitive:</b> accueillir <i>to welcome</i> : see cueillir		
<b>Infinitive:</b> acheter <i>to buy</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'achète tu achètes il achète nous achetons vous achetez ils achètent	<b>Participles:</b> achetant acheté <b>Future:</b> j'achèterai (è in all forms) <b>Simple past:</b> j'achetai <b>Imperfect:</b> j'achetais <b>Subj (près):</b> que j'achète que nous achetions que vous achetiez <b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'achetasse



TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> achever <i>to finish</i> : is like <i>acheter</i> in the distribution of <i>è</i>				
<b>Infinitive:</b> acquérir <i>to acquire</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'acquires tu acquies il acquiert	nous acquérons vous acquérez ils acquièrent	<b>Participles:</b> acquérant acquies	
			<b>Future:</b> j'acquerrai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> j'acquies	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> j'acquérais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'acquière	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'acquiesse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> adjoindre <i>to join with</i> : see joindre				
<b>Infinitive:</b> admettre <i>to let in</i> : see mettre				
<b>Infinitive:</b> advenir <i>to occur</i> : see venir				
<b>Infinitive:</b> aller <i>to go</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je vais tu vas il va	nous allons vous allez ils vont	<b>Participles:</b> allant allé	
			<b>Future:</b> j'irai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> j'allai	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> j'allais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'aie	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'allasse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> amener <i>to bring</i> : is like <i>mener</i> in the distribution of <i>è</i> in certain forms				
<b>Infinitive:</b> apparaître <i>to appear</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'apparais tu apparais il apparaît	nous apparaissions vous apparaissez ils apparaissent	<b>Participles:</b> apparaissant apparu	
			<b>Future:</b> j'apparaîtrai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> j'apparus	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> j'apparaissais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'apparaisse	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'apparusse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> appartenir <i>to belong</i> : see tenir				
<b>Infinitive:</b> appeler <i>to call</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'appelle tu appelles il appelle	nous appelons vous appelez ils appellent	<b>Participles:</b> appelant appelé	
			<b>Future:</b> j'appellerai (11 in all forms)	
			<b>Simple past:</b> j'appelai	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> j'appelais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'appelle que nous appelions que vous appeliez	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'appelasse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> apprendre <i>to learn, to teach</i> : see prendre				

TABLE 7.H Irregular verbs (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> assaillir <i>to assail</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'assaille      nous assaillons tu assailles    vous assailliez il assaille      ils assaillent	<b>Participles:</b> assaillant      assailli <b>Future:</b> j'assaillirai <b>Simple past:</b> j'assaillis <b>Imperfect:</b> j'assaillais <b>Subj (près):</b> que j'assaille <b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'assaillisse <b>Imperative:</b> assaille (assailles before y and en)
<b>Infinitive:</b> s'asseoir <i>to sit down</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je m'assieds    nous nous asseyons tu t'assieds    vous vous asseyez il s'assied      ils s'asseyent	<b>Participles:</b> s'asseyant      assis <b>Future:</b> je m'assiérai (or je m'assoierai) <b>Simple past:</b> je m'assis <b>Imperfect:</b> je m'asseyais (or je m'assoiais) <b>Subj (près):</b> que je m'asseye <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je m'assisse
(Also possible are: je m'assois      nous nous assoyons tu t'assois      vous vous assoyez il s'assoit      ils s'asseoient)		
<b>Infinitive:</b> astreindre <i>to oblige</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'astreins      nous astreignons tu astreins    vous astreignez il astreint     ils astreignent	<b>Participles:</b> astreignant    astreint <b>Future:</b> j'astreindrai <b>Simple past:</b> j'astreignis <b>Imperfect:</b> j'astreignais <b>Subj (près):</b> que j'astreigne <b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'astreignisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> atteindre <i>to attain</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'atteins      nous atteignons tu atteins     vous atteignez il atteint      ils atteignent	<b>Participles:</b> atteignant     atteint <b>Future:</b> j'atteindrai <b>Simple past:</b> j'atteignis <b>Imperfect:</b> j'atteignais <b>Subj (près):</b> que j'atteigne <b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'atteignisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> avancer <i>to advance</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'avance      nous avançons tu avances    vous avancez il avance      ils avancent	<b>Participles:</b> avançant      avancé <b>Future:</b> j'avancerai <b>Simple past:</b> j'avançai <b>Imperfect:</b> j'avançais <b>Subj (près):</b> que j'avance <b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'avançasse
NB: Always ç before an 'a' or 'o'		
<b>Infinitive:</b> battre <i>to beat</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je bats        nous battons tu bats        vous battez il bat          ils battent	<b>Participles:</b> battant        battu <b>Future:</b> je battrai <b>Simple past:</b> je battis <b>Imperfect:</b> je battais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je batte <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je battisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> boire <i>to drink</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je bois        nous buvons tu bois        vous buvez il boit        ils boivent	<b>Participles:</b> buvant        bu <b>Future:</b> je boirai <b>Simple past:</b> je bus <b>Imperfect:</b> je buvais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je boive <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je busse

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> bouillir <i>to boil</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je bous tu bous il bout	nous bouillons vous bouillez ils bouillent	<b>Participles:</b> bouillant bouilli
<b>Future:</b> je bouillirai			
<b>Simple past:</b> je bouillis			
<b>Imperfect:</b> je bouillais			
<b>Subj (près):</b> que je bouille			
<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je bouillisse			
<b>Infinitive:</b> braire <i>to bray</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> il brait	ils braient	<b>Participles:</b> brayant
			<b>Future:</b> il braira
			<b>Simple past:</b> -
			<b>Imperfect:</b> il brayait
			<b>Subj (près):</b> -
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> -
<b>Infinitive:</b> bruire <i>to buzz (of insects)</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> il bruit	ils bruissent	<b>Participles:</b> -
			<b>Future:</b> il bruera
			<b>Simple past:</b> -
			<b>Imperfect:</b> -
			<b>Subj (près):</b> -
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> -
<b>Infinitive:</b> céder <i>to give up</i> : is like <i>espérer</i> and <i>compléter</i> in the way <i>é</i> and <i>è</i> are distributed			
<b>Infinitive:</b> ceindre <i>to put sth around sth (rare)</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je ceins tu ceins il ceint	nous ceignons vous ceignez ils ceignent	<b>Participles:</b> ceignant ceint
			<b>Future:</b> je ceindrai
			<b>Simple past:</b> je ceignis
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je ceignais
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je ceigne
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je ceignisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> choir <i>to fall (rare)</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je choisis tu choisis il choisit	ils choisent	<b>Participles:</b> chu
			<b>Future:</b> je choirai
			<b>Simple past:</b> je chus
			<b>Imperfect:</b> -
			<b>Subj (près):</b> -
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> -
<b>Infinitive:</b> circonscire <i>to circumscribe</i> : see écrire			
<b>Infinitive:</b> circonvenir <i>to circumvent</i> : see venir			
<b>Infinitive:</b> clore <i>to conclude, close</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je clos tu clos il clôt	ils closent	<b>Participles:</b> -
			<b>Future:</b> je clorai
			<b>Simple past:</b> -
			<b>Imperfect:</b> -
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je close
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> -

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> combattre <i>to fight</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je combats tu combats il combat	nous combattons vous combattez ils combattent	<b>Participles:</b> combattant combattu	<b>Future:</b> je combattrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je combattis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je combattais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je combatte	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je combattisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> commettre <i>to commit</i> : see mettre								
<b>Infinitive:</b> comparaître <i>to appear before a court</i> : see paraître								
<b>Infinitive:</b> complaire à <i>to humour</i> : see plaire								
<b>Infinitive:</b> compléter <i>to complete</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je complète tu complètes il complète	nous complétons vous complétez ils complètent	<b>Participles:</b> complétant complété	<b>Future:</b> je complèterai	<b>Simple past:</b> je complétais	<b>Imperfect:</b> je complétais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je complète que nous complétions que vous complétiez	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je complétasse
<b>Infinitive:</b> comprendre <i>to understand</i> : see prendre								
<b>Infinitive:</b> compromettre <i>to compromise</i> : see mettre								
<b>Infinitive:</b> conclure <i>to conclude</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je conclus tu conclus il conclut	nous concluons vous concluez ils concluent	<b>Participles:</b> concluant conclu	<b>Future:</b> je conclurai	<b>Simple past:</b> je conclus	<b>Imperfect:</b> je concluais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je conclue	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je conclusse
<b>Infinitive:</b> concourir <i>to converge</i> : see courir								
<b>Infinitive:</b> conduire <i>to drive</i> : see construire								
<b>Infinitive:</b> confire <i>to preserve in fat or sugar</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je confis tu confis il confit	nous confisons vous confisez ils confisent	<b>Participles:</b> confisant confit	<b>Future:</b> je confirai	<b>Simple past:</b> je confis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je confisais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je confise	<b>Subj (imp):</b> "

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> connaître <i>to know</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je connais tu connais il connaît	nous connaissons vous connaissez ils connaissent	<b>Participles:</b> connaissant	c	<b>Future:</b> e connaîtrai	<b>Simple past:</b> e connus	<b>Imperfect:</b> e connaissais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je connaisse	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je connusse
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**Infinitive:**  
conquérir *to conquer*: see acquérir

<b>Infinitive:</b> construire <i>to build</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je construis tu construis il construit	nous construisons vous construisez ils construisent	<b>Participles:</b> construisant	construit	<b>Future:</b> je construirai	<b>Simple past:</b> je construisis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je construisais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je construisse	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je construisisse
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**Infinitive:**  
contenir *to contain*: see tenir

<b>Infinitive:</b> contraindre <i>to constrain</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je contraains tu contraains il contraint	nous contraignons vous contraignez ils contraignent	<b>Participles:</b> contraignant	contraint	<b>Future:</b> je contraindrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je contraignis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je contraignais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je contraigne	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je contraignisse
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**Infinitive:**  
contredire *to contradict*: see interdire

**Infinitive:**  
contrefaire *to imitate*: see faire

**Infinitive:**  
contrevenir *to contravene*: see venir

**Infinitive:**  
convaincre *to convince*: see vaincre

**Infinitive:**  
convenir *to agree*: see venir

<b>Infinitive:</b> corrompre <i>to corrupt</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je corromps tu corromps il corrompt	nous corrompons vous corrompez ils corrompent	<b>Participles:</b> corrompant	corrompu	<b>Future:</b> je corromprai	<b>Simple past:</b> je corrompis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je corrompais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je corrompe	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je corrompisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> coudre <i>to sew</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je couds tu couds il coud	nous cousons vous cousez ils cousent	<b>Participles:</b> cousant	cousu	<b>Future:</b> je coudrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je cousis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je cousais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je couse	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je cousisse

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> courir <i>to run</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je cours tu cours il court nous courons vous courez ils courent	<b>Participles:</b> courant couru <b>Future:</b> je courrai <b>Simple past:</b> je courus <b>Imperfect:</b> je courais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je coure <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je courusse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> couvrir <i>to cover</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je couvre tu couvres il couvre nous couvrons vous couvrez ils couvrent	<b>Participles:</b> couvrant couvert <b>Future:</b> je couvrirai <b>Simple past:</b> je couvris <b>Imperfect:</b> je couvrais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je couvre <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je couvrissse <b>Imperative:</b> couvre (couvres before y and en)	
<b>Infinitive:</b> craindre <i>to fear</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je crains tu crains il craint nous craignons vous craignez ils craignent	<b>Participles:</b> craignant craint <b>Future:</b> je craindrai <b>Simple past:</b> je craignis <b>Imperfect:</b> je craignais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je craigne <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je craignisse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> créer <i>to create</i> (regular verb)	<b>Present indicative:</b> je crée tu créés il crée nous créons vous créez ils créent	<b>Participles:</b> créant créé <b>Future:</b> je créerai <b>Simple past:</b> je créai <b>Imperfect:</b> je créais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je crée <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je créasse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> croire <i>to believe</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je crois tu crois il croit nous croyons vous croyez ils croient	<b>Participles:</b> croyant cru <b>Future:</b> je croirai <b>Simple past:</b> je crus <b>Imperfect:</b> je croyais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je croie <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je crusse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> croître <i>to increase</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je crois tu crois il croît nous croissons vous croissez ils croissent	<b>Participles:</b> croissant crû (crue) <b>Future:</b> je croîtrai <b>Simple past:</b> je crûs <b>Imperfect:</b> je croissais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je croisse <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je crûsse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> cueillir <i>to pick</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je cueille tu cueilles il cueille nous cueillons vous cueillez ils cueillent	<b>Participles:</b> cueillant cueilli <b>Future:</b> je cueillerai <b>Simple past:</b> je cueillis <b>Imperfect:</b> je cueillais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je cueille <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je cueillisse <b>Imperative:</b> cueille (cueilles before y and en)	

NB: The future and conditional have *cueiller* as a base and not *cueillir*. The same is true of *accueillir* and *recueillir* (but not *assaillir*).



TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> dépeindre <i>to describe</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je dépeins tu dépeins il dépeint	nous dépeignons vous dépeignez ils dépeignent	<b>Participles:</b> dépeignant dépeint	<b>Future:</b> je dépeindrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je dépeignis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je dépeignais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je dépeigne	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je dépeignisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> déplaître à <i>to displease</i> : see plaître								
<b>Infinitive:</b> désapprendre <i>to unlearn</i> : see prendre								
<b>Infinitive:</b> déteindre <i>to fade</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je déteins tu déteins il déteint	nous déteignons vous déteignez ils déteignent	<b>Participles:</b> déteignant déteint	<b>Future:</b> je déteindrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je déteignis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je déteignais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je déteigne	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je déteignisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> détenir <i>to be in possession of</i> : see tenir								
<b>Infinitive:</b> détruire <i>to destroy</i> : see construire								
<b>Infinitive:</b> dévêtir <i>to undress</i> : see vêtir								
<b>Infinitive:</b> devoir <i>must</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je dois tu dois il doit	nous devons vous devez ils doivent	<b>Participles:</b> devant dû (due)	<b>Future:</b> je devrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je dus	<b>Imperfect:</b> je devais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je doive	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je dusse
<b>Infinitive:</b> dire <i>to say</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je dis tu dis il dit	nous disons vous dites ils disent	<b>Participles:</b> disant dit	<b>Future:</b> je dirai	<b>Simple past:</b> je dis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je disais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je dise	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je disse
<b>Infinitive:</b> disconvenir à <i>to be unsuited to</i> : see venir								
<b>Infinitive:</b> discourir <i>to hold forth</i> : see courir								
<b>Infinitive:</b> disjoindre <i>to sever</i> : see joindre								



TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> disparaître <i>to disappear</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je disparaissais tu disparaissais il disparaissait	nous disparaissions vous disparaissiez ils disparaissaient	<b>Participles:</b> disparaissant disparu	<b>Future:</b> je disparaîtrai	
<b>Simple past:</b> je disparus	<b>Imperfect:</b> je disparaissais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je disparaissais	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je disparusse		
<b>Infinitive:</b> dissoudre <i>to dissolve</i> : see absoudre					
<b>Infinitive:</b> distraindre <i>to distract</i> : see traire					
<b>Infinitive:</b> s'ébattre <i>to frolic</i> : see battre					
<b>Infinitive:</b> échoir <i>to fall due</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> il échoit	ils échoient	<b>Participles:</b> échéant échu	<b>Future:</b> il échoira	
			<b>Simple past:</b> il échet		
<b>Infinitive:</b> éclore <i>to blossom</i> : see clore					
<b>Infinitive:</b> écrire <i>to write</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'écris tu écris il écrit	nous écrivons vous écrivez ils écrivent	<b>Participles:</b> écrivant écrit	<b>Future:</b> j'écrirai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> j'écrivis	<b>Imperfect:</b> j'écrivais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'écrive
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'écrivisse		
<b>Infinitive:</b> élire <i>to elect</i> : see lire					
<b>Infinitive:</b> émettre <i>to emit</i> : see mettre					
<b>Infinitive:</b> émouvoir <i>to excite</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'émeus tu émeus il émeut	nous émouvons vous émeuvez ils émeuvent	<b>Participles:</b> émouvant ému	<b>Future:</b> j'émouvrai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> j'émus	<b>Imperfect:</b> j'émouvais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'émeuve
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'émusse		
<b>Infinitive:</b> employer <i>to use</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'emploie tu emploies il emploie	nous employons vous employez ils emploient	<b>Participles:</b> employant employé	<b>Future:</b> j'emploierai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> j'employai	<b>Imperfect:</b> j'employais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'emploie
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'employasse		
<b>Infinitive:</b> emprescindre <i>to stamp</i> : 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:**

enduire *to coat, render*: see construire

**Infinitive:**

enfreindre  
*to infringe*

**Present indicative:**

j'enfreins  
tu enfreins  
il enfreint

nous enfreignons  
vous enfreignez  
ils enfreignent

**Participles:**

enfreignant      enfreint

**Future:**

j'enfreindrai

**Simple past:**

j'enfreignis

**Imperfect:**

j'enfreignais

**Subj (près):**

que j'enfreigne

**Subj (imp):**

que j'enfreignisse

**Infinitive:**

s'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:**

s'enquérir *to make enquiries*: see acquérir

**Infinitive:**

s'ensuivre *to result, follow*: see suivre

An impersonal verb used only in the infinitive and third singular form

**Infinitive:**

s'entremettre *to intervene*: see mettre

**Infinitive:**

entreprendre *to undertake*: see prendre

**Infinitive:**

entretenir *to maintain*: see tenir

**Infinitive:**

entrevoir *to make out*: see voir

**Infinitive:**

entrouvrir *to half-open*: see ouvrir

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> envoyer <i>to send</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'envoie tu envoies il envoie	<b>Participles:</b> envoyant envoyé	<b>Future:</b> j'enverrai	
	nous envoyons vous envoyez ils envoient	<b>Simple past:</b> j'envoyai	<b>Imperfect:</b> j'envoyais	
		<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'envoie	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'envoyasse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> épeler <i>to spell</i> : is like <i>appeler</i> in the distribution of single <i>l</i> and double <i>'ll'</i>				
<b>Infinitive:</b> s'éprendre de <i>to fall in love with</i> : see prendre				
<b>Infinitive:</b> équivaloir à <i>to be equivalent to</i> : see valoir				
<b>Infinitive:</b> espérer <i>to hope</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'espère tu espères il espère	<b>Participles:</b> espérant espéré	<b>Future:</b> j'espérerai	
	nous espérons vous espérez ils espèrent	<b>Simple past:</b> j'espérai	<b>Imperfect:</b> j'espérais	
		<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'espère	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'espérasse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> éteindre <i>to extinguish</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'éteins tu éteins il éteint	<b>Participles:</b> éteignant éteint	<b>Future:</b> j'éteindrai	
	nous éteignons vous éteignez ils éteignent	<b>Simple past:</b> j'éteignis	<b>Imperfect:</b> j'éteignais	
		<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'éteigne	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'éteignisse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> êtreindre <i>to embrace</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'étreins tu êtreins il étreint	<b>Participles:</b> êtreignant êtreint	<b>Future:</b> j'étreindrai	
	nous êtreignons vous êtreignez ils êtreignent	<b>Simple past:</b> j'étreignis	<b>Imperfect:</b> j'étreignais	
		<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'étreigne	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'étreignisse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> exclure <i>to exclude</i> : see conclure				
<b>Infinitive:</b> extraire <i>to extract</i> : see traire				
<b>Infinitive:</b> faillir <i>to almost do, nearly do</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'ai failli/il a failli, etc., tomber <i>I/he nearly fell</i>	<b>Participles:</b> -	<b>Future:</b> je faillirai	failli
e.g.	Je ne faillirai pas à mon devoir i <i>won't fail in my duty</i>		<b>Simple past:</b> je faillis	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je taillais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> -	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> -	

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> faire <i>to do</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je fais nous faisons tu fais vous faites il fait ils font	<b>Participles:</b> faisant fait <b>Future:</b> je ferai <b>Simple past:</b> je fis <b>Imperfect:</b> je faisais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je fasse <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je fisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> falloir <i>to be necessary, 'must'</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> il faut	<b>Participles:</b> - fallu <b>Future:</b> il faudra <b>Simple past:</b> il fallut <b>Imperfect:</b> il fallait <b>Subj (près):</b> qu'il faille <b>Subj (imp):</b> qu'il fallût
<b>Infinitive:</b> feindre <i>to feign</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je feins nous feignons tu feins vous feignez il feint ils feignent	<b>Participles:</b> feignant feint <b>Future:</b> je feindrai <b>Simple past:</b> je feignis <b>Imperfect:</b> je feignais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je feigne <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je feignisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> fleurir: has two present participles depending on meaning: <i>fleurissant</i> for the meaning of 'coming into flower', but <i>florissant</i> for 'flourishing' a; in 'a flourishing business'.		
<b>Infinitive:</b> frire <i>to fry</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je fris tu fris il frit	<b>Participles:</b> - frit <b>Future:</b> je frirai <b>Simple past:</b> - <b>Imperfect:</b> - <b>Subj (près):</b> - <b>Subj (imp):</b> -
<b>Infinitive:</b> fuir <i>to flee</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je fuis nous fuyons tu fuis vous fuyez il fuit ils fuient	<b>Participles:</b> fuyant fui <b>Future:</b> je fuirai <b>Simple past:</b> je fus <b>Imperfect:</b> je fuyais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je fuie <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je fuisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> geindre <i>to groan</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je geins nous geignons tu geins vous geignez il geint ils geignent	<b>Participles:</b> geignant geint <b>Future:</b> je geindrai <b>Simple past:</b> je geignis <b>Imperfect:</b> je geignais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je geigne <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je geignisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> geler <i>to freeze</i> : is like <i>mener</i> in the use of è in some forms		
<b>Infinitive:</b> gésir <i>to be at rest, (as in grave), lie about (as clothes on floor)</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je gis nous gisons tu gis vous gisez il gît ils gisent NB: ci-gît ... <i>here lies</i> ...	<b>Participles:</b> gisant - <b>Future:</b> - <b>Simple past:</b> - <b>Imperfect:</b> je gisais <b>Subj (près):</b> - <b>Subj (imp):</b> ~

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> haïr <i>to hate</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je hais tu hais il hait	nous haïssons vous haïssez ils haïssent	<b>Participles:</b> <b>Future:</b> <b>Simple past:</b> <b>Imperfect:</b> <b>Subj (près):</b> <b>Subj (imp):</b>	haïssant je hairai je haïs je haïssais que je haïsse que je haïsse	haï
NB: The ï (i with trema) indicates two syllables. The verb is regular apart from the use of the tréma.					
<b>Infinitive:</b> induire <i>to induce</i> : see construire					
<b>Infinitive:</b> inscrire <i>to inscribe</i> : see écrire					
<b>Infinitive:</b> instruire <i>to instruct</i> : see construire					
<b>Infinitive:</b> interdire <i>to forbid</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'interdis tu interdis il interdit	nous interdisons vous interdisez ils interdisent	<b>Participles:</b> <b>Future:</b> <b>Simple past:</b> <b>Imperfect:</b> <b>Subj (près):</b> <b>Subj (imp):</b>	interdisant j'interdirai j'interdis j'interdisais que j'interdise que j'interdisse	interdit
<b>Infinitive:</b> intervenir <i>to intervene</i> : see venir					
<b>Infinitive:</b> introduire <i>to insert</i> : see construire					
<b>Infinitive:</b> jeter <i>to throw</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je jette tu jettes il jette	nous jetons vous jetez ils jettent	<b>Participles:</b> <b>Future:</b> <b>Simple past:</b> <b>Imperfect:</b> <b>Subj (près):</b>  <b>Subj (imp):</b>	jetant je jetterai je jetai je jetais que je jette que nous jetions que vous jetiez que je jetasse	jeté
<b>Infinitive:</b> joindre <i>to join</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je joins tu joins il joint	nous joignons vous joignez ils joignent	<b>Participles:</b> <b>Future:</b> <b>Simple past:</b> <b>Imperfect:</b> <b>Subj (près):</b> <b>Subj (imp):</b>	joignant je joindrai je joignis je joignais que je joigne que je joignisse	joint
<b>Infinitive:</b> lire <i>to read</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je lis tu lis il lit	nous lisons vous lisez ils lisent	<b>Participles:</b> <b>Future:</b> <b>Simple past:</b> <b>Imperfect:</b> <b>Subj (près):</b> <b>Subj (imp):</b>	lisant je lirai je lus je lisais que je lise que je lusse	lu

TABLE 7.H (continued)

Infinitive: luire <i>to shine</i> : is similar to <i>construire</i> , except that its past participle is 'lui' and it normally does not have a simple past or an imperfect subjunctive.				
<b>Infinitive:</b> maintenir <i>to maintain</i> : see tenir				
<b>Infinitive:</b> manger <i>to eat</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je mange tu manges il mange	nous mangeons vous mangez ils mangent	<b>Participles:</b> mangeant <b>Future:</b> je mangerai <b>Simple past:</b> je mangeai <b>Imperfect:</b> je mangeais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je mange <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je mangeasse	mangé
NB: Insert 'e' after 'g' before 'a' or 'o' to ensure correct pronunciation.				
<b>Infinitive:</b> maudire <i>to curse</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je maudis tu maudis il maudit	nous maudissons vous maudissez ils maudissent	<b>Participles:</b> maudissant <b>Future:</b> je maudirai <b>Simple parff:</b> je maudis <b>Imperfect:</b> je maudissais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je maudisse <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je maudisse	maudit
<b>Infinitive:</b> méconnaître <i>to misunderstand</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je méconnais tu méconnais il méconnaît	nous méconnaissons vous méconnaissez ils méconnaissent	<b>Participles:</b> méconnaissant <b>Future:</b> je méconnaîtrai <b>Simple past:</b> je méconnus <b>Imperfect:</b> je méconnaissais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je méconnaisse <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je méconnusse	méconnu
<b>Infinitive:</b> mener <i>to lead</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je mené tu mènes il mène	nous menons vous menez ils mènent	<b>Participles:</b> menant <b>Future:</b> je mènerai <b>Simple past:</b> je menai <b>Imperfect:</b> je menais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je mène que nous menions que vous meniez <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je menasse	mené
NB: è in cases where the following syllable contains a 'silent' 'e'				
<b>Infinitive:</b> se méprendre <i>to be mistaken</i> : see prendre				
<b>Infinitive:</b> mettre <i>to put</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je mets tu mets il met	nous mettons vous mettez ils mettent	<b>Participles:</b> mettant <b>Future:</b> je mettrai <b>Simple past:</b> je mis <b>Imperfect:</b> je mettais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je mette <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je misse	mis

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> moudre <i>to grind</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je mouds tu mouds il moud nous moulons vous moulez ils moulent	<b>Participles:</b> moulant moulu <b>Future:</b> je moudrai <b>Simple past:</b> je moulus <b>Imperfect:</b> je moulais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je moule <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je moulusse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> mourir <i>to die</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je meurs tu meurs il meurt nous mourons vous mourez ils meurent	<b>Participles:</b> mourant mort <b>Future:</b> je mourrai <b>Simple past:</b> je mourus <b>Imperfect:</b> je mourais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je meure <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je mourusse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> mouvoir <i>to move</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je meus tu meus il meut nous mouvons vous mouvez ils meuvent	<b>Participles:</b> mouvant mû (mue, mus) <b>Future:</b> je mouvrai <b>Simple past:</b> je mus <b>Imperfect:</b> je mouvais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je meuve <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je mussé	
<b>Infinitive:</b> naître <i>to be born</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je nais tu nais il naît nous naissons vous naissez ils naissent	<b>Participles:</b> naissant né <b>Future:</b> je naîtrai <b>Simple past:</b> je naquis <b>Imperfect:</b> je naissais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je naisse <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je naquisse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> nettoyer <i>to clean</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je nettoie tu nettoies il nettoie nous nettoyons vous nettoyez ils nettoient	<b>Participles:</b> nettoyant nettoyé <b>Future:</b> je nettoierai <b>Simple past:</b> je nettoyai <b>Imperfect:</b> je nettoiais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je nettoie <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je nettoyasé	
<b>Infinitive:</b> nuire <i>to harm</i> : is similar to construire, except that its past participle is 'nui' and it normally does not have a simple past or an imperfect subjunctive.			
<b>Infinitive:</b> obtenir <i>to obtain</i> : see tenir			
<b>Infinitive:</b> offrir <i>to give</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'offre tu offres il offre nous offrons vous offrez ils offrent	<b>Participles:</b> offrant offert <b>Future:</b> j'offrirai <b>Simple past:</b> j'offris <b>Imperfect:</b> j'offrais <b>Subj (près):</b> que j'offre <b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'offrisse <b>Imperative:</b> offre (offres before <i>y</i> and <i>en</i> )	
<b>Infinitive:</b> omettre <i>to omit</i> : see mettre			

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> ouvrir <i>to open</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> j'ouvre tu ouvres il ouvre	nous ouvrons vous ouvrez ils ouvrent	<b>Participles:</b> ouvrant ouvert	<b>Future:</b> j'ouvrirai	<b>Simple past:</b> j'ouvris	<b>Imperfect:</b> j'ouvrais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que j'ouvre	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que j'ouvrise	<b>Imperative:</b> ouvre (ouvres before y and en)
<b>Infinitive:</b> paraître <i>to seem</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je paraïs tu paraïs il paraît	nous paraissions vous paraissiez ils paraissent	<b>Participles:</b> paraissant paru	<b>Future:</b> je paraîtrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je parus	<b>Imperfect:</b> je paraissais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je paraisse	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je parusse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> parcourir <i>to travel through:</i> see courir									
<b>Infinitive:</b> parfaire <i>to perfect:</i> see faire									
<b>Infinitive:</b> parvenir <i>to reach:</i> see venir									
<b>Infinitive:</b> peindre <i>to paint</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je peins tu peins il peint	nous peignons vous peignez ils peignent	<b>Participles:</b> peignant peint	<b>Future:</b> je peindrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je peignis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je peignais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je peigne	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je peignisse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> permettre <i>to allow:</i> see mettre									
<b>Infinitive:</b> peser <i>to weigh:</i> is like mener in the use of è in some forms									
<b>Infinitive:</b> se plaindre <i>to complain</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je me plains tu te plains il se plaint	nous nous plaignons vous vous plaignez ils se plaignent	<b>Participles:</b> se plaignant se plaint	<b>Future:</b> je me plaindrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je me plaignis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je me plaignais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je me plaigne	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je me plaignisse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> plaire <i>to please</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je plais tu plais il plaît	nous plaisons vous plaisez ils plaisent	<b>Participles:</b> plaisant plu	<b>Future:</b> je plairai	<b>Simple past:</b> je plus	<b>Imperfect:</b> je plaisais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je plaise	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je plusse	



TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> pleuvoir <i>to rain</i> (impersonal)	<b>Present indicative:</b> il pleut	<b>Participles:</b> pleuvant plu	<b>Future:</b> il pleuvra	
		<b>Simple past:</b> il plut		
		<b>Imperfect:</b> il pleuvait		
		<b>Subj (près):</b> qu'il pleuve		
		<b>Subj (imp):</b> qu'il plût		
<b>Infinitive:</b> poursuivre <i>to pursue</i> : see suivre				
<b>Infinitive:</b> pourvoir <i>to provide</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je pourvois tu pourvois il pourvoit	nous pourvoyons vous pourvoyez ils pourvoient	<b>Participles:</b> pourvoyant pourvu	
			<b>Future:</b> je pourvoirai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> je pourvus	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je pourvoyais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je pourvoie	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je pourvusse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> pouvoir <i>to be able to</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je peux tu peux il peut (alternative: je puis)	nous pouvons vous pouvez ils peuvent	<b>Participles:</b> pouvant pu	
			<b>Future:</b> je pourrai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> je pus	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je pouvais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je puisse	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je pusse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> prédire <i>to predict</i> : see interdire				
<b>Infinitive:</b> prendre <i>to take</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je prends tu prends il prend	nous prenons vous prenez ils prennent	<b>Participles:</b> prenant pris	
			<b>Future:</b> je prendrai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> je pris	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je prenais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je prenne que nous prenions que vous preniez	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je prisse	
NB: Two 'n's when 'ri is followed by a 'silent' e: <i>prenne, preannes, prennent</i> .				
<b>Infinitive:</b> prescrire <i>to prescribe</i> : see écrire				
<b>Infinitive:</b> prévaloir <i>to prevail</i> : see valoir				
<b>Infinitive:</b> prévenir <i>to anticipate</i> : see venir				
<b>Infinitive:</b> prévoir <i>to foresee</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je prévois tu prévois il prévoit	nous prévoyons vous prévoyez ils prévoient	<b>Participles:</b> prévoyant prévu	
			<b>Future:</b> je prévoirai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> je prévis	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je prévoyais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je prévoie	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je prévisse	

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> produire <i>to produce</i> : see construire		
<b>Infinitive:</b> projeter <i>to plan</i> : is like <i>jeter</i> in the use of single ' ' and double 'tt'		
<b>Infinitive:</b> promettre <i>to promise</i> : see mettre		
<b>Infinitive:</b> proscrire <i>to outlaw</i> : see écrire		
<b>Infinitive:</b> protéger <i>to protect</i> : is like <i>espérer</i> , <i>compléter</i> in the distribution of <i>é</i> and <i>è</i>		
<b>Infinitive:</b> provenir de <i>to arise from</i> : see venir		
<b>Infinitive:</b> 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.		
<b>Infinitive:</b> rabattre <i>to pull down</i> (e.g. hat)	<b>Present indicative:</b> je rabats      nous rabattons tu rabats      vous rabattez il rabat        ils rabattent	<b>Participles:</b> rabattant      rabattu <b>Future:</b> je rabattrai <b>Simple past:</b> je rabattis <b>Imperfect:</b> je rabattais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je rabatte <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je rabattisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> (se) rappeler <i>to recall</i> : is like appeler in the distribution of single T and double 'll'		
<b>Infinitive:</b> reconnaître <i>to recognize</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je reconnais    nous reconnaissons tu reconnais    vous reconnaissez il reconnaît    ils reconnaissent	<b>Participles:</b> reconnaissant    reconnu <b>Future:</b> je reconnaitrai <b>Simple past:</b> je reconnus <b>Imperfect:</b> je reconnaissais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je reconnaisse <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je reconnusse
<b>Infinitive:</b> recouvrir <i>to cover</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je recouvre    nous recouvrons tu recouvres    vous recouvrez il recouvre     ils recouvrent	<b>Participles:</b> recouvrant      recouvert <b>Future:</b> je recouvrirai <b>Simple past:</b> je recouvris <b>Imperfect:</b> je recouvrais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je recouvre <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je recouvrisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> refléter <i>to reflect</i> : is like <i>espérer</i> and <i>completer</i> in the distribution of <i>é</i> and <i>è</i>		
<b>Infinitive:</b> rejeter <i>to throw back</i> : is like <i>jeter</i> in the use of single 't' and double 'tt'		

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> renvoyer <i>to sack, send back</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je renvoie tu renvoies il renvoie	nous renvoyons vous renvoyez ils renvoient	<b>Participles:</b> renvoyant renvoyé	<b>Future:</b> je renverrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je renvoyai	<b>Imperfect:</b> je renvoyais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je renvoie	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je renvoyasse
<b>Infinitive:</b> répéter <i>repeat</i> : is like <i>espérer</i> and <i>compléter</i> in the distribution of <i>e</i> and <i>è</i> (second syllable)								
<b>Infinitive:</b> résoudre <i>to resolve</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je résous tu résous il résout	nous résolvons vous résolvez ils résolvent	<b>Participles:</b> résolvant résolu	<b>Future:</b> je résoudreai	<b>Simple past:</b> je résolus	<b>Imperfect:</b> je résolvais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je résolve	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je résolusse
<b>Infinitive:</b> restreindre <i>to restrain</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je restreins tu restreins il restreint	nous restreignons vous restreignez ils restreignent	<b>Participles:</b> restreignant restreint	<b>Future:</b> je restreindrai	<b>Simple past:</b> je restreignis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je restreignais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je restreigne	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je restreignisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> <b>rire</b> <i>to laugh</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je ris tu ris il rit	nous rions vous riez ils rient	<b>Participles:</b> riant ri	<b>Future:</b> je rirai	<b>Simple past:</b> je ris	<b>Imperfect:</b> je riaais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je rie	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je risse
<b>Infinitive:</b> rompre <i>to break</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je romps tu romps il rompt	nous rompons vous rompez ils rompent	<b>Participles:</b> rompant rompu	<b>Future:</b> je romprai	<b>Simple past:</b> je rompis	<b>Imperfect:</b> je rompais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je rompe	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je rompisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> satisfaire <i>to satisfy</i> : see faire								
<b>Infinitive:</b> savoir <i>to know</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je sais tu sais il sait	nous savons vous savez ils savent	<b>Participles:</b> sachant su	<b>Future:</b> je saurai	<b>Simple past:</b> je sus	<b>Imperfect:</b> je savais	<b>Subj (près):</b> que je sache	<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je susse
<b>Infinitive:</b> secourir <i>to help</i> : see courir								
<b>Infinitive:</b> séduire <i>to seduce</i> : see construire								

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> semer <i>to sow</i> : is like <i>mener</i> in the distribution of <i>è</i> in certain forms				
<b>Infinitive:</b> souffrir <i>to suffer</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je souffre tu souffres il souffre	<b>nous</b> souffrons vous souffrez ils souffrent	<b>Participles:</b> souffrant	souffert
			<b>Future:</b> je souffrirai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> je souffris	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je souffrais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je souffre	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je souffrisse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> soumettre <i>to submit</i> : see mettre				
<b>Infinitive:</b> sourire <i>to smile</i> : see rire				
<b>Infinitive:</b> souscrire <i>to sign</i> : see écrire				
<b>Infinitive:</b> soustraire <i>to withdraw</i> : see traire				
<b>Infinitive:</b> soutenir <i>to support</i> : see tenir				
<b>Infinitive:</b> se souvenir de <i>to remember</i> : see venir				
<b>Infinitive:</b> subvenir <i>to subsidize</i> : see venir				
<b>Infinitive:</b> suffire <i>to suffice</i> (impersonal)	<b>Present indicative:</b> il suffit		<b>Participles:</b> suffisant	suffi
			<b>Future:</b> il suffira	
			<b>Simple past:</b> il suffit	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> il suffisait	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> qu'il suffise	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> qu'il suffît	
<b>Infinitive:</b> suivre <i>to follow</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je suis tu suis il suit	nous suivons vous suivez ils suivent	<b>Participles:</b> suivant	suivi
			<b>Future:</b> je suivrai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> je suivis	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je suivais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je suive	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je suivisse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> surprendre <i>to surprise</i> : see prendre				

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> surseoir <i>to postpone</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je sursois tu sursois il sursoit	nous sursoyons vous sursoyez ils sursoient	<b>Participles:</b> sursoyant	
			<b>Future:</b> je surseoirai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> je sursis	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je sursoyais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je sursoie	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je sursisse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> survenir <i>to happen</i> : see venir				
<b>Infinitive:</b> survivre à <i>to survive</i> : see vivre				
<b>Infinitive:</b> se taire <i>to be quiet</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je me tais tu te tais il se tait	nous nous taisons vous vous taisez ils se taisent	<b>Participles:</b> se taisant	tu
			<b>Future:</b> je me tairai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> je me tus	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je me taisais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je me taise	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je me tusse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> teindre <i>to dye</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je teins tu teins il teint	nous teignons vous teignez ils teignent	<b>Participles:</b> teignant	teint
			<b>Future:</b> e teindrai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> e teignis	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> e teignais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je teigne	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je teignisse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> tenir <i>to hold</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je tiens tu tiens il tient	nous tenons vous tenez ils tiennent	<b>Participles:</b> tenant	tenu
			<b>Future:</b> je tiendrai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> je tins	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je tenais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je tienne	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b> que je tinsse	
<b>Infinitive:</b> traduire <i>to translate</i> : see construire				
<b>Infinitive:</b> traire <i>to milk</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je traie tu traie il traite	nous trayons vous trayez ils traient	<b>Participles:</b> trayant	tr <sub>i</sub>
			<b>Future:</b> je trairai	
			<b>Simple past:</b> -	
			<b>Imperfect:</b> je trayais	
			<b>Subj (près):</b> que je traie	
			que nous trayions	
			que vous trayiez	
			<b>Subj (imp):</b>	
<b>Infinitive:</b> transcrire <i>to transcribe</i> : see écrire				
<b>Infinitive:</b> transmettre <i>to transmit</i> : see mettre				
<b>Infinitive:</b> transparaître <i>to show through</i> : see paraître				

TABLE 7.H (continued)

<b>Infinitive:</b> vaincre <i>to defeat</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je vains      nous vainquons tu vaines    vous vainquez il vainc      ils vainquent	<b>Participles:</b> vainquant    vaincu <b>Future:</b> je vaincrai <b>Simple past:</b> je vainquis <b>Imperfect:</b> je vainquais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je vainque <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je vainquisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> valoir <i>to be worth</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je vaux      nous valons tu vaux      vous valez il vaut      ils valent	<b>Participles:</b> valant      valu <b>Future:</b> je vaudrai <b>Simple past:</b> je valus <b>Imperfect:</b> je valais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je vaille <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je valusse
<b>Infinitive:</b> venir <i>to come</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je viens      nous venons tu viens      vous venez il vient      ils viennent	<b>Participles:</b> venant      venu <b>Future:</b> je viendrai <b>Simple past:</b> je vins <b>Imperfect:</b> je venais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je vienne <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je vinsse
<b>Infinitive:</b> vêtir <i>to clothe</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je vêts      nous vêtons tu vêts      vous vêtez il vêt      ils vêtent	<b>Participles:</b> vêtant      vêtu <b>Future:</b> je vêtirai <b>Simple past:</b> je vêtis <b>Imperfect:</b> je vêtais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je vête <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je vêtisse
<b>Infinitive:</b> vivre <i>to live</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je vis      nous vivons tu vis      vous vivez il vit      ils vivent	<b>Participles:</b> vivant      vécu <b>Future:</b> je vivrai <b>Simple past:</b> je vécus <b>Imperfect:</b> je vivais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je vive <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je vécusse
<b>Infinitive:</b> voir <i>to see</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je vois      nous voyons tu vois      vous voyez il voit      ils voient	<b>Participles:</b> voyant      vu <b>Future:</b> je verrai <b>Simple past:</b> je vis <b>Imperfect:</b> je voyais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je voie <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je visse
<b>Infinitive:</b> vouloir <i>to want</i>	<b>Present indicative:</b> je veux      nous voulons tu veux      vous voulez il veut      ils veulent	<b>Participles:</b> voulant      voulu <b>Future:</b> je voudrai <b>Simple past:</b> je voulus <b>Imperfect:</b> je voulais <b>Subj (près):</b> que je veuille <b>Subj (imp):</b> que je voulusse

# 8

## 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

Verb type	Complement type	
	Direct object	Prepositional object
<b>Intransitive (8.2)</b> e.g. <i>partir</i> <i>Jeanne partira</i>	No	No
<b>Directly Transitive (8.3)</b> e.g. <i>fermer</i> <i>Il ferme</i>	Yes <i>les yeux</i>	No -
<b>Indirectly Transitive (8.4)</b> e.g. <i>hériter</i> <i>Yvon hérite</i>	No	Yes <i>d'une fortune</i> "
<b>Ditransitive (8.5)</b> e.g. <i>planter</i> <i>Hervé a planté</i>	Yes <i>le jardin</i>	Yes <i>de roses</i>
<b>Pronominal (8.7)</b> (a) <i>se</i> is a direct object e.g. <i>s'évanouir</i>  (b) <i>se</i> is an indirect object e.g. <i>se faire mal</i>	(a) <i>Marie s'est évanouie</i>  -	-  (b) <i>Elle s'est fait mal</i> (à elle-même)

### 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*

La fête continue	<i>The party is going on</i>
Elle avait disparu	<i>She had disappeared</i>
Vous descendez?	<i>Are you going down?</i>
Il ne souffrira pas	<i>He won't suffer</i>

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)	<i>She is going (on holiday)</i>
Un léger brouillard montait (de la mer)	<i>A mist rose (from the sea)</i>
Il a respiré fortement	<i>He breathed deeply</i>
Christian serait tombé (du haut de la falaise)	<i>Christian apparently fell (from the cliff)</i>
Elle est descendue (péniblement)	<i>She went down (gingerly)</i>
Cet homme avait vécu <b>plus de 90 ans</b>	<i>That man had lived into his nineties</i>
Louis tremblait (de tous ses membres)	<i>Louis was trembling (all over)</i>
Les minutes passaient (lentement)	<i>The minutes passed (slowly)</i>

### 8.2.1 Intransitive verbs and auxiliary *avoir*

Most intransitive verbs employ the auxiliary *avoir* in compound tenses:

Depuis Janvier les prix ont augmenté	<i>Since January prices have gone up</i>
<b>Il aurait</b> acquiescé	<i>He agreed, apparently</i>
La fête avait continué	<i>The party had gone on</i>
Elle <b>avait</b> disparu	<i>She had disappeared</i>
Il n'a pas souffert	<i>He didn't suffer</i>
La situation aura probablement empiré	<i>The situation will probably have got worse</i>

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	<i>He began to read this novel</i>
La pièce est commencée	<i>The play has begun</i>
Il a changé les pneus de sa voiture	<i>He changed the tyres on his car</i>
Depuis dix ans elle est vraiment changée	<i>She has really changed in ten years</i>

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	<i>A mist rose from the sea</i>
Christian est tombé du haut de la falaise	<i>Christian fell from the cliff</i>
Elle était descendue	<i>She had gone down</i>
Marie-Christine <b>est</b> née en 1968	<i>Marie-Christine was born in 1968</i>



The verbs which take *être* in this way are:

aller	<i>to go</i>	naître	<i>to be born</i>
arriver	<i>to arrive</i>	partir	<i>to leave</i>
décéder	<i>to die</i>	rentrer	<i>to go home</i>
demeurer	<i>to remain</i>	rester	<i>to stay</i>
descendre	<i>to go down</i>	retourner	<i>to return</i>
devenir	<i>to become</i>	revenir	<i>to come back</i>
entrer	<i>to enter</i>	sortir	<i>to go out</i>
monter	<i>to go up</i>	tomber	<i>to fall</i>
mourir	<i>to die</i>	venir	<i>to come</i>

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	<i>When he heard the news he came quickly</i>
Il nous est apparu que le gardien avait menti	<i>It became apparent to us that the porter had lied</i>
Il est passé nous voir	<i>He came to see us</i>

(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:

lire la nouvelle dans le journal	<i>to read the item in the newspaper</i>
quitter le Pays de Galles	<i>to leave Wales</i>
composter un billet	<i>to punch a ticket</i>
fumer une cigarette	<i>to smoke a cigarette</i>
ouvrir la portière	<i>to open the (car, train) door</i>
prendre le train	<i>to take the train</i>
rencontrer un ami	<i>to meet a friend</i>
expliquer les faits	<i>to explain the facts</i>
étouffer un <b>juron</b>	<i>to stifle an oath</i>
lever la tête	<i>to raise one's head</i>

### 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	<i>Clément drinks</i> ('alcohol' understood)
La vitesse tue	<i>Speed kills</i> ('people' understood)
Gustave enseigne	<i>Gustave teaches</i> ('pupils' understood)
Il ne sait pas conduire	<i>He can't drive</i> ('cars' understood)
On attend	<i>We're waiting</i> ('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:

Elle a quitté le Pays de Galles  
 J'ai rencontré un ami  
 Dans la bousculade Laurent avait reçu  
 des coups  
 On a attendu

*She has left Wales  
 I met a friend  
 In the confusion Laurent had  
 been hit  
 We waited*

### 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  
 La chaîne augmente ses prix

*Prices are going up  
 The store is increasing its prices*

Il rentre  
 Il rentre la voiture au garage

*He is going home  
 He is putting the car in the garage*

Elle sort  
 Elle sort son appareil-photo

*She is going out  
 She is getting her camera out*

Le moteur a calé  
 Alain a calé le moteur

*The engine stalled  
 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  
 BUT  
 Pierre a descendu les valises

*Pierre went down  
 Pierre has taken the suitcases down*

Marie est montée prendre son maillot  
 de bain  
 BUT  
 Marie avait monté un sac de charbon

*Marie has gone up to fetch her  
 swimming costume  
 Marie had taken a sack of coal up*

Mickey est sorti  
 BUT  
 Mickey a sorti une pièce d'identité

*Mickey has gone out  
 Mickey got out some identification*

Bernard sera rentré  
 BUT  
 Bernard avait rentré la voiture au garage

*Bernard will have gone home  
 Bernard had put the car in the  
 garage*

Eliane était retournée à la banque  
 BUT  
 Eliane a retourné tout l'appartement

*Eliane had gone back to the bank  
 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  
 Elle a monté la côte

*He went down the stairs/the street  
 She went up the hill*

Compare with:

Il est descendu vers la rue  
 Elle est montée à l'échelle

*He went down towards the street  
 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	<i>to approve <b>of</b> a choice</i>
attendre le train	<i>to wait <b>for</b> the train</i>
chercher une enveloppe	<i>to look <b>for</b> an envelope</i>
demander un verre d'eau	<i>to ask <b>for</b> a glass of water</i>
descendre la rue	<i>to go <b>down</b> the street</i>
écouter la radio	<i>to listen <b>to</b> the radio</i>
espérer une récompense	<i>to hope <b>for</b> a reward</i>
habiter <b>une</b> maison, une ville, une région	<i>to live <b>in</b> a house, <b>in</b> a town, <b>in</b> a region</i>
longer la falaise	<i>to go <b>along</b> the cliff</i>
monter la côte	<i>to go <b>up</b> the hill</i>
payer un tour de manège	<i>to pay <b>for</b> a ride on a roundabout</i>
payer une tournée	<i>to pay <b>for</b> a round (of drinks)</i>
présider une séance	<i>to be the chairperson <b>of</b> a session</i>
regarder le soleil	<i>to look <b>at</b> the sun</i>
viser la cible	<i>to aim <b>at</b> the target</i>

*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	<i>to be present at a meeting</i>
compatir à la douleur de quelqu'un	<i>to feel for somebody in their sorrow</i>
croire au diable	<i>to believe in the devil</i>
en vouloir à son cousin	<i>to hold a grudge against one's cousin</i>
participer aux activités	<i>to take part in the activities</i>
penser à son avenir	<i>to think about one's future</i>
pourvoir aux besoins de quelqu'un	<i>to provide for somebody's needs</i>
réfléchir à son passé	<i>to reflect on one's past</i>
songer à un voyage en Italie	<i>to envisage a trip to Italy</i>
veiller au bon règlement d'une affaire	<i>to see to the proper handling of a matter</i>

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* 'I believe this

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	<i>to overflow with water</i>
déjeuner de fruits	<i>to lunch on fruit</i>
dépendre des circonstances	<i>to depend on the circumstances</i>
dîner de moules et de frites	<i>to dine on mussels and french fries</i>
fourmiller d'abeilles	<i>to swarm with bees</i>
gémir de douleur	<i>to groan with pain</i>
grouiller de fourmis	<i>to swarm with ants</i>
parler de ses amis	<i>to speak of one's friends</i>
regorger de richesses	<i>to abound in wealth</i>
répondre de son ami	<i>to answer for one's friend</i>
rire de ses compagnons	<i>to laugh at one's friends</i>
rougir de honte	<i>to go red with shame</i>
tenir de sa mère	<i>to take after one's mother</i>
trembler de peur	<i>to tremble with fear</i>
triumpher de son adversaire	<i>to overcome one's opponent</i>
vivre de l'air du temps	<i>to live on fresh air alone</i>
vivre de presque rien	<i>to live on next to nothing</i>

(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	<i>to break the rule</i>
convenir à Julie	<i>to suit Julie</i>
(dé)plaire à son professeur	<i>to (dis)please one's teacher</i>
(dés)obéir à ses parents	<i>to (dis)obey one's parents</i>
échapper à la police	<i>to evade capture by the police</i>
échouer à un examen	<i>to fail an exam</i>
jouer au football, au rugby, au tennis	<i>to play football, rugby, tennis</i>
nuire à la réputation de quelqu'un	<i>to harm somebody's reputation</i>
parvenir au sommet	<i>to reach the summit</i>
plaire à quelqu'un	<i>to please somebody</i>
remédier à la situation	<i>to rectify the situation</i>
renoncer à l'alcool	<i>to give up alcohol</i>
résister à une force	<i>to resist a force</i>
ressembler à son chien	<i>to look like one's dog</i>
subvenir aux besoins de quelqu'un	<i>to look after somebody financially</i>
succéder à son père	<i>to succeed one's father</i>

survivre à un accident	<i>to survive an accident</i>
téléphoner à quelqu'un	<i>to telephone somebody</i>
toucher aux affaires de quelqu'un	<i>to mess about with somebody's things</i>

While *échapper à* means 'to evade capture', *s'échapper de* means 'to escape from': *s'échapper de la prison*.

Examples:

Il joue au football	(NOT *Il joue football)
Il a téléphoné à sa femme	(NOT *Il a téléphoné sa femme)
Elle ressemble beaucoup à sa mère	(NOT *Elle ressemble beaucoup sa mère)
Le nouveau poste plaisait à Antoine	(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	<i>to misuse one's inheritance</i>
douter de la vérité d'une histoire	<i>to doubt the truth of a story</i>
hériter d'une fortune	<i>to inherit a fortune</i>
jouer du piano/du violon/de la flûte	<i>to play the piano/violin/flute</i>
jouir de privilèges sans précédent	<i>to enjoy unprecedented privileges</i>
médire de son voisin	<i>to slander one's neighbour</i>
redoubler d'efforts	<i>to double one's efforts</i>

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	(NOT *Elle espère hériter une fortune)
Elle jouait du piano	(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	<i>to get an apprentice used to a trade</i>
admettre un invité à la fête	<i>to admit a guest to the party</i>
appeler quelqu'un au téléphone	<i>to call somebody to the phone</i>
apprendre le français à des élèves	<i>to teach French to pupils</i>
avouer un crime à la police	<i>to confess to the police about a crime</i>
condamner un malfaiteur à une peine de prison	<i>to condemn a criminal to prison</i>
conduire les hôtes à leur chambre	<i>to take the guests to their room</i>
contraindre les rebelles à l'obéissance	<i>to force the rebels into obedience</i>
convier des amis à une fête	<i>to invite friends to a party</i>
dire ses quatre vérités à quelqu'un	<i>to shout the bare truth at somebody</i>

destiner son fils à une belle carrière	<i>to arrange a great career for one's son</i>
dire des mensonges à sa famille	<i>to tell lies to one's family</i>
emmener les invités à leur hôtel	<i>to take guests to their hotel</i>
exposer sa famille à des dangers	<i>to expose one's family to danger</i>
forcer les citoyens à la révolution	<i>to drive the citizens to revolution</i>
habituer les motocyclistes au port du casque	<i>to get motorcycle riders used to wearing a helmet</i>
inciter les ouvriers à la révolte	<i>to incite workers to revolt</i>
inviter les syndicalistes à une réunion	<i>to invite the trade union representatives to a meeting</i>
jurer l'amour éternel à quelqu'un	<i>to swear eternal love to somebody</i>
louer une voiture à un touriste	<i>to rent a car to a tourist</i>
obliger ses créanciers au remboursement	<i>to force one's debtors to pay up</i>
ordonner la retraite à ses troupes	<i>to order one's troops to retreat</i>
provoquer quelqu'un à une réaction trop vive	<i>to provoke somebody into a hasty reaction</i>
réduire quelqu'un à la mendicité	<i>to reduce somebody to beggary</i>
rendre le magnétoscope à son voisin	<i>to return the video recorder to one's neighbour</i>
suggérer une idée à un collègue	<i>to suggest an idea to a colleague</i>

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	<i>to buy a lorry from a garage owner</i>
arracher de l'argent à un avare	<i>to prise money from a miser</i>
cacher la catastrophe à sa famille	<i>to hide the disaster from one's family</i>
dérober de l'argent à ses enfants	<i>to steal money from one's children</i>
emprunter cinq cents francs à un ami	<i>to borrow five hundred francs from a friend</i>
enlever le pistolet au voleur	<i>to take the revolver away from the thief</i>
ôter une écharde à quelqu'un	<i>to remove a splinter from somebody's flesh</i>
louer une camionnette au garagiste	<i>to hire a van from the garage owner</i>
préparer la famille à de bien tristes nouvelles	<i>to prepare the family for very sad news</i>
reprocher une liaison à son mari	<i>to be angry with one's husband for having had an affair</i>
réserver des sièges aux invités	<i>to reserve some seats for the guests</i>
retirer son permis au conducteur	<i>to take the driver's licence away from him</i>
soustraire une grosse somme à une vieille dame	<i>to swindle an old lady out of a large sum</i>
voler une bague à sa cousine	<i>to steal a ring from one's cousin</i>

#### **Introduced by de and corresponding typically to English 'with' or 'in' or, less frequently, 'from' or 'on'**

accabler son amie de cadeaux	<i>to overwhelm one's girl friend with presents</i>
accompagner ses commentaires de sarcasme	<i>to bring sarcasm into one's comments</i>
affranchir une population de l'esclavage	<i>to free a population from slavery</i>
armer ses soldats de mitrailleuses	<i>to arm one's soldiers with machine guns</i>
charger un voisin d'une commission	<i>to entrust an errand to a neighbour</i>
coiffer un enfant d'un chapeau de paille	<i>to put a straw hat on a child's head</i>
combler ses invités de gentilleses	<i>to cover one's guests in kindness</i>

couvrir sa petite amie de cadeaux	<i>to drown one's girlfriend in presents</i>
cribler un corps de balles	<i>to riddle a body with bullets</i>
éloigner sa fille de ses admirateurs	<i>to remove one's daughter from her admirers</i>
encombrer la voiture d'affaires de sport	<i>to clutter up the car with sports equipment</i>
entourer la famille de bons amis	<i>to surround the family with good friends</i>
envelopper le cadeau d'un papier de soie	<i>to wrap the present in tissue paper</i>
habiller son mari de vêtements sport	<i>to buy casual styles of clothes for one's husband</i>
menacer ses employés d'une réduction de salaire	<i>to threaten one's employees with reduction in salary</i>
munir les étudiants du savoir nécessaire	<i>to provide students with the necessary knowledge</i>
ornier le parebrise d'autocollants	<i>to decorate the windscreen with stickers</i>
planter le jardin de roses	<i>to plant the garden with roses</i>
pourvoir un réfugié d'un faux passeport	<i>to provide a refugee with a false passport</i>
remplir l'auditoire de terreur	<i>to fill the audience with terror</i>
semer un champ de haricots	<i>to sow a field with beans</i>
souiller un drap de sang	<i>to soil a sheet with blood</i>
tacher un pantalon de graisse	<i>to stain trousers with grease</i>
tapisser la chambre d'un papier peint rose	<i>to paper the bedroom in pink</i>
vêtir un cardinal d'une robe de pourpre	<i>to dress a cardinal in a purple robe</i>

### 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:

<i>to give a present to one's uncle</i> offrir un cadeau à son oncle	BUT NOT	<i>to give one's uncle a present</i> *offrir son oncle un cadeau
<i>to pass the salt to one's neighbour</i> passer le sel à son voisin	BUT NOT	<i>to pass one's neighbour the salt</i> *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:

Paris St Germain a été battu (par Nantes)  
*Paris St Germain were beaten (by Nantes)*

Quand elle est arrivée au commissariat, son mari l'accompagnait  
*When she got to the police station, her husband was with her*

becomes:

Quand elle est arrivée au commissariat, elle était accompagnée de son mari  
*When she got to the police station, she was in the company of her husband*

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*

Georges 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*

Georges est aimée par Juliette  
*George is loved by Juliette*

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* 'I 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:



*John gave flowers to Naomi*  
*John gave Naomi flowers*

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:

*Floivers 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:*

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:*

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	<i>to order sb to do sth/to order sth from sb</i>
conseiller qc à qn	<i>to advise sb to do sth</i>
défendre qc à qn	<i>to forbid sb sth</i>
demander qc à qn	<i>to ask sb sth</i>
donner qc à qn	<i>to give sb sth</i>
écrire qc à qn	<i>to write sb sth</i>
enseigner qc à qn	<i>to teach sb sth</i>
laisser qc à qn	<i>to leave sb sth</i>
montrer qc à qn	<i>to show sb sth</i>
offrir qc à qn	<i>to offer sb sth, treat sb to sth</i>
pardonner qc à qn	<i>to forgive sb sth</i>
passer qc à qn	<i>to pass sb sth</i>
permettre qc à qn	<i>to allow sb sth</i>
prescrire qc à qn	<i>to prescribe sb sth</i>
prêter qc à qn	<i>to lend sb sth</i>
promettre qc à qn	<i>to promise sb sth</i>
refuser qc à qn	<i>to refuse sb sth</i>

## 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

*se laver* '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

*se laver 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>I can see myself in the mirror</i>
Je me déteste	<i>/ hate myself</i>

Il s'est fait mal	<i>He hurt himself</i>
Elle s'était cassé la jambe	<i>She had broken her leg</i>

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:

Il me lave	<i>I am washing (myself)</i>
Il se rase	<i>He is shaving (himself)</i>
Il s'est roulé par terre	<i>He rolled (himself) on the ground</i>

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

Il me lave à l'eau froide	<i>I wash in cold water</i>
Elle est maladroite et se blesse fréquemment	<i>She is clumsy and often injures herself</i>
Il se coiffe pendant des heures	<i>He spends hours doing his hair</i>
Tu te baignes tous les jours?	<i>Do you have a swim every day?</i>
Suzanne s'habille très mal	<i>Suzanne dresses very badly</i>
Jean-Pierre se nourrit très bien	<i>Jean-Pierre has a healthy diet</i>
Marianne se cache dans l'armoire	<i>Marianne is hiding in the cupboard</i>

### The reflexive pronoun is the indirect object

Je me parle constamment en me promenant	<i>I constantly talk to myself when I go for a walk</i>
En répétant des confidences on ne peut que se nuire	<i>By repeating secrets you only succeed in doing yourself harm</i>
Tu t'achèteras un nouveau blouson pour la rentrée	<i>You'll buy yourself a new jacket to go back to school</i>
Je me reproche ces bêtises	<i>I feel bad about this foolishness</i>
Je me jure de continuer à travailler	<i>I promise myself that I will continue to work</i>
Il faut bien s'admettre la vérité	<i>We just have to accept the truth</i>
Marianne se cache la vérité	<i>Marianne is hiding the truth from herself</i>

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*

Il se critique  
*He criticizes himself*

Je juge le prisonnier coupable  
*I consider the prisoner guilty*

Je me juge coupable  
*I consider myself guilty*

Elle regarde son amie  
*She is looking at her girlfriend*

Elle se regarde  
*She is looking at herself*

Tu offres un cadeau à Philippe  
*You are giving a present to Philip*

Tu t'offres un cadeau  
*You are giving a present to yourself*

Il parle à sa mère  
*He's talking to his mother*

Il se parle  
*He's talking to himself*

Elle cache la vérité à son mari  
*She is hiding the truth from her husband*

Elle se cache la vérité  
*She is hiding the truth from herself*

### 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  
*Ne a/zvays regretted' t/iouse 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'accroupir derrière un arbre	to crouch behind a tree
s'affaiblir lentement	to get slowly weaker
s'affaisser/s'affaler/s'écrouler par terre	to collapse on the ground
s'agenouiller près de quelqu'un	to kneel down next to somebody
s'amuser en vacances	to have fun on holiday
s'apercevoir de qch	to notice something
s'appeler Dupont	to be called Dupont
s'approcher de qn	to approach somebody
s'appuyer au rebord de la fenêtre	to lean on the windowsill
s'arrêter aux feux	to stop at the lights
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 briser/se casser en miettes	to break into pieces
se charger d'une tâche	to take on a task
se comporter mal	to behave badly
se contenter d'une carrière médiocre	to make do with a mediocre career
se coucher tôt	to go to bed early
se dépêcher de poser sa candidature	to hurry to apply for the job
se déshabiller dans le noir	to get undressed in the dark
se diriger vers la maison	to go towards the house
se distinguer par son intelligence	to stand out by one's intelligence
se douter de qc	to suspect something
se dresser contre une injustice	to protest against an injustice
s'écarter du chemin	to stray from the track
s'échapper/s'évader d'une prison	to escape from a prison
s'écouler vite	to pass quickly (of time)
s'écrier	to shout, exclaim
s'éloigner de la ville	to move away from the town
s'emparer de son adversaire	to get hold of one's opponent
s'en aller ailleurs	to go away somewhere else
s'endormir dans la voiture	to go to sleep in the car
s'enfuir dans les bois	to flee into the woods
s'ennuyer à la campagne	to become bored in the country
s'enquérir auprès de l'ambassade	to enquire at the Embassy
s'étonner de la vitesse de la voiture	to be surprised at the speed of the car
s'évanouir	to faint
se fâcher de qc	to get annoyed at something
se fatiguer facilement	to get easily tired
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'habituer 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

se nourrir de pain	<i>to live on bread</i>
s'occuper de ses enfants	<i>to look after one's children</i>
se passer de cigarettes	<i>to go without cigarettes</i>
se plaindre du temps	<i>to complain about the weather</i>
se rappeler une amie	<i>to remember a friend</i>
se raviser brusquement	<i>to change one's mind suddenly</i>
se réfugier sous les arbres	<i>to take refuge under the trees</i>
se repentir de ses paroles	<i>to regret one's words</i>
se retourner	<i>to turn around</i>
se réunir le dimanche	<i>to meet on Sundays</i>
se réveiller	<i>to wake up</i>
se servir d'une scie	<i>to use a saw</i>
se soucier de la santé de qn	<i>to worry about somebody's health</i>
se souvenir d'une amie	<i>to remember a friend</i>
se taire	<i>to keep quiet</i>
se tenir droit	<i>to stand straight</i>
se tromper	<i>to be wrong</i>

#### 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 <b>s'est fait écraser</b> par un camion	<i>Julie was run over by a lorry</i>
Pierre <b>s'est fait sortir</b> du terrain	<i>Pierre got (himself sent off the field</i>
Jean <b>s'est fait embrasser</b> par Christine	<i>Jean got Christine to kiss him</i>
Elle <b>s'est laissé convaincre</b> par son père	<i>She let herself be persuaded by her father</i>
Il <b>se laissait guider</b>	<i>He let himself be led</i>
Guido <b>s'est laissé pousser</b> les moustaches	<i>Guido allowed his moustache to grow</i>

(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 <b>se rencontreront</b> à Paris	<i>They will meet (each other) in Paris</i>
Nous <b>nous connaissons</b>	<i>We know each other</i>
Les enfants <b>se disputent</b>	<i>The children are arguing (with each other)</i>

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 conjugent 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 <b>fait</b> pas	<i>That is just not done</i>
Ce vin se <b>boit</b> chambré	<i>This wine is drunk at room temperature</i>

La vengeance est un plat qui se mange froid	<i>Revenge is a meal to be eaten cold</i>
C'est une revue qui se lit facilement	<i>This journal is easy to read</i>

### 8.7.7 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:



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	<i>It's raining</i>
Il pleut des cordes	<i>It's raining cats and dogs</i>
Il neige	<i>It's snowing</i>
Il grêle	<i>It's sleeting</i>
Il tonne	<i>There's thunder about</i>
Il vente	<i>It's windy</i>
Il bruine	<i>It's drizzling</i>

More generally climatic conditions can be expressed by an impersonal use of *faire* followed by an adjective or a noun:

Il fait beau	<i>It's a nice day</i>
Il fait du soleil	<i>It's sunny</i>
Il fait mauvais	<i>It's not a nice day</i>
Il fait chaud	<i>It's hot</i>
Il fait lourd	<i>The weather is oppressive</i>
Il fait sec	<i>It's very dry</i>
Il fait humide	<i>It's very humid</i>
Il fait du brouillard	<i>It's foggy</i>

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	<i>Time is needed</i>
<b>Il faut partir</b>	<i>It is time to leave</i>
Il faut que nous partions	<i>We must leave</i>
Il nous faut partir	<i>We must leave</i>
Il nous faudra revenir dans trois semaines	<i>We must come back in three weeks</i>
Il a fallu trois mois pour que nous nous décidions	<i>It took us three months to make up our minds</i>
Il faudrait être certain que cela soit la bonne décision	<i>We need to be sure that this is the right decision</i>

### 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)

*être* 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	<i>It is high time we went</i>
Il n'est absolument pas question d'attendre	<i>There can be no question of waiting</i>
Il est dommage d'avoir attendu si longtemps	<i>It is a pity to have waited so long</i>
Est-il besoin de vous le rappeler?	<i>Is there any need to remind you ?</i>
	(formal style)

Il est des jours où l'on souhaiterait être ailleurs	<i>There are days when one would wish to be elsewhere</i>
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There are two set phrases used to introduce fairy stories:

Il était une fois . . . and  
Il y avait une fois . . .  
*Once upon a time . . .*

## 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	<i>to drink sth chilled</i>
considérer qc peu probable	<i>to consider sth unlikely</i>
croire qn heureux	<i>to believe sb happy</i>
élire qn président	<i>to elect sb president</i>
estimer qn inapte	<i>to reckon sb unsuitable</i>
juger qn maladroit	<i>to judge sb clumsy</i>
laisser qn tranquille	<i>to leave sb alone</i>
manger qc chaud	<i>to eat sth hot</i>
nommer qn directeur	<i>to appoint sb director</i>
rendre qn malade	<i>to make sb ill</i>
trouver qc difficile	<i>to find sth difficult</i>

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*.

# 9

## *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 Alstom et le groupe GEC sont arrivés à un accord pour le développement d'une nouvelle locomotive  
*Alstom 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:

*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:

Ni Simon ni Steven n'a pu me dire où se trouvaient les autres  
*Neither Simon nor Steven was able to tell me where the others were*

C'est soit lui soit sa sœur qui doit te téléphoner  
*Either he or his sister must be responsible for telephoning you*

If, on the other hand, the intention is to consider the two elements as a group, the verb will be plural:

Ni Lord Byron ni Chateaubriand n'ont pu comprendre l'inutilité des rêveries romantiques  
*Neither Lord Byron nor Chateaubriand could understand how useless romantic dreams are*

The same principle underlies agreement with *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:

Ni Alberte ni Suzanne n'avaient pu rencontrer le peintre  
*Neither Alberte nor Suzanne managed to meet the painter*

Ni l'une ni l'autre n'ont pu rencontrer le peintre  
*Neither the one nor the other was able to meet the painter*

Ni Alberte ni Suzanne ne viendra  
*Neither Alberte nor Suzanne will come*

Ni l'une ni l'autre ne viendra  
*Neither the one nor the other will come*

### 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:

Le gouvernement a décidé de modifier la loi sur la nationalité  
*The government has/have decided to change the nationality law*

Le comité a proposé une réunion pour 16 heures  
*The committee has/have suggested a meeting at 4 o'clock*

La famille passe les vacances de Noël en Bretagne  
*The family is/are spending the Christmas holidays in Brittany*

NB: *Tout le monde* always agrees with a singular verb:

Tout le monde vient passer le weekend chez moi  
*Everybody's coming to my place for the weekend*

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:

C'est moi/nous	<i>It's me/us</i>
C'est toi /vous /lui /elle	<i>It's you/him/her</i>
C'est le facteur	<i>It's the postman</i>

In formal French, plural nouns and third person plural pronouns are supposed to follow *ce sont*:

Ce sont mes parents	<i>It's my parents</i>
Ce sont eux	<i>It's them</i>

However, most speakers (and even writers) of formal French use *c'est* in these cases these days:

C'est mes parents  
 C'est eux

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*:



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	<i>The Durands had gone to Morlaix</i>
Suzanne est sortie	<i>Suzanne went out</i>
Elles sont tombées	<i>They fell over</i>
Jean-Paul et Janine sont montés au troisième	<i>Jean-Paul and Janine went up to the third floor</i>

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:

**La piscine** est couverte      *The swimming pool is indoors*  
**Les guichets** sont fermés      *The (ticket office) windows are closed*

### 9.3 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  
*I saw Marie: I saw her*

Les policiers avaient repéré les voleurs: Les policiers les avaient repérés  
*The police had found the thieves: The police had found them*

Les voisins ont appelé ma sœur et moi (fem): Les voisins nous ont appelées  
*The neighbours called my sister and me: The neighbours called us*

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  
*His mother is ill; he has often said so*

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)  
*I spoke to Marie: I spoke to her*

*j'ai* indiqué le chemin à Jean-Claude et Paul: Je leur ai indiqué (NOT "indiqués) le chemin  
*I told Jean-Claude and Paul how to get there: I told them how to get there*

Ce matin il y a eu des vaches qui sont passées dans le champ du voisin. J'en ai vu (NOT \*vues) hier aussi  
*This morning there were some cows which got into the neighbour's field. I saw some yesterday as well*

#### 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:

convenir à qn	La situation nous a convenu	<i>The situation suited us</i>
désobéir à qn	Lucien vous a désobéi	<i>Lucien disobeyed you</i>
nuire à qn	Hubert m'a nui	<i>Hubert did me (fern) some damage</i>
succéder à qn	Suzanne m'a succédé	<i>Suzanne succeeded me (fem)</i>
téléphoner à qn	Les voisins vous ont téléphoné	<i>The neighbours phoned you</i>
résister à qn	Les voleurs nous ont résisté	<i>The thieves resisted us</i>

### 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)*

Nathalie l'a vue écraser son chien  
*Nathalie saw it run her dog over*

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)*

Hubert-Jean l'a regardée gagner la course  
*Hubert-Jean watched her win the race*

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)*

On les a entendues résonner dans la caverne  
*We heard them 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*  
*(sa maison is the object of écraser)*

Nathalie l'a vu écraser par une énorme roche  
*Nathalie saw it crushed by a huge rock*

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)*

Hubert-Jean l'a regardé détruire par des bulldozers  
*Hubert-Jean watched it being destroyed by bulldozers*

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:

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:

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)  
*J 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 achetés?  
*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 eus?  
*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 vue 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>I'm shaving</i>
<b>Elle se</b> lève	<i>She's getting up</i>

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	<i>She got up</i>
Ils se sont tus	<i>They fell silent</i>
Nous <b>nous</b> sommes abstenus de tout commentaire	<i>We refrained from making any comment</i>

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:

Reflexive use	Non-reflexive counterpart
Je me rase <i>I am shaving</i>	Le coiffeur rase son client <i>The barber is shaving his client</i>
Elle se sert la première <i>She serves herself first</i>	Elle sert sa fille la première <i>She serves her daughter first</i>
	Ils se sont rasés de bonne heure <i>They shaved early</i>
	Elle s'est servie la première <i>She served herself first</i>

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:

Reflexive use	Non-reflexive use
Elle s'offre un gâteau <i>She treats herself to a cake</i>	Elle offre un gâteau à Jean <i>She treats Jean to a cake</i>
Nous nous cachons la vérité <i>We hide the truth from ourselves</i>	Nous cachons la vérité à nos amis <i>We hide the truth from our friends</i>

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:

Grâce au vignoble, les villes **sont** prospères dès le 16<sup>e</sup> 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:

<b>The imperfect:</b>	Je jouais du piano
<b>The simple past (past historic):</b>	Je jouai du piano
<b>The compound past (perfect):</b>	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:

Pierre <b>lisait</b>	<i>Pierre was reading</i>
Il <b>était</b> tard	<i>It was late</i>
La ville <b>dormait</b>	<i>The town was sleeping</i>

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  
*H was late. M. Dupont pulled up in front of a café*

Les voleurs **faisaient** beaucoup de bruit. Les gendarmes se glissèrent dans la pièce sans se faire remarquer  
*The thieves were making a great deal of noise. The policemen slipped into the room without being noticed*

Je **somnolais** tranquillement quand quelqu'un a sonné à la porte  
*I was dozing quietly when someone rang the door bell*

(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 always used to stop at the café when he had the time or*  
*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, it 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'Été 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 Torgën 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 Torgën 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 éparés [*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*], ouvert en deux, le sac en papier qui avait enveloppé [*pluperfect - see 10.5.1 - earlier completed event*] 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 éparés. 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 travailla 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 fermerez 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'                      Il a dit qu'il viendrait  
*He said: T will come'                      He said he would come*

Je lui ai demandé: "Est-ce tu pourras venir?"  
*I asked him, 'Will you be able to come?'*

Je lui ai demandé s'il pourrait venir  
*I asked him if he could 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 compound conditional, as appropriate. These clauses are introduced by conjunctions **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*

(For *depuis que* see Chapter 17.3.4.)

*il y a*

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:

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:

Original tense		Reported tense
present		imperfect
(compound) future	→	(compound) conditional
compound/simple past	→	pluperfect

Table 10.A illustrates the pattern.

TABLE 10.A *Tenses following a reporting verb in a past tense*

Direct description	Reporting verb (imperfect, compound or simple past, pluperfect)	Reported verb
Elle parle (present) <i>She is speaking</i>	Ils croyaient qu' Ils ont cru/crurent qu' <i>They thought that</i>  Ils avaient cru qu' <i>They had thought that</i>	elle parlait (imperfect) <i>she was speaking/spoke</i>
Elle parlera (future) <i>She will speak</i>  Elle aura parlé (compound future) <i>She will have spoken</i>	Ils croyaient qu' Ils ont cru/crurent qu' <i>They thought that</i>  Ils avaient cru qu' <i>They thought that</i>	elle parlerait (conditional) <i>she would speak</i>  elle aurait parlé (compound conditional) <i>she would have spoken</i>
Elle a parlé (compound past) <i>She spoke/has spoken</i>  Elle parla (simple past) <i>She spoke</i>	Ils croyaient qu' Ils ont cru/crurent qu' <i>They thought that</i>  Ils avaient cru qu' <i>They had thought that</i>	elle avait parlé (pluperfect) <i>she had spoken</i>

Other tenses of reported verbs remain the same as the original. To take some typical examples:

Direct description	Reported
Elle parlait	Ils avaient cru qu'elle parlait <i>They had thought that she was speaking</i>
Elle aurait parlé	Ils ont cru qu'elle aurait parlé <i>They thought that she would have spoken</i>
Elle avait parlé	Ils croyaient qu'elle avait parlé <i>They thought that she had spoken</i>

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:

Direct description	Reported
Elle parle	Ils croiraient qu'elle parle <i>They would think that she is speaking</i>
Elle parlera	Ils croient qu'elle parlera <i>They think that she will speak</i>
Elle a parlé	Ils auraient cru qu'elle a parlé <i>They would have thought that she spoke</i>

## 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*



# *The subjunctive, modal verbs, exclamation and imperatives*

## **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		<i>Jean declares that</i>	
Jean pense que		<i>Jean thinks that</i>	
Jean imagine que	Pierre est venu	<i>Jean reckons that</i>	<i>Pierre came</i>

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		<i>I believe that</i>	
Je juge que		<i>I reckon that</i>	
Je pense que		<i>I think that</i>	
Je suppose que	Pierre viendra	<i>I suppose that</i>	<i>Pierre will come</i>
Il est certain que		<i>It's certain that</i>	
Il est probable que		<i>It's probable that</i>	

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		<i>Jean doesn't think that</i>	
Jean n'imagine pas que	Pierre soit venu	<i>Jean doesn't imagine that</i>	<i>Pierre came</i>
etc.		etc.	
Je ne crois pas que		<i>I don't believe that</i>	
Il n'est pas certain que		<i>It's not certain that</i>	
Il est possible que	Pierre vienne	<i>It's possible that</i>	<i>Pierre will come</i>
etc.		etc.	
Est-il certain que		<i>Is it certain that. . .</i>	
Crois-tu que	Pierre vienne?	<i>Do you think that</i>	<i>Pierre will come?</i>
etc.		etc.	
Est-ce que Jean		<i>Does Jean think that . . .</i>	
pense que			
Est-ce que Jean	Pierre <b>soit venu</b> ?	<i>Does Jean imagine that</i>	<i>Pierre came?</i>
imagine que		etc.	
etc.			

### **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  
*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?  
*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 *que*, **not every subordinate clause introduced by *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.

### 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).

#### Present subjunctive

For many verbs, take the third person plural, present tense form of the indicative, delete *-ent*:

for example:

(ils) parlent	→	parl-
finissent	→	finiss
dorment	→	dorm-
vendent	→	vend-
reçoivent	→	reçoiv-

and add the endings:

-e  
-es  
-e  
-ions  
-iez  
-ent

for example:

parle, parles, parle, parlions, parliez, *parlent*  
finisse, finisses, finisse, finissions, finissiez, finissent  
etc.

NB: The stem *reçoiv-* changes when the ending does not begin with *-e*: *reçoive*, *reçoives*, *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:

(je) parlai	—>	parla-
finis	—>	fini-
dormis	—>	dormi-
vendis	—>	vendi-
reçus	—>	reçu-

and add the endings:

-sse  
-sses  
-<sup>A</sup>f  
-ssions  
-ssiez  
-ssent

for example:

<sup>\*</sup>  
parlasse, parlasses, *parlât*, parlussions, parlassiez, parlussent  
finisse, finisses, finit, finissions, finissiez, finissent  
reçusse, reçusses, *reçût*, *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.)

#### I 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:

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	<i>to wish that</i>
attendre que	<i>to wait for</i>
s'attendre à ce que	<i>to expect that</i>
avoir envie que	<i>to really want that</i>
commander que	<i>to order that</i>
consentir que	<i>to agree or to accept that</i>
être content que	<i>to be pleased that</i>
craindre que	<i>to fear that</i>
demander que	<i>to ask that</i>
désirer que	<i>to wish that</i>
être désolé que	<i>to be sorry that</i>
être dommage que	<i>to be a pity or to be regretted that</i>
douter que	<i>to doubt that</i>
s'étonner que	<i>to be surprised that</i>
exiger que	<i>to require that</i>
être heureux que	<i>to be happy that</i>
insister pour que	<i>to insist that</i>
ordonner que	<i>to order that</i>
permettre que	<i>to allow that</i>
avoir peur que	<i>to be afraid that</i>
préférer que	<i>to prefer that</i>
être ravi que	<i>to be delighted that</i>
regretter que	<i>to regret that</i>
se réjouir que	<i>to rejoice that</i>
souhaiter que	<i>to wish that</i>
être surpris que	<i>to be surprised that</i>
tenir à ce que	<i>to be anxious that</i>
être triste que	<i>to be sad that</i>
veiller à ce que	<i>to be careful that</i>
vouloir que	<i>to want that</i>

J'aimerais que tous les étudiants **puissent** trouver du travail en fin d'études.  
*/ 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*

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 aies 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 I.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:

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?*

### I 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* '**T 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:

il est certain que + indicative	il n'est pas certain que + subjunctive
il est probable que + indicative	il est peu probable que + subjunctive
il est sûr que + indicative	il n'est pas sûr que + subjunctive
il est vrai que + indicative	il n'est pas vrai que + subjunctive

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      Il 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 subordinate clause:

afin que	<i>in order that</i>
pour que	
en attendant que	<i>whilst waiting for</i>
non que	<i>not that</i>
ce n'est pas que	
à moins que	<i>unless</i>
à supposer que	<i>supposing that</i>
supposé que	
en supposant que	
en admettant que	
bien que	<i>although</i>
quoique	
encore que	
malgré que	
de façon que	<i>so that, in such a way that</i>
de manière que	
de sorte que	
si bien que	
de peur que	<i>for fear that</i>
de crainte que	
pour peu que	<i>however little that</i>
si peu que	
pourvu que	<i>provided that</i>
à condition que	
sans que	<i>without</i>

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  
*VU show you how it works so that ('creating the conditions for you to') 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 ('creating the conditions for me to') 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 ('with the result 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 ('with the result that') I cannot advise you*

(See also Chapter 17.3.8.)

### **I 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 16.16, 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

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.1.1 I 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.)

## **I 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 devons 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*

### **I 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 auront 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*

#### I 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*

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 **pourrions** 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 meanings. 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.

### I 1.3.1 '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 envisaged 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 infinitive and not by a participle form of the main verb:

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  
Il se peut qu'elle vienne, (on ne sait pas)  
*She **might** come or she might not*

Je surveillais les enfants de peur qu'ils ne se fassent mal  
*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!	<i>How she's grown!</i>
Que de monde!	<i>What a lot of people!</i>
Que le diable l'emporte!	<i>The devil take him!</i>
Vive la France!	<i>Long live France!</i>

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



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indicative:

Pierre a changé <i>Pierre has changed</i>	Comme Pierre a changé! Que Pierre a changé! <i>How Pierre has changed!</i>
Il se plaignait <i>He used to complain</i>	Comme il se plaignait! Qu'il se plaignait! <i>How he used to complain!</i>
C'est dégoûtant <i>It's disgusting</i>	Comme c'est dégoûtant! Que c'est dégoûtant! <i>How disgusting it is!</i>
Elle parle vite <i>She speaks quickly</i>	Comme elle parle vite! Qu'elle parle vite! <i>How quickly she speaks!</i>

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 <i>She knows how Pierre has changed</i>
Ils ont raconté combien il se plaignait <i>They recounted how he used to complain</i>

### I 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:

<b>Quel</b> vent! Quelle surprise!	<i>What a wind!</i> <i>What a surprise!</i>
<b>Quels</b> progrès ces étudiants ont faits!	<i>What progress these students have made!</i>
Avec <b>quelle</b> adresse il a résolu le problème!	<i>With what skill he solved the problem!</i>

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!
Quels progrès ont faits ces étudiants!

### 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!	<i>What a lot of people!</i>
Que de difficultés!	<i>So many difficulties!</i>
Que de problèmes on doit affronter!	<i>What a lot of problems we have before us!</i>

### 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!	<i>Long live Brittany!</i>
Dieu soit loué!	<i>Praise God!</i>
Sauve qui peut!	<i>Every man for himself!</i>
Puissiez-vous réussir!	<i>May you succeed!</i>

and also those headed by *que*:

Que la Sainte Vierge vous bénisse!	<i>May the Holy Virgin bless you!</i>
Que Dieu nous protège!	<i>May God help us!</i>
Qu'il aille au diable!	<i>The devil take him!</i>
Qu'il aille se faire voir ailleurs!	<i>May he get lost!</i>

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	<i>Sit down</i>
Allez la France!	<i>Come on, France!</i>
Allons-y	<i>Let's go</i>
Fais attention!	<i>Watch out!</i>

### 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:

tu parles	parle	<i>speak</i>
vous parlez	parlez	<i>speak</i>
nous parlons	parlons	<i>let's speak</i>
tu vas	va	<i>Ko</i>
vous allez	allez	<b>g</b> <sup>•</sup>
nous allons	allons	<i>let's go</i>
tu ouvres	ouvre	<i>open</i>
vous ouvrez	ouvrez	<i>open</i>
nous ouvrons	ouvrons	<i>let's open</i>
tu finis	finis	<i>finish</i>
vous finissez	finissez	<i>finish</i>
nous finissons	finissons	<i>let's finish</i>
tu dors	dors	<i>sleep</i>
vous dormez	dormez	<i>sleep</i>
nous dormons	dormons	<i>let's sleep</i>
tu reçois	reçois	<i>receive</i>
vous recevez	recevez	<i>receive</i>
nous recevons	recevons	<i>let's receive</i>

There are four verbs with irregular imperative forms:

être		avoir	
sois		aie	<i>have</i>
soyez	<i>be</i>	ayez	<i>have</i>
soyons	<i>let's be</i>	ayons	<i>let's have</i>
savoir		<b>vouloir</b>	
sache	<i>know</i>	veille	(used almost
sachez	<i>know</i>	veillez	exclusively to
sachons	<i>let's know</i>	—	mean <i>please</i> -
			see 11.5.5)

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*:

parle	<i>speak</i>	parles-en	<i>speak about it</i>
	<b>g</b> <sup>•</sup>	vas-y	<i>go on</i>

The equivalent of English contrastive imperatives like 'you go (instead of me)', 'you shut up (instead of me)' are the forms *vous-même*, *toi-même*: *Allez-y vous-même*, *Tais-toi toi-même*.

### 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	<i>get up</i>
vous vous levez	levez-vous	<i>get up</i>
nous nous levons	levons-nous	<i>let's get up</i>
tu te sers	sers-toi	<i>help yourself</i>
vous vous servez	servez-vous	<i>help yourself</i>
nous nous servons	servons-nous	<i>let's help ourselves</i>

### I 1.5.3 Location and order of pronouns with imperatives

In affirmative imperatives, direct and indirect object pronouns, and the pronouns *y* and *en*, come immediately after the verb which governs them. 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	<i>Take them</i>
Suivez-nous	<i>Follow us</i>
Ecoutez-moi	<i>Listen to me</i>
Tais-toi	<i>Shut up</i>

NB: Pronouns governed by an infinitive following an imperative are NOT linked to the imperative by a hyphen:

Monte les chercher	<i>Go up and look for them</i> ( <i>les</i> is the object of <i>chercher</i> )
Courez lui téléphoner	<i>Run and phone him</i> ( <i>lui</i> is the indirect object of <i>téléphoner</i> )

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	<i>Give it to me</i>
Donnez-le-lui	<i>Give it to him</i>
Donne-m'en	<i>Give me some of it</i>
Accroche-t'y	<i>Hang on to it</i>

(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	<i>Don't give it to me</i>
Ne le lui donnez pas	<i>Don't give it to him</i>
Ne m'en donne pas	<i>Don't give me any</i>
Ne t'y accroche pas	<i>Don't hang on to it</i>

### 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*

### I 1.5.5 Toning down imperatives

Orders can be toned down by the use of *veuillez*, which is an equivalent of *s'il vous plaît*:

Asseyez-vous	<i>Sit down</i>
Veuillez vous asseoir	<i>Please sit down</i>
Asseyez-vous, s'il vous plaît	<i>Sit down, please</i>

or by the use of a non-imperative declarative sentence with a future tense:

Vous fermerez la porte, s'il vous plaît  
*Close the door, please*

Vous me donnerez deux baguettes  
*Give me two baguettes (French loaves), please*

### I 1.5.6 Infinitives used as imperatives

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):

Ralentir	<i>Slow down</i>
Ouvrir doucement	<i>Open carefully</i>

(See also Chapter 12.10.)

### I 1.5.7 Third person imperatives

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):

Qu'il s'asseye	<i>Let him sit down</i>
Qu'elle descende me commander une bière	<i>Let her go down and order me a beer</i>
Qu'ils te le donnent	<i>Let them give it to you</i>

# 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. <i>aimer, placer, arriver, étudier</i>
-ir	e.g. <i>finir, courir, venir, dormir</i>
-re	e.g. <i>vendre, rire, être, paraître</i>
-oir(e)	e.g. <i>s'asseoir, recevoir, avoir, boire, croire</i>

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	<i>to go and have dinner somewhere</i>
s'en aller vivre ailleurs	<i>to go and live somewhere else</i>
arriver réparer la machine à laver	<i>to come to repair the washing machine</i>
courir téléphoner à la police	<i>to run and phone the police</i>
descendre commander une bière	<i>to go down and order a beer</i>
monter chercher ses lunettes	<i>to go up and look for one's glasses</i>
partir s'installer à Paris	<i>to leave to go to live in Paris</i>
rentrer prendre son maillot de bain	<i>to go home and get one's swimming costume</i>
retourner faire des courses	<i>to go back to do some shopping</i>
revenir ouvrir les fenêtres	<i>to come back to open the windows</i>
sortir acheter un journal	<i>to go out to buy a newspaper</i>

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	<i>to bring a friend home for dinner</i>
emmener ses enfants jouer au square	<i>to take one's children to play in the park</i>
envoyer Marie chercher le docteur	<i>to send Marie to fetch the doctor</i>
mener son oncle voir le château	<i>to take one's uncle to see the castle</i>

### 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	<i>to have to speak to the director</i>
oser critiquer son patron	<i>to dare to criticize one's boss</i>
pouvoir persuader son oncle	<i>to be able to persuade one's uncle</i>
savoir parler italien	<i>to be able to speak Italian</i>
vouloir construire un périphérique	<i>to want to build a ring-road</i>

### 12.3.4 Verbs of saying'

Verbs of saying typically take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition:

affirmer connaître le patron	<i>to state that one knows the boss</i>
confirmer avoir reçu le paquet	<i>to confirm that one received the package</i>
déclarer comprendre ce livre	<i>to declare that one understands this book</i>
dire s'intéresser à la psychologie	<i>to say that one is interested in psychology</i>
nier avoir brisé l'assiette	<i>to deny having broken the plate</i>
prétendre être heureux	<i>to claim to be happy</i>
reconnaître s'être trompé	<i>to admit that one was wrong</i>

*dire*, 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*: *dire 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	<i>to believe that one has finished</i>
estimer pouvoir prendre le train	<i>to reckon to be able to take the train</i>
(s')imaginer avoir gagné la partie	<i>to imagine having won the match</i>
penser rencontrer un ami	<i>to think one might meet a friend</i>
se rappeler avoir visité l'abbaye	<i>to remember having visited the abbey</i>

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	<i>to love eating out</i>
aimer travailler le soir	<i>to like to work in the evenings</i>
aimer autant rester chez soi	<i>to just as soon stay at home</i>
aimer mieux éviter les embouteillages	<i>to prefer to avoid traffic jams</i>
compter commencer bientôt	<i>to count on starting soon</i>
daigner donner son opinion	<i>to deign to give one's opinion</i>
désirer dormir un peu	<i>to want to sleep a little</i>
entendre être obéi	<i>to mean to be obeyed</i>
espérer partir en vacances	<i>to hope to go on holiday</i>
préférer manger seul	<i>to prefer to eat alone</i>
souhaiter faire la connaissance de quelqu'un	<i>to wish to make somebody's acquaintance</i>

*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	<i>to turn out to be effective</i>
paraître dire la vérité	<i>to appear to be telling the truth</i>
se révéler avoir des conséquences inattendues	<i>to turn out to have unexpected consequences</i>
sembler préférer les légumes	<i>to seem to prefer vegetables</i>

**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	<i>to listen to the children reciting a poem</i>
entendre l'horloge sonner trois heures	<i>to hear the clock strike three o'clock</i>
regarder le chien manger	<i>to watch the dog eating</i>
sentir ses pieds s'enfoncer dans la boue	<i>to feel one's feet sink into the mud</i>
voir Paul partir	<i>to see Paul leave</i>

**12.3.9 faire and laisser**

The verbs *faire* and *laisser* take infinitive complements without a preceding preposition:

faire travailler Pierre	<i>to make Pierre work</i>
faire payer les gens	<i>to make people pay</i>
laisser Pierre travailler	<i>to let Pierre work</i>
laisser travailler Pierre	<i>to let Pierre work</i>
laisser tomber le football pour le rugby	<i>to drop football and take up rugby instead</i>

(For the placement of object pronouns in these constructions see Chapter 3.2.32.)

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	<i>to start to draft a report</i>
persister à demander une réponse	<i>to persist in asking for a reply</i>

*Commencer* and *continuer* are verbs which take an infinitive complement preceded interchangeably by *à* or by *de*:

commencer à/d'écrire ses mémoires	<i>to begin to write one's memoirs</i>
continuer à/de faire des efforts	<i>to continue to make an effort</i>

The following verbs can take infinitive complements preceded by *par*:

commencer par enlever le papier peint	to	<i>begin by removing the wallpaper</i>
finir par vendre sa maison		<i>to finish by selling one's house</i>

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	<i>begin to remove the wallpaper</i>
finir de tondre le gazon		<i>to finish mowing the lawn</i>

### 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	to	<i>stoop to asking one's family and friends for money</i>
s'appliquer à apprendre le russe	to	<i>apply oneself to learning Russian</i>
s'apprêter à parler	to	<i>get ready to speak</i>
s'attarder à bavarder dans le restaurant	to	<i>linger chatting in the restaurant</i>
se borner à considérer les points principaux	to	<i>limit oneself to considering the main points</i>
concourir à assurer la défaite de l'ennemi	to	<i>combine to defeat the enemy</i>
condescendre à faire quelque chose	to	<i>condescend to do something</i>
conspirer à produire une catastrophe		<i>to conspire to produce a catastrophe</i>
s'entêter à découvrir la vérité		<i>to be bent on discovering the truth</i>
se limiter à corriger les plus grosses erreurs	to	<i>limit oneself to correcting the worst errors</i>
s'obstiner à découvrir la vérité	to	<i>be bent on discovering the truth</i>

<b>s'oublier à lire un roman</b>	<i>to become absorbed in reading a novel</i>
<b>s'en tenir à changer quelques détails</b>	<i>to stick to changing a few details</i>
<b>travailler à se faire aimer</b>	<i>to work to get oneself liked</i>

#### 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*:

<b>s'abêtir à trop travailler</b>	<i>to become stupid by working too hard</i>
<b>s'abrutir à regarder la télévision</b>	<i>to become stupefied from watching television</i>
<b>s'affoler à imaginer le pire</b>	<i>to panic imagining the worst</i>
<b>s'amuser à mettre le professeur en colère</b>	<i>to have fun making the teacher angry</i>
<b>se délecter à visiter Bruges</b>	<i>to take delight in visiting Bruges</i>
<b>s'énervner à rattacher constamment ses lacets</b>	<i>to get annoyed constantly retying one's laces</i>
<b>s'ennuyer à faire un travail monotone</b>	<i>to get bored doing a monotonous job</i>
<b>s'irriter à expliquer qc</b>	<i>to get more and more annoyed as one tries to explain sth</i>
<b>se plaire à tout critiquer</b>	<i>to take pleasure in criticizing everything</i>

#### Exceptions:

<b>s'étonner d'être si calme</b>	<i>to be surprised to be so calm</i>
<b>s'inquiéter de trouver la route bloquée</b>	<i>to worry about finding the road blocked</i>
<b>s'irriter d'avoir à expliquer chaque point 3 fois</b>	<i>to be annoyed by having to explain each point three times</i>
<b>se réjouir de/à écrire des contes pour enfants</b>	<i>to take real pleasure in writing children's stories</i>

#### 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*:

<b>s'acharner à trouver une solution</b>	<i>to be bent on finding a solution</i>
<b>s'égosiller à appeler les enfants</b>	<i>to go hoarse calling the children</i>
<b>s'épuiser à travailler</b>	<i>to exhaust oneself working</i>
<b>s'éreinter à traîner une valise</b>	<i>to tire oneself out dragging a suitcase along</i>
<b>s'essouffler à monter la côte</b>	<i>to get out of breath climbing the hill</i>
<b>s'évertuer à conclure l'affaire</b>	<i>to do one's utmost to close the deal</i>
<b>se fatiguer à répéter l'avertissement</b>	<i>to tire oneself out repeating the warning</i>
<b>se tuer à le dire</b>	<i>to be sick and tired of saying it</i>
<b>s'user à repeindre la maison</b>	<i>to wear oneself out repainting the house</i>

#### 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*:

<b>s'attacher à</b> traduire la pensée du maître	<i>to be careful to convey the master's thoughts</i>
<b>s'aventurer à</b> faire des suggestions	<i>to be so bold as to make suggestions</i>
<b>se décider à</b> prendre sa retraite	<i>to persuade oneself to retire</i>
<b>s'essayer à</b> gérer un restaurant	<i>to try one's hand at running a restaurant</i>
<b>se hasarder à</b> faire une course en montagne	<i>to venture to go up a mountain</i>
<b>se résigner à</b> tout perdre	<i>to resign oneself to losing everything</i>
<b>se résoudre à</b> changer d'emploi	<i>to come to terms with having to change jobs</i>
<b>se risquer à</b> jouer en Bourse	<i>to take risks by playing the Stock Exchange</i>

Note the following differences in meaning when some of these verbs are used with *à* and with *de*:

<b>se décider à</b> prendre sa retraite	<i>to persuade oneself to retire</i>
<b>décider de</b> prendre sa retraite	<i>to decide to retire</i>
<b>s'essayer à</b> gérer un restaurant	<i>to try one's hand at running a restaurant</i>
<b>essayer de</b> gérer un restaurant	<i>to try to run a restaurant</i>
<b>se risquer à</b> investir à l'étranger	<i>to take risks by investing abroad</i>
<b>risquer de</b> tout perdre	<i>to risk losing everything</i>
<b>se résoudre à</b> changer d'emploi	<i>to accept having to change jobs</i>
<b>résoudre de</b> changer d'emploi	<i>to resolve to change jobs</i>

#### 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*:

<b>arriver à</b> obtenir gain de cause	<i>to manage to get one's way</i>
<b>aspirer à</b> dominer sa peur	<i>to aspire to overcome fear</i>
<b>chercher à</b> faire fortune	<i>to seek to make one's fortune</i>
<b>être disposé à</b> favoriser qn	<i>to be inclined to favour sb</i>
<b>incliner à</b> quitter son emploi	<i>to be inclined to give up one's job</i>
<b>parvenir à</b> battre un adversaire	<i>to succeed in beating one's opponent</i>
<b>réussir à</b> gagner la course	<i>to succeed in winning the race</i>
<b>tendre à</b> éviter les problèmes	<i>to have a tendency to avoid problems</i>
<b>tenir à</b> lire un livre	<i>to be bent on reading a book</i>
<b>viser à</b> remporter la victoire	<i>to aim to be victorious</i>

#### 12.4.7 Verbs expressing 'unwillingness'

Verbs which express an unwillingness to do something typically take an infinitive complement preceded by *à*:

<b>hésiter à</b> critiquer qn	<i>to hesitate to criticize sb</i>
<b>rechigner à</b> vendre ses livres	<i>to balk at selling one's books</i>
<b>renoncer à</b> tout relire	<i>to give up on the idea of re-reading everything</i>
<b>répugner à</b> tout faire soi-même	<i>to be very reluctant to do the work oneself</i>

#### 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*:

condamner qn à vivre sans ressources	<i>to condemn sb to live in poverty</i>
contraindre Julie à revenir	<i>to force Julie to come back</i>
forcer une entreprise à baisser ses prix	<i>to make a company reduce its prices</i>
obliger Pierre à partir	<i>to make Pierre leave</i>

Note that the following verbs, when used in the passive, take an infinitive complement preceded by *de*:

être contraint de démissionner	<i>to be obliged to resign</i>
être forcé de rentrer	<i>to have to go home</i>
être obligé de travailler à l'étranger	<i>to be forced to work abroad</i>

#### 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	<i>to call on a third party to arbitrate</i>
assigner le témoin à comparaître	<i>to call on the witness to appear</i>
autoriser les clients à s'en servir	<i>to authorize the clients to make use of it</i>
inviter Robert à donner son avis	<i>to invite Robert to give his opinion</i>

#### 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	<i>to get a sick person used to taking fewer painkillers</i>
apprendre à ses élèves à parler italien	<i>to teach one's pupils to speak Italian</i>
dresser un chien à aller chercher le journal	<i>to train a dog to fetch the newspaper</i>
enseigner à Jacques à jouer au tennis	<i>to teach Jacques to play tennis</i>
habituer un citadin à travailler en plein air	<i>to get a town-dweller used to working in the open air</i>
préparer quelqu'un à traverser une période de chômage	<i>to prepare somebody for a period of unemployment</i>

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	<i>to teach somebody to do something</i>
enseigner à quelqu'un à faire quelque chose	<i>to teach somebody to do something</i>

Verbs which English speakers often think have indirect objects, but which in fact have direct objects, are:

aider quelqu'un à faire quelque chose	<i>to help somebody to do something</i>
inviter quelqu'un à faire quelque chose	<i>to invite somebody to do something</i>
obliger quelqu'un à faire quelque chose	<i>to make somebody do something</i>

#### 12.4.11 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	<i>to bring Jean to talk about the accident again</i>
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**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*:

<b>décider</b> quelqu'un à partir		<i>to bring somebody to leave</i>
<b>décider de</b> partir		<i>to decide to leave</i>
<b>se décider</b> à partir	to	<i>decide to leave (after much thought)</i>

#### 12.4.12 Verbs expressing 'the dedication of time, money to doing something'

<b>consacrer</b> ses loisirs à faire des croquis		<i>to spend one's free time making sketches</i>
<b>dépenser</b> de l'argent à réparer sa voiture	to	<i>spend money repairing one's car</i>
<b>mettre</b> deux heures à ranger ses affaires	to	<i>take two hours to tidy one's things</i>
<b>occuper</b> son temps à lire des romans policiers	to	<i>spend one's time reading crime novels</i>
<b>passer</b> son temps à faire des mots croisés		<i>to spend one's time doing crosswords</i>
<b>utiliser</b> ses connaissances à améliorer le sort de ses semblables	to	<i>use one's knowledge to improve the lot of one's fellow beings</i>

#### 12.4.13 Verbs of 'discovering'

<b>attraper</b> qn à pêcher sans permis	to	<i>catch sb fishing without a licence</i>
<b>prendre</b> qn à fouiller dans un tiroir	to	<i>catch sb going through a drawer</i>
<b>surprendre</b> qn à voler des livres	to	<i>catch sb stealing books</i>

## 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

<b>entreprendre</b> de rétablir des liens		<i>to undertake to re-establish links</i>
<b>jurer</b> à son père de lui rendre visite		<i>to swear to one's father to visit him</i>
<b>obtenir de</b> pouvoir sortir tôt		<i>to get permission to go out early</i>
<b>permettre</b> (à qn) <b>de</b> rembourser sans payer les intérêts		<i>to allow somebody to pay back without interest</i>
<b>résoudre de</b> ne plus boire de café	to	<i>resolve to drink no more coffee</i>

### 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»

<b>s'abstenir de</b> boire du vin	to	<i>abstain from drinking wine</i>
<b>se disculper</b> d'avoir voulu supplanter qn		<i>to exonerate oneself from having wanted to take over from sb</i>
<b>refuser de</b> s'abaisser à un compromis	to	<i>refuse to stoop to a compromise</i>

Exception: *nier* takes an infinitive complement without a linking preposition:

<b>nier</b> être impliqué dans l'affaire	to	<i>deny being implicated in the affair</i>
--	----	--

### 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'

**appréhender 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'**

<b>envisager de</b> vivre sur une île déserte	<i>to imagine living on a desert island</i>
<b>méditer de</b> changer de métier	<i>to think about changing jobs</i>
<b>préméditer de</b> quitter sa femme	<i>to plan on leaving one's wife</i>
<b>projeter de</b> quitter le pays	<i>to think about leaving the country</i>
<b>proposer de</b> partir tout seul dans le Midi	<i>to propose going to the south of France on one's own</i>
<b>ruminer d'</b> écrire ses mémoires	<i>to have it in mind to write one's memoirs</i>

**12.5.16 Verbs of ordering'**

<b>chuchoter à qn de</b> fermer la porte	<i>to whisper to sb to close the door</i>
<b>commander à un</b> bataillon de se préparer	<i>to order a bataillon to get ready</i>
<b>dire à Pierre de</b> rejoindre la compagnie	<i>to tell Pierre to rejoin the company</i>
<b>écrire à Marie d'</b> aller voir sa mère	<i>to write to Marie to go and see her mother</i>
<b>hurler à qn de</b> passer le ballon	<i>to shout to sb to pass the ball</i>
<b>ordonner à qn de</b> quitter les lieux	<i>to order sb to leave the premises</i>
<b>prescrire à qn de</b> se reposer	<i>to order sb to rest</i>
<b>répondre à qn de</b> se taire	<i>to tell sb in response to be quiet</i>
<b>sommer qn de</b> venir aussi vite que possible	<i>to instruct sb to come as quickly as possible</i>
<b>téléphoner à sa</b> mère d'envoyer de l'argent	<i>to phone one's mother to send money</i>

**12.5.17 Verbs of finishing' and of stopping somebody doing something'**

<b>s'abstenir de</b> fumer pendant trois mois	<i>to refrain from smoking for three months</i>
<b>achever de</b> construire sa maison	<i>to finish building one's house</i>
<b>arrêter de</b> faire l'idiot en cours	<i>to stop playing the fool in class</i>
<b>cesser de</b> participer aux matchs de football	<i>to stop taking part in football matches</i>
<b>empêcher qn de</b> partir en vacances	<i>to stop sb going on holiday</i>
<b>éviter de</b> faire les mêmes erreurs	<i>to avoid making the same mistakes</i>
<b>finir de</b> se préparer	<i>to finish getting ready</i>

**12.5.18 Verbs of 'thanking'**

<b>remercier qn de</b> vous avoir invité à manger	<i>to thank sb for having invited you for a meal</i>
<b>savoir gré à qn de</b> bien vouloir répondre rapidement	<i>to be grateful to sb for replying quickly</i>

**12.5.19 Impersonal verbs expressing'personal reaction' to an event**

Compare some of the 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	<i>It annoys me to see them idle</i>
Ça m'amuse de le voir en colère	<i>It amuses me to see him angry</i>
Ça m'attriste d'apprendre qu'elle est malheureuse	<i>It saddens him to learn that she is unhappy</i>
Ça me consterne de l'apprendre	<i>It dismays me to learn that</i>
Ça me dégoûte de voir ce gaspillage	<i>It appals me to see this waste</i>

Ça <b>m'ennuie</b> d'être suivi par des journalistes	<i>I find it wearing to be followed by reporters</i>
Ça la <b>fâche</b> d'avoir à se justifier auprès de toi	<i>It irritates her to have to justify herself to you</i>
Ça les <b>fatigue de</b> faire la navette	<i>It tires them to commute</i>
Ça l'intéresse de voir le manuscrit	<i>It interests him to see the manuscript</i>
Ça l' <b>intrigue de</b> savoir ce qu'ils ont dit	<i>It intrigues him to know what they said</i>
Ça nous <b>irrite</b> d'avoir à refaire le travail	<i>It irritates us to have to do the work again</i>

### 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 collègue  
*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 réserver 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	<i>pleasant to do sth</i>
bon de faire qc	<i>good to do sth</i>
commode de faire qc	<i>convenient to do sth</i>
difficile de faire qc	<i>difficult to do sth</i>
facile de faire qc	<i>easy to do sth</i>
important de faire qc	<i>important to do sth</i>
(im)possible de faire qc	<i>(im)possible to do sth</i>
intéressant de faire qc	<i>interesting to do sth</i>
inutile de faire qc	<i>useless to do sth</i>
mauvais de faire qc	<i>bad to do sth</i>
merveilleux de faire qc	<i>amazing to do sth</i>
pénible de faire qc	<i>irksome to do sth</i>
simple de faire qc	<i>simple to do sth</i>
utile de faire qc	<i>useless to do sth</i>

### 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	<i>to be inclined to do sth</i>
être habile à faire qc	<i>to be skilful in doing sth</i>
être prompt à faire qc	<i>to be prompt in doing sth</i>
être seul à faire qc	<i>to be alone in doing sth</i>

### 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  
 (but Libre à vous d'essayer) *You are free to try*  
*Up to you to try*

Other common adjectives which take *de*:

certain/sûr de faire qc	<i>sure to do sth</i>
content de faire qc	<i>pleased to do sth</i>
désireux de faire qc	<i>keen to do sth</i>
désolé de faire qc	<i>sorry to do sth</i>
étonné de faire qc	<i>astonished to do sth</i>
fier de faire qc	<i>proud to do sth</i>
impatient de faire qc	<i>impatient to do sth</i>
(in)capable de faire qc	<i>(in)capable of doing sth</i>
susceptible de faire qc	<i>likely to do sth</i>

## 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	Défense de fumer
interdire à qn de faire qc	Interdiction de pénétrer en ces lieux
menacer qn de faire qc	la menace de faire qc
ordonner à qn de faire qc	l'ordre de faire qc
permettre à qn de faire qc	la permission de faire qc
désireux de faire qc	le désir de faire qc
impatient 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	<i>an apartment to rent</i>
du bois à brûler	<i>firewood</i>
une chambre à coucher	<i>a bedroom</i>
un exemple à ne pas suivre	<i>an example not to be followed</i>
un fer à repasser	<i>an iron</i>
un homme à craindre	<i>a man to be feared</i>
une idée à examiner	<i>an idea to explore</i>
une maison à vendre	<i>a house for sale</i>
un pays à voir l'hiver	<i>a country to see in winter</i>
une poêle à frire	<i>a frying pan</i>
une pomme à cuire	<i>a cooking apple</i>
des repas à emporter	<i>take-away meals</i>
un roman à lire	<i>a novel to read</i>
une salle à manger	<i>a dining room</i>

### 12.8.3 Some common idioms in which the preposition is à

avoir intérêt à faire qc	<i>to have a stake in doing sth</i>
avoir du mal à faire qc	<i>to experience some difficulty in doing sth</i>
avoir plaisir à faire qc	<i>to take pleasure in doing sth</i>
être d'âge à faire qc	<i>to be old enough to do sth</i>
Nous sommes cinq à faire qc	<i>There are five of us doing sth</i>
être le dernier à faire qc	<i>to be the last to do sth</i>
être d'humeur à faire qc	<i>to be in a mood for doing sth</i>
être le premier à faire qc	<i>to be the first to do sth</i>
être le seul à faire qc	<i>to be the only one to do sth</i>
prendre plaisir à faire qc	<i>to take pleasure in doing sth</i>

### 12.8.4 Most other nouns take the preposition *de*

avoir l'air/l'apparence de faire qc	<i>to appear to be doing sth</i>
avoir besoin de faire qc	<i>to need to do sth</i>
avoir de la chance de faire qc	<i>to be lucky to do sth</i>
avoir le droit de faire qc	<i>to have the right to do sth</i>
avoir envie de faire qc	<i>to want to do sth</i>
avoir hâte de faire qc	<i>to be quick to do sth</i>
avoir honte de faire qc	<i>to be ashamed to do sth</i>
avoir raison de faire qc	<i>to be right to do sth</i>
avoir tort de faire qc	<i>to be wrong to do sth</i>
avoir le toupet/le culot de faire qc	<i>to have the cheek to do sth</i>
avoir la veine de faire qc	<i>to be lucky to do sth</i>
la façon/la manière de faire qc	<i>the manner of doing sth</i>
le moment de faire qc	<i>the moment to do sth</i>
les moyens de faire qc	<i>the means to do sth</i>
l'occasion de faire qc	<i>the opportunity to do sth</i>
le temps de faire qc	<i>the time to do sth</i>

## 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*

*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:

<b>Ralentir:</b> Enfants (or Attention: Ecole)	<i>Slow down. School</i>
<b>Soulever, écarter</b> doucement	<i>Lift and separate carefully</i> (instructions for opening a packet of coffee)
<b>Ecrire</b> les réponses au verso	<i>Write the answers on the back of this page</i>
Ne <b>répondre</b> qu'à l'une des questions de la section ci-dessous	<i>Answer only one question in this section</i>
<b>Ouvrir</b> doucement	<i>Be careful when opening</i>
Ne pas <b>renverser</b>	<i>Don't spill</i>
Ne pas <b>retourner</b>	<i>Don't turn over</i>
<b>A manier</b> avec précaution	<i>Be careful when handling</i>
<b>Remettre</b> entre les mains de . . .	<i>Only to be given to . . . personally</i>
<b>Appuyer</b> sur le bouton	<i>Press the button</i>
Agiter avant d'ouvrir	<i>Shake before opening</i>

## 12.1 I Quick-reference index to verbs taking infinitive complements

s'abaisser à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to stoop to doing sth</i>
s'abêtir, s'abrutir à faire qc (12.4.3)	<i>to become stupid/from doing sth</i>
s'abstenir de faire qc (12.5.7,12.5.17)	<i>to refrain from doing sth</i>
accepter de faire qc (12.5.2)	<i>to agree to do sth</i>
accoutumer qn à faire qc (12.4.10)	<i>to get sb used to doing sth</i>
accuser qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.5)	<i>to accuse sb of having done sth</i>
s'acharner à faire qc (12.4.4)	<i>to be bent on doing sth</i>
achever de faire qc (12.5.17)	<i>to finish doing sth</i>
adorer faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to adore doing sth</i>
affecter d'avoir fait qc (12.5.14)	<i>to pretend to have done sth</i>
affirmer avoir fait qc (12.3.4)	<i>to state that one has done sth</i>
s'affliger d'avoir fait qc (12.5.20)	<i>to be sorry to have done sth</i>
s'affoler à faire qc (12.4.3)	<i>to panic doing sth</i>
aider qn à faire qc (12.4.10)	<i>to help sb do sth</i>
aimer faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to like doing sth</i>
aimer autant faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to just as soon do sth</i>
aimer mieux faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to prefer doing sth</i>
s'en aller faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to go and do sth</i>
aller faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to go and do sth</i>
ambitionner de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to have ambitions to do sth</i>
amener qn faire qc (12.3.2)	<i>to bring sb along to do sth</i>

amener qn à faire qc (12.4.11)	<i>to bring sb to the point of doing sth</i>
s'amuser à faire qc (12.4.3)	<i>to have fun doing sth</i>
appeler qn à faire qc (12.4.9)	<i>to call on sb to do sth</i>
s'applaudir d'avoir fait qc (12.5.6)	<i>to congratulate oneself on having done sth</i>
s'appliquer à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to apply oneself to doing sth</i>
appréhender de faire qc (12.5.10)	<i>to be fearful of doing sth</i>
apprendre à qn à faire qc (12.4.10)	<i>to teach sb to do sth</i>
s'apprêter à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to get ready to do sth</i>
arrêter de faire qc (12.5.17)	<i>to stop doing sth</i>
arriver faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to come to do sth</i>
arriver à faire qc (12.4.6)	<i>to succeed in doing sth</i>
aspirer à faire qc (12.4.6)	<i>to aspire to do sth</i>
assigner qn à faire qc (12.4.9)	<i>to call on sb to do sth</i>
s'attacher à faire qc (12.4.5)	<i>to cling to doing sth</i>
s'attarder à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to linger doing sth</i>
attraper qn à faire qc (12.4.13)	<i>to catch sb doing sth</i>
s'attrister à faire qc (8.4.3)	<i>to be saddened doing sth</i>
autoriser qn à faire qc (12.4.9)	<i>to authorize sb to do sth</i>
s'aventurer à faire qc (12.4.5)	<i>to be so bold as to do sth</i>
s'avérer être qc (12.3.7)	<i>to turn out to be sth</i>
avertir qn de faire qc (12.5.1)	<i>to warn sb to do sth</i>
avoir droit de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to have the right to do sth</i>
<i>en avoir marre de faire qc (12.5.20)</i>	<i>to be fed up doing sth</i>
<i>avoir peur de faire qc (12.5.10)</i>	<i>to be afraid to do sth</i>
<i>avoir regret d'avoir fait qc (12.5.13)</i>	<i>to regret having done sth</i>
<i>blâmer qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.5)</i>	<i>to blame sb for having done sth</i>
<i>se borner à faire qc (12.4.2)</i>	<i>to limit oneself to doing sth</i>
<i>brûler de faire qc (12.5.20)</i>	<i>to have a great desire to do sth</i>
<i>cesser de faire qc (12.5.17)</i>	<i>to stop doing sth</i>
charger qn de faire qc (12.5.5)	<i>to make sb responsible for doing sth</i>
chercher à faire qc (12.4.6)	<i>to seek to do sth</i>
choisir de faire qc (12.5.2)	<i>to choose to do sth</i>
chuchoter à qn de faire qc (12 5 16)	<i>to whisper to sb to do sth</i>
commander à qn de faire qc (12 5 16)	<i>to order sb to do sth</i>
commencer à/de faire qc (12.4.1)	<i>to start to do sth</i>
commencer par faire qc (12.4.1)	<i>to start by doing sth</i>
comploter de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to plot to do sth</i>
compter faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to count on doing sth</i>
concourir à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to combine to do sth</i>
condamner qn à faire qc (12.4.8)	<i>to condemn sb to doing sth</i>
condescendre à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to condescend to do sth</i>
conduire qn à faire qc (12.4.11)	<i>to bring sb to do sth</i>
confirmer avoir fait qc (12.3.4)	<i>to confirm having done sth</i>
conjuré qn de faire qc (12.5 1)	<i>to plead with sb to do sth</i>
consacrer du temps à faire qc (12 4 12)	<i>to spend time doing sth</i>
conseiller à qn de faire qc (12 5 1)	<i>to advise sb to do sth</i>
consoler qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.20)	<i>to console sb for having done sth</i>
conspirer à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to conspire to do sth</i>
se contenter de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to be happy to do sth</i>
continuer à/de faire qc (12.4.1)	<i>to continue to do sth</i>
contraindre qn à faire qc (12.4.8)	<i>to force sb to do sth</i>

convaincre qn de faire qc (12.5.1)	<i>to convince sb to do sth</i>
convenir de faire qc (12.5.2)	<i>to agree to do sth</i>
convier qn à faire qc (12.4.11)	<i>to invite sb to do sth</i>
courir faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to run to do sth</i>
craindre de faire qc (12.5.10)	<i>to fear to do sth</i>
croire avoir fait qc (12.3.5)	<i>to believe to have done sth</i>
daigner faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to deign to do sth</i>
décider de faire qc (12.4.5, 12.4.11 and 12.5.2)	<i>to decide to do sth</i>
décider qn à faire qc (12.4.11)	<i>to make sb decide to do sth</i>
se décider à faire qc (12.4.5, 12.4.11)	<i>to make up one's mind to do sth</i>
déclarer avoir fait qc (12.3.4)	<i>to declare that one has done sth</i>
déconseiller à qn de faire qc (12.5.1)	<i>to advise sb not to do sth</i>
dédaigner de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>not to lower oneself to do sth</i>
défier qn de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to challenge sb to do sth</i>
défendre à qn de faire qc (12.5.9)	<i>to forbid sb to do sth</i>
dégoûter qn de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to put sb off doing sth</i>
se délecter à faire qc (12.4.3)	<i>to take delight in doing sth</i>
demander à qn de faire qc (12.5.4)	<i>to ask sb to do sth</i>
démentir avoir fait qc (12.3.4)	<i>to deny having done sth</i>
se dépêcher de faire qc (12.5.12)	<i>to hurry to do sth</i>
dépenser de l'argent à faire qc (12.4.12)	<i>to spend money doing sth</i>
désaccoutumer qn de faire qc (12.5.1)	<i>to wean sb off doing sth</i>
descendre faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to go down and do sth</i>
désespérer de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to despair of doing sth</i>
déshabituer qn de faire qc (12.5.1)	<i>to wean sb off doing sth</i>
désirer faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to want to do sth</i>
déterminer qn à faire qc (12.4.11)	<i>to make sb decide to do sth</i>
devoir faire qc (12.3.3)	<i>to have to do sth</i>
dire avoir fait qc (12.3.4)	<i>to say that one has done sth</i>
dire à qn de faire qc (12.5.16)	<i>to tell sb to do sth</i>
se disculper d'avoir fait qc (12.5.7)	<i>to exonerate oneself from having done sth</i>
dispenser qn de faire qc (12.5.2)	<i>to allow sb not to do sth</i>
dissuader qn de faire qc (12.5.1)	<i>to dissuade sb from doing sth</i>
douter de pouvoir faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to doubt that one is able to do sth</i>
dresser un animal à faire qc (12.4.10)	<i>to train an animal to do sth</i>
écouter qn faire qc (12.3.8)	<i>to listen to sb doing sth</i>
écrire à qn de faire qc (12.5.16)	<i>to write to sb to do sth</i>
s'efforcer de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to force oneself to do sth</i>
s'égosiller à dire qc (12.4.4)	<i>to go hoarse saying sth</i>
emmener qn faire qc (12.3.2)	<i>to take sb to do sth</i>
empêcher qn de faire qc (12.5.17)	<i>to prevent sb from doing sth</i>
encourager qn à faire qc (12.4.11, 12.5.1)	<i>to encourage sb to do sth</i>
s'énervé à faire qc (12.4.3)	<i>to get annoyed doing sth</i>
engager qn à faire qc (12.4.11)	<i>to bring sb to do sth</i>
enjoindre à qn de faire qc (12.5.1)	<i>to suggest to sb that they do sth</i>
s'ennuyer à faire qc (12.4.3)	<i>to get bored doing sth</i>
enrager d'avoir fait qc (12.5.3)	<i>to be angry about having done sth</i>
enseigner à qn à faire qc (12.4.10)	<i>to teach sb to do sth</i>
entendre faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to intend, mean to do sth</i>
entendre qn faire qc (12.3.8)	<i>to hear sb doing sth</i>
s'entêter à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to be bent on doing sth</i>

entraîner qn à faire qc (12.4.11)	<i>to cause sb to do sth</i>
entreprendre de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to undertake to do sth</i>
envier qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.20)	<i>to envy sb for having done sth</i>
envisager de faire qc (12.5.15)	<i>to imagine doing sth</i>
envoyer qn faire qc (12.3.2)	<i>to send sb to do sth</i>
s'épuiser à faire qc (12.4.4)	<i>to exhaust oneself doing sth</i>
s'éreinter à faire qc (12.4.4)	<i>to tire oneself out doing sth</i>
espérer faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to hope to do sth</i>
s'essayer à faire qc (12.4.5)	<i>to try one's hand at doing sth</i>
essayer de faire qc (12.4.5, 12.5.4)	<i>to try to do sth</i>
s'essouffler à faire qc (12.4.4)	<i>to get out of breath doing sth</i>
estimer avoir fait qc (12.3.5)	<i>to reckon to have done sth</i>
s'étonner de faire qc (12.4.3)	<i>to be surprised at doing sth</i>
être contraint de faire qc (12.4.8)	<i>to be obliged to do sth</i>
être disposé à faire qc (12.4.6)	<i>to be inclined to do sth</i>
être forcé de faire qc (12.4.8)	<i>to have to do sth</i>
être furieux d'avoir fait qc (12.5.3)	<i>to be furious at having done sth</i>
être obligé de faire qc (12.4.8)	<i>to be forced to do sth</i>
être tenu de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to be obliged to do sth</i>
s'évertuer à faire qc (12.4.4)	<i>to do one's utmost to do sth</i>
éviter de faire qc (12.5.17)	<i>to avoid doing sth</i>
excuser qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.8)	<i>to excuse sb for having done sth</i>
exhorter qn à faire qc (12.4.11)	<i>to exhort sb to do sth</i>
faire faire qc à qn (12.3.9)	<i>to make sb do sth</i>
faire semblant de faire qc (12.5.14)	<i>to pretend to do sth</i>
se fatiguer à faire qc (12.4.4)	<i>to tire oneself out doing sth</i>
feindre d'avoir fait qc (12.5.14)	<i>to pretend to have done sth</i>
féliciter qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.6)	<i>to congratulate sb on having done sth</i>
finir de faire qc (12.4.1, 12.5.17)	<i>to finish doing sth</i>
finir par faire qc (12.4.1)	<i>to finish by doing sth</i>
se flatter de faire qc (12.5.6)	<i>to imagine oneself doing sth</i>
forcer qn à faire qc (12.4.8)	<i>to make sb do sth</i>
frémir de faire qc (12.5.10)	<i>to shudder at doing sth</i>
se garder de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to make sure not to do sth</i>
gémir de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to groan at doing sth</i>
se glorifier d'avoir fait qc (12.5.6)	<i>to be proud of having done sth</i>
gronder qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.5)	<i>to scold sb for having done sth</i>
habituer qn à faire qc (12.4.10)	<i>to get sb used to doing sth</i>
se hasarder à faire qc (12.4.5)	<i>to venture to do sth</i>
se hâter de faire qc (12.5.12)	<i>to hasten to do sth</i>
hésiter à faire qc (12.4.7)	<i>to hesitate to do sth</i>
hurler à qn de faire qc (12.5.16)	<i>to shout to sb to do sth</i>
s'imaginer faire qc (12.3.5)	<i>to imagine doing sth</i>
implorer qn de faire qc (12.5.4)	<i>to implore sb to do sth</i>
inciter qn à faire qc (12.4.11)	<i>to incite sb to do sth</i>
incliner à faire qc (12.4.6)	<i>to be inclined to do sth</i>
s'indigner d'avoir fait qc (12.5.3)	<i>to be furious at having done sth</i>
s'inquiéter de faire qc (12.4.3, 12.5.10)	<i>to worry about doing sth</i>
interdire à qn de faire qc (12.5.9)	<i>to forbid sb to do sth</i>

inviter qn à faire qc (12.4.9, 12.4.10)	<i>to invite sb to do sth</i>
s'irriter de/à faire qc (12.4.3)	<i>to become irritated doing sth</i>
jurer (à qn) de faire qc (12.5.2)	<i>to swear (to sb) to do sth</i>
laisser qn faire qc (12.3.9)	<i>to let sb do sth</i>
se limiter à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>limit oneself to doing sth</i>
louer qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.6)	<i>to praise sb for doing sth</i>
méditer de faire qc (12.5.15)	<i>to think about doing sth</i>
se mêler de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to be mixed up in doing sth</i>
menacer (qn) de faire qc (12.5.3)	<i>to threaten to do sth (sb with doing sth)</i>
mener qn faire qc (12.3.2)	<i>to take sb to do sth</i>
mériter de faire qc (12.5.6)	<i>to deserve to do sth</i>
mettre x jours à faire qc (12.4.12)	<i>to take x days to do sth</i>
se mettre à faire qc (12.4.1)	<i>to start doing sth</i>
monter faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to go up and do sth</i>
négliger de faire qc (12.5.11)	<i>to neglect to do sth</i>
nier avoir fait qc (12.3.4)	<i>to deny having done sth</i>
obliger qn à faire qc (12.4.8, 12.4.10)	<i>to make sb do sth</i>
s'obstiner à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to be bent on doing sth</i>
obtenir de qn de faire qc (12.5.2)	<i>to get permission from sb to do sth</i>
occuper son temps à faire qc (12.4.12)	<i>to spend one's time doing sth</i>
offrir à qn de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to offer sb (the chance of) doing sth</i>
omettre de faire qc (12.5.11)	<i>to omit to do sth</i>
ordonner à qn de faire qc (12.5.16)	<i>to order sb to do sth</i>
oser faire qc (12.3.3)	<i>to dare to do sth</i>
oublier de faire qc (12.5.11)	<i>to forget to do sth</i>
s'oublier à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to become absorbed in doing sth</i>
pâlir de faire qc (12.5.10)	<i>to blanch at doing sth</i>
paraître faire qc (12.3.7)	<i>to appear to do sth</i>
pardonner à qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.8)	<i>to pardon sb for having done sth</i>
parler de faire qc (12.5.4)	<i>to speak of doing sth</i>
partir faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to leave to do sth</i>
parvenir à faire qc (12.4.6)	<i>to succeed in doing sth</i>
passer son temps à faire qc (12.4.12)	<i>to spend one's time doing sth</i>
penser faire qc (12.3.5)	<i>to think one might do sth</i>
permettre à qn de faire qc (12.5.2)	<i>to allow sb to do sth</i>
persiste à faire qc (12.4.1)	<i>to persist in doing sth</i>
persuader qn de faire qc (12.5.1)	<i>to persuade sb to do sth</i>
plaindre qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.20)	<i>to pity sb for having done sth</i>
se plaisir à faire qc (12.4.3)	<i>to take pleasure in doing sth</i>
pousser qn à faire qc (12.4.11)	<i>to push sb into doing sth</i>
pouvoir faire qc (12.3.3)	<i>to be able to do sth</i>
préférer faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to prefer to do sth</i>
préméditer de faire qc (12.5.15)	<i>to think about doing sth beforehand</i>
prendre qn à faire qc (12.4.13)	<i>to catch sb doing sth</i>
préparer qn à faire qc (12.4.10)	<i>to prepare sb for doing sth</i>
prescrire à qn de faire qc (12.5.16)	<i>to order sb to do sth</i>
presser qn de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to put pressure on sb to do sth</i>

prétendre avoir fait qc (12.3.4)	<i>to claim to have done sth</i>
prévoir de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to foresee doing sth</i>
prier qn de faire qc (12.5.4)	<i>to ask sb politely to do sth</i>
projeter de faire qc (12.5.15)	<i>to think about doing sth</i>
promettre à qn de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to promise sb to do sth</i>
proposer (à qn) de faire qc (12.5.4, 12.5.15)	<i>to propose doing sth (to sb)</i>
se rappeler avoir fait qc (12.3.5)	<i>to remember having done sth</i>
rechigner à faire qc (12.4.7)	<i>to balk at doing sth</i>
réclamer de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to demand to do sth</i>
recommander à qn de faire qc (12.5.1)	<i>to recommend sb to do sth</i>
reconnaître avoir fait qc (12.3.4)	<i>to admit to having done sth</i>
redouter de faire qc (12.5.10)	<i>to fear doing sth</i>
refuser de faire qc (12.5.7)	<i>to refuse to do sth</i>
regarder qn faire qc (12.3.8)	<i>to watch sb doing sth</i>
regretter d'avoir fait qc (12.5.13)	<i>to regret having done sth</i>
se réjouir de/à faire qc (12.4.3, 12.5.13)	<i>to take pleasure in doing sth</i>
remercier qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.18)	<i>to thank sb for having done sth</i>
se remettre d'avoir fait qc (12.5.20)	<i>to recover from having done sth</i>
renoncer à faire qc (12.4.7)	<i>to give up doing sth</i>
rentrer faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to go home and do sth</i>
se repentir d'avoir fait qc (12.5.13)	<i>to regret having done sth</i>
répondre à qn de faire qc (12.5.16)	<i>to tell sb in response to do sth</i>
reprocher à qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.5)	<i>to reproach sb for having done sth</i>
répugner à faire qc (12.4.7)	<i>to be reluctant to do sth</i>
se réserver de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to reserve the right to do sth</i>
se résigner à faire qc (12.4.5)	<i>to resign oneself to doing sth</i>
résoudre de faire qc (12.4.5, 12.5.2)	<i>to resolve to do sth</i>
se résoudre à faire qc (12.4.5)	<i>to accept having to do sth</i>
retourner faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to go back and do sth</i>
réussir à faire qc (12.4.6)	<i>to succeed in doing sth</i>
se révéler avoir/être qc (12.3.7)	<i>to turn out to have/be sth</i>
revenir faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to come back and do sth</i>
rêver de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to dream of doing sth</i>
risquer de faire qc (12.4.5)	<i>to risk doing sth</i>
se risquer à faire qc (12.4.5)	<i>to take risks in doing sth</i>
rougir de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to blush at doing sth</i>
ruminer de faire qc (12.5.15)	<i>to think about doing sth</i>
savoir faire qc (12.3.3)	<i>to be able to do sth</i>
savoir gré à qn de faire qc (12.5.18)	<i>to be grateful to sb for doing sth</i>
sembler faire qc (12.3.7)	<i>to seem to do sth</i>
sentir qn faire qc (12.3.8)	<i>to feel sb do sth</i>
sommer qn de faire qc (12.5.16)	<i>to instruct sb to do sth</i>
sortir faire qc (12.3.1)	<i>to go out and do sth</i>
se soucier de faire qc (12.5.10)	<i>to care about doing sth</i>
souhaiter faire qc (12.3.6)	<i>to wish to do sth</i>
soupçonner qn d'avoir fait qc (12.5.5)	<i>to suspect sb of having done sth</i>
sourire de faire qc (12.5.20)	<i>to smile at doing sth</i>
se souvenir d'avoir fait qc (12.3.5)	<i>to remember having done sth</i>
suggérer à qn de faire qc (12.5.1)	<i>to suggest doing sth to sb</i>
supplier qn de faire qc (12.5.4)	<i>to beg sb to do sth</i>
surprendre qn à faire qc (8.4.13)	<i>to surprise sb doing sth</i>



300 *The infinitive*

tâcher de faire qc (12.5.4)	<i>to try to do sth</i>
téléphoner à qn de faire qc (12.5.16)	<i>to phone sb to do sth</i>
tendre à faire qc (12.4.6)	<i>to have a tendency to do sth</i>
tenir à faire qc (12.4.6)	<i>to be bent on doing sth</i>
s'en tenir à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to stick to doing sth</i>
tenter de faire qc (12.5.4)	<i>to try to do sth</i>
travailler à faire qc (12.4.2)	<i>to work at doing sth</i>
trembler de faire qc (12.5.10)	<i>to tremble to do sth</i>
se tuer à faire qc (12.4.4)	<i>to be sick and tired of doing sth</i>
s'user à faire qc (12.4.4)	<i>to wear oneself out doing sth</i>
utiliser ses connaissances à faire qc (12.4.12)	<i>to use one's knowledge in doing sth</i>
se vanter d'avoir fait qc (12.5.6)	<i>to boast of having done sth</i>
viser à faire qc (12.4.6)	<i>to aim to do sth</i>
voir qn faire qc (12.3.8)	<i>to see sb doing sth</i>
vouloir faire qc (12.3.3)	<i>to want to do sth</i>

# 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 = <i>a box of matches</i> trois kilos de sucre = <i>three kilos of sugar</i>
à ~ 'at':	à trois heures ~ <i>at three o'clock</i> être à l'école = <i>to be at school</i>
dans ~ 'in':	dans sa chambre ~ <i>in her room</i> dans les années trente = <i>in the thirties</i>

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 <i>a pitcher filled with (NOT *of) cider</i>
tenir un livre à la main <i>to hold a book in (NOT *at) one's hand</i>
<i>It's kind of you</i>
C'est gentil à (NOT *de) vous <i>She is good at languages</i>
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  
Elle est à l'école, au café, au cinéma  
à l'église, au restaurant, à la pharmacie

*The lorry slowed down at every bend*  
*She is at school, at the café, at the*  
*cinema*  
*at church, at the restaurant, at the*  
*chemist's*

Si on se réunissait au café? Il était assis au chevet de sa mère	<i>Shall we meet at the café? He was sitting at his mother's bedside</i>
Mis en bouteille à la source au bord du lac	<i>Bottled at the spring at the edge of the lake</i>

**Referring to time**

à trois heures, à minuit, à midi	<i>at three o'clock, at midnight, at midday</i>
à la nuit tombée, au crépuscule	<i>at nightfall, at dusk</i>

BUT *au petit matin* is translated by: 'in the early morning'

au petit déjeuner, au dîner	<i>at breakfast, at dinner</i>
à la fin, au début	<i>at the end, at the beginning</i>
une chose à la fois	<i>one thing at a time</i>
à toute vitesse	<i>at full speed</i>
Il est mort à 26 ans	<i>He died at 26</i>

**13.2.2 à = 'to'**

au nord, au sud, à l'est, à l'ouest	<i>to the north, to the south, to the east, to the west</i>
-------------------------------------	---

NB: l'Afrique du Sud: *South Africa*; au sud de l'Afrique: *to the south of Africa*.

Elle va à l'école, au café, au cinéma, à l'église, au restaurant, à la pharmacie	<i>She is going to school, to the café, to the cinema, to church, to the restaurant, to the chemist's</i>
monter à sa chambre	<i>to go up to one's room</i>
tourner à droite, à gauche	<i>to turn to the right, to the left</i>

'to' most countries of masculine gender is à:

au Japon	<i>to Japan</i>
au Danemark	<i>to Denmark</i>
au Portugal	<i>to Portugal</i>
au Canada	<i>to Canada</i>
aux Etats-Unis, aux USA	<i>to the United States, to the USA</i>

(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	<i>to Malta, to Jersey, to Guernsey, to Cyprus, to Martinique, to Reunion, to Madagascar, to Tahiti, to the Philippines</i>
---	---

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	<i>to Paris, to London, to Berlin</i>
------------------------------	---

### 13.23 à = 'in'

#### Referring to place

vivre à Paris	<i>to live in Paris</i>
à cet endroit (BUT dans ce lieu)	<i>in this place</i>
au village (BUT en ville)	<i>in the village (in town)</i>
se reposer au jardin, au parc, au salon	<i>to rest in the garden, in the park, in the sitting-room</i>

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	<i>to walk in the park</i> (simple statement of location)
perdre ses clefs dans le parc	<i>to lose one's keys in the park</i> (the park is the area within which the keys were lost)

Compare:

Ils sont partis se promener au parc	<i>They have gone for a walk in the park</i>
On se promenait dans le parc quand on a perdu nos clefs	<i>We were walking in the park when we lost our keys</i>
vivre à Paris	<i>to live in Paris</i> (simple statement of location)
Il est difficile de se garer dans Paris	<i>It's difficult to park in Paris</i> (i.e. within Paris, as opposed to anywhere else)
au deuxième rang du parterre	<i>in the second row of the stalls</i>
à l'arrière	<i>in the back</i>
à l'intérieur	<i>inside</i>
tenir quelque chose à la main	<i>to hold something in one's hand</i>
porter une fleur au chapeau	<i>to wear a flower in one's hat</i>
au paradis (BUT en enfer)	<i>in heaven (in hell)</i>

'in' most countries of masculine gender is à:

au Japon	<i>in Japan</i>
au Danemark	<i>in Denmark</i>
au Portugal	<i>in Portugal</i>
au Canada	<i>in Canada</i>
aux États-Unis, aux USA	<i>in the United States, in the USA</i>

(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	<i>in Malta, in Jersey, in Guernsey, in Cyprus, in Martinique, in Reunion, in Madagascar, in Tahiti, in the Philippines</i>
---	---

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 Marseilles*

### Referring to time

la veille au soir *in the evening of the day before*  
 à l'entracte *in the interval*  
 vivre au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle *to live in the 20th century*  
 arriver à temps *to arrive in time*

### 13.2.4 à =W

Je le ramasserai au retour *I'll pick it up on my way back*  
 Il est arrivé à pied *He arrived on foot*  
 Je l'ai appris au service militaire *I learned it when I was on military service*  
 Elle a essayé de le contacter à plusieurs reprises *She tried to contact him on several occasions*  
 à la page 2 *on page 2*  
 à la télévision/à la radio *on (the) television/on (the) radio*  
 se mettre à genoux *to get down on one's knees*  
 avoir une cicatrice à la jambe *to have a scar on one's leg*  
 frapper à la porte, à la vitre *to knock on the door, on the window*  
 les pommes étaient à terre *the apples were on the ground*

### Modes of transport

à bicyclette *on a bicycle*  
 à pied *on foot*  
 à cheval *on horseback*  
 à dos de chameau *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 *to move forward step by step*  
 partir un à un *to leave one by one*  
 travailler à la lumière d'une bougie *to work by the light of a candle*  
 fabriqué à la main *made by hand*  
 reconnaître quelqu'un à sa voix *to recognize somebody by his/her voice*

### 13.2.6 à used where English typically uses compound nouns

une tasse à thé *a tea cup*  
 un livre à couverture de cuir *a leather-bound book*  
 un moulin à vent, à café *a windmill, coffee-mill*  
 un homme à cheveux gris, aux cheveux gris *a grey-haired man*  
 un homme à barbe *a bearded man*  
 une fille aux cheveux d'or *a golden-haired girl*  
 un billet à 10 F *a 10 franc ticket*  
 une pompe à main *a hand pump*  
 un bateau à roue *a paddle steamer*  
 une chambre à air *an inner tube*

une omelette aux champignons  
 une sauce au vin  
 de la soupe à l'oignon

*a mushroom omelette  
 a wine sauce  
 onion soup*

### 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

*The cliff was steep  
 The shutters were half closed  
 to have a headache  
 Rennes is 348 kilometres from Paris  
 a restaurant a stone's throw from  
 here*

Ils se sont arrêtés à mi-chemin

*They stopped halfway*

La voiture roulait à cent trente kilomètres  
 à l'heure

*The car was travelling at 130  
 kilometres an hour*

à l'envers  
 rentrer à la maison

*back to front  
 to go home*

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  
 C'est à vous de décider  
 C'est gentil à vous de m'aider  
 C'est aimable à lui  
 un oncle à lui (*also un de ses oncles*)  
 un livre à moi (*also un de mes livres*)  
 boire à la bouteille, à la source

*to go upstairs/to go downstairs  
 It's up to you to decide  
 It's kind of you to help me  
 That's nice of him  
 an uncle of his  
 a book of mine  
 to drink from the bottle, from the  
 spring*

emprunter de l'argent à la banque  
 un repas à la française  
 des pâtes à l'italienne

*to borrow money from the bank  
 a meal in the French style  
 Italian style pasta*

### 13.3 après/d'après

après la fin du film  
 après le repas  
 après avoir acheté une glace  
 après être arrivé  
 Il n'arrête pas de crier après tout le monde  
 demander après quelqu'un  
 (both these uses of *après* are informal)

*after the end of the film  
 after the meal  
 after buying an ice-cream  
 after arriving  
 He shouts at everyone  
 to ask after somebody*

d'après les journaux  
 d'après ce qu'on m'a dit  
 D'après leur tête, ils ont perdu le match

*according to the newspapers  
 from what I've been told  
 From the look on their faces, they lost  
 the match*

D'après vous, lequel est le meilleur?  
un tableau d'après Van Gogh

*In your view, which is the better?  
a painting in the style of Van Gogh*

### 13.4 *auprès 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  
tourner autour de la question  
Nous arriverons autour de huit heures

*around the airport  
to go around the question  
We will arrive around eight*

### 13.6 *avant*

s'arrêter juste avant le tournant  
avant le mois de juin  
avant l'entracte  
avant l'aube  
avant le weekend  
arriver avant qn  
faire passer qn avant les autres

*to stop just before the bend  
before lune  
before the interval  
before dawn  
before the weekend  
to arrive ahead of sb  
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  
  
une voiture avec des banquettes de cuir  
elle est arrivée avec son père et sa mère  
  
s'entendre bien avec quelqu'un  
parler avec quelqu'un  
remplir un verre avec de l'eau  
mouiller un ragoût avec du vin blanc  
Ce Calvados est fait avec nos propres  
pompes

*He was to come with me to the  
garage  
a car with leather seats  
She arrived with her father and  
mother  
to get on well with somebody  
to speak with somebody  
to fill a glass with water  
to thin a stew with white wine  
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  
épousseter les meubles avec un plumeau  
On s'est moqué d'eux, avec Alain  
On a fini l'article, avec Pierre  
(informai)  
aller quelque part avec la voiture

*to shave with an electric razor  
to dust with a feather duster  
Alain and I made fun of them  
Pierre and I have finished the article  
to go somewhere by car*

(For modes of transport also see 13.26.5.)

**13.8 bout: au bout de**

au bout de mon jardin  
au bout de trois heures

*at the bottom of my garden  
after three hours*

**13.9 cause: à cause de, pour cause de, pour raison de**

A cause de sa maladie, il n'a pas  
pu venir  
Le restaurant est fermé pour cause de  
décès  
Il a démissionné pour raison de santé

*Because of his illness, he couldn't  
come  
The restaurant is closed due to a  
bereavement  
He resigned for health reasons*

**13.10 chez**

Je suis chez moi samedi  
Ils l'ont ramené chez eux  
Elle est venue chez nous en pleine  
nuit

*I am at home on Saturday  
They brought him back to their house  
She came to our house in the middle  
of the night*

Est-il vrai que chez les Anglais on boit  
du thé avec chaque repas?

*Is it true that, among the English,  
tea is drunk with every meal?*

Tu coucheras chez nous  
Chez Camus, le décor est très important

*You'll sleep at our house  
In Camus, the setting is very  
important*

**13.1 I contre**

Je n'ai rien contre lui  
protéger ses plantes contre le froid

*I have nothing against him  
to protect one's plants against the  
cold*

une table posée contre le mur  
agir contre qn  
changer des francs contre des dollars  
livraison contre remboursement

*a table placed against the wall  
to act against sb  
to change francs for dollars  
cash on delivery*

**13.12 côté: à côté de, du côté de**

La boucherie est à côté de la pharmacie  
Elle s'est assise à côté de moi

*The butcher's is next to the chemist's  
She sat down next to me*

A côté de ses œuvres précédentes, celle-ci est moins impressionnante  
*Compared with his earlier works, this one is less impressive*

rouler du côté de Brive  
arriver du côté de Brive

*to travel in the direction of Brive  
to arrive from the direction of Brive;  
to be coming from Brive*

habiter du côté de Brive

*to live around Brive*

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  
 au cours de sa carrière

*during the week*  
*in the course of his career*

**13.14 dans****13.14.1 dans = «in»**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| J'ai aperçu la ferme dans la vallée   | <i>I saw the farm in the valley</i>  |
| Elle était assise dans son fauteuil   | <i>She was sitting in her armchair</i>   |
| BUT s'asseoir sur une chaise, sur un banc,<br>sur un siège  | <i>to sit on a chair, on a bench, on a seat</i>  |
| Il y avait de la pluie dans l'air   | <i>There was rain in the air</i>   |
| Nous l'avons croisé dans la rue, dans l'allée, dans l'avenue                                      | <i>We passed him in the street, in the alley, in the avenue</i>  |
| BUT sur la place, sur la route, sur le chemin, sur le boulevard, sur la chaussée, sur le trottoir | <i>in the square, on the road, on the track, on the boulevard, in the road (as opposed to pavement), on the pavement</i> |

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'.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Il est dans sa chambre                    | <i>He is in his room</i>               |
| Elle habite dans une belle maison         | <i>She lives in a fine house</i>       |
| Je l'ai lu dans un journal, dans un livre | <i>I read it in a paper, in a book</i> |
| dans tous les sens                        | <i>in every direction</i>              |
| dans les années trente                    | <i>in the thirties</i>                 |
| Il vit dans la misère                     | <i>He lives in poverty</i>             |
| Cela l'a laissé dans le doute             | <i>That left him in doubt</i>          |

*dans* with the meaning 'in' is used with French *départements*, English counties and American states:

- |                       |                    |                       |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| dans le Calvados      | dans le Yorkshire  | dans le Massachusetts |
| dans la Marne         | dans l'Essex       | dans le Nevada        |
| dans le Finistère     | dans le Lancashire | dans l'Arizona        |
| dans la Haute-Garonne |                    |                       |
| dans l'Aveyron        |                    |                       |
| dans l'Isère          |                    |                       |

*dans* is also used with the meaning 'in' with countries and towns modified by adjectives, quantifiers or other expressions:

- |                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| dans toute la France          | <i>in ail France</i>      |
| dans la Pologne ravagée       | <i>in war-torn Poland</i> |
| dans le sud de l'Espagne      | <i>in southern Spain</i>  |
| dans le Mexique d'aujourd'hui | <i>in today's Mexico</i>  |
| dans le vieux Paris           | <i>in old Paris</i>       |

BUT *en France, en Italie, en Espagne, à Paris* etc. (See 13.26.1.)

**13.14.2 dans = 'in(side)'**

Le manteau est dans l'armoire  
 Mettez le couteau dans le tiroir  
 un petit navire dans une bouteille

*The coat is in the wardrobe  
 Put the knife in the drawer  
 a ship in a bottle*

## 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

en auto, en voiture  
 en vélo, à bicyclette  
 à cheval  
 en navire  
 en avion  
 en hélicoptère  
 en ambulance  
 en taxi

*by car  
 by bike  
 on horseback  
 by ship  
 by plane  
 by helicopter  
 by ambulance  
 by taxi*

(See section 13.26.5.)

**13.14.3 dans = '(in)to'**

Elle est allée dans la cour  
 emmener quelqu'un dans un restaurant

*She went into the yard  
 to take somebody to a restaurant*

**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  
 Je l'attends dans deux jours

*He can do it in a fortnight's time  
 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):

Je l'aurai lu en une heure  
 Il peut le faire en quinze jours  
 Ça se fait en un instant

*I'll have read it (with)in an hour  
 He can do it (with)in a fortnight  
 That's done in an instant*

**13.14.5 dans = 'during'**

Je le ferai dans la semaine  
 Elle a écrit sa rédaction dans la journée  
 Il était tombé malade dans la nuit  
 Je l'avais vu dans la semaine

*I'll do it during the week  
 She finished her essay during the day  
 He became ill during the night  
 I had seen him during the week*

**13.14.6 dans = 'around', 'or so'**

Nous avons gagné dans les mille francs  
 Ça pèse dans les 500 grammes  
 Il avait dans les 26 ans (informal)

*We won around a thousand francs  
 That weighs around 500 grams  
 He was around 26*

**13.14.7 dans = 'among'**

Il a **disparu** dans les sapins  
 Y *ai* cherché dans mes papiers

*He disappeared among the firs  
 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 pourrions 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  
 Il bricolait dans des fermes

*We met him on the stairs  
 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  
 une boîte d'allumettes  
 un verre de vin  
 un bol de café

*a cup of tea  
 a box of matches  
 a glass of wine  
 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	<i>a road full of bends</i>
J'entendais le bruit des campeurs	<i>I heard the noise of the campers</i>
le Tour de France	<i>the Tour de France</i>
le bombardement de Marseille en 1944	<i>the bombing of Marseilles in 1944</i>
la moitié des spectateurs	<i>half of the spectators</i>
la plupart de la population	<i>most of the population</i>
un tiers des concurrents	<i>a third of the competitors</i>
trois de mes amis	<i>three of my friends</i>
le plus grand joueur de tous	<i>the greatest player of all</i>
le plus intelligent de nous tous	<i>the most intelligent of all of us</i>

### 13.15.2 de ='with'

une rue bordée de platanes	<i>a street lined with plane trees</i>
un mur couvert d'affiches	<i>a wall covered with posters</i>
un vestibule encombré de chaussures	<i>a hall cluttered with shoes</i>
un pichet rempli de cidre	<i>a pitcher filled with cider</i>

*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	<i>to go red with shame</i>
tomber de fatigue	<i>to drop with tiredness</i>
trembler de peur	<i>to tremble with fear</i>
piétiner d'impatience	<i>to dance with impatience</i>
crier de colère	<i>to shout with anger</i>
sauter de joie	<i>to jump with joy</i>

### 13.15.3 de ='in'

vêtu de noir	<i>dressed in black</i>
habillé d'un complet bleu	<i>dressed in a blue suit</i>

After a superlative ('best in ...', 'biggest in ...', etc.) or after *seul*, *dernier*, *premier*, *jamais*:

le bâtiment le plus haut du monde	<i>the tallest building in the world</i>
le train le plus rapide d'Europe	<i>the fastest train in Europe</i>
la seule fois de ma vie	<i>the only time in my life</i>
Jamais de ma vie je n'ai eu aussi peur	<i>Never in my life have I been so scared</i>
d'une certaine manière, façon	<i>in a certain manner, fashion</i>
trois dimanches de suite	<i>three Sundays in a row</i>
boire un whisky d'un trait	<i>to drink a whisky in one go</i>
Il est paralysé des jambes, court de jambes	<i>He is paralysed in the legs, short in</i>
large d'épaules	<i>the leg, broad in the shoulders</i>

### 13.15.4 de ='from'

regarder quelqu'un d'en haut	<i>to watch somebody from above</i>
le train de Paris	<i>the train from (also for) Paris</i>
Elle venait de Marseille	<i>She came from Marseilles</i>
Il est sorti de derrière la maison	<i>He came out from behind the house</i>
regarder les choses d'un même œil	<i>to see things from the same perspective</i>

aller de Londres à Paris	<i>to go from London to Paris</i>
passer du rouge au vert	<i>to go from red to green</i>
citer quelque chose de mémoire	<i>to cite something from memory</i>
faire quelque chose de colère	<i>to do something from anger</i>

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>I know him by sight, by reputation</i>
un film de François Truffaut	<i>a film by François Truffaut</i>

*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	<i>He was frightened by the storm</i>
Jean a été mordu par mon chien	<i>Jean was bitten by my dog</i>

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	<i>his mother's sister</i>
le vélo de mon oncle	<i>my uncle's bike</i>
la maison de mes parents	<i>my parents' house</i>
le nom de son chien	<i>his dog's name</i>

13.15.7 *de* = 'than' (*plus de, moins de*)

Elle gagne plus de 30 000 FF par mois	<i>She earns more than 30,000 francs a month</i>
Moins d'une dizaine de personnes assistaient au cours	<i>Fewer than ten people were at the lecture</i>
Cela est arrivé il y a plus de trente ans	<i>That happened more than thirty years ago</i>
Interdit aux moins de 15 ans	<i>No children under 15</i>

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) <i>She earns more than her sister (earns)</i>
Il travaille moins de 2 heures par jour		<i>He works less than 2 hours a day</i>
Il travaille moins que son frère (ne travaille)		<i>He works less than his brother (works)</i>

### 13.15.8 de = no preposition in English

#### Linking nouns to make them compound nouns

un vieux tronc d'acacia	<i>an old acacia trunk</i>
un homme d'affaires	<i>a businessman</i>
la boîte de vitesses	<i>the gear-box</i>
un vélo de course	<i>a racing bike</i>

#### Introducing parts of countries, states, towns, etc., in relation to the points of the compass

L'Afrique du Sud	<i>South Africa</i>
le Sud de l'Afrique	<i>southern Africa</i>
L'Italie du Sud	<i>southern Italy</i>
La France du Nord	<i>northern France</i>
les pays de l'ouest	<i>western countries</i>
La Gare du Nord	
La Gare de l'Est	

#### With many quantifiers

la plupart des gens	<i>most people (also 'most of the people')</i>
beaucoup de gens	<i>many people</i>
bien des gens	<i>many people</i>
la moitié des gens	<i>half the people (also 'half of the people')</i>

For more on these quantifiers see Chapter 6.9.

#### With the following adjectival construction used frequently in informal French

une journée de libre	<i>a free day</i>
encore un problème de réglé	<i>one more problem solved</i>
il y avait trois passants de blessés	<i>three passers-by were injured</i>

#### Linking indefinite or negative nouns and adjectives

quelqu'un d'important	<i>someone important</i>
personne d'intéressant	<i>nobody interesting</i>
rien d'autre	<i>nothing else</i>
quelque chose de drôle	<i>something funny</i>

#### 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	<i>a wall one metre thick</i>
une rivière longue de 200 kilomètres	<i>a 200-kilometre long river</i>
une clôture haute de cinq mètres	<i>a five-metre high fence</i>
Elle est âgée de 15 ans	<i>She is 15</i>
Le train est en retard de 20 minutes	<i>The train is 20 minutes late</i>

(For measurements see also Chapter 6.5.1.)

**13.15.9 de = other uses**

Je ne me nourris que de pommes de terre	<i>7 live on potatoes</i>
être de permanence	<i>to be on duty, on call</i>
On n'a plus revu Bernard de l'après-midi	<i>We didn't see Bernard again for the rest of the afternoon</i>
traiter quelqu'un de voleur	<i>to call somebody a thief</i>
Quoi de neuf?	<i>What's new?</i>
Quoi de plus éprouvant?	<i>What can be more harrowing?</i>

**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

*The noise reached us from the tenace  
from the top to the very bottom*

Je vous parle depuis Poitiers

*I'm speaking to you from Poitiers  
(only on the radio and television)*

### 13.20 *derrière*

une rue derrière la grande place  
derrière chez lui

*a street behind the main square  
behind his house*

Allez vous mettre par-derrière la cloison

*Go and stand behind the partition  
(par-derrière implies movement)*

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

*from nightfall, from dawn  
as soon as he arrived*

Dès que je suis entré, j'ai compris que  
quelque chose ne tournait pas rond

*As soon as I came in,  
I knew that something was wrong*

dès maintenant  
dès lors  
dès l'enfance

*from now on  
from then on  
from childhood*

### 13.22 *dessous: au-dessous delpar-dessous*

Au-dessous de la salle à manger il y a une piscine  
*Below the dining room there is a swimming-pool*

La température est tombée au-dessous de zéro  
*The temperature fell below zero*

Il a rampé par-dessous la barrière  
*He crawled under the gate (par-dessous implies movement)*

### 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  
sauter par-dessus une barrière

*I looked at the sky above the village  
Above the entrance there was a sign  
to wear a coat over one's jacket  
to jump over a gate*

### 13.24 *devant*

devant l'église  
devant chez lui  
mettre un pied devant l'autre  
Je l'ai laissé devant un chemin obscur

*in front of the church  
in front of his house  
to put one foot in front of the other  
I left him at the beginning of a dark  
track*



marcher devant qn	<i>to walk in front of sb</i>
comparaître devant le tribunal	<i>to appear before the court</i>

**13.25 *durant***

durant la nuit, durant l'été	<i>during the night, during the summer</i>
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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	<i>in the open air</i>
en bonne santé	<i>in good health</i>
en terminale	<i>in the upper sixth year</i>
une région riche en forêts	<i>a region rich in forests</i>
une thèse pauvre en idées	<i>a thesis poor in ideas</i>
en cas d'urgence	<i>in an emergency</i>
avoir confiance en quelqu'un	<i>to have confidence in somebody</i>

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	<i>to be taken to a distant prison</i>
---	--

**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.	<i>in the year 1992, in the year 1485.</i>

BUT:

dans les années 90	<i>in the 90s</i>
au 20e siècle	<i>in the 20th century</i>

**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 France	en Afrique
en Espagne	en Amérique
en Italie	en Europe
en Allemagne	en Australie
en Grèce	en Asie
en Turquie	en Chine

*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 Etats-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	<i>to took up</i>
des idées en l'air	<i>unrealistic ideas</i>
en la circonstance	<i>in the circumstances</i>
en l'occurrence	<i>as it turns out</i>
en l'espèce	<i>in this particular case</i>
en ce cas	<i>in this case</i>
en son for intérieur	<i>in his heart of hearts</i>

### 13.26.3 en = 'in' (within a certain period of time)

Il a fait des progrès en deux ans	<i>He has made progress in two years</i>
Je l'aurai lu en une heure	<i>I'll have read it in an hour</i>

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  
une robe en velours rouge  
une montre en or  
une robe en soie  
un pont en ciment

*a bronze statue  
a red velvet dress  
a gold watch  
a silk dress  
a concrete bridge*

#### 13.26.5 en = modes of transport

The following are common in informal French:

voyager en taxi, en vélo  
en bicyclette, en moto  
en avion, en car  
en train, en voiture  
en ambulance  
en skis  
en bateau

*to travel by taxi, by bike  
by bicycle, on a motorbike  
by plane, on a coach  
by train, by car  
in an ambulance  
on skis  
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  
en vente  
en route  
en voyage  
en moyenne  
en feu

*on holiday, on leave  
on sale  
on the way,  
on a trip  
on average  
on fire*

#### 13.26.7 en = 'with'

une maison en briques  
alimenter un restaurant en vin  
ravitailler des terroristes en armes

*a house built with bricks  
to supply a restaurant with wine  
to supply terrorists with arms*

#### 13.26.8 en = 'at'

en fin de semaine  
en haut de page  
en mer  
en plein sommet  
en même temps  
Les deux pays étaient en guerre  
Sa vie est en jeu  
être fort en langues, en maths  
en vitesse (informel)

*at the end of the week  
at the top of the page  
at sea  
right at the summit  
at the same time  
The two countries were at war  
Her life is at stake  
to be good at languages, maths  
at speed*

**13.26.9 en = 'from'**

aujourd'hui en huit  
lundi en quinze

*a week from today  
two weeks from Monday*

**13.26.10 en = 'as'**

parler en spécialiste  
s'habiller en marin  
recevoir qc en cadeau

*to speak as an expert  
to dress as a sailor  
to receive something as  
a present*

agir en lâche  
en signe de deuil

*to act as a coward  
as a sign of mourning*

**13.26.11 en = 'into'**

transformer la maison en hôtel  
changer une défaite en victoire  
traduire un texte en allemand

*to transform the house into a hotel  
to change a defeat into victory  
to translate a text into German*

**13.26.12 en = no preposition**

se mettre en colère  
une télévision en couleur  
un film en noir et blanc

*to become angry  
a colour television  
a black and white film*

**13.27 entre/d'entre**

la distance entre deux points  
une dispute entre eux  
J'ai le rapport entre les mains  
la frontière entre deux pays

*the distance between two points  
a dispute between them  
I have the report in my hands  
the border between two countries*

la plupart d'entre eux  
beaucoup d'entre mes amis  
une dizaine d'entre les serveurs  
le moins beau d'entre nous  
Lequel d'entre vous le fera?

*most of them  
many of my friends  
ten or so of the waiters  
the least handsome among us  
Which of you will do it?*

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

*each of them  
no-one among the guests  
none of the spectators*

**13.28 envers**

ressentir de la haine envers qn  
être bien disposé envers qn  
ma gratitude envers votre oncle

*to feel hatred towards sb  
to be well disposed towards sb  
my gratitude to your uncle*

**13.29 excepté**

Excepté les grand-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	<i>out of danger</i>
hors de saison	<i>out of season</i>
hors de lui	<i>beside himself with anger</i>
hors d'haleine	<i>out of breath</i>
sauter hors de son lit	<i>to jump out of one's bed</i>
une randonnée hors de la ville	<i>a hike outside the town</i>

**13.36 jusqu'à**

jusqu'à demain	<i>until tomorrow</i>
jusqu'au bout	<i>right to the end</i>
depuis Paris jusqu'à la Manche	<i>from Paris to the Channel</i>

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  
passer par la forêt  
aspirer l'air par la bouche  
Je l'ai eu par un boulanger de Tours*to look through the window  
to go through the forest  
to breathe through the mouth  
I got it through a baker from Tours***13.41.2 par = 'by', 'per'**Le village était coupé par la neige  
Par bonheur, il s'est évadé  
Il tenait son fils par la main  
prendre qn par surprise  
travailler par groupes de quatre  
heure par heure  
Ils sortaient un par un  
La chambre coûte 100 F par personne  
par nuit*The village was cut off by the snow  
By good fortune, he escaped  
He held his son by the hand  
to catch sb by surprise  
to work in groups of four  
hour by hour  
They came out one by one  
The room is 100 francs per person  
per night**L'Etranger*, 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  
Jean a été mordu par mon chien*He was frightened by the storm  
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'

se rouler par terre  
se jeter par terre  
par une belle journée de printemps

*to roll oneself on the ground  
to throw oneself on the ground  
on a fine day in spring*

**13.41.4** *par* = 'from', 'out of'

faire qc par crainte  
par orgueil, par respect de qn  
par amitié, par honte  
par jalousie, par pudeur  
par ignorance

*to do sth out of fear  
from pride, from respect for sb  
out of/from friendship, from shame  
from jealousy, from modesty  
out of/from ignorance*

**13.41.5** *par* = 'in(to)'

par temps de pluie  
sortir par beau temps  
par milliers  
par ordre alphabétique  
par endroits  
par écrit

*in wet weather  
to go out in fair weather  
in (their) thousands  
in alphabetical order  
in places  
in writing*

**13.42** *parmi*

parmi les spectateurs  
parmi la foule

*among the spectators  
among the crowd*

une rumeur courait parmi les gens de la ville  
*a rumour was spreading among the townspeople*

parmi mes papiers

*among my papers*

(See also 13.14.7.)

**13.43** *port: de la part de*

parler de la part des étudiants  
C'est de la part de qui?

*to speak on behalf of the students  
Who's calling? Who's it from?*

**13.44** *partir: à partir de*

à partir de demain

*from tomorrow*

**13.45** *passé*

Passé le pont, on s'est arrêté un instant

*Once passed the bridge, we stopped a minute*

Passé minuit il n'y a plus de taxis

*After midnight there are no more taxis*

**13.46** *pendant*

pendant la guerre  
Nous avons dansé pendant une éternité  
Je t'écrirai pendant la semaine

*during the war  
We danced for ages  
I'll write to you during the week*

**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	<i>to pay for a round (of drinks)</i>
On ne voulait pas que je paie ma place	<i>They didn't want me to pay for my seat</i>

Unless money is involved, or a person is being paid for:

payer 500 francs pour un micro-ondes	<i>to pay 500 francs for a micro-wave oven</i>
Je ne paie pas pour toi!	<i>I'm not paying for you!</i>

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	<i>She stayed for two days</i>
Il est resté trois semaines	<i>He stayed for three weeks</i>

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	<i>She'll be away for two days</i>
Il voulait s'absenter pour trois semaines	<i>He wanted to be away for three weeks</i>

When the events that take place during the time period are stressed, *pendant* is the usual form:

Il a été malade pendant la nuit	<i>He was ill during the night</i>
Elle va travailler pendant deux jours	<i>She is going to work for two days</i>

**I 3.48 près de**

Il s'est assis près de moi	<i>He sat down next to me</i>
Je l'ai aperçu près du pont	<i>I spied him near the bridge</i>



**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	<i>without me</i>
sans sel	<i>without salt</i>
sans rien dire	<i>without saying anything</i>
sans me regarder	<i>without looking at me</i>

**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	<i>according to the common view</i>
selon la loi	<i>by law, under the law</i>

**13.53 sous**

sous la table	<i>under the table</i>
s'abriter sous un arbre	<i>to shelter under a tree</i>
nager sous l'eau	<i>to swim under the water</i>
sous l'ancien régime	<i>under the 'ancien régime'</i>
sous clef	<i>under lock and key</i>
sous les verrous	<i>under lock and key</i>
sous le règne de Louis XIV	<i>in the reign of Louis XIV</i>

sous la chaleur, sous la pluie, sous le soleil  
*in the heat, 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	<i>to promise on oath</i>
interdire qc sous peine d'amende	<i>to prohibit sth on pain of a fine</i>
vendre qc sous conditions	<i>to sell sth on condition</i>
J'ai un annuaire sous la main	<i>I have a phone directory to hand</i>
passer l'affaire sous silence	<i>to keep quiet about the matter</i>
manifester sous les fenêtres de la mairie	<i>to demonstrate in front of the town hall</i>

**13.54 suite: par suite de**

par suite d'un accident	<i>following an accident</i>
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**13.55 suivant**

suivant son habitude	<i>as was his custom</i>
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### 13.56 sur

J'ai mis ma main sur son épaule	<i>I put my hand on his shoulder</i>
Il me regardait, appuyé sur les coudes	<i>He watched me, leaning on his elbows</i>
Elle était assise sur un vieux tronc d'arbre sur le seuil	<i>She was sitting on an old tree trunk on the threshold, on the doorstep</i>
Elle attendait sur les marches de la mairie	<i>She was waiting on the steps of the town hall</i>
lire qc sur une affiche	<i>to read sth on a poster</i>
Je l'ai vu sur la place	<i>I saw him in the square</i>
sur la route, sur le chemin	<i>on the road, on the track</i>
sur le boulevard, sur la chaussée	<i>on the boulevard, in the road</i>
sur le trottoir	<i>on the pavement</i>
Il a laissé la clef sur la porte	<i>He left the key in the door</i>
Les garçons étaient assis sur trois rangées de fauteuils	<i>The boys were sitting in three rows of seats</i>
marcher sur les pas de quelqu'un	<i>to follow in somebody's footsteps</i>
aller sur le terrain de football	<i>to go onto the football pitch</i>
sur la patinoire	<i>onto the ice-rink</i>
revenir sur ses pas	<i>to retrace one's steps</i>
un salon qui donne sur la rivière	<i>a sitting-room which overlooks the river</i>
Elle va sur ses vingt-six ans	<i>She is nearly 26</i>
deux sur trois	<i>two out of three</i>
Sur dix, trois étaient partis	<i>Often, three had left</i>
Sur mon salaire, il ne restait que 5 francs	<i>of my salary, only 5 francs remained</i>
Quatre chats sur cinq le préfèrent	<i>Four out of five cats prefer it</i>
Sur la fin, j'étais fatigué	<i>Towards the end, I was tired</i>

### 13.57 travers: à travers! au travers del en travers de

Il me parla à travers la porte fermée	<i>He talked to me through the closed door</i>
L'arbre était tombé en travers de la route	<i>The tree had fallen across the road</i>
Ils y sont finalement arrivés au travers d'un champ labouré	<i>They finally got there across a ploughed field</i>

### 13.58 vers

se diriger vers la maison	<i>to head for the house</i>
vers le haut du col	<i>towards the top of the pass</i>
vers 10 heures	<i>around 10 o'clock</i>
vers la fin de mars	<i>towards the end of March</i>
Il avait vers 26 ans	<i>He was around 26 years old</i>

### 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*

*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

*to ask after sb* demander après qn

*to come after sb (e.g. in a race)* arriver derrière qn (13.20)

*to clean up after sb* nettoyer derrière qn

**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

*among the spectators* parmi les spectateurs (13.42)

*among the crowd* parmi la foule

*among friends* entre amis

*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)

*to win around 1,000 francs* Also: Il avait dans les 26 ans (informel), il avait autour de 26 ans gagner dans les 1,000 francs (13.14.6)

**As: en; en tant que; comme**

*to speak as an expert* parler en spécialiste

*to dress as a sailor* s'habiller en marin

*to receive sth as a present* recevoir qc en cadeau

*to act as the representative of* agir en tant que représentant de

*to act as an intermediary* servir comme intermédiaire

**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

*at the cinema, at church* au cinéma, à l'église

*at 3 o'clock* à 3 heures

*at the beginning, at the end* au début, à la fin

*one thing at a time* une chose à la fois

*at the same time* en même temps (13.26.8)

*at odd moments* par instant(s)

*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

*at sea* en mer

*right at the summit* en plein sommet

*at war* en guerre

*at stake* en jeu

*at speed* en vitesse

*to be good at languages* être bon en langues

**By: de; par; à; avant; selon**

<i>to know sb by sight</i>	connaître qn de vue	(13.15.5)
<i>to be known by everyone</i>	être connu de tous	
<i>a film by François Truffaut</i>	un film de François Truffaut	
<i>to be accompanied by one's wife</i>	être accompagné de sa femme	
<i>to be frightened by the storm</i>	être effrayé par l'orage	
<i>to be bitten by a dog</i>	être mordu par un chien	
<i>to recognize sb by his/her voice</i>	reconnaître qn à sa voix	(13.2.5)
<i>to move forward step by step</i>	s'avancer pas à pas	
<i>to leave one by one</i>	partir un à un (or un par un)	
<i>to work by the light of a candle</i>	travailler à la lumière d'une bougie	
<i>to hold sb by the hand</i>	tenir qn par la main	(13.41.2)
<i>to work in groups</i>	travailler par groupes	
<i>hour by hour</i>	heure par heure	
<i>by night</i>	par nuit	
<i>cut off by the snow</i>	coupé par la neige	
<i>by the weekend</i>	avant le weekend	(13.6)
<i>by the rules</i>	selon les règles	
<i>by law</i>	selon la loi	(13.52)

*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)	(13.26.5)
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**

<i>Fil do it during the week</i>	
Je le ferai dans (or pendant or au cours de) la semaine	(13.14.5)

**From: de; depuis; du haut de; à; dans; en; d'après; sur**

<i>to watch sb from above</i>	regarder qn d'en haut	(13.15.4)
<i>to cite sth from memory</i>	citer qc de mémoire	
<i>from afar</i>	de loin	
<i>from close by</i>	de près	
<i>to go from London to Paris</i>	aller de Londres à Paris	
<i>He complained all the way from London to Paris</i>	Il s'est plaint depuis Londres jusqu'à Paris	
<i>to jump from the cliff</i>	sauter du haut de la falaise	(13.34)
<i>to borrow sth from sb</i>	emprunter qc à qn	(13.2.8)
<i>to drink from the bottle</i>	boire à la bouteille	
<i>to take a wallet from the drawer</i>	prendre un portefeuille dans le tiroir	(13.14.9)
<i>to cut photos from the newspaper</i>	découper des photos dans le journal	
<i>a week from today</i>	aujourd'hui en huit	(13.26.9)
<i>a fortnight from Monday</i>	lundi en quinze	

<i>to do sth from fear, from shame, from ignorance</i>		
<i>faire qc par {or de} crainte, par {or de} honte, par {or d'}ignorance</i>		(13.41.4)
<i>from what I'm told</i>	d'après ce qu'on me dit	(13.3)
<i>from the look on his face</i>	d'après son expression d'après la tête qu'il faisait	
<i>They selected five from ten</i>	Ils en ont sélectionné cinq sur dix	
<b>In: de; à; en; dans; par; sur; sous; no preposition used in French</b>		
<i>dressed in black</i>	vêtu, or habillé de noir	(13.15.3)
<i>to go out in evening dress</i>	sortir en tenue de soirée	(13.26.1)
<i>in a swimming costume</i>	en maillot de bain	
<i>in shirt sleeves</i>	en bras de chemise	
<i>the first, last, only time in my life</i>	la première, dernière, seule fois de ma vie	(13.15.3)
<i>the fastest train in Europe</i>	le train le plus rapide d'Europe	
<i>three Sundays in a row</i>	trois dimanches de suite	
<i>paralysed in the arms, legs</i>	paralysé des bras, des jambes	
<i>broad in the shoulders, short in the legs</i>	large d'épaules, court de jambes	
<i>to live in Paris</i>	vivre à Paris	(13.2.3)
<i>in the shade</i>	à l'ombre	
<i>in the back, in one's hand, in paradise</i>	à l'arrière, à la main, au paradis	
<i>in the garden, in the cinema</i>	au jardin, au cinéma	
<i>in the restaurant, in school</i>	au restaurant, à l'école	
<i>in the village, in the park</i>	au village, au parc	
<b>BUT</b> <i>in town</i>	en ville	(13.26.1)
<i>in hell</i>	en enfer	
<i>in Japan, in Denmark, in the United States, in Malta, in Jersey</i>	au Japon, au Danemark, aux Etats-Unis, à Malte, à Jersey	(13.2.3)
<i>in Prance, in Spain</i>	en France, en Espagne	(13.26.1)
<i>in the evening, in the morning</i>	au soir, au matin	(13.2.3)
<i>in the 20th century</i>	au 20e siècle	
<i>in the interval</i>	à l'entracte	
<i>to glimpse sth in the valley</i>	apercevoir qc dans la vallée	(13.14.1)
<i>to meet sb in the rue de Rivoli, on the boulevard Montparnasse</i>	rencontrer qn rue de Rivoli, boulevard Montparnasse	
<i>to meet sb in Yorkshire,</i>	rencontrer qn dans le Yorkshire	
<i>to meet sb in Nevada, in the Calvados region</i>	rencontrer qn dans le Nevada, dans le Calvados	
<i>I'll come back after an hour</i>	Je reviendrai dans une heure	(13.14.4)
<i>I'm expecting him in two days</i>	Je l'attends dans deux jours	

*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

*in 1992, in the year 1992* en 1992, en l'an 1992  
*in the 50s* 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  
*in places* par endroits

*to see sb in the square* voir qn sur la place  
*to be sitting in three rows of seats* être assis sur trois rangées de fauteuils  
*in the reign of Louis XIV* sous le règne de Louis XIV (13.53)

**Into: dans; en; à**

*to go into the yard* aller dans la cour  
*to turn the house into a hotel* transformer la maison en hôtel (13.26.11)  
*to burst into tears* éclater en larmes  
*to go into the office* aller au bureau (13.2.2)  
*to get into bed* se mettre au lit

**Of: de; à; sur; d'entre**

*a cup of tea* une tasse de thé (13.15.1)  
*half of the spectators* la moitié des spectateurs  
*It's kind of you, nice of you* C'est gentil à vous, aimable à vous (13.2.8)  
*one of my uncles* 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)  
*each of them* chacun d'(entre) eux

**On: de; à; dans; en; par; sur; sous; no preposition**

*I live just on potatoes* Je ne me nourris que de pommes (13.15.9)  
*de terre*  
*to be on duty or on call* être de permanence  
*to look on the bright side* voir les choses du bon côté  
*on several occasions* à plusieurs reprises (13.2.4)  
*on page 2* à la page 2  
*on the television/on the radio* à la télévision/à la radio  
*to knock on the door* frapper à la porte  
*to be on the ground* être à terre  
*on one's return* au retour

### 330 Prepositions

<i>on a bicycle, on foot, on horseback</i>	à bicyclette, à pied, à cheval	
<i>on military service</i>	au service militaire	
<i>to meet sb on the stairs</i>	rencontrer qn dans l'escalier	(13.14.8)
<i>to do odd jobs on farms</i>	bricoler dans des fermes	
<i>on fire</i>	en feu	(13.26.6)
<i>on holiday</i>	en vacances	
<i>on leave</i>	en congé	
<i>on sale</i>	en vente	
<i>on the way</i>	en route	
<i>on a trip</i>	en voyage	
<i>on average</i>	en moyenne	
<i>to throw things on the ground</i>	jeter des choses par terre	(13.41.3)
<i>on a fine spring day</i>	par une belle journée de printemps	
<i>to put one's hand on his shoulder</i>	mettre la main sur son épaule	(13.56)
<i>leaning on one's elbows</i>	appuyé sur les coudes	
<i>to sit on a chair, a bench, a seat</i>	s'asseoir sur une chaise, un banc, un siège	
<i>on the road, on the pavement</i>	sur la route, sur le trottoir	
<i>to promise on oath</i>	promettre sous serment	(13.53)
<i>to sell sth on condition</i>	vendre qc sous conditions	
<i>on Mondays</i>	le lundi	
<i>They're on mel</i>	C'est ma tournée!	

#### **Out of: de; en dehors de; hors de; sur**

<i>to pull a rabbit out of a hat</i>	sortir un lapin d'un chapeau	(13.15.4)
<i>Get out of here!</i>	Sortez d'ici!	
<i>out of the town</i>	en dehors de la ville	(13.16)
<i>out of the question</i>	hors de question	
<i>five out of ten</i>	cinq sur dix	(13.56)

#### **Than: de; que**

<i>She earns more than 30,000 francs a month</i>	Elle gagne plus de 30 000 FF par mois	
<i>She earns more than me/than I do</i>	Elle gagne plus que moi	(13.15.7)
<i>He works less than 2 hours a day</i>	Il travaille moins de 2 heures par jour	

#### **Through: par; à travers; au travers de; par moyen de**

<i>to look through the window</i>	regarder par la fenêtre	(13.41.1)
<i>to go through the forest</i>	passer par la forêt	
<i>to breathe through the mouth</i>	aspirer l'air par la bouche	
<i>to go through fields</i>	passer à travers champs	(13.57)
<i>to go through difficulties</i>	passer au travers des problèmes	
<i>through an advert</i>	par moyen d'une annonce	

#### **To: à; en; dans; sous; jusqu'à; pour; avec**

<i>to the north, to the south</i>	au nord, au sud	(13.2.2)
<i>to go to school, to the cinema, to the café</i>	aller à l'école, au cinéma, au café	
<i>to go up to one's room</i>	monter à sa chambre	
<i>to the right, to the left</i>	à droite, à gauche	

<i>to Japan, to Denmark</i>	au Japon, au Danemark	
<i>to Malta, to Jersey</i>	à Malte, à Jersey	
<i>to Paris, to London</i>	à Paris, à Londres	
<i>to Sicily, to New Zealand</i>	en Sicile, en Nouvelle-Zélande	(13.26.1)
<i>to France, to Spain</i>	en France, en Espagne	
<i>to Europe, to Africa</i>	en Europe, en Afrique	
<i>to Normandy, to Brittany</i>	en Normandie, en Bretagne	
<i>to Essex, to Massachusetts</i>	dans l'Essex, dans le Massachusetts	
<i>to have a phone directory to hand</i>	avoir un annuaire sous la main	(13.53)
<i>to go up to 2,000 francs</i>	aller jusqu'à 2,000 francs	
<i>a cheque to the value of ...</i>	un chèque de la valeur de ...	
<i>to keep something to oneself</i>	garder quelque chose pour soi	
<i>to be kind to sb</i>	être gentil avec qn	

**Under: sous; moins de; inférieur à; selon**

<i>under the table, under the water</i>	sous la table, sous l'eau	(13.53)
<i>under twentyfrancs</i>	moins de vingt francs	(13.15.7)
<i>a price under a thousandfrancs</i>	un prix inférieur à mille francs	
<i>under the law</i>	selon la loi	(13.52)

**With: de; à; avec**

<i>a street lined with plane trees</i>	une rue bordée de platanes	(13.15.2)
<i>to fill with water</i>	remplir d'eau ( <i>or</i> avec de l'eau)	
<i>to cover with posters</i>	couvrir d'affiches ( <i>or</i> avec des affiches)	
<i>to go red with shame</i>	rougir de honte	
<i>to tremble with cold</i>	trembler de froid	
<i>a man with a grey beard</i>	un homme à la barbe grise	(13.2.6)
<i>to water the garden with a watering can</i>	arroser le jardin avec un arrosoir	(13.7)
<i>to speak with sb</i>	parler avec qn	
<i>to arrive with sb</i>	arriver avec qn	



# 14

## *Question formation*

### 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:

Est-ce que tu as quelque chose à dire?	<i>Do you have anything to say?</i>
Est-ce qu'elle va rester ici?	<i>Is she going to stay here?</i>
Est-ce que Pierre est venu?	<i>Has Pierre come?</i>
Est-ce que je peux mettre mes photos au mur?	<i>Can I put my photos on the wall?</i>

Yes/no questions formed with *est-ce que* can be used in all styles of French, informal and formal, spoken and written.

#### 14.2.3 Yes/no questions formed by inverting the verb and subject

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:

Es-tu content?	<i>Are you happy?</i>
Est-ce le facteur?	<i>Is it the postman?</i>
Avez-vous bien compris?	<i>Have you really understood?</i>
Peut-on se changer dans les vestiaires?	<i>Can you change in the changing rooms?</i>
Avaient-ils reçu de ses nouvelles?	<i>Had they had news of him?</i>
Avait-il pu réunir les actionnaires?	<i>Had he been able to assemble the shareholders?</i>

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.:

Aime-t-il le Roquefort?	<i>Does he like Roquefort?</i>
Descend-elle en ville?	<i>Is she going down into town?</i>
Fumez-vous depuis longtemps?	<i>Have you smoked for long?</i>
Prendent-ils le train?	<i>Are they taking the train?</i>

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:

Pierre est-il content?	<i>Is Pierre happy?</i>
Les joueurs peuvent-ils se changer dans les vestiaires?	<i>Can the players change in the changing rooms?</i>
Cela est-il vrai?	<i>Is that true?</i>
Personne ne veut-il m'accompagner?	<i>Doesn't anyone want to come with me?</i>
Les élèves avaient-ils reçu les résultats?	<i>Had the pupils received the results?</i>
Julie viendra-t-elle demain?	<i>Will Julie come tomorrow?</i>

NB: It is impossible to invert a subject which is not an unstressed pronoun with an agreeing verb:

NOT \*Viendra Julie demain?  
 NOT \*Est cela vrai?  
 NOT \*Peuvent les joueurs se changer dans les vestiaires?  
 NOT \*Est Pierre content?

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?	<i>Is he 17?</i>
Aura-t-elle faim?	<i>Will she be hungry?</i>

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?	<i>Is he marrying Marie?</i>
Dîne-t-elle au palais ce soir?	<i>Is she dining at the palace this evening?</i>

Where a verb already ends in a *-l* or a *-d* in the written language, it is pronounced as 't' in questions:

Est-elle contente?	<i>Is she happy?</i>
Boivent-ils du cidre?	<i>Are they drinking cider?</i>
Vos amis sont-ils partis?	<i>Have your friends left?</i>
David vend-il sa voiture?	<i>Is David selling his car?</i>
Le voyage te rend-il malade?	<i>Is the journey making you feel ill?</i>

#### 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)	<i>Am I allowed to?</i>
Dois-je vous téléphoner? (devoir)	<i>Should I phone you?</i>
Puis-je vous déranger? (pouvoir)	<i>May I disturb you?</i>
Suis-je heureux? (être)	<i>Am I happy?</i>
Vais-je me laisser tromper? (aller)	<i>Am I going to let myself be deceived?</i>
Ne dis-je pas la vérité? (dire)	<i>Am I not telling the truth?</i>

but with most other verbs such inversion is impossible:

NOT *Mens-je?	<i>Am I lying?</i>
NOT *Prends-je le bus?	<i>Am I taking the bus?</i>

In future and conditional tenses, however, inversion with these same verbs is more acceptable (but again only in the most formal styles):

Mentirais-je?	<i>Would I lie?</i>
Prendrai-je le bus?	<i>Shall I take the bus?</i>

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, <b>n'est-ce pas?</b>	<i>He lives in Paris, doesn't he?</i>
Vous avez vendu le terrain, <b>n'est-ce pas?</b>	<i>You've sold the land, haven't you?</i>
Je dois m'adresser au sous-directeur, <b>n'est-ce pas?</b>	<i>I must speak to the assistant director, mustn't I?</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?	<i>Have you ever been to the Louvre?</i>
A-t-il <b>rien</b> fait de meilleur?	<i>Has he done anything better?</i>
A-t-elle eu aucune réponse?	<i>Has she received any reply?</i>
Est-ce que vous avez vu <b>personne</b> ?	<i>Have you seen anyone?</i>

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?
<i>Does he tell anyone what he is doing?</i>

#### 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
<i>Would you like some cheese?</i>	- <i>No, thank you</i>

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
<i>Would you like some cheese?</i>	- <i>Yes, -please</i>

### 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?	<i>What did you see?</i>
Elle a dit <b>quoi?</b>	<i>What did she say?</i>
Marcel a écrit <b>à qui?</b>	<i>Who did Marcel write to?</i>
Elle parle de <b>quoi?</b>	<i>What is she talking about?</i>
Tu recommanderais <b>quel film?</b>	<i>Which film would you recommend?</i>
Ils ont invité <b>combien de gens?</b>	<i>How many people did they invite?</i>
Vous l'avez vu où?	<i>Where did you see it?</i>
Bernard reviendra <b>quand?</b>	<i>When will Bernard come back?</i>

### 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?	<i>Who did you see?</i>
Qui c'est, celui là?	<i>Who's he?</i>
A qui Marcel a écrit?	<i>Who did Marcel write to?</i>
Quel film tu recommanderais?	<i>Which film would you recommend?</i>
Combien de gens ils ont invités?	<i>How many people did they invite?</i>
De quoi tu voulais me parler?	<i>What did you want to speak to me about?</i>
Où vous l'avez vu?	<i>Where did you see it?</i>
Pourquoi la police l'a arrêté?	<i>Why did the police arrest him?</i>

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?	<i>What did she say?</i>
Qu'est-ce que tu faisais dans ma chambre?	<i>What were you doing in my room?</i>

### 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?	<i>Who did you see?</i>
Qu'est-ce qu'elle a dit?	<i>What did she say?</i>
Quel film est-ce que tu recommanderais?	<i>Which film would you recommend?</i>
A qui est-ce que Marcel a écrit?	<i>To whom did Marcel write?</i>
Combien de gens est-ce qu'ils ont invités?	<i>How many people did they invite?</i>
Où est-ce que vous l'avez vu?	<i>Where did you see it?</i>
Quand est-ce que Bernard reviendra?	<i>When will Bernard come back?</i>
Pourquoi est-ce que la police l'a arrêté?	<i>Why did the police arrest him?</i>

### 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?	<i>Who took my pencil?</i>
Qui est-ce qui va avoir le prix?	<i>Who will get the prize?</i>

*qu'est-ce qui?* is used to form questions dealing with non-animate subjects:

Qu'est ce qui a abîmé mon pneu?	<i>What punctured my tyre?</i>
Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé?	<i>What happened?</i>
Qu'est-ce qui a effrayé le facteur?	<i>What frightened the postman?</i>
Qu'est-ce qui lui est arrivé, à Paul?	<i>What happened to Paul?</i>

*qui est-ce que?* is used to form questions dealing with animate direct objects:

Qui est-ce que vous avez vu?	<i>Who did you see?</i>
Qui est-ce qu'ils ont invité à la fête?	<i>Who did they invite to the party?</i>

*qu'est-ce que?* is used to form questions dealing with non-animate direct objects:

Qu'est-ce que vous avez dit?	<i>What did you say?</i>
Qu'est-ce que Marie va acheter?	<i>What is Marie going to buy?</i>
Qu'est-ce qu'elle a pris dans la grange?	<i>What did she take from the barn?</i>
Qu'est-ce que c'était, ce bruit, dehors?	<i>What was that noise, outside?</i>

Compare the following uses of *qu'est-ce?*, *qu'est-ce que?* and *qu'est-ce que c'est?*:

Qu'est-ce? (very formal)	<i>What is it?</i>
Qu'est-ce que c'est?	<i>What is it?</i>
Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?	<i>What on earth is that?</i>
Qu'est-ce qu'une 'jonque'?	<i>What's a 'jonque'?</i>
Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'une 'jonque'?	<i>What on earth is a 'jonque'?</i>
Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire 'jonque'?	<i>What does 'jonque' mean?</i>

#### 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?	<i>Who did you see?</i>
Qui est-ce?	<i>Who is it?</i>
A qui a-t-elle écrit?	<i>To whom did she write?</i>
Quel film recommanderais-tu?	<i>Which film would you recommend?</i>
Combien de personnes ont-ils invités?	<i>How many people have they invited?</i>
Où l'avez-vous vu?	<i>Where did you see it?</i>
Quand reviendra-t-il?	<i>When will he come back?</i>
Pourquoi l'ont-ils arrêté?	<i>Why have they arrested him?</i>

(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?	<i>Who did Robert meet?</i>
A qui Jean donnera-t-il l'argent?	<i>To whom will Jean give the money?</i>
Quelle robe Madame préfère-t-elle?	<i>Which dress does madam prefer?</i>
Combien de romans Camus a-t-il écrits?	<i>How many novels did Camus write?</i>
Où Marie va-t-elle faire ses courses?	<i>Where is Marie going to do her shopping?</i>

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*<sup>1</sup>, 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 grignoté 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:



<b>Que</b> dit le <b>docteur</b> ?	<i>What does the doctor say?</i>
<b>Que</b> pense <b>Marie</b> ?	<i>What does Marie think?</i>
<b>Qu'a</b> décidé le conseil <b>municipal</b> ?	<i>What has the council decided?</i>
<b>Que</b> va faire <b>Marie</b> ?	<i>What is Marie going to do?</i>
Qu'aurait dû déclarer le <b>ministre</b> ?	<i>What should the minister have declared?</i>

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?	<i>What had the doctor said?</i>
<b>Qu'a</b> décidé le conseil <b>municipal</b> ?	<i>What has the council decided?</i>

##### Prepositional object *qui* (à *qui*?, de *qui*?, avec *qui*?, etc.)

<b>A qui</b> s'est adressé <b>Jacques</b> ?	<i>To whom did Jacques go and speak?</i>
<b>De qui</b> aura parlé le <b>professeur</b> ?	<i>Who will the professor have spoken about?</i>

##### Prepositional object *quoi* (à *quoi*?, de *quoi*?, avec *quoi*?, etc.)

<b>A quoi</b> aurait dû penser <b>Marie</b> ?	<i>What ought Marie to have thought about?</i>
<b>De quoi</b> dépend la <b>décision</b> ?	<i>What does the decision depend on?</i>

##### Object and prepositional object *quel*?, *quand*?, *combien*?

###### *quel*

<b>Quel plat</b> a commandé <b>Pierre</b> ?	<i>Which dish did Pierre order?</i>
<b>A quelle heure</b> partira <b>Thomas</b> ?	<i>At what time will Thomas leave?</i>
Par <b>quelle</b> porte est sortie la vedette?	<i>Which door did the star come out of?</i>

###### *quand*

<b>Quand</b> est entré <b>François</b> ?	<i>When did François come in?</i>
<b>Depuis quand</b> travaille <b>Pierre</b> ?	<i>How long has Pierre been working?</i>

###### *combien*

Combien de <b>kilos</b> a perdu <b>Philippe</b> ?	<i>How many kilos has Philippe lost?</i>
<b>Combien</b> de cidre produit ce verger?	<i>How much cider does this orchard produce?</i>

Stylistic inversion is not possible with *pourquoi*:

NOT * <i>Pourquoi</i> travaille <b>Pierre</b> ?	<i>Why does Pierre work?</i>
NOT * <i>Pourquoi</i> est partie <b>Marie</b> ?	<i>Why did Marie leave?</i>

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 <b>quand</b> travaille <b>Pierre</b> ?	<i>How long has Pierre been working?</i>
---	--

And when the questioned phrase is itself a direct object:

Quel vin recommande le patron?	<i>Which wine does the patron recommend?</i>
--------------------------------	--

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?	<i>How long has Pierre known Marie?</i>
NOT *Où va manger Pierre des escargots?	<i>Where is Pierre going to eat snails?</i>
NOT *A qui a donné Paul ce livre?	<i>To whom did Paul give this book?</i>

#### 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 <i>She spoke of it to Charley</i>	En a-t-elle parlé à Charley? <i>Did she speak of it to Charley?</i>
--	--

Il le <b>lui</b> avait prêté <i>He lent it to her</i>	Le <b>lui</b> avait-il prêté? <i>Did he lend it to her?</i>
--	--

Jean te le dira <i>Jean will tell you so</i>	Jean te le dira-t-il? <i>Will Jean tell you so?</i>
---	--

Ils me l'ont donné <i>They gave it to me</i>	Pourquoi me l'ont-ils donné? <i>Why did they give it to me?</i>
---	--

#### 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 <i>You have never done that</i>	N'as-tu jamais fait cela? <i>Have you never done that?</i>
---	---

Vous n'avez <b>pas</b> vu cet homme <i>You haven't seen this man</i>	Qui n'avez-vous pas vu? <i>Who haven't you seen?</i>
---	---

Ils ne leur écrivent plus <i>They don't write to them any more</i>	Pourquoi ne leur écrivent-ils plus? <i>Why don't they write to them any more?</i>
---	--

#### 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**

**A 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?

NOT \*Que lui est arrivé?

*What happened to him?*

Qu'est-ce qui a taché le mur?

NOT \*Qu'a fait cela?

*What made that mess on the wall?*

*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**

A 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?*

*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?*

NB: When a *quel* phrase is a subject it is not possible to invert subject and verb or use *est-ce que?*:

NOT \*Quelle écrivaine n'a-t-elle pas rêvé d'être célèbre?

NOT \*Quelle écrivaine est-ce qu'elle n'a pas rêvé d'être célèbre?

#### 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?*

**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? Laquelle préférez-vous?	<i>Which of these colours do you prefer? Which do you prefer?</i>
Lesquels des élèves avez-vous choisis pour l'équipe? Lesquels avez-vous choisis?	<i>Which of the pupils have you chosen for the team? Which have you chosen?</i>
Elle a enfin décidé quelle robe elle va acheter Laquelle?	<i>She has finally decided which dress she is going to buy Which one?</i>

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?	<i>Which of these colours do you prefer?</i>
Lequel chante le mieux de ces deux solistes?	<i>Which of these two soloists sings the best?</i>

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?	<i>How much does that cost?</i>
Combien sont déjà arrivés?	<i>How many have already arrived?</i>

Or it may be used with a following prepositional phrase:

Combien de pain nous reste-t-il?	<i>How much bread do we have left?</i>
Combien de spectateurs assistaient au match?	<i>How many spectators were there at the match?</i>

*combien (de)?* can be used to question subjects, direct objects and objects of prepositions:

**Subject**

Combien d'invités sont déjà arrivés?	<i>How many guests have already arrived?</i>
--------------------------------------	--

**Direct object**

Combien d'enfants ont-ils?	<i>How many children do they have?</i>
----------------------------	--

**Object of a preposition**

Avec combien d'argent est-il parti à l'étranger?	<i>How much money did he go abroad with?</i>
---	--

When *combien?* is used alone and functions as a direct object, the pronoun *en* is required:

Combien en as-tu vu?	<i>How many did you see?</i>
Combien est-ce qu'ils en ont tués?	<i>How many did they kill?</i>

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?	<i>How are you?</i>
Comment va votre mère?	<i>How is your mother?</i>
Comment est-ce qu'elle va?	<i>How is she?</i>
Comment s'étaient-ils comportés?	<i>How had they behaved?</i>
Comment allez-vous réparer le moteur?	<i>How are you going to repair the engine?</i>
Comment cela se prononce-t-il?	<i>How is this pronounced?</i>

*comment?* also translates 'what?' with the verb *appeler*:

Comment tu t'appelles?	<i>What's your name?</i>
Comment appelez-vous ce monument? or	<i>What is this monument called?</i>
Comment ce monument s'appelle-t-il?	

#### 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?	<i>Where do you live?</i>
Où habitez-vous?	<i>Where do you live?</i>
Où est-ce que vous habitez?	<i>Where do you live?</i>
Où Pierre habite-t-il?	<i>Where does Pierre live?</i>
Quand vous partez?	<i>When are you leaving?</i>
Quand partez-vous?	<i>When are you leaving?</i>
Quand est-ce que vous partez?	<i>When are you leaving?</i>
Quand Pierre partira-t-il?	<i>When will Pierre leave?</i>

When the verb is *être*, 'stylistic inversion' of the subject is normal with *où?* and *quand?* (see 14.3.7):

Où est le portefeuille?	<i>Where's the wallet?</i>
Quand est son anniversaire?	<i>When's his birthday?</i>

*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?	<i>Why has he moved?</i>
Pourquoi a-t-il déménagé?	<i>Why has he moved?</i>
Pourquoi est-ce qu'il a déménagé?	<i>Why has he moved?</i>
Pourquoi Pierre a-t-il déménagé?	<i>Why has Pierre moved?</i>

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?	<i>How big is the table?</i>
Avec quelle fréquence y allez-vous?	<i>How often do you go there?</i>
Est-ce souvent que vous y allez?	<i>How often do you go there?</i>
Dans quelle mesure en êtes-vous certain?	<i>How certain are you?</i>
Dans quelle mesure accepteriez-vous de faire cela?	<i>How happy would you be to do that?</i>

### 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)
<i>She asked who came</i>	
Quel piège est-ce qu'on lui tend?	(direct question)
Il n'arrive pas à comprendre quel piège on lui tend	(indirect question)
<i>He hasn't grasped what kind of trap they are setting for him</i>	
Quand arrivera-t-il?	(direct question)
Dites-moi quand il arrivera	(indirect question)
<i>Tell me when he will arrive</i>	

#### 14.7.1 Word order in indirect questions

There is no subject-verb inversion in indirect questions:

Où sont-ils?  
 Je 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:

Est-ce que Julie viendra demain?  
Je me demande si Julie viendra demain  
*I wonder if Julie will come tomorrow*

A-t-il bien compris?  
On ne sait jamais s'il a bien compris  
*One never knows whether he has understood properly*

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:

Qu'est-ce qui a ravagé les champs des Dupont?  
On ne sait pas ce qui a ravagé les champs des Dupont  
*They don't know what ruined the Duponts' fields*

Qu'est-ce qui est arrivé?  
Elle se demande ce qui est arrivé  
*She wonders what happened*

Que dit-il?  
Je ne comprends pas ce qu'il dit  
*I don't understand what he's saying*

Qu'est-ce que Pierre fera?  
Il a expliqué ce que Pierre ferait  
*He explained what Pierre would do*

All other question words remain the same:

Elle lui demande à qui il écrivait	<i>She is asking him who he was writing to</i>
Je ne sais plus de quoi elle parlait	<i>I no longer know what she was talking about</i>
Je ne sais pas laquelle lui plaît le plus	<i>I don't know which he likes more</i>

### 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:

Chante-t-il?	<i>Is he singing?</i>
Quand a-t-il chanté?	<i>When did he sing?</i>
Qui avait chanté?	<i>Who had sung?</i>



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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:

Chantera-t-il?	<i>Will he sing?</i>
Qui chanterait?	<i>Who would sing?</i>
Elle ne savait pas s'il chanterait/ qui chanterait	<i>She didn't know if he would sing/ who would sing</i>

# 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  
*J 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):

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| à       | Le touriste à qui j'ai parlé vient du Québec<br>(j'ai parlé au touriste)<br><i>The tourist I spoke to comes from Quebec</i>  |
| en      | C'est un commerçant en qui on peut avoir confiance<br>(on peut avoir confiance en ce commerçant)<br><i>He's a shopkeeper in whom one can have confidence</i>   |
| sur     | L'intermédiaire sur qui on comptait s'est avéré malhonnête<br>(on comptait sur l'intermédiaire)<br><i>The go-between we were counting on turned out to be dishonest</i>  |
| par     | Je recommanderais le garagiste par qui j'ai eu cette voiture<br>(j'ai eu cette voiture par le garagiste)<br><i>I would recommend the garage I got this car from</i>  |
| avec    | Il n'a jamais revu le camarade avec qui il jouait quand ils<br>étaient petits<br>(il jouait avec ce camarade)<br><i>He has never again seen the friend he used to play with when they were<br/>little</i>                        |
| pour    | Elle a invité son professeur, pour qui elle a beaucoup de respect, à<br>dîner<br>(elle a beaucoup de respect pour son professeur)<br><i>She has invited her teacher, for whom she has a great deal of respect, to<br/>dinner</i> |
| près de | Le jeune homme près de qui il est assis le reconnaît<br>(il est assis près du jeune homme)<br><i>The young man next to whom he's sitting recognizes him</i>  |

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*:

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*

### 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:

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>Masculine</b>	lequel	lesquels
<b>Feminine</b>	laquelle	lesquelles

Furthermore, the *le-*, *la-* etc. components combine with a preceding *à* or *de* to form:

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>Masculine</b>	auquel	auxquels	duquel	desquels
<b>Feminine</b>	à laquelle	auxquelles	de laquelle	desquelles

à	Le texte auquel il a fait référence ... <i>The text he referred to ...</i> La conférence à laquelle je vais participer ... <i>The conference in which I shall be taking part ...</i>
dans	Cela illustre les contradictions dans lesquelles s'enferme la Grande-Bretagne <i>That illustrates the contradictions within which Great Britain is locked</i>
autour	Elle habite une maison autour de laquelle il y a une haie de lauriers <i>She lives in a house around which there is a laurel hedge</i>
durant	Des weekends interminables, durant lesquels je ne savais quoi faire <i>Interminable weekends during which I didn't know what to do</i>

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:

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*, *duquel/de laquelle/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



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 ...	<i>the day when ...</i>
à l'heure où ...	<i>at the time (of day) when ...</i>
au temps où ...	<i>in the days when ...</i>
à la saison où ...	<i>during the season when ...</i>

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** (head) *qui assistaient à la réunion* (relative clause)  
*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 magnéscope 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 magnéscope, 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 magnéscope*. 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 magnéscope*.

*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:

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:

<b>Quel que</b> soit le prix, je l'achèterai	<i>Whatever the price may be, I'll buy it</i>
Quelles que soient ses intentions, méfie-toi	<i>Whatever his intentions are, don't trust him</i>

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 choisissiez, vous bénéficierez d'un rabais  
 (vous allez choisir un livre)  
*Whatever/whichever book you choose, we'll give you a discount*

Quelques efforts que vous fassiez, on ne vous en accordera aucun crédit  
 (vous allez faire des efforts)  
*Whatever 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	<i>Whatever the price (may be), I'll buy it</i>
---------------------------------------	---

Quelque livre que vous choisissiez,  
vous bénéficiez 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:

quelque	+ adjective	+ verb in the subjunctive
si		
aussi		
pour		
tout	+ adjective	+ verb in the indicative

*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, laquelle, 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		<i>Whoever you appoint</i>
Quoi qui puisse arriver		<i>Whatever may happen</i>
Quoi qu'il fasse		<i>Whatever he does</i>
Quelque livre que vous choisissiez		<i>Whichever book you choose</i>
Quelle que soit la réponse		<i>Whatever the response</i>
Quelque		
Si	grand qu'il soit	<i>However big he is</i>
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)', 'the biggest (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*

Connaissez-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*

Head of clause	Function in clause	Pronoun	Example	See section
l'homme	subject (± animate)	qui	l'homme qui conduit	15.2
l'autobus	direct object (± animate)	que	l'autobus que je conduis	15.3
une maladie	object of <i>de</i> (± animate)	dont	une maladie dont il est mort	15.6.1
une maison	same	dont	une maison dont la porte est fermée	15.6.1
une maison	same	dont	une maison dont on ferme la porte	15.6.1
le touriste	object (+ animate) of a preposition	à qui	le touriste à qui j'ai parlé	15.4
le texte	object (-animate) of a preposition	auquel	le texte auquel il fait référence	15.5
un écrivain	object (+ animate) of a preposition in a prepositional phrase	à la vie duquel	un écrivain à la vie duquel il s'intéresse	15.6.2
un blazer	object (-animate) of a preposition in a prepositional phrase	dans la poche duquel	un blazer dans la poche duquel il y a une lettre	15.6.2
la ville	place adverb	où	la ville où je vis	15.7.1
le jour	time adverb (definite)	où	le jour où elle est partie	15.7.2
un jour	time adverb (indefinite)	que	un jour que je sortais	15.7.2
rien, ce, quelque chose, clause	object of a preposition	sur quoi	rien, ce, quelque chose sur quoi on peut compter	15.8
non-specific head	subject or object (+ animate)	celui qui/que	j'ai vu celui qui est sorti	15.9
non-specific head	subject (- animate)	ce qui	je ferai ce qui me plaît	15.9
non-specific head	object (- animate)	ce que	je crois ce qu'elle dit	15.9
non-specific head	object of a preposition	ce preposition quoi	il se moque de ce en quoi j'ai confiance	15.9

# 16

## Negation

### 16.1 Introduction

French sentences can be negated by using one of the following expressions:

ne ... aucun	<i>not any, none</i>
ne ... guère	<i>hardly</i>
ne ... jamais	<i>not ever, never</i>
ne ... ni ... ni	<i>neither ... nor</i>
ne ... nul	<i>not any, none</i>
ne ... pas	<i>not</i>
ne ... personne	<i>not anyone, no-one, nobody</i>
ne ... plus	<i>not any more, no longer</i>
ne ... que	<i>only</i>
ne ... rien	<i>not anything, nothing</i>

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>I'm not sleeping at my place tonight</i>
Je n'ai pas dormi chez moi hier soir	<i>I didn't sleep at my place last night</i>
Je ne l'entendais pas	<i>I didn't hear him</i>
Il ne le lui a jamais envoyé	<i>He didn't ever send it to her</i>
Elle n'a rien voulu me raconter	<i>She didn't want to tell me anything</i>

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	<i>He wasn't watching me</i>
La boîte ne contenait que des bonbons	<i>There were only sweets in the box</i>
Ça ne donne aucun plaisir	<i>That's not at all enjoyable</i>
Il ne mangeait jamais le soir	<i>He never used to eat in the evenings</i>

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	<i>He didn't want any of it</i>
Je n'ai jamais vu la mer	<i>I have never seen the sea</i>
Elle n'a plus voulu continuer	<i>She didn't want to continue</i>
Je ne l'ai guère connue	<i>I hardly knew her</i>
On ne m'a rien pris	<i>They didn't take anything from me</i>

By contrast, *personne* behaves just like an object, an indirect object or the object of a preposition:

Je n'ai vu personne	<i>I didn't see anyone</i>
Il n'a parlé à personne	<i>He didn't speak to anyone</i>
Elle n'est sortie avec personne	<i>She didn't go out with anyone</i>

and *aucun* precedes an object, an indirect object or the object of a preposition:

Ils n'ont vendu aucun tableau	<i>They didn't sell a single picture</i>
Je ne le vendrais à aucun prix	<i>I wouldn't sell it at any price</i>
Il n'a confiance en aucun autre que lui-même	<i>He doesn't trust anyone else but himself</i>

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 **sois** 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:

ne ...	pas	past participle or infinitive	que
--------	-----	-------------------------------------	-----

Il n'y a **pas que** des héros dans l'armée  
 Il n'a **pas écrit que** des contes de fées

*There aren't only heroes in the army*  
*He didn't only write fairy stories*

ne ...	jamais guère	plus	rien	past participle or infinitive	personne	que
--------	-----------------	------	------	-------------------------------------	----------	-----

On ne le verra **jamais plus**  
 On n'en verra **jamais rien**  
 On n'en verra **plus rien**  
 On n'en verra **jamais plus rien**

*We'll never see him again*  
*We'll never see anything of it*  
*We won't see anything more of it*  
*We won't see anything more of it ever again*

Elle n'a **jamais plus** écrit  
 Elle n'a **jamais rien** écrit  
 Elle n'a **plus rien** écrit  
 Elle n'a **jamais plus rien** écrit

*She never wrote again*  
*She never wrote anything*  
*She wrote nothing again*  
*She never wrote anything again*

Elle n'a **jamais plus rien** écrit  
 qu'une brochure de publicité

*She never wrote anything again*  
*except an advertizing brochure*

Ça n'impressionnera **jamais personne**  
 Ça n'impressionnera **plus personne**  
 Ça n'impressionnera **jamais plus personne**

*That will never impress anyone*  
*That won't impress anyone any more*  
*That will never impress anyone again*

Il n'a **jamais** critiqué **personne**  
 Il n'a **plus** critiqué **personne**  
 Il n'a **jamais plus** critiqué **personne**

*He never criticized anyone*  
*He didn't criticize anyone again*  
*He didn't ever criticize anyone again*

Elle n'a guère **plus** écrit après son deuil

*She hardly ever wrote again after her bereavement*

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	<i>It's not true</i>
J'ai pas eu le temps de le faire	<i>I didn't have time to do it</i>
Je sais pas	<i>I don't know</i>
Elle l'avait pas lu	<i>She hadn't read it</i>

## 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?	<i>Aren't you sleeping at your house tonight?</i>
Il n'a jamais vu la mer N'a-t-il jamais vu la mer?	<i>Hasn't he ever seen the sea?</i>
On ne lui avait rien appris Ne lui avait-on rien appris?	<i>Had they taught him nothing?</i>
Elle n'avait vu personne N'avait-elle vu personne?	<i>Had she seen no-one?</i>
Taquine-le! Ne le taquine pas!	<i>Don't tease him!</i>
Fais ça! Ne fais jamais ça!	<i>Never do that!</i>
Touchez quelque chose! Ne touchez rien!	<i>Don't touch anything!</i>
Présentez-lui quelqu'un! Ne lui présentez personne!	<i>Don't introduce anyone to him!</i>

(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 <b>pas</b> vrai	<i>It's not true</i>
Je ne me rappelle <b>pas</b> les circonstances	<i>I don't remember the circumstances</i>
Je n'ai <b>pas</b> eu le temps de comprendre	<i>I didn't have time to understand</i>
Ça fait/Voilà longtemps qu'on ne s'est <b>pas</b> vu	<i>It's been a long time since we saw each other</i>

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*:

Elle a écrit **une** lettre  
*She wrote a letter*

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

On lui a fait **du** mal  
*They did him harm*

On ne lui a pas fait de mal  
*They didn't do him any harm*

Il cultive les fraises  
*He grows strawberries*

Il ne cultive pas de fraises  
*He doesn't grow strawberries*

Where *un(e)* appears before a direct object after *ne ... pas* it means 'not one', (rather than 'not a'):

On n'entendait pas un bruit  
dehors

*We couldn't hear a single noise  
outside*

(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*:

Pas un brin d'herbe ne bougeait dans la prairie  
*Not a blade of grass stirred on the plain*

Where *du, de la, des* appear before a direct object after *ne ... pas*, they are instances of *de* + definite article (and not indefinite articles):

Elle n'a pas parlé du mal qu'on lui a fait  
*She didn't speak of **the** harm they did him*  
(versus: *On ne lui a pas fait de mal* 'They didn't do him any harm')

Il ne s'occupe pas **des** fraises à présent  
*He isn't busy with **the** strawberries at the moment*  
(versus *Il ne cultive pas de fraises cette année* 'He's not growing strawberries this year')

(See Chapter 2.5.)

When adverbs are located sentence-internally in sentences negated by *ne ... pas*, they usually appear immediately before *pas*:

Il ne savait **visiblement pas** que faire de son grand corps  
*You could see that he didn't know what to do with his big frame*

Je ne l'entendais **même pas**  
*I didn't even hear him*

Je ne l'ai **toujours pas** compris  
*I still don't understand him*

NB: *davantage* 'more' used in conjunction with *ne ... pas* has a similar meaning to *ne ... plus*:

J'ai fait un effort pour ne **pas** dépenser **davantage**  
*I made an effort not to spend any more*

### 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?	<i>Who wouldn't be moved in these circumstances?</i>
Que ne donnerait-il pour une bière?	<i>What wouldn't he give for a beer?</i>
Quel homme n'en serait fier?	<i>What man wouldn't be proud of it?</i>
C'est Pierre, si je ne me trompe	<i>It's Pierre, unless I'm mistaken</i>
N'importe qui pourrait le faire	<i>Anyone could do it</i>
J'inventerai n'importe quoi pour faire plus vrai	<i>I'll make up anything to make it sound more realistic</i>

### 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 <b>non</b> compris	<i>something extra which is not included</i>
habiter <b>non</b> loin de la mer	<i>to live not far from the sea</i>
<b>non</b> comme un frère	<i>not as a brother</i>

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*

(See also Chapter 17.3.8.)

*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	[	Anglais
	pas		
	non pas		

## 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 ... nulle* 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 *null(e)* 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: *nul(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  
*She wears a helmet*

Elle ne porte jamais de casque  
*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**

*It's now or never*  
*Have you been to Rennes? Never*

In formal French it can also be interpreted as 'ever' in questions, hypothetical sentences or comparisons:

As-tu jamais envisagé le suicide?  
*Have you ever thought of suicide?*

Si une malle s'était jamais trouvée dans le grenier, elle n'y était plus  
*If there had ever been a trunk in the attic, it was no longer there*

Elle chante mieux que jamais  
*She is singing better than ever*

When adverbs are located sentence-internally in sentences negated by *ne ... jamais*, they usually appear immediately before *jamais*:

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  
*She sells milk*

Elle ne vend plus de lait  
*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 I *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 parlait à peine

*We hardly spoke*

Cette histoire n'avait guère semblé croyable

Cette histoire avait à peine 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

*There are visitors*

Il n'y a guère de visiteurs

*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:

Combien en avez-vous acheté?  
*How many did you buy?*

Guère (à peine quelques-uns)  
*Hardly any*

## 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  
Je **ne** sais **rien** prévoir

*Nothing was taken from me*  
*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**  
Je n'ai rien trouvé d'intéressant  
**Il ne m'a rien dit de surprenant**

*He doesn't say anything interesting*  
*I found nothing interesting*  
*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	<i>without any hesitation</i>
sans jamais reculer	<i>without ever retreating</i>
sans plus se mettre en colère	<i>without getting angry again</i>
sans rien dire	<i>without saying anything</i>
sans déranger personne	<i>without disturbing anyone</i>

### 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!	<i>God forbid!</i>
Il n'a eu garde de se montrer	<i>He carefully refrained from showing his face</i>

#### In clauses dependent on comparatives

Il se porte moins bien que je (ne) pensais	<i>His health is less good than I thought</i>
Il est tout autre qu'on (ne) croit	<i>He is quite different from what one imagines</i>
La vie est plus chère qu'elle (n')était il y a un an	<i>The cost of living is higher than it was a year ago</i>

#### In clauses dependent on verbs which express fear, like *craindre*, *avoir peur que*, *redouter que*, *appréhender que*

<i>Je crains qu'il (ne) vienne</i>	<i>I'm afraid that he will come</i>
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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	<i>Put his bonnet on to stop him catching cold</i>
--	--

#### After the conjunctions *à moins que*, *avant que*, *sans que*

Sans qu'ils (ne) sachent	<i>Without them knowing</i>
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#### In clauses dependent on some verbs expressing doubt or denial which are themselves negated or questioned, like *douter que*, *ignorer que*, *nier que*

<i>Je ne doute pas qu'il (ne) soit intelligent</i>	<i>I don't doubt that he's intelligent</i>
--	--

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*

# 17

## *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	<i>and</i>	Where coordinating conjunctions link two clauses, the verb in the second clause is always in the indicative, e.g. <i>il y avait des bals, mais on ne pouvait pas danser</i> 'There were dances, but we weren't able to dance'.
et . . . et	<i>both . . . and</i>	
mais	<i>but</i>	
ou	<i>or</i>	
ou . . . ou soit . . . soit	<i>either . . . or</i>	
puis	<i>then</i>	means '(first) X then Y'
car	<i>for (because)</i>	mainly used in written French
or	<i>now</i>	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	NOT	*Car il est riche, il est heureux
<i>He is happy, for he is rich</i>		<i>For he is rich, he is happy</i>

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*

fe 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 17.B

Conjunction	Translation	Comments
après que	<i>after</i>	<i>après que</i> may sometimes be heard followed by a verb in the subjunctive, by analogy with <i>avant que</i> (see 17.3.8)
aussitôt que dès que sitôt que dès lors que	<i>as soon as</i>	
aussi longtemps que	<i>as long as</i>	Substitute another adverb for <i>longtemps</i> to create similar conjunctions: <i>aussi vite que</i> , <i>aussi peu que</i>
chaque fois que toutes les fois que	<i>every time</i>	
depuis que	<i>since</i>	Understood as 'from the time when'
maintenant que	<i>now</i>	
pendant que	<i>while, as</i>	Understood as 'during the time when'
quand lorsque	<i>when</i>	
tant que	<i>while, as</i>	Understood as 'the whole time while'
une fois que	<i>once</i>	

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  
*We'll 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*

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**

Conjunction	Translation	Comments
ainsi de même que	<i>just as</i>	
(au fur et) à mesure que à proportion que	<i>as</i>	With the meaning: 'all the while'
attendu que vu que étant donné que dès lors que	<i>seeing that, given that, since</i>	<i>dès lors que</i> also has a time meaning: <i>Dès lors quelle a su la vérité, elle a cessé de lui faire confiance</i> 'As soon as she knew the truth, she lost confidence in him'
(pour) autant que	<i>as far as</i>	Is sometimes followed by the subjunctive to express uncertainty
plutôt que	<i>rather than, more than</i>	<i>ne</i> can be optionally inserted in front of the subordinate verb

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 17.C (continued)

Conjunction	Translation	Comments
comme	<i>as, like</i>	Also has a time meaning: <i>Il arrivait comme midi sonnait</i> 'He arrived as midday was chiming'
comme si	<i>as if</i>	
puisque	<i>since</i>	Not to be confused with <i>depuis que</i> - see 17.4.1
excepté que sinon que outré que sauf que	<i>except that</i>	
parce que	<i>because</i>	

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 been 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 17.C (continued)

Conjunction	Translation	Comments
selon que suivant que	<i>depending on whether</i>	
si même si quand même	<i>if, even if</i>	For tenses with <i>si</i> see 17.3.6
tandis que alors que	<i>while, whereas</i>	<i>alors que</i> also has a time meaning: <i>Alors qu'il se promenait dans le parc, il a rencontré un vieil ami</i> 'While he was walking in the park, he met an old friend'

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' :

Était-elle venue?    Je ne savais pas si elle était venue  
*Had she come?    I didn't know if/whether she had come*

(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*

Main clause		si clause	
<b>Present, future, conditional</b>		<b>Present, imperfect</b>	
Je le fais	<i>I do it</i>	si je peux	<i>if I can</i>
Je le ferai	<i>I'll do it</i>	si je peux	<i>if I am able</i>
Je le ferais	<i>I would do it</i>	si je pouvais	<i>if I was able</i>
<b>Imperfect, compound conditional</b>		<b>Imperfect pluperfect</b>	
Je le faisais	<i>I used to do it</i>	si je pouvais	<i>if I was able</i>
Je l'aurais fait	<i>I would have done it</i>	si je pouvais	<i>if I was able</i>
		si j'avais pu	<i>if I had been able</i>

### 17.3.7 Alternatives to (*même*) *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 (*même*) 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*

Conjunction	Translation	Comments
avant que	<i>before</i>	<i>ne</i> can be optionally inserted in front of the subordinate verb
en attendant que	<i>waiting for</i>	
jusqu'à ce que	<i>until</i>	

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*

Conjunction	Translation	Comments
bien que quoique encore que malgré que	<i>although</i>	<i>encore que</i> is found only in formal written French <i>malgré que</i> is found in informal spoken French
afin que pour que	<i>in order that, so that</i>	

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)

Conjunction	Translation	Comments
de façon que de manière que de sorte que si bien que	<i>so that</i>	Followed by the indicative these describe something which has happened Followed by the subjunctive they express a wish that something might happen
tel que	<i>such as</i>	<i>tel</i> in <i>tel que</i> agrees with the noun it refers to

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)

Conjunction	Translation	Comments
(soit/ou) que ... (soit/ou) que	whether ... or	
à moins que	<i>unless</i>	<i>ne</i> can be optionally inserted in front of the subordinate verb - it is most likely in formal French
pour peu que si peu que	<i>however little</i>	
pourvu que à condition que	<i>providing that</i>	Conditional and future are possible in informal spoken French

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)

Conjunction	Translation	Comments
à supposer que supposé que en supposant que en admettant que	<i>supposing that</i>	
non que ce n'est pas que	<i>not that</i>	
sans que	<i>without</i>	<i>ne</i> can be optionally inserted in front of the subordinate verb in formal French
de peur que de crainte que	<i>for fear that</i>	<i>ne</i> can be optionally inserted in front of the subordinate verb in formal French

### 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 while 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*

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*

A mesure qu'il parlait, une idée se formait dans mon esprit  
*As he spoke, an idea formed in my mind*

(b) meaning 'at the same time as' = *comme*

Il arrivait comme midi sonnait  
*He arrived as midday was striking*

(c) meaning 'in the manner of' = *comme*

Les footballeurs s'embrassaient comme ils l'avaient vu faire à la télévision  
*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*

Quand sa femme est morte, il a déménagé  
*When his wife died, he moved house*

(b) meaning 'whereas' = *alors que, tandis que*

Je me demandais pourquoi il venait chez nous, alors qu'il habitait de l'autre côté de la frontière  
*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):

Quand je suis pressé et que je sors la voiture du garage, elle cale  
*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):

Même quand j'étais gosse, et que je vivais à la campagne, je ne jouais pas dehors  
*Even when I was a child, and (when) I lived in the country, I didn't play outside*

Bien qu'il plaisante et qu'il feigne l'indifférence, en réalité il est très touché  
*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:

S'il fait beau demain, et que nous ayons le temps, nous pourrions aller à la plage  
*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*

<b>Followed by <i>de</i></b>	
afin de (finir le premier) avant de (monter à l'étage) de crainte de/de peur de (déranger les voisins) à condition de (faire des bénéfices) à moins d'(avoir une augmentation)	<i>in order to (finish first)</i> <i>before (going upstairs)</i> <i>for fear of (disturbing the neighbours)</i> <i>subject to (making a profit)</i> <i>unless (I/you/we etc. get a pay rise)</i>
<b>Followed by <i>à</i></b>	
(aller) jusqu'à (déclarer le contraire) de manière à/de façon à/de sorte à (assurer la victoire)	<i>(to go) as far as (stating the opposite)</i> <i>so as to (be certain of victory)</i>
<b>Not followed by another preposition</b>	
pour (finir le premier) sans (faire du bruit)	<i>in order to (finish first)</i> <i>without (making a noise)</i>

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 hello 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*  
(*il* 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) sois 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.:

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  
*Sitting there on a bench, we 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	<i>a fascinating story</i>
Cette histoire est passionnante	<i>this story is fascinating</i>
une eau de toilette séduisante	<i>a seductive perfume</i>
Cette eau de toilette est séduisante	<i>this perfume is seductive</i>
une femme plaisante	<i>an agreeable woman</i>
Cette femme est plaisante	<i>this woman is agreeable</i>
une chaise roulante	<i>a wheelchair</i>
une ferme avoisinante	<i>a neighbouring farm</i>
une injustice criante	<i>a flagrant injustice</i>

### 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 collègue  
*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	<i>a fascinating editorial</i>
un editorial ennuyeux	<i>a boring editorial (OK - adjective)</i>
une chaise roulante	<i>a wheelchair</i>
une chaise haute	<i>a highchair (OK - adjective)</i>

un editorial ridiculisant le gouvernement	<i>*un editorial ennuyeux le gouvernement (not OK - present participle)</i>
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une voiture roulant lentement	<i>*une voiture haute lentement (not OK - present participle)</i>
-------------------------------	---

des manifestants hurlant des slogans	<i>*des manifestants délicats des slogans (not OK - present participle)</i>
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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:

Etant 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*

Ayant 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

argent comptant	<i>in cash</i>
Ils veulent être payés en argent comptant	<i>They want to be paid in cash</i>
ne pas avoir un sou vaillant	<i>not to have a red cent</i>
J'admets que je n'ai pas un sou vaillant	<i>I admit I am totally broke</i>
ce disant	<i>in so saying</i>
Ce disant il a fait un geste maladroit et a renversé un verre	<i>In so saying he made a clumsy gesture and knocked over a glass</i>
chemin faisant	<i>on the way</i>
Chemin faisant on a chanté des chansons	<i>We sang songs on the way</i>
donnant donnant	<i>a fair exchange, swop</i>
Nous sommes d'accord si c'est donnant donnant	<i>We agree as long as it's a fair exchange</i>
strictement parlant	<i>strictly speaking</i>
Strictement parlant je ne devrais pas vous le répéter	<i>Strictly speaking I should not say this to you</i>
tambour battant	<i>in an energetic manner</i>
La droite a mené la campagne tambour battant d'un bout à l'autre	<i>The right led a thoroughly energetic campaign from the beginning to the end</i>

### 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*

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:

un touriste français (adj) <i>a French tourist</i>	un Français de ma connaissance (noun) <i>a Frenchman I know</i>
un livre américain (adj) <i>an American book</i>	un Américain célèbre (noun) <i>a famous American</i>
un prêtre catholique (adj) <i>a Catholic priest</i>	un catholique célèbre (noun) <i>a famous Catholic</i>

### Small letters for languages

English always uses capital letters to introduce adjectives and nouns describing languages, French always uses lower-case letters:

la langue française (adj) <i>the French language</i>
Elle parle bien le français (noun) <i>She speaks French well</i>

### 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.



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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 tranquillement**  
*'It's not true,' the others replied calmly*

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