

# GRAMMAIRE

## POUR LES ÉTUDIANTS DU FRANÇAIS

### NOUN

Nouns are the name of a person, place, thing or idea. They are used after **determiners**.

e.g. un ballon      la tête  
ma mère      quelque chose

### GENDER

All **nouns** in French belong to one of two groups - masculine or feminine. These two groups are called **genders**.

Any **determiner** or **adjective** needs to agree with, or match, the gender of the noun.

e.g. un acteur    an actor    masculine  
une actrice    an actress    feminine

### DETERMINER

A determiner helps to specify a **noun**. For example:

indefinite articles:  
un / une / des (a / some)

definite articles:  
le / la / l' / les (the)

possessive adjectives:  
e.g. mon (my), notre (our)

quantifiers:  
e.g. quelque (some), chaque (every)

### PREPOSITION

Prepositions are placed before a **noun**, **pronoun** or noun phrase to link them to another word in the sentence. They often show physical location or location in time.

For example:  
à côté de (next to)      derrière (behind)

### ADJECTIVE

Adjectives are "describing words". They describe **nouns** and make the meaning of those nouns more specific.

They need to agree in **gender** and number (singular or **plural**) with the noun that they describe.

e.g. un chat noir  
une vache noire et blanche  
des cheveux noirs  
des chaussettes noires

The majority of French adjectives need to go **AFTER** the noun that they describe. Some adjectives are allowed to go before the noun.

### PLURAL

singular = one, plural = more than one

In French we add the suffixes -s or -x and -aux to show that there is more than one.

Most **nouns**: add -s.  
Nouns ending in -s or -x: no change required.

Nouns ending in -au, -eau, -eu and -ou: add -x.

Nouns ending in -al: change -al to -aux.

e.g. chien -> chiens    voix -> voix  
chou -> choux    journal -> journaux

### CONJUNCTION

Conjunctions join two words or phrases.

Co-ordinating conjunctions link two words or phrases as equal pairs.  
e.g. et (and), mais (but), ou (or)

Subordinating conjunctions introduce a subordinate clause.

### ADVERB

Adverbs modify a verb or adjective. In English they usually end in -ly while in French they usually end in -ment.

To form an adverb, make the adjective feminine and add -ment.

e.g. actuellement      rapidement  
heureusement      franchement

### ADVERBIAL

An adverbial is a word or phrase that is used like an adverb to modify a verb or clause.

Time phrases such as "in five minutes" and "last night" fall into this category.

### VERB

A verb is a "doing word", which shows an action that something or someone does as well as a state. It can be transitive (requires an object) or intransitive (does not have an object).

### INFINITIVE

The infinitive is the basic "name" of the **verb**, which is used as a head word in the dictionary.

In English the infinitive is always preceded by "to".

In French, infinitives comprise one word only. They end in -er, -ir or -re.

### AUXILIARY VERB

An auxiliary **verb** helps us to build compound tenses such as the perfect along with the past **participle**.

In French the verbs avoir (to have) and être (to be) are used as auxiliaries in compound tenses such as the perfect and pluperfect.

### TENSE

The tense is the time in which the **verb** happens. In French this difference in time is usually shown by distinct verb forms.

e.g. je chante      I sing (present tense)  
je chanterai      I will sing (future tense)  
je chantais      I was singing (imperfect)  
j'ai chanté      I sang (perfect tense)

### PARTICIPLE

There are two participles, present and past.

The present participle in English has the suffix -ing.

The past participle in English often has the suffix -ed.

In French we form the present participle by adding the suffix -ant to the "nous" form of the present **tense**.

e.g. choisir (to choose) -> choisissant (choosing)

The present participle is used with en:  
en choisissant    while / by / when choosing

We form the past participle by adding the suffix -é (ER verbs), -i (IR verbs) or -u (RE verbs).

e.g. jouer (to play) -> joué (played)  
There are many irregular past participles.

Past participles are used in compound tenses with **auxiliary** verbs.

### PRONOUN

A pronoun replaces a **noun** in a sentence and often enables us to avoid repetition.

Subject pronouns show us which person the **verb** form belongs to, e.g. I, she, they.

Object pronouns replace the object of the sentence.

e.g. I saw the dog. -> I saw it.

Interrogative pronouns are also known as question words. Examples are Who? Which? and How?.