

# **Complete French Master Course**

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# Articles

•1•

## The definite article with nouns

Let's first look at the definite article. All nouns in French have a gender: masculine or feminine, whether they refer to a person, an animal, a thing, or an abstract notion. While English has only one definite article *the*, French uses **le** for masculine nouns and **la** for feminine nouns. **Le** and **la** are shortened to **l'** before a singular noun or adjective that begins with a vowel sound. The plural **les** is used for both masculine and feminine.

### Masculine

|                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>le village</b> | <i>the village</i> |
| <b>le pont</b>    | <i>the bridge</i>  |

### Feminine

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>la ville</b>  | <i>the city</i>   |
| <b>la région</b> | <i>the region</i> |

### Plural

|                                      |                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>les villages</b> ( <i>m.pl.</i> ) | <i>the villages</i> |
| <b>les villes</b> ( <i>f.pl.</i> )   | <i>the cities</i>   |

**Le** and **la** become **l'** in front of singular nouns starting with a vowel or a mute **h**.

### Masculine

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| <b>l'océan</b> | <i>the ocean</i>  |
| <b>l'ami</b>   | <i>the friend</i> |

### Feminine

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>l'île</b>       | <i>the island</i>  |
| <b>l'autoroute</b> | <i>the highway</i> |

Où se trouve **le pont** Alexandre III?

**La ville** principale est à cent kilomètres d'ici.

Prenez **le chemin** sur **la droite**.

**Le réchauffement** de **la planète** est **le sujet** de sa conférence.

**Les enfants** jouent dans **le jardin**.

**L'ami** de Sonia est japonais.

*Where is the Alexandre III bridge?*

*The main town is a hundred kilometers away.*

*Take the path on the (your) right. Global warming is the topic of his lecture.*

*The children are playing in the garden.*

*Sonia's friend is Japanese.*

|                            |                          |                            |                                       |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>la terre</b>            | <i>Earth</i>             | <b>une plaine</b>          | <i>a plain</i>                        |
| <b>une planète</b>         | <i>a planet</i>          | <b>une vallée</b>          | <i>a valley</i>                       |
| <b>un pays</b>             | <i>a country</i>         | <b>une montagne</b>        | <i>a mountain</i>                     |
| <b>un continent</b>        | <i>a continent</i>       | <b>une colline</b>         | <i>a hill</i>                         |
| <b>une capitale</b>        | <i>a capital</i>         | <b>une île</b>             | <i>an island</i>                      |
| <b>une ville</b>           | <i>a city</i>            | <b>un pont</b>             | <i>a bridge</i>                       |
| <b>un village</b>          | <i>a village</i>         | <b>la mer</b>              | <i>a sea</i>                          |
| <b>une rue</b>             | <i>a street</i>          | <b>un océan</b>            | <i>an ocean</i>                       |
| <b>une ruelle</b>          | <i>an alley, a lane</i>  | <b>une rivière</b>         | <i>a river (tributary)</i>            |
| <b>une impasse</b>         | <i>a dead end</i>        | <b>un fleuve</b>           | <i>a river (flowing into the sea)</i> |
| <b>un plan de la ville</b> | <i>a city map</i>        | <b>un ruisseau</b>         | <i>a brook, a stream</i>              |
| <b>un arrondissement</b>   | <i>a (city) district</i> | <b>le nord</b>             | <i>north</i>                          |
| <b>une région</b>          | <i>a region</i>          | <b>le sud</b>              | <i>south</i>                          |
| <b>une province</b>        | <i>a province</i>        | <b>l'est (m.)</b>          | <i>east</i>                           |
| <b>un état</b>             | <i>a state</i>           | <b>l'ouest (m.)</b>        | <i>west</i>                           |
| <b>un royaume</b>          | <i>a kingdom</i>         | <b>un peuple</b>           | <i>a people, a nation</i>             |
| <b>le désert</b>           | <i>the desert</i>        | <b>une tribu</b>           | <i>a tribe</i>                        |
| <b>une frontière</b>       | <i>a border</i>          | <b>autochtone</b>          | <i>native</i>                         |
| <b>une carte</b>           | <i>a map</i>             | <b>étranger, étrangère</b> | <i>foreign</i>                        |
| <b>une route</b>           | <i>a road</i>            | <b>inconnu(e)</b>          | <i>foreign, unknown</i>               |
| <b>une autoroute</b>       | <i>a highway</i>         |                            |                                       |
| <b>une côte</b>            | <i>a coast(line)</i>     |                            |                                       |

## The indefinite and partitive articles with nouns

The indefinite articles are **un** (masculine singular) (*a*), **une** (feminine singular) (*a*), and **des** (both masculine and feminine plural) (*some*).

### Masculine

**un projet**  
**un bâtiment**  
**un immeuble**

*a project, a plan*  
*a building*  
*an apartment building*

### Feminine

**une maison**  
**une lampe**  
**une avalanche**  
**une aubergine**

*a house*  
*a lamp*  
*an avalanche*  
*an eggplant*

### Masculine or feminine

**un(e) architecte**  
**un(e) artiste**  
**un(e) journaliste**

*an architect*  
*an artist*  
*a journalist*

### Masculine and feminine plural

**des murs (m.pl.)**  
**des balcons (m.pl.)**  
**des fenêtres (f.pl.)**  
**des amis (m.pl.)**  
**des amies (f.pl.)**

*(some) walls*  
*(some) balconies*  
*(some) windows*  
*(some) friends (m.)*  
*(some) friends (f.)*

Est-ce qu'il y a **une piscine**?  
Elle a acheté **un vélo**.

*Is there a swimming pool?*  
*She bought a bike.*

Nous avons vu **des lapins** dans le jardin.  
Il a acheté **des rideaux** pour le salon.  
Il a **un nouveau chien**.  
Tu veux emprunter **un de mes livres**?

*We saw (some) rabbits in the garden.  
He bought (some) curtains for the living room.  
He has a new dog.  
Do you want to borrow one of my books?*

## The partitive article

The partitive article is used when the exact quantity of an item is unknown. In English, the partitive article is often omitted. We say, "I want bread" or "I want some bread." However, the partitive article is always required in French. It is formed by combining **de** and the definite article.

de + le = du  
de + l' = de l'  
de + la = de la  
de + les = des

Je voudrais **du** pain.  
Elle mange **du** chocolat.  
Nous buvons **de l'**eau minérale.  
Il achète **de la** viande.  
Elle fait pousser **des** haricots verts.

*I would like some bread.  
She eats chocolate.  
We drink mineral water.  
He is buying meat.  
She grows green beans.*

When used in the negative, the **du**, **de la**, and **des** all become **de**, since the quantity of the item doesn't exist any longer.

Ce village a **du** charme.  
Ce village n'a pas **de** charme.  
Il prête **de l'**argent à son ami.  
Il ne prête pas **d'**argent à son ami.  
Elle a **des** amis à Paris.  
Elle n'a pas **d'**amis à Paris.  
Nous avons **des** cartes routières.  
Nous n'avons pas **de** cartes routières.

*This village has charm.  
This village has no charm.  
He lends money to his friend.  
He does not lend any money to his friend.  
She has friends in Paris.  
She does not have any friends in Paris.  
We have road maps.  
We do not have any road maps.*

One exception to this rule is when using the verb **être** (to be). In the negative, the partitive article is always used with **être**.

C'est **du** fromage de chèvre.  
Ce n'est pas **du** fromage de chèvre.  
C'est **de la** porcelaine.  
Ce n'est pas **de la** porcelaine.  
C'est **de l'**eau potable.  
Ce n'est pas **de l'**eau potable.

*It's goat cheese.  
It's not goat cheese.  
It's porcelain.  
It's not porcelain.  
It's drinkable water.  
It's not drinking water.*

### EXERCICE

#### 1.1

Compléter avec l'article partitif approprié.

1. Il prend \_\_\_\_\_ vacances.
2. Nous mangeons \_\_\_\_\_ pain.
3. Elle visite \_\_\_\_\_ monuments.
4. Elle a \_\_\_\_\_ chance.

5. Il met \_\_\_\_\_ ail dans la salade.
6. Vous choisissez \_\_\_\_\_ cadeaux pour vos amis.
7. Il boit \_\_\_\_\_ lait.
8. Nous envoyons \_\_\_\_\_ cartes postales en vacances.
9. Tu plantes \_\_\_\_\_ légumes.
10. Elle veut \_\_\_\_\_ crème fraîche.

## Accent on accents

There is an annoying tendency, quite widespread in the English-speaking world, to dismiss French accents as another example of Gallic eccentricity. In fact, there are reference sources, whose publishers shall remain unnamed, containing thousands of titles, without accents, of French-language publications. French accents are a nuisance, these publishers maintain, and what counts is correct spelling. Indeed, but while we're talking about correct spelling, let us remind the anti-accent crowd that the result of removing a needed accent is a *typo*.

As we shall see, French accents, which by the way have nothing to do with stress, not only indicate the *correct pronunciation* of a vowel, but also act as *semantic markers*. For example, consider the following two exclamations:

Vivre . . . ou . . . ?  
Vivre . . . où . . . ?

They may sound the same, but their meaning is completely different. The first phrase, which might remind us of the dilemma expressed in Hamlet's famous soliloquy, could be translated as: *To live . . . or to . . . ?*

Perhaps expressing some confusion, but definitely lacking any sinister overtones, the second phrase means: *To live . . . where . . . ?*

Or imagine getting a photograph of a friend at the Louvre Pyramid in Paris. Without the necessary accent, the caption would read:

Marie a la pyramide du Louvre.

This literally means: *Marie has the Louvre Pyramid*.

Without the **accent grave**, **a** is the third-person singular of the verb **avoir**; when we add the **accent grave**, as in **à**, we get a preposition! Now you know why people who denigrate French accents are not to be trusted.

There are four accents in French for vowels and a cedilla for the consonant **c**. In most cases, their main purpose is to modify the pronunciation of a vowel, except for the cedilla, of course, which modifies the pronunciation of a consonant.

## É

The **accent aigu** (*acute accent*) ' is used only with the vowel **e**, as in **été** (*summer*), and it indicates that the vowel should be pronounced as a *closed e*. Think of the *e* in the English word *bed*. Here are other examples:

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| le café   | <i>coffee</i> |
| le céleri | <i>celery</i> |
| le désir  | <i>desire</i> |

|               |                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| l'épaule      | <i>shoulder</i>             |
| gérer         | <i>to manage, to handle</i> |
| le médecin    | <i>doctor</i>               |
| le mélange    | <i>mix</i>                  |
| le musée      | <i>museum</i>               |
| la poésie     | <i>poetry</i>               |
| la sécheresse | <i>drought</i>              |

In some words the initial **é** replaces an initial **s** that figures in earlier Latin and Old French forms. Note that the Latin **s** is still alive in the English cognates. Let's look at a few examples:

|                |                         |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| l'éponge       | <i>sponge</i>           |
| l'état, l'État | <i>state, condition</i> |
| l'étudiant     | <i>student</i>          |
| étudier        | <i>to study</i>         |

## È, À, and Ù

The **accent grave** (*grave accent*) ` is used on the vowels **a**, **e**, and **u**, as in **à** (*at, in*) and **mère** (*mother*), and has a more open pronunciation. For example, **è** resembles the vowel sound in the English word *bad*. (If you ever meet someone from Geneva, Switzerland, ask him or her to pronounce the name of that city: Genève. You will hear a deliciously open vowel in the second syllable.) Let's look at other examples:

|                |                             |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| à              | <i>at, in</i>               |
| après          | <i>after</i>                |
| la/la collègue | <i>colleague</i>            |
| le congrès     | <i>congress, conference</i> |
| la crème       | <i>cream</i>                |
| la grève       | <i>strike</i>               |
| l'interprète   | <i>interpreter</i>          |
| là             | <i>here, there</i>          |
| où             | <i>where</i>                |
| le procès      | <i>lawsuit</i>              |

## Circumflex

The **accent circonflexe** ^ (*circumflex*) can be found on **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, and **u**:

|                                                                |                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Le chien s'amuse avec un bâton.                                | <i>The dog plays with a stick.</i>                       |
| Ils ramassent des champignons dans la forêt.                   | <i>They pick mushrooms in the woods.</i>                 |
| Un touriste finlandais est tombé dans un abîme dans les Alpes. | <i>A Finnish tourist fell into an abyss in the Alps.</i> |
| Les hôtes sont arrivés en retard.                              | <i>The guests arrived late.</i>                          |
| Cette pêche n'est pas mûre.                                    | <i>This peach is not ripe.</i>                           |

If the English cognate contains an **s** that is missing in the French word, you may assume that the French word will need a circumflex accent, which fills the space created by the disappearance of the **s** in French. Most of these words, as you may have guessed, are derived from Latin. For example:

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| le coût | <i>cost</i>  |
| la fête | <i>feast</i> |

|           |                 |
|-----------|-----------------|
| la forêt  | <i>forest</i>   |
| l'hôpital | <i>hospital</i> |
| l'hôte    | <i>host</i>     |
| l'intérêt | <i>interest</i> |
| la pâte   | <i>pasta</i>    |

It is important to identify the meaning of words. Look at the examples:

- ♦ **a** versus **à**  
 Il **a** un nouvel ordinateur. *He **has** a new computer.*  
 Il habite **à** Strasbourg. *He lives **in** Strasbourg.*
- ♦ **de** versus **dé**  
 Elle est revenue **de** Turquie. *She came back **from** Turkey.*  
 Les enfants jouaient aux **dés** dans la rue. *The children played **dice** on the street.*
- ♦ **du** versus **dû**  
 Tu veux du thé ou **du** café? *Do you want **some** tea or coffee?*  
 Ils ont **dû** partir à six heures. *They **had to** leave at 6 o'clock.*

## Diaeresis

Another accent is the **tréma**, or *diaeresis*. The diaeresis is used when two vowels are next to each other and the accented vowel represents a separate sound. In other words, both vowels in a diphthong must be articulated. For example:

|             |                    |
|-------------|--------------------|
| aïe         | <i>ouch</i>        |
| ambiguïté   | <i>ambiguity</i>   |
| archaïque   | <i>archaic</i>     |
| bonsaï      | <i>bonsai</i>      |
| Caraïbe     | <i>Caribbean</i>   |
| coïncidence | <i>coincidence</i> |
| égoïste     | <i>selfish</i>     |
| faïence     | <i>earthenware</i> |
| héroïne     | <i>heroine</i>     |
| laïc        | <i>secular</i>     |
| maïs        | <i>corn</i>        |
| mosaïque    | <i>mosaic</i>      |
| naïve       | <i>naive</i>       |
| Noël        | <i>Christmas</i>   |

## La cédille

There is also a graphic sign called **la cédille**, **ç**. The **cédille** (*cedilla*) is found only under the letter **c** before the vowels **a**, **o**, and **u**. It changes the hard sound of **catalogue** (*catalog*) (like a **k**) into a soft sound of **ça** (*this, that*). It is not used with the vowels **e** and **i**.

|               |                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| la balançoire | <i>swing</i>                |
| le commerçant | <i>shopkeeper, merchant</i> |
| la façade     | <i>façade, front</i>        |
| la façon      | <i>way, manner</i>          |
| français      | <i>French</i>               |
| le garçon     | <i>boy</i>                  |
| le glaçon     | <i>ice cube</i>             |
| la leçon      | <i>lesson</i>               |
| le reçu       | <i>receipt</i>              |
| le soupçon    | <i>suspicion</i>            |

It is important to remember to use the **cédille** when conjugating verbs in different tenses:

nous commençons  
elle a aperçu  
en remplaçant  
il menaçait  
nous plaçons  
je soupçonne  
tu déplaçais  
ils enfonçaient  
je conçois  
il pinça

*we start  
she noticed  
while replacing  
he was threatening  
we are placing  
I suspect  
you moved  
they pushed, hammered  
I conceive, imagine  
he pinched*

EXERCICE

1.2

*Choose the right form of the verb.*

1. La journaliste annonçait/annonçait/annonssait les résultats de l'élection quand il y a eu une panne d'électricité.
2. Nous voyagons/voyageons/voyageons en Sicile chaque automne.
3. Vous reconnaissez/reconnaissez/reconnaissez votre erreur.
4. Après la fête, mes amis rangèrent/rangerent/rangèrent la maison très vite.
5. Élodie manga/mangai/mangea une crème brûlée.
6. Tu as été réveillé/reveillé/réveillé par le chant du coq.
7. Je reconnaitrais/reconnaitrais/reconnaitrait la chanson si vous la chantiez.
8. Tous les étés, nous finançons/finançons/finançons une bibliothèque mobile.
9. J'ai enfin reçu/ressu/reçu ma commande de livres.
10. Les associations écologiques empêchèrent/empecherent/empêchèrent le départ du vieux bateau.

EXERCICE

1.3

*Restore the accents or the graphic signs in the following passage. (See Translations at the back of this book for the English.)*

*La porte étroite*, André Gide (1909)

—Tiens! Ma porte n'était donc pas fermée? dit-elle.

—J'ai frappé; tu n'as pas répondu, Alissa, tu sais que je pars demain?

Elle ne répondit rien, mais posa sur la cheminée le collier qu'elle ne parvenait pas àagrafer. Le mot: fiancailles me paraissait trop nu, trop brutal, j'employai je ne sais quelle périphrase à la

place. Des qu'Alissa me comprit, il me parut qu'elle chancela, s'appuya contre la cheminée ... mais j'étais moi-même si tremblant que craintivement j'évitais de regarder vers elle.

J'étais près d'elle et, sans lever les yeux, lui pris la main; elle ne se dégagea pas, mais, inclinant un peu son visage et soulevant un peu ma main, elle y posa ses lèvres et murmura, appuyée à demi contre moi:

—Non, Jérôme, non; ne nous fiançons pas, je t'en prie ... [ ... ]

—Pourquoi?

—Mais c'est moi qui peux te demander: pourquoi? pourquoi changer?

Je n'osais lui parler de la conversation de la veille, mais sans doute elle sentit que j'y pensais, et, comme une réponse à ma pensée, dit en me regardant fixement:

—Tu te méprends, mon ami: je n'ai pas besoin de tant de bonheur. Ne sommes-nous pas heureux ainsi?

Elle s'efforçait en vain à sourire.

—Non, puisque je dois te quitter.

—Écoute, Jérôme, je ne puis te parler ce soir ... Ne gâtons pas nos derniers instants ...

Non, non. Je t'aime autant que jamais; rassure-toi. Je t'écirai; je t'expliquerai. Je te promets de t'écrire, des demain ... dès que tu seras parti. Va, maintenant!

## The **h aspiré**

In the French language, about 1,500 words start with the letter **h**. And of these, three hundred of them are called **h aspiré**.

You are acquainted with nouns like **l'habitant** (*inhabitant*), **l'habitude** (*habit*), **l'hélicoptère** (*helicopter*), **l'heure** (*hour, time*), **l'histoire** (*history, story*), **l'hiver** (*winter*), **l'homme** (*man*), **l'hôpital** (*hospital*), **l'hôtel** (*hotel*), **l'huile** (*oil*), and so on. These nouns start with an **h** that is silent and the article that precedes them needs an apostrophe.

The **h aspiré** is also silent, but the liaison between the article and the noun is not allowed, so there is no apostrophe on the article. Here are some of the most important nouns with **h aspiré**:

|                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| la haie         | <i>hedge</i>          |
| la haine        | <i>hatred</i>         |
| le hamac        | <i>hammock</i>        |
| le hameau       | <i>hamlet</i>         |
| la hanche       | <i>hip</i>            |
| le handicap     | <i>handicap</i>       |
| le haricot      | <i>bean</i>           |
| le hasard       | <i>chance</i>         |
| le harcèlement  | <i>harassment</i>     |
| la hausse       | <i>increase, rise</i> |
| le haut         | <i>top, summit</i>    |
| le héros        | <i>hero</i>           |
| la hiérarchie   | <i>hierarchy</i>      |
| le homard       | <i>lobster</i>        |
| la honte        | <i>shame</i>          |
| le hors-d'œuvre | <i>hors-d'oeuvre</i>  |

This is of the utmost importance, for you don't want the French laughing at you when they hear: **les héros de la Révolution**, which when pronounced without the aspiration sounds like "The zeros (dummies) of the Revolution"!

As we've seen before, rules can be unreliable, so it's better to remember words in context.

Using the preceding vocabulary list of **h aspiré** words, translate the following sentences using the **est-ce que** form and **tu** when necessary.

1. The hierarchy in this organization is a game of chance.

---

2. The hero of this new film is a man who lives in the hamlet next to our village.

---

3. The hatred between the two brothers is well-known.

---

4. Nora is surprised by the increase of the prices of the hotel's restaurant.

---

5. The hors-d'oeuvres they served were delicious.

---

6. Do you want to order the lobster on the menu?

---

7. Carole's father fractured his hip last week.

---

8. The hammock in the garden is a gift from Laurent.

---

9. The cold winter in this city is the main handicap for our grandparents.

---

10. The shame of his defeat is hard to accept.

---

## Capitalization

In French, the capitalization of words differs quite a bit from English capitalization. After all this business of "rules but no rules," *one rule* is pretty solid: capitalization is more frequent in English than it is in French. Let's look at a few examples.

## Nationalities

Adjectives that refer to nationalities are capitalized in English but not in French. Nouns that refer to nationalities are capitalized in both languages. For example:

Marie est **française**.  
Paolo est **brésilien**.

Marie is **French**.  
Paolo is **Brazilian**.

Son professeur est un **Français**  
de Lyon.  
Elle partage un appartement  
avec une **Italienne**.

*Her teacher is a **Frenchman**  
from Lyon.  
She shares her apartment with  
an **Italian woman**.*

## Languages

Languages are capitalized in English but not in French. For example:

Ils apprennent l'**arabe**.  
Nous parlons **espagnol** à la maison.

*They are learning **Arabic**.  
We speak **Spanish** at home.*

## Locations

When you write an address, the words for *street*, *avenue*, *place*, and other names for roads are not capitalized. For example:

25, rue de l'Université  
55, avenue de Neuilly  
110, boulevard des Capucines  
37, quai Branly  
1, place des Abbesses  
7, impasse de la Tonnelle

## Dates, time, days, months, and seasons

Such words are not capitalized. For example:

Son anniversaire est le 23 **août**.  
Nous partirons le 5 **décembre**.  
Paris, le 10 **mars** 2013  
Il est 10**h**05.

*His birthday is on the 23rd of **August**.  
We'll leave on **December** 5.  
Paris, **March** 10, 2013  
It is 10:05 **a.m.***

## Religions

In French, the names of religions tend not to be capitalized except **l'Islam** (Islam):

le christianisme  
le judaïsme  
le bouddhisme  
l'hindouisme

*Christianity  
Judaism  
Buddhism  
Hinduism*

## Geographical nouns

Geographic names, as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, are capitalized: **l'Asie** (*Asia*), **l'Europe** (*Europe*), **les États-Unis** (*United States*), **la Loire** (*Loire River*), **La Nouvelle-Orléans** (*New Orleans*), **La Havane** (*Havana*), **Aix-en-Provence** (*Aix-en-Provence*).

If the geographic noun is composed of a generic name (*bay*, *cape*, *river*, *sea*, etc.) and a specific noun, only the specific noun is capitalized:

la mer Rouge  
la mer Noire  
la mer Morte  
l'île Maurice  
l'île de Ré  
la baie des Anges

*the Red Sea  
the Black Sea  
the Dead Sea  
Mauritius Island  
Île de Ré  
the Bay of Angels*

le cap Horn  
la péninsule Ibérique  
le désert d'Arabie  
l'océan Pacifique  
le pôle Nord

*Cape Horn  
the Iberian Peninsula  
the Arabian Desert  
the Pacific Ocean  
the North Pole*

You will run into many other cases like **l'Asie centrale** (*Central Asia*), **l'Asie Mineure** (*Asia Minor*), **l'Asie du Sud-Est** (*Southeast Asia*), **l'Arabie Saoudite** (*Saudi Arabia*), **le Moyen-Orient** (*the Middle East*), **l'Extrême-Orient** (*the Far East*), **les Grands Lacs** (*the Great Lakes*), so check your dictionary.

EXERCICE

1.5

Translate the following sentences. Be aware of the capitalization of words, using **tu** when necessary.

1. Jean is Belgian.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Isabella is Hungarian.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Bruno's children speak French with their friends and English with their parents.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In Greece, winter is mild.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Lucie was born on February 28.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. The jazz festival takes place from July 1 to 4.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. The Mediterranean Sea is less salty than the Dead Sea.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Spanish and Portuguese are the main languages in Latin America.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. The South Pole is in the Antarctic.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. When you are skiing in the Alps, you can go from France to Slovenia.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Addressing people

When writing to people in French, capitalize most titles:

Monsieur Verneuil  
Madame Deneuve  
Maître Didier Lebon  
Monsieur le Recteur de l'académie de Poitiers  
Monsieur le Premier ministre

## Accents on capitals

An old topic for debate: are accents needed on capitals? Although there is still some disagreement, it is *absolutely necessary* to use accents on capitals to avoid misinterpretation. Here are a few examples of headlines in a newspaper. You'll see how including accents makes a significant difference!

|                               |                                                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| A NANTES, UN ASSASSIN TUE.    | <i>IN NANTES, A MURDERER KILLS.</i>                 |
| À NANTES, UN ASSASSIN TUÉ.    | <i>IN NANTES, A MURDERER IS KILLED.</i>             |
| PAUL EST INTERNE A L'HOPITAL. | <i>PAUL IS AN INTERN IN THE HOSPITAL.</i>           |
| PAUL EST INTERNÉ À L'HÔPITAL. | <i>PAUL IS CONFINED IN THE MENTAL<br/>HOSPITAL.</i> |

And for another reason, it is simply more elegant in prose. It's a question of pure aesthetics. Just take a look:

Étant donné la promotion d'Air France pour les vols à destination des États-Unis, Ève et Édouard ont décidé de passer une semaine à la Nouvelle-Orléans.  
*Given the Air France promotion for flights to the USA, Ève and Édouard have decided to spend a week in New Orleans.*

So, all to your keyboards!

# Basic gender endings: Masculin and féminin

•2•

## Basic endings

As you already know, there are two genders in French: masculine and feminine, preceded by the definite article **le, la** or the indefinite article **un, une**. Since the purpose of this book is to forge a reliable method of identifying and learning French genders, we will learn the fundamental rules governing genders, starting with masculine nouns and then moving on to the feminine nouns. Along with the rules, we will identify their exceptions. Indeed, exceptions to grammatical rules can be annoying, but this is a “flaw” of all natural languages. (Only constructed languages, such as Esperanto, contain rules without exceptions.)

While you may be tempted to say that French gender can sometimes be arbitrary, you do have some name endings to rely on. Memorization is crucial. Every new word must be learned in conjunction with its gender. This knowledge, as you will find out, quickly becomes tacit, internalized. After some practice, you will be able to identify the gender of a word by relying on your intuition, without even having to think in terms of rules and exceptions.

In your mind, each word will become like a short musical phrase. You won't have to think which key, major or minor, the musical phrase is in. You will simply know. When you study music, you learn scales. In French: **do, ré, mi, fa, sol, la, si, do**. Learning endings is similar. **Le train, le bateau, and le vin** will appear on your masculine scale, whereas **la beauté, la nature, and la culture** will register on your feminine scale. French is all about sounds. Gustave Flaubert used to isolate himself and shout his novels aloud in his **gueuloir**—more or less his screaming room—to make sure the words flowed beautifully. Think of endings as musical notes on a score.

In this chapter, you will learn how to connect a noun to its gender marker by studying the main endings of masculine nouns. Feminine nouns will follow. For example, nouns ending in a consonant or in any vowel but **e** tend to be masculine:

**le bijou**     *jewel*  
**le cacao**     *cocoa*  
**le carnaval**     *carnival*  
**le gala**     *gala*

**le gaz**     *gas*  
**le lieu**     *place*  
**le nez**     *nose*

**le sofa**     *sofa*  
**le tact**     *tact*  
**le zébu**     *zebu*

As we proceed, remember to focus on the endings and, at the same time, to memorize any exceptions that may crop up.

## Basic masculine noun endings

The following endings tend to be masculine.

### -age, -ige, -ège, -oge, -uge

|            |          |
|------------|----------|
| l'éloge    | praise   |
| le fromage | cheese   |
| le mariage | marriage |

|              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| le prodige   | prodigy, feat |
| le refuge    | refuge        |
| le sortilège | spell         |

Stéphane Audeguy a écrit un livre merveilleux, *Le petit **éloge** de la douceur*.  
Les alpinistes ont dormi dans **un refuge**.  
Félicie a offert un fauteuil art déco à sa cousine comme cadeau de **mariage**.

*Stéphane Audeguy wrote a wonderful book, In **Praise** of Sweetness.*  
*The climbers slept in **a refuge**.*  
*Félicie gave her cousin an Art Deco armchair as a **wedding** gift.*

However, there are a few exceptions:

|           |                     |
|-----------|---------------------|
| la cage   | cage                |
| l'horloge | clock               |
| l'image   | image               |
| la loge   | dressing room/lodge |
| la luge   | luge                |
| la nage   | swimming            |

|            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| la Norvège | Norway             |
| la page    | page               |
| la plage   | beach              |
| la rage    | rage, fury, rabies |
| la tige    | stem               |

Il manque **la** dernière **page** du livre.  
Nous avons félicité **la** diva dans **sa** loge.

*The last **page** of the book is missing.*  
*We congratulated **the** diva in **her** dressing room.*

### -ail, -euil

|               |                       |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| l'épouvantail | scarecrow             |
| le fauteuil   | armchair              |
| le recueil    | collection, anthology |

|            |                      |
|------------|----------------------|
| le seuil   | doorstep, threshold  |
| le travail | work                 |
| le vitrail | stained-glass window |

Henri a mis **un épouvantail** dans son jardin.  
Zoé lit **un recueil** de poèmes dans **son** fauteuil.

*Henri has placed **a scarecrow** in his garden.*  
*Zoé is reading **a** poetry **book** in **her** armchair.*

### -ain

|              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| le bain      | bath, swim    |
| le grain     | grain         |
| le lendemain | following day |

|            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| le pain    | bread        |
| le terrain | ground, land |
| le train   | train        |

There is one exception: **la main** (hand).

Samuel est arrivé le 3 mars et il est reparti **le lendemain**.  
Va acheter **du pain** avant de prendre ton bain.

*Samuel arrived on March 3rd and left **the** following day.*  
*Go buy **some** bread before taking **a** bath.*

## -al

|             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| le cheval   | horse     |
| le festival | festival  |
| le journal  | newspaper |

|            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| le mal     | harm, pain, evil |
| le récital | recital          |
| le signal  | signal           |

Armelle a lu dans **le journal** qu'il y aurait  
**un récital** de musique baroque **au**  
**festival** de La Rochelle.  
**Le cheval** d'Henri IV était-il vraiment  
blanc?

Armelle read in **the paper** that there  
would be **a recital** of baroque music  
**at the** La Rochelle **festival**.  
Was Henri IV's **horse** really white?

## -ament, -ement

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| le branchement | connection        |
| le département | department        |
| le jugement    | judgment/sentence |

|                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| le médicament    | medicine/medication |
| le réchauffement | warming             |
| le testament     | testament           |

Ce **médicament** est recommandé pour  
l'hypertension.  
Vu les problèmes dans la famille, il n'a pas  
encore fait **son testament**.

**This drug** is recommended for high blood  
pressure.  
Given the family problems, he has not yet  
made out **his will**.

## -ard

|            |          |
|------------|----------|
| le canard  | duck     |
| le guépard | cheetah  |
| le placard | cupboard |

|              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| le regard    | look/gaze |
| le renard    | fox       |
| le vieillard | old man   |

Une famille de **canards** habite sur l'étang.  
**Son regard** se posa sur elle.

A family of **ducks** lives on the pond.  
**His eyes** came to rest on her.

Some words ending in **-ard** may have a pejorative connotation, such as:

|              |                             |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| le bâtard    | bastard, illegitimate child |
| le chauffard | reckless driver             |
| le clochard  | bum                         |

|            |         |
|------------|---------|
| le fêtard  | reveler |
| le vantard | boaster |

## -eau, -ou

|            |       |
|------------|-------|
| le bateau  | boat  |
| le bijou   | jewel |
| le cerveau | brain |

|            |         |
|------------|---------|
| le chameau | camel   |
| le château | castle  |
| le chou    | cabbage |

Patrick était **le cerveau** de l'affaire.  
On lui a volé tous **ses bijoux**.

Patrick was **the brains** behind the job.  
All of **her jewelery** was stolen.

Here are two exceptions: **la peau** (skin), **l'eau** (water). English and French share many nouns of Latin origin. It will come in handy to compare and deduce the meaning of words. For instance, these two particular exceptions are interesting, for they have retained the gender of their Latin ancestors: *pellis* (skin) and *aqua* (water).

## -el

l'appel *call*  
le caramel *caramel*  
le logiciel *software*

le matériel *equipment, material*  
le sel *salt*

Ce **logiciel** vous permettra de créer un site web.  
Passe-moi **le sel**, s'il te plaît.

*This **software** will help you create a website.*  
*Pass me **the salt**, please.*

## -ent, -ant

l'argent *money*  
le chant *singing, song*  
le diamant *diamond*

le restaurant *restaurant*  
le talent *talent*  
le vent *wind*

Here is one exception: la dent (tooth). And more Latin: dens (tooth) is feminine.

Églantine a emprunté de **l'argent** à sa mère.  
Puis elle s'est offert une bague **en diamant**.

*Églantine borrowed **money** from her mother.*  
*Then she treated herself to **a diamond** ring.*

## -er

le boulanger *baker*  
le danger *danger*  
le déjeuner *lunch*

le fer *iron*  
le passager *passenger*  
le verger *orchard*

Ils ne produisent que des poires Williams dans **ce verger**.  
Si on prenait **du pain perdu** au petit déjeuner?

*They only produce Williams pears in **this orchard**.*  
*What about having **some French toast** for breakfast?*

## -ier/yer

le calendrier *calendar*  
le clavier *keyboard*  
le fichier *file*

le loyer *rent*  
le tablier *apron*  
le voilier *sailboat*

Adèle n'a pas pu ouvrir **ton fichier**.  
Le **loyer** est-il cher pour ce studio?

*Adèle could not open **your file**.*  
*Is **the rent** expensive for this studio?*

## -at, -et, -t

l'alphabet *alphabet*  
le billet *ticket*  
le circuit *circuit, tour*

le débat *debate*  
le lit *bed*  
le perroquet *parrot*

Nous regarderons **le débat** à la télé ce soir.  
Ils dorment dans **un lit** à baldaquin.

*We'll watch **the debate** on TV tonight.*  
*They sleep in **a four-poster bed**.*

Here are quite a few important exceptions:

la dot *dowry*  
la forêt *forest*  
la mort *death*

la nuit *night*  
la part *share*  
la plupart *most people/things*

The Latin word for *forest*, *silva*, although feminine, does not even resemble the French noun; however, it appears in words such as **ylviculture** (*forestry*). But look at the Latin roots of the other feminine words: *nox* (*night*), *mors* (*death*), *pars* (*part, share*), and *dos* (*dowry*).

|                                                                                                        |                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>La nuit</b> , tous les chats sont gris.                                                             | <i>Everyone looks the same <b>in the dark</b>.</i>                                                       |
| De nombreuses espèces de perroquets<br>se trouvent dans <b>la forêt</b> tropicale de<br>l'île Maurice. | <i>Many species of parrot are to be found<br/><b>in the tropical forest</b> of Mauritius<br/>Island.</i> |

## -eur

Nouns ending in **-eur** include names of professions as well as words denoting certain tools and machines.

|                       |                        |                         |                     |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>l'aspirateur</b>   | <i>vacuum cleaner</i>  | <b>le compositeur</b>   | <i>composer</i>     |
| <b>le climatiseur</b> | <i>air-conditioner</i> | <b>l'ordinateur</b>     | <i>computer</i>     |
| <b>le cœur</b>        | <i>heart</i>           | <b>le réfrigérateur</b> | <i>refrigerator</i> |

Léa, tu devrais passer **l'aspirateur** dans le salon. *Léa, you should **vacuum** the living room.*

Paul-Henri a **un cœur** de pierre. *Paul-Henri has **a heart** of stone.*

Don't be intimidated by the references to Latin. No one expects a budding—or even competent—Francophone to become a Latinist. However, Latin is not only the direct ancestor of French but also a living presence. When a French-speaking person dips into the vast ocean of Latin vocabulary to create a handy neologism, he or she, as scholars have written, is not borrowing from a foreign language.

While English is a bit removed from Latin, let us not forget the Norman Conquest (1066), which imposed Norman French on England for more than three centuries. English was not accepted in the courts until 1386, becoming the fully accepted idiom only around 1400. As a result, modern English retains an enormous Latin vocabulary, acquired via Norman French. In fact, English is probably more French than any other non-Romance language, and English speakers use French in everyday life without even knowing it. For example, while *love* is a Germanic word, its adjective, *amorous*, is French. We are so used to our Romance vocabulary that we don't even notice our natural bilingualism when we alternate, depending on the context, between *friendly* (Germanic) and *amicable* (French). There are thousands of such examples—no surprise, since around 30 percent of our vocabulary is French. These affinities and similarities between English and French are good news for the learner.

In another example, we are all familiar with an elegant French word for *software*: **logiciel**. But the word for *gameware*, **ludiciel**, is equally elegant. Why **ludiciel**, you might wonder, since the word for *game* is **jeu**? But the Latin word for game is *ludus*, and the neologism sounds quite native to a French ear. Another interesting Latin-derived word is the French word for *computer*, **ordinateur**. It comes from the Latin *ordinator*, which not only means, literally, *the one who puts things in order*, but is also a synonym for God!

## -ien

|             |                                       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| le bien     | <i>good</i>                           |
| le chien    | <i>dog</i>                            |
| l'entretien | <i>interview, upkeep, maintenance</i> |

|               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| l'italien     | <i>Italian</i>    |
| le lien       | <i>link, tie</i>  |
| le végétarien | <i>vegetarian</i> |

Ludovic ne sait pas discerner **le bien** du mal.

*Ludovic is not able to tell **good** from evil.*

**L'entretien** de ces jardins coûte une fortune.

***The maintenance** of these gardens costs a fortune.*

## -illon

|               |                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| le bouillon   | <i>broth, bubble</i>        |
| le brouillon  | <i>first draft, outline</i> |
| l'échantillon | <i>sample</i>               |

|               |                         |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| le grillon    | <i>cricket</i>          |
| le papillon   | <i>butterfly</i>        |
| le tourbillon | <i>whirlwind, swirl</i> |

Voudriez-vous **un échantillon** de ce tissu en lin?

*Would you like **a sample** of this linen fabric?*

La bibliothèque Mitterrand a organisé une exposition sur **les brouillons** des plus grands écrivains.

*The Mitterrand Library organized an exhibit on the greatest writers' **drafts**.*

## -in

|            |                        |
|------------|------------------------|
| le chagrin | <i>grief</i>           |
| le dessin  | <i>drawing, design</i> |
| le jardin  | <i>garden</i>          |

|           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| le moulin | <i>mill</i> |
| le vin    | <i>wine</i> |

One exception is **la fin** (end).

Théo a fait **un joli dessin** dans **le jardin**.  
Le meunier est mort de **chagrin** dans **son moulin**.

*Théo did **a nice drawing** in **the garden**.  
The miller died of **sorrow** in **his mill**.*

## -is

|              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| le compromis | <i>compromise</i> |
| le croquis   | <i>sketch</i>     |
| le devis     | <i>estimate</i>   |

|             |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| le fouillis | <i>mess, jumble</i> |
| le taudis   | <i>slum</i>         |
| le tennis   | <i>tennis</i>       |

There are two exceptions: **la souris** (mouse) and **la vis** (screw).

Pourriez-vous nous donner **un devis** pour les réparations?  
**Quel fouillis!** Je ne retrouve même plus **la souris** de mon ordinateur!

*Could you give us **an estimate** for the repairs?  
**What a mess!** I can't even find **my** computer **mouse**!*

## -isme

|             |                    |
|-------------|--------------------|
| l'égoïsme   | <i>selfishness</i> |
| l'héroïsme  | <i>heroism</i>     |
| l'optimisme | <i>optimism</i>    |

|               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| le romantisme | <i>romanticism</i> |
| le séisme     | <i>earthquake</i>  |
| le socialisme | <i>socialism</i>   |

Le **séisme** a fait de nombreuses victimes.  
L'**héroïsme** de la population était inouï.

*The **earthquake** killed many people.  
The **heroism** of the people was  
unbelievable.*

## -oir, -oin

le **besoin**                      *need*  
le **coin**                         *corner, part*  
le **couloir**                    *hallway*

le **miroir**                      *mirror*  
le **témoin**                    *witness*  
le **trottoir**                   *sidewalk*

Sabrina a **besoin** d'un nouveau **miroir**.  
Appelez le **témoin**!

Sabrina **needs** a new **mirror**.  
Call **the witness**!

## -on, -om

le **cornichon**                *gherkin*  
le **nom**                        *name*  
le **prénom**                  *first name*

le **salon**                      *living room*  
le **torchon**                  *dish towel*  
le **violon**                   *violin*

Here are a few exceptions:

la **boisson**                  *beverage*  
la **chanson**                 *song*  
la **cloison**                  *partition*  
la **cuisson**                  *cooking*  
la **façon**                    *manner*

la **leçon**                    *lesson*  
la **livraison**               *delivery*  
la **rançon**                  *ransom*  
la **trahison**               *betrayal*

Passe-moi le **torchon** jaune!  
Quelle est l'origine de **ce prénom**?—  
Maylis? Je crois que c'est breton.

Hand me **the yellow dish towel**!  
What is the origin of **this first name**?—  
Maylis? I think it is Breton.

Bear in mind that the **-on** ending often indicates Latin ancestry and that many feminine Latin words ending with **-tio** acquired **-tion** endings, which are also feminine in French. Thus the Latin *natio* became **nation**. In the same vein, **chanson** comes from *cantio* and **leçon** from *lectio*. It is safe to say that you have to be extra careful with **-on** words. For example, **son** (*sound*) retains the masculine gender of *sonus*, its Latin ancestor, whereas words like **nation** are feminine. It might be helpful to treat **-tion** as a separate ending, which always indicates a feminine word.

## -phone

Nouns ending with **-phone** are masculine, often referring to machines and instruments connected to sound. This is a bit funny, because this ending stems from the Greek word for *voice*, *phōnē*, which is feminine, just as the French word **voix**, which comes from the equally feminine Latin *vox*. Yes, Greek, too, lurks behind the scenes, but there is no need for panic. In French, we get to enjoy the lexical opulence of the two classical languages without having to learn their respective grammars. That is a good thing, of course, since French grammar, as we know, is enough of a challenge.

le **magnétophone**        *tape recorder*  
le **mégaphone**            *megaphone*  
le **microphone**          *microphone*

le **saxophone**            *saxophone*  
le **téléphone**            *telephone*  
le **xylophone**            *xylophone*

**Leur téléphone** est en dérangement.  
Guillaume joue **du saxophone** dans un club le jeudi soir.

**Their phone** is out of order.  
Guillaume plays **the saxophone** in a club on Thursday nights.

## -scope

Nouns ending in **-scope** refer to optical instruments and related things, which makes sense, because the suffix comes from the Greek verb *skopeo*, which means *I look* and *I spy on someone*.

|                        |                           |                         |                    |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>l'horoscope</b>     | <i>horoscope</i>          | <b>le microscope</b>    | <i>microscope</i>  |
| <b>le kaléidoscope</b> | <i>kaleidoscope</i>       | <b>le télescope</b>     | <i>telescope</i>   |
| <b>le magnétoscope</b> | <i>videotape recorder</i> | <b>le trombinoscope</b> | <i>group photo</i> |

Isabeau lit **son horoscope** tous les matins dans le journal.

Isabeau reads **her horoscope** every morning in the paper.

Nous avons observé Vénus grâce **au télescope** d'Alix.

We looked at Venus thanks to Alix's **telescope**.

As you have seen, there is some method in the madness of genders. True, there is no set of rules, free of exceptions, that one could memorize and thereby master French genders. If that were true, there would be no need for this book! However, by memorizing the principal ending types, you will make great strides toward mastery. You might even decide that incomplete mastery may be OK, because it leaves room for mystery.

## Other masculine endings

You thought you were done with masculine endings? Not so fast. There are other interesting cases.

### -a

Nouns ending with **-a** are usually masculine:

|                    |                |                   |                |                  |                |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>l'agenda</b>    | <i>agenda</i>  | <b>le choléra</b> | <i>cholera</i> | <b>le pyjama</b> | <i>pyjamas</i> |
| <b>le bégonia</b>  | <i>begonia</i> | <b>le cinéma</b>  | <i>cinema</i>  | <b>le visa</b>   | <i>visa</i>    |
| <b>le brouhaha</b> | <i>hubbub</i>  | <b>l'opéra</b>    | <i>opera</i>   |                  |                |

However, there are a few exceptions:

|                 |              |                   |                |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>la diva</b>  | <i>diva</i>  | <b>la saga</b>    | <i>saga</i>    | <b>la villa</b> | <i>villa</i> |
| <b>la polka</b> | <i>polka</i> | <b>la véranda</b> | <i>veranda</i> |                 |              |

**Le choléra** sévit dans cette région.

**Cholera** is rampant in this region.

Il faut **un visa** pour entrer dans ce pays.

You need **a visa** to enter this country.

This may be quite confusing, since we know that **-a** is generally a feminine ending in Romance languages. Indeed, French can be a bit peculiar, but there is an explanation. Unlike the other Romance languages, French did not keep the **-a** ending in Latin-derived feminine nouns.

### -as

Nouns ending with **-as** are generally masculine:

|                   |                      |                   |                    |                   |                     |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>le bras</b>    | <i>arm</i>           | <b>le fracas</b>  | <i>crash, roar</i> | <b>le pas</b>     | <i>step</i>         |
| <b>le cadenas</b> | <i>padlock</i>       | <b>le lilas</b>   | <i>lilac</i>       | <b>le repas</b>   | <i>meal</i>         |
| <b>le cas</b>     | <i>case</i>          | <b>le matelas</b> | <i>mattress</i>    | <b>le verglas</b> | <i>glazed frost</i> |
| <b>l'embarras</b> | <i>embarrassment</i> |                   |                    |                   |                     |

J'ai besoin d'**un cadenas** pour ma valise. *I need **a padlock** for my suitcase.*  
 Alice a fait **ses premiers pas** à huit mois. *Alice made **her first steps** at the age of eight months.*

## -ème, -me, -ome, -ôme, -aume, -rme, -sme

Nouns ending in -ème, -me, -ome, -ôme, -aume, -rme, and -sme tend to be masculine:

|          |       |             |         |           |       |
|----------|-------|-------------|---------|-----------|-------|
| le dôme  | dome  | le problème | problem | le spasme | spasm |
| l'idiome | idiom | le royaume  | kingdom | le terme  | term  |
| le poème | poem  |             |         |           |       |

Mon **royaume** pour un cheval!  
 C'est le plus beau **poème** qu'il m'ait  
 jamais écrit.

*My **kingdom** for a horse!*  
*It is **the** most beautiful **poem** he ever  
 wrote to me.*

## -ble, -cle, -gle, -ple

Nouns ending in -ble, -cle, -gle, and -ple are often masculine:

|            |         |              |        |
|------------|---------|--------------|--------|
| l'angle    | angle   | le sable     | sand   |
| le câble   | cable   | le spectacle | show   |
| le périple | journey | le temple    | temple |

Here are some interesting exceptions, all with a Latin pedigree, except for **la bible**, a Greek interloper. The Greek neuter plural (*ta biblia*), which means *the books*, having become feminine in Romance languages because of its deceptive -a ending, was bound to become -e in French. Back to our Latin-derived exceptions:

| French    | English | Latin                          |
|-----------|---------|--------------------------------|
| la boucle | buckle  | buccula (meaning little mouth) |
| la fable  | fable   | fabula                         |
| la règle  | rule    | regula                         |
| la table  | table   | tabula                         |

Le **spectacle** ne dura qu'une heure.  
 La **boucle** est bouclée.

*The **show** lasted only an hour.*  
*We have come **full circle**.*

## -ac, -ak, -ic, -oc, -uc

Nouns ending in -ac, -ak, -ic, -oc, and -uc tend to be masculine:

|            |                    |               |            |           |                     |
|------------|--------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|---------------------|
| l'ammoniac | ammonia            | le croc       | fang/hook  | le public | public              |
| l'aqueduc  | aqueduct           | le diagnostic | diagnosis  | le stuc   | stucco              |
| l'armagnac | Armagnac           | le duc        | duke       | le tabac  | tobacco             |
| le basilic | basil              | le fric       | money/cash | le trafic | traffic             |
| le bivouac | bivouac            | le hamac      | hammock    | le troc   | barter              |
| le bloc    | block, writing pad | le kayak      | kayak      | le truc   | trick/thing/gimmick |
| le clic    | click              | le lac        | lake       | le viaduc | viaduct             |

Renaud vient de penser à **un truc**.  
 Tu as **un bloc** de papier?

*Renaud just thought of **something**.*  
*Do you have a writing **pad**?*

## -g

Nouns ending in **-g** are generally masculine:

|                    |                                 |                |                 |                |              |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>l'étang</b>     | <i>pond/lake</i>                | <b>le joug</b> | <i>yoke</i>     | <b>le sang</b> | <i>blood</i> |
| <b>le faubourg</b> | <i>suburb/<br/>neighborhood</i> | <b>le rang</b> | <i>row/rank</i> |                |              |

Tristan a **du sang** sur sa chemise.  
Célie est assise **au** troisième **rang**.

Tristan has **blood** on his shirt.  
Célie is sitting in **the** third **row**.

## -o, -op, -ort, -os, -ot, -ours, -us

Nouns ending in **-o, -op, -ort, -os, -ot, -ours, and -us** are usually masculine:

|                      |                |                   |                           |                    |                    |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>l'abricot</b>     | <i>apricot</i> | <b>l'escargot</b> | <i>snail</i>              | <b>le numéro</b>   | <i>number</i>      |
| <b>le cactus</b>     | <i>cactus</i>  | <b>le jus</b>     | <i>juice</i>              | <b>l'ours</b>      | <i>bear</i>        |
| <b>le coquelicot</b> | <i>poppy</i>   | <b>le lapsus</b>  | <i>slip of the tongue</i> | <b>le paquebot</b> | <i>ocean liner</i> |
| <b>le cours</b>      | <i>course</i>  | <b>le lavabo</b>  | <i>bathroom sink</i>      | <b>le sirop</b>    | <i>syrup</i>       |
| <b>le dos</b>        | <i>back</i>    | <b>le mot</b>     | <i>word</i>               | <b>le sport</b>    | <i>sport</i>       |
| <b>l'effort</b>      | <i>effort</i>  | <b>le nimbus</b>  | <i>nimbus cloud</i>       | <b>le vélo</b>     | <i>bicycle</i>     |

**Quel numéro** dois-je composer pour  
appeler Londres?  
Vous devriez faire **un effort**!

**What number** should I dial to call  
London?  
You should make **an effort**!

Remember that gender does not change when a word is abbreviated:

|                 |                         |                  |                    |                  |                            |
|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>la météo</b> | <i>weather forecast</i> | <b>la photo</b>  | <i>photography</i> | <b>la stéréo</b> | <i>hi-fi/stereo system</i> |
| <b>la philo</b> | <i>philosophy</i>       | <b>la psycho</b> | <i>psychology</i>  | <b>la vidéo</b>  | <i>video</i>               |

**La photo** que tu as prise est un peu floue.  
Comment il est, ton prof de **philo**?

**The picture** you took is a bit blurred.  
Your **philosophy** teacher, how is he?

## -ogue

Nouns ending in **-ogue** that refer to certain professionals may be masculine or feminine. For example, while Claude Lévi-Strauss was **un anthropologue** (*anthropologist*), we would call Margaret Mead **une anthropologue**.

**Masculine nouns ending in -ogue**

|                     |                 |                    |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| <b>le catalogue</b> | <i>catalog</i>  | <b>l'épilogue</b>  | <i>epilogue</i> |
| <b>le dialogue</b>  | <i>dialogue</i> | <b>le prologue</b> | <i>prologue</i> |

A hint: all these words are in some way derived from the Greek *logos*, a masculine noun that means *word*, and from many other words.

**Feminine nouns ending in -ogue**

|                   |                               |                     |                      |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| <b>la drogue</b>  | <i>drug</i>                   | <b>la synagogue</b> | <i>synagogue</i>     |
| <b>la morgue</b>  | <i>haughtiness/morgue</i>     | <b>la vogue</b>     | <i>fashion/vogue</i> |
| <b>la pirogue</b> | <i>piroque, dug-out canoe</i> |                     |                      |

C'est **la** grande **vogue** maintenant.  
Les Gauthier ont descendu l'Amazone **en**  
**piroque**.

It's all **the rage** now.  
The Gauthiers went down the Amazon  
in **a piroque**.

## -r, -er

Nouns ending in **-r** and **-er** are generally masculine:

|                  |                  |                     |                  |                    |                       |
|------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>l'avenir</b>  | <i>future</i>    | <b>le cauchemar</b> | <i>nightmare</i> | <b>le jour</b>     | <i>day</i>            |
| <b>le bar</b>    | <i>bar</i>       | <b>le cuir</b>      | <i>leather</i>   | <b>le nénuphar</b> | <i>water lily</i>     |
| <b>le car</b>    | <i>bus/coach</i> | <b>le décor</b>     | <i>décor</i>     | <b>le tour</b>     | <i>tour/trip/ride</i> |
| <b>le castor</b> | <i>beaver</i>    | <b>le dollar</b>    | <i>dollar</i>    | <b>le trésor</b>   | <i>treasure</i>       |

One exception to this rule is words ending in **-eur** when they do not denote a profession or a machine. Here are three additional exceptions:

|                |                        |
|----------------|------------------------|
| <b>la cour</b> | <i>courtyard</i>       |
| <b>la star</b> | <i>star, celebrity</i> |
| <b>la tour</b> | <i>tower</i>           |

|                                                            |                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| C'était <b>le pire cauchemar</b> qu'on ait pu imaginer.    | <i>It was <b>the</b> worst <b>nightmare</b> we could have imagined.</i> |
| Un sans-abri a découvert <b>un trésor</b> dans une grotte. | <i>A homeless man discovered <b>a treasure</b> in a grotto.</i>         |

## -re

Nouns ending in **-re** are generally masculine:

|                  |               |                  |                      |                  |                       |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>le centre</b> | <i>center</i> | <b>le lustre</b> | <i>luster/gloss</i>  | <b>le mètre</b>  | <i>meter</i>          |
| <b>le feutre</b> | <i>felt</i>   | <b>le maître</b> | <i>master/artist</i> | <b>le ventre</b> | <i>stomach, belly</i> |
| <b>le filtre</b> | <i>filter</i> |                  |                      |                  |                       |

These are some exceptions:

|                   |               |                  |               |                 |                    |
|-------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| <b>la fenêtre</b> | <i>window</i> | <b>la lettre</b> | <i>letter</i> | <b>la vitre</b> | <i>window pane</i> |
| <b>l'huître</b>   | <i>oyster</i> | <b>la montre</b> | <i>watch</i>  |                 |                    |

|                                             |                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Le centre</b> culturel est juste à côté. | <i><b>The</b> cultural <b>center</b> is right next door.</i> |
| Ne partez pas <b>le ventre</b> creux!       | <i>Don't leave with <b>an</b> empty <b>stomach</b>!</i>      |

## -x, -xe

For the most part, nouns ending in **-x** and **-xe** are masculine:

|                       |                   |                    |                        |                    |                |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>l'axe</b>          | <i>axis</i>       | <b>le flux</b>     | <i>flow, tide</i>      | <b>le luxe</b>     | <i>luxury</i>  |
| <b>le circonflexe</b> | <i>circumflex</i> | <b>l'inox</b>      | <i>stainless steel</i> | <b>le lynx</b>     | <i>lynx</i>    |
| <b>le complexe</b>    | <i>complex</i>    | <b>le juke-box</b> | <i>jukebox</i>         | <b>le paradoxe</b> | <i>paradox</i> |
| <b>l'équinoxe</b>     | <i>equinox</i>    | <b>le larynx</b>   | <i>larynx</i>          | <b>le sexe</b>     | <i>sex</i>     |

Here are some exceptions:

|                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| <b>la boxe</b>    | <i>boxing</i> |
| <b>la syntaxe</b> | <i>syntax</i> |
| <b>la taxe</b>    | <i>tax</i>    |

Interestingly, the word *syntax* is a derivation of the feminine Greek noun *taxis*, meaning *battle array*.

|                                                           |                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Tu oublies toujours <b>le circonflexe</b> sur « gâteau »! | <i>You always forget <b>the circumflex</b> on gâteau!</i> |
| Il vit dans <b>le luxe</b> .                              | <i>He lives in <b>luxury</b>.</i>                         |

## -e

Many nouns ending in **-e** are masculine, although there are some rather prominent feminine nouns in that category, such as **la gloire**. It is a mistake, however, to assume that the **-e** ending automatically defines a noun as feminine. Here are some examples:

|                   |                |                  |                     |                   |                    |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>l'ange</b>     | <i>angel</i>   | <b>le groupe</b> | <i>group</i>        | <b>le pouce</b>   | <i>thumb</i>       |
| <b>le beurre</b>  | <i>butter</i>  | <b>le palace</b> | <i>palace</i>       | <b>le souffle</b> | <i>breath/blow</i> |
| <b>le divorce</b> | <i>divorce</i> | <b>le peigne</b> | <i>comb</i>         | <b>le verbe</b>   | <i>verb</i>        |
| <b>l'espace</b>   | <i>space</i>   | <b>le poste</b>  | <i>position/job</i> | <b>le verre</b>   | <i>glass</i>       |

Tu préfères **le beurre salé** ou **le beurre doux**? *Do you prefer **salted** or **unsalted** butter?*

**Ce groupe** est n'est pas compétent pour résoudre **ce problème**. ***This group** is not competent to solve **this problem**.*

Here we are, at the end of the masculine endings. Ouf!

To facilitate the memorization of gender, make up sentences or rhymes like this one:

|                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Le soir, Lucas lis le journal dans son<br>fauteuil et écoute le récital tandis que<br>son chat joue avec le bouchon de la<br>bouteille de son vin préféré. | <i>At night, Lucas reads the paper in his<br/>armchair and listens to the recital<br/>while his cat plays with the cork from<br/>a bottle of his favorite wine.</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Repeat this sentence a few times, and you'll have a few endings engraved in your mind. Then create new ones or extract some from French literature. Write them in a small notebook or make a "Gender" list on your computer. You'll see—it works!

## Basic feminine noun endings

The following nouns tend to be feminine:

### -ade

|                    |                                 |                     |                   |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>l'ambassade</b> | <i>embassy</i>                  | <b>la limonade</b>  | <i>lemonade</i>   |
| <b>la cascade</b>  | <i>waterfall, stunt, series</i> | <b>la promenade</b> | <i>walk, ride</i> |
| <b>la grenade</b>  | <i>grenade/pomegranate</i>      | <b>la salade</b>    | <i>salad</i>      |

Here are a few exceptions:

|                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| <b>le grade</b> | <i>rank, degree</i> |
| <b>le jade</b>  | <i>jade</i>         |
| <b>le stade</b> | <i>stadium</i>      |

**L'ambassade** n'est pas ouverte aujourd'hui. ***The Embassy** is not open today.*  
Moi, je prends **la salade** niçoise. *I'm having **the salad** niçoise!*

### -aie

|                 |                          |                     |                        |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| <b>la baie</b>  | <i>berry/bay/opening</i> | <b>la monnaie</b>   | <i>change/currency</i> |
| <b>la craie</b> | <i>chalk</i>             | <b>la palmeraie</b> | <i>palm grove</i>      |
| <b>la haie</b>  | <i>hedge/hurdle</i>      | <b>la taie</b>      | <i>pillowcase</i>      |

Leur jardin est entouré d'**une haie** d'aubépine. *Their garden is surrounded with a hawthorn **hedge**.*  
Auriez-vous de **la monnaie**? *Could you give me **some change**?*

## -aine

|             |        |             |           |
|-------------|--------|-------------|-----------|
| la douzaine | dozen  | la marraine | godmother |
| la haine    | hatred | la migraine | migraine  |
| la laine    | wool   | la semaine  | week      |

Here are a couple of exceptions:

|            |                      |
|------------|----------------------|
| le domaine | estate, field/domain |
| le Maine   | Maine                |

Mathilde a acheté un tapis **de** haute **laine** à Marrakech. *Mathilde bought a thick-pile **wool** rug in Marrakech.*

Offre-lui **une douzaine de** roses! *Give her **a dozen** roses!*

## -aison, -oison

|                |                             |           |              |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| la cloison     | partition, bulkhead, septum | la raison | reason, mind |
| la conjugaison | conjugation, union          | la saison | season       |
| la maison      | house                       | la toison | fleece, mane |

Here are a few exceptions:

|           |        |
|-----------|--------|
| le poison | poison |
| le vison  | mink   |

Connais-tu **la conjugaison** du verbe « s'asseoir »?

*Do you know **the conjugation** of the verb to sit?*

Jonathan se met en colère pour **une raison** ou une autre. *Jonathan gets angry for **some reason** or other.*

## -ence, -ance

|                |              |              |                     |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| la chance      | luck, chance | la puissance | power, authority    |
| l'indépendance | independence | l'urgence    | urgency, emergency  |
| la présidence  | presidency   | la violence  | violence, roughness |

Here is an exception: **le silence** (silence).

Vous avez de **la chance** d'aller en France demain. *You are **lucky** to go to France tomorrow.*

Ils ont lutté pour **leur indépendance**. *They fought for **their independence**.*

## -ande

|             |                    |            |                      |
|-------------|--------------------|------------|----------------------|
| l'amande    | almond, kernel     | la demande | request, application |
| la bande    | band/bandage/group | la viande  | meat                 |
| la commande | order, control     |            |                      |

Julien a envoyé **sa demande** hier.

*Julien sent **his application** yesterday.*

**Ma commande** n'est pas encore arrivée. ***My order** has not arrived yet.*

## -ée

|            |                   |            |          |
|------------|-------------------|------------|----------|
| l'année    | year              | la durée   | duration |
| l'araignée | spider            | l'idée     | idea     |
| la bouée   | rubber ring, buoy | la journée | day      |

Here are a few exceptions:

|            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| l'apogée   | <i>apogee/peak</i> |
| l'athée    | <i>atheist</i>     |
| le colisée | <i>coliseum</i>    |
| le lycée   | <i>high school</i> |

|                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| le mausolée        | <i>mausoleum</i>  |
| le musée           | <i>museum</i>     |
| le rez-de-chaussée | <i>main floor</i> |
| le trophée         | <i>trophy</i>     |

Quelles idées folles!  
Quelle sera la **durée** du vol?

*What crazy **ideas!***  
*What's **the duration** of the flight?*

Words indicating quantity are often feminine:

|               |                       |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| une assiettée | <i>plateful</i>       |
| une bouchée   | <i>mouthful</i>       |
| une brassée   | <i>armful</i>         |
| une brouettée | <i>wheelbarrowful</i> |

|               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| une cuillerée | <i>spoonful</i>  |
| une pelletée  | <i>shovelful</i> |
| une pincée    | <i>pinch</i>     |
| une poignée   | <i>handful</i>   |

Sofia est arrivée avec **une brassée** de fleurs sauvages. *Sofia arrived with **an armful** of wild flowers.*  
Maheu m'a donné **une poignée** de cerises. *Maheu gave me **a handful** of cherries.*

## -esse, -osse, -ousse

|             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| la brosse   | <i>brush</i> |
| la housse   | <i>cover</i> |
| la jeunesse | <i>youth</i> |

|              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| la politesse | <i>politeness</i> |
| la sagesse   | <i>wisdom</i>     |
| la trousse   | <i>case</i>       |

Here are a couple of exceptions:

|                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| le carrosse     | <i>coach</i>      |
| le pamplemousse | <i>grapefruit</i> |

Florin, c'est la voix de **la sagesse**. *Florin, he is the voice of **wisdom**.*  
J'ai perdu un bouton. Tu as **une trousse** à couture? *I lost a button. Do you have **a sewing kit**?*

## -ette

|              |                     |
|--------------|---------------------|
| l'assiette   | <i>plate, basis</i> |
| la dette     | <i>debt</i>         |
| la devinette | <i>riddle</i>       |

|               |                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| la fourchette | <i>fork/margin</i>          |
| la noisette   | <i>hazelnut, small knob</i> |
| la serviette  | <i>towel/napkin</i>         |

Here are some interesting exceptions:

|                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| le bébé-éprouvette | <i>test-tube baby</i> |
| le casse-noisette  | <i>nutcracker</i>     |
| le porte-serviette | <i>napkin holder</i>  |

|              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| le quartette | <i>quartet</i>  |
| le quintette | <i>quintet</i>  |
| le squelette | <i>skeleton</i> |

Diego a **une dette** de reconnaissance envers vous. *Diego has **a debt** of gratitude toward you.*  
Donne-moi **une** plus grande **assiette**. *Give me **a larger plate**.*

## -eur (excluding nouns denoting professions and machines)

|            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| la chaleur | <i>heat</i>         |
| la couleur | <i>color, light</i> |
| la fleur   | <i>flower</i>       |

|           |                    |
|-----------|--------------------|
| la lueur  | <i>glow, light</i> |
| la peur   | <i>fear</i>        |
| la tumeur | <i>tumor</i>       |

Here are some exceptions:

**le bonheur**      *happiness*  
**l'honneur**      *honor*

Margaux a **une peur** bleue des souris.  
De **quelle couleur** allez-vous repeindre  
votre salle de bain?

**le labeur**      *labor/toil*  
**le malheur**      *misfortune/ordeal*

Margaux is **scared** to death of mice.  
**What color** are you going to repaint your  
bathroom?

## -ie, -rie

**la magie**      *magic*  
**la poésie**      *poetry, poem*  
**la tapisserie**      *tapestry, wallpaper*

**la thérapie**      *therapy*  
**l'utopie**      *utopia*  
**la vie**      *life*

More exceptions to add to the list include:

**le génie**      *genius*  
**l'incendie**      *fire*  
**le messie**      *messiah*

**le parapluie**      *umbrella*  
**le sosie**      *double*  
**le zombie**      *zombie*

Marie Laveau croit à **la magie**.  
**La thérapie** de Lola a duré cinq ans.

Marie Laveau believes in **magic**.  
Lola's **therapy** lasted five years.

## -ise

**la cerise**      *cherry*  
**la chemise**      *shirt, folder*  
**la crise**      *crisis, attack, fit*

**la gourmandise**      *delicacy, greediness*  
**la surprise**      *surprise*  
**la valise**      *suitcase, bag*

**La crise** financière a eu un impact  
catastrophique sur cette province.  
Je pense que **ta valise** est trop lourde.

**The financial crisis** had a terrible impact  
on this province.  
I think **your suitcase** is too heavy.

## -aille

**la bataille**      *battle, fight*  
**l'écaille**      *scale, chip, flake*  
**la faille**      *flaw/fault (geology)*

**la médaille**      *medal, disk*  
**la paille**      *straw*  
**la taille**      *waist/size/height*

An exception is **le braille** (Braille). This exception could be explained by the fact that the Braille alphabet was named after its inventor, Louis Braille (1809–1852).

C'est trop serré à **la taille**.  
Il y a **une faille** dans votre argument.

It is too tight around **the waist**.  
There is **a flaw** in your argument.

## -ille

**la brindille**      *twig*  
**la famille**      *family*  
**la fille**      *girl, daughter*

**la lentille**      *lens/lentil*  
**la myrtille**      *bilberry*  
**la vanille**      *vanilla*

Here is a trio of exceptions:

**le gorille**      *gorilla/bodyguard*  
**le quadrille**      *quadrille*  
**le vaudeville**      *vaudeville*

Manon ne veut pas de **lentilles** mais une  
glace à **la vanille**.  
**La famille** d'Hadrien habite à Nîmes.

Manon does not want **lentils** but a  
**vanilla** ice cream cone.  
Hadrien's **family** lives in Nîmes.

## -ouille

|               |                     |
|---------------|---------------------|
| la brouille   | <i>disagreement</i> |
| la citrouille | <i>pumpkin</i>      |
| la grenouille | <i>frog</i>         |

|                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| la nouille     | <i>noodles</i>     |
| la patrouille  | <i>patrol</i>      |
| la ratatouille | <i>ratatouille</i> |

La ratatouille de votre grand-mère est délicieuse.

*Your grandmother's ratatouille is delicious.*

La grenouille est assise sur une citrouille près du lac.

*The frog is sitting on a pumpkin near the lake.*

## -ique

|              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| la botanique | <i>botany</i>  |
| la musique   | <i>music</i>   |
| la physique  | <i>physics</i> |

|               |                         |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| la polémique  | <i>controversy</i>      |
| la politique  | <i>politics, policy</i> |
| la république | <i>republic</i>         |

Here are quite a few exceptions:

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| l'antibiotique | <i>antibiotic</i> |
| le lexique     | <i>glossary</i>   |
| le moustique   | <i>mosquito</i>   |
| le pique-nique | <i>picnic</i>     |

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| le plastique    | <i>plastic</i>   |
| le portique     | <i>portico</i>   |
| le téléphérique | <i>cable-car</i> |

Quelle musique écoutez-vous?  
Cette politique est fort dangereuse.

*What music do you listen to?*  
*This policy is quite dangerous.*

Many **-ique** words come from Latin feminine nouns ending in *-ica*, such as *musica* and *res publica*. However, as we have seen, **-ique** words come to us from other languages as well, so one needs to tread gingerly.

## -gion, -nion, -sion, -ssion

|                  |                           |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| la compréhension | <i>understanding</i>      |
| la décision      | <i>decision</i>           |
| l'occasion       | <i>chance/opportunity</i> |

|            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| l'opinion  | <i>opinion</i> |
| la passion | <i>passion</i> |
| la région  | <i>region</i>  |

Damien n'a aucune compréhension de la situation.

*Damien has no understanding of the situation.*

Antonin doit se faire une opinion sur la situation.

*Antonin must form an opinion on the situation.*

## -tion, -xion

|               |                                       |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| la connexion  | <i>connection</i>                     |
| la génération | <i>generation</i>                     |
| l'information | <i>information,<br/>piece of news</i> |

|               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| la population | <i>population</i>        |
| la révolution | <i>revolution</i>        |
| la tradition  | <i>tradition, legend</i> |

Here are a few exceptions:

|             |                           |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| l'avion     | <i>airplane</i>           |
| le champion | <i>champion</i>           |
| le bastion  | <i>bastion/stronghold</i> |

Ils sont fidèles à **la tradition**.  
**La Révolution** française a eu lieu  
 en 1789.

*They are true to **tradition**.*  
***The French Revolution** took place*  
*in 1789.*

Why doesn't **avion**, you may ask, share the feminine gender of the other Latin-based words on this list, such as **population** or **tradition**? Well, **avion** is different because it is a neologism, an artificial construction, just like **logiciel**.

When the airplane was invented, people scrambled to find the right word. English speakers could not come up with anything better than the vaguely Latinate *aeroplane*, or *airplane*, which was less cumbersome than the German *das Flugzeug* but still far from perfect. Fortunately, French speakers know how to benefit from their visceral connection to Latin, which non-Romance languages can only dream about. In fact, **avion**, a construction based on the feminine Latin noun *avis*, which means *bird*, exemplifies the facility with which French incorporates the stupendously rich Latin vocabulary into its own lexicon. This proves the thesis, advanced by the great German literary scholar Ernst Robert Curtius, that Latin words in the French vocabulary are not loan words, since the source language is not foreign.

## -ite

|                      |                         |                      |                            |
|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>l'appendicite</b> | <i>appendicitis</i>     | <b>la limite</b>     | <i>border, limit, edge</i> |
| <b>la conduite</b>   | <i>behavior/conduct</i> | <b>la marguerite</b> | <i>daisy</i>               |
| <b>l'élite</b>       | <i>elite</i>            | <b>la réussite</b>   | <i>success</i>             |

Here is a list of exceptions:

|                     |                     |                     |                   |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>l'anthracite</b> | <i>anthracite</i>   | <b>le satellite</b> | <i>satellite</i>  |
| <b>le gîte</b>      | <i>shelter/home</i> | <b>le site</b>      | <i>area, site</i> |
| <b>l'insolite</b>   | <i>unusual</i>      | <b>le sulfite</b>   | <i>sulphite</i>   |
| <b>le mérite</b>    | <i>merit</i>        | <b>le termite</b>   | <i>termite</i>    |
| <b>le rite</b>      | <i>rite</i>         |                     |                   |

Au-delà de **cette limite**, votre billet n'est plus valable.  
 C'est un signe de **réussite sociale**.

*Beyond **this limit**, your ticket is no longer valid.*  
*It's a sign of **social success**.*

## -té, -tié

|                   |                   |                    |                    |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>l'amitié</b>   | <i>friendship</i> | <b>la pitié</b>    | <i>pity, mercy</i> |
| <b>la cécité</b>  | <i>blindness</i>  | <b>la santé</b>    | <i>health</i>      |
| <b>la laïcité</b> | <i>secularism</i> | <b>la virilité</b> | <i>virility</i>    |

Here are more exceptions to learn:

|                 |                                   |                  |               |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| <b>l'aparté</b> | <i>private conversation/aside</i> | <b>l'été</b>     | <i>summer</i> |
| <b>l'arrêt</b>  | <i>decree</i>                     | <b>le karaté</b> | <i>karate</i> |
| <b>le côté</b>  | <i>side</i>                       |                  |               |

As mentioned earlier, some feminine nouns with these endings stem from Latin nouns ending in *-a*, such as *amicitia*.

**La laïcité** est un sujet controversé en France.  
 Leur **amitié** fut éternelle.

***Secularism** is a controversial topic in France.*  
*Their **friendship** was eternal.*

Here's a helpful hint: most feminine **-té** words have English cognates ending in **-ty**, a suffix that was stolen from French.

**l'identité**      *identity*  
**l'illégalité**      *illegality*  
**la liberté**      *freedom/liberty*

**la nationalité**      *nationality*  
**la propriété**      *property*  
**la vanité**      *vanity*

Quelle est **la nationalité** de Morgan?  
 Ulysse a agi en **toute liberté**.

What's Morgan's **nationality**?  
 Ulysse acted with **complete freedom**.

Here are three exceptions:

**le comité**      *committee*  
**le comté**      *county*  
**le traité**      *treaty*

**Le traité** aurait été signé pendant la nuit.

**The treaty** was reportedly signed during the night.

**Le comité** de soutien se réunira ce soir.

**The support committee** will meet tonight.

## -ode

**la commode**      *chest of drawers*  
**la méthode**      *method*  
**la mode**      *fashion/style*

**l'ode**      *ode*  
**la pagode**      *pagoda*  
**la période**      *period/time*

Here some exceptions:

**l'antipode**      *antipode*  
**le code**      *code*  
**l'épisode**      *episode/serial/phase*

**l'exode**      *exodus*  
**le mode**      *mode, mood, method*

Quelle est **la** meilleure **méthode** pour mémoriser le genre des noms?

What's **the** best **method** to memorize the gender of nouns?

Plusieurs femmes priaient dans **la pagode**.

Several women were praying in **the pagoda**.

## -tude

**l'attitude**      *attitude*  
**l'étude**      *study*  
**l'habitude**      *habit*

**l'inquiétude**      *anxiety, worry*  
**la longitude**      *longitude*  
**la solitude**      *solitude/loneliness*

Here are a couple of exceptions:

**le prélude**      *prelude*  
**l'interlude**      *interlude*

Many French nouns with these endings come from feminine Latin words ending in **-tudo**, such as *solitudo*. The exceptions can be explained by the fact that these words are compounds containing the Latin word *ludus* (game), which is masculine.

Blaise, tu devrais te débarrasser de **cette** mauvaise **habitude**.  
 Ophélie aime **la solitude**.

Blaise, you should get rid of **this** bad **habit**.  
 Ophélie loves being **by herself**.

## -ure

|            |                            |             |                       |
|------------|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| la censure | <i>censorship, censure</i> | la nature   | <i>nature</i>         |
| l'écriture | <i>writing</i>             | la peinture | <i>paint/painting</i> |
| la lecture | <i>reading</i>             | la voiture  | <i>car</i>            |

You'll need to remember these exceptions:

|            |                |            |                       |
|------------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| l'augure   | <i>omen</i>    | le murmure | <i>whisper/murmur</i> |
| le cyanure | <i>cyanide</i> | le parjure | <i>traitor</i>        |

Cédric vient de vendre **une** autre **peinture** à l'huile. *Cédric just sold **another** oil **painting**.*

La meilleure recette pour apprendre le français, c'est **la lecture** et **l'écriture**. *The best recipe for learning French is **reading** and **writing**.*

Note: Just like **-tié**, which we have seen in **amitié**, the French ending **-re**, like in **nature**, stems from the Latin ending *-ra*, found in such eminently feminine words as *natura*. One of our exceptions, **l'augure**, also comes from Latin, but the original word is *augurium*, which is neuter. The only thing about the neuter we need to know is that Latin words in this gender automatically become masculine in French.

Incidentally, according to the Belgian philologist André Goosse, editor of the famed *Bon usage*, the fact that the masculine in French is a default gender for the Latin neuter undermines the notion that the masculine gender in French implies power. For example, the neuter *medicamentum* becomes **médicament**, a masculine noun in French. Whenever you think of English words ending in *-um*, more specifically the Latin words that seem to enjoy a green card status in English, words such as *colloquium* and *opprobrium*, you can be sure that their French equivalents, in this case **le colloque** and **l'opprobre**, are masculine.

## Other cases

There are many other endings, and each must be studied case by case.

## -ice

Nouns ending in **-ice**, except for the feminine forms of masculine words to denote people practicing particular professions, such as **rédactrice** (*female editor*) or **directrice** (*female director*), are often masculine:

|               |                   |              |                  |             |                 |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| le bénéfice   | <i>benefit</i>    | l'exercice   | <i>exercise</i>  | le service  | <i>service</i>  |
| le caprice    | <i>caprice</i>    | l'indice     | <i>clue</i>      | le solstice | <i>solstice</i> |
| le complice   | <i>accomplice</i> | le précipice | <i>precipice</i> | le vice     | <i>vice</i>     |
| le dentifrice | <i>toothpaste</i> |              |                  |             |                 |

But watch out for the feminine nouns:

|              |              |           |                                |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------------------------|
| l'avarice    | <i>greed</i> | l'épice   | <i>spice</i>                   |
| la cicatrice | <i>scar</i>  | la malice | <i>malice, mischievousness</i> |

This looks like a rule that's not really a rule. However, we can get some help from an old friend, Latin. You see, as mentioned earlier, the French masculine nouns, in their old (i.e., Latin) form as neuter nouns ended in *-um*: *beneficium* (**le bénéfice**), *indicium* (**l'indice**), *servitium* (**le service**), *solstitium* (**le solstice**), and *vitium* (**le vice**).

Now what about those pesky feminine nouns? Well, as we know, French likes to standardize noun endings, which explains why feminine Latin nouns such as *avaritia* (**l'avarice**), *cicatrix* (**la cicatrice**), and *malitia* (**la malice**), also ended up with **-ice** endings. Sometimes one has the impression (French is no exception) that languages have a mind of their own, often ignoring our wishes and desires. Frustrating, you may say, but a certain measure of unpredictability also makes languages fascinating and exciting.

La police a arrêté **le complice** du meurtrier.

The police arrested **the** murderer's **accomplice**.

Pourriez-vous me rendre **un service**?

Could you do me **a favor**?

## -aire, -oire

We could try to make a rule for **-aire** and **-oire** being masculine:

**l'anniversaire** birthday  
**le dictionnaire** dictionary  
**le formulaire** form

**l'interrogatoire** questioning/cross-examination  
**le laboratoire** laboratory  
**le mémoire** thesis/dissertation

However, we cannot avoid the many androgynous words, such as **le/la stagiaire** (*intern*) and a very long list of exceptions. Here are a few of them:

|                      |                        |                     |                |                        |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>l'affaire</b>     | <i>business, issue</i> | <b>la foire</b>     | <i>fair</i>    | <b>la moustiquaire</b> | <i>mosquito screen</i> |
| <b>la baignoire</b>  | <i>bathtub</i>         | <b>la grammaire</b> | <i>grammar</i> | <b>la victoire</b>     | <i>victory</i>         |
| <b>la bouilloire</b> | <i>kettle</i>          | <b>la mémoire</b>   | <i>memory</i>  |                        |                        |

You might be better off making your own rhymes.

Le stagiaire, fatigué d'écrire **son mémoire**  
le jour de **son anniversaire**, a pris un  
bain dans **sa baignoire** avant d'aller à  
**la foire** artisanale.

Tired of working on **his thesis** on **his birthday**, the intern took a bath in **his tub** and went to the arts and crafts **fair**.

**Quel interrogatoire!** Ça a duré plus d'une semaine!

**What a cross-examination!** It lasted more than a week!

Remplissez d'abord **le formulaire**!

Fill in **the form** first!

## -oi, -ois, -oix

The only feminine nouns ending in **-oi**, **-ois**, and **-oix** are:

**la croix** cross  
**la foi** faith

**la loi** law  
**la noix** nut

**la paroi** wall/partition  
**la voix** voice

Elles parlaient à **voix basse**.  
C'est **la loi** de la jungle.

They were talking in **low voices**.  
It's **the law** of the jungle.

## -f, -aim

The only feminine nouns ending in **-f** and **-aim** are:

**la clef** ou **la clé** key  
**la faim** hunger

**la nef** nave  
**la soif** thirst

**La faim** dans le monde empire chaque jour.  
Où as-tu mis **la clé** du coffre-fort?

World **hunger** gets worse every day.  
Where did you put **the key** of the safe?

## -ole, -ôle, -ule

Nouns ending in **-ole**, **-ôle**, or **-ule** seem willing to go either way. While Latin may provide some guidance, there is no foolproof method. Nevertheless, it helps to know that *symbolus*—**le symbole** (*symbol*)—is masculine in Latin and *crepusculum*—**le crépuscule** (*dusk*)—is neuter, while *schola*—**l'école** (*school*)—is feminine.

Masculine nouns ending in **-ole** or **-ôle**:

|                    |                 |                   |                          |                     |                 |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| <b>le contrôle</b> | <i>control</i>  | <b>le pactole</b> | <i>fortune/gold mine</i> | <b>le protocole</b> | <i>protocol</i> |
| <b>le monopole</b> | <i>monopoly</i> | <b>le pôle</b>    | <i>pole</i>              | <b>le symbole</b>   | <i>symbol</i>   |

Feminine nouns ending in **-ole** or **-ôle**:

|                     |                  |                   |                |                     |                   |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>l'Acropole</b>   | <i>Acropolis</i> | <b>la console</b> | <i>console</i> | <b>l'idole</b>      | <i>idol</i>       |
| <b>la banderole</b> | <i>banner</i>    | <b>l'école</b>    | <i>school</i>  | <b>la nécropole</b> | <i>necropolis</i> |
| <b>la casserole</b> | <i>pan</i>       | <b>la gondole</b> | <i>gondola</i> | <b>la parole</b>    | <i>speech</i>     |

Masculine nouns ending in **-ule**:

|                      |                         |                     |                                      |                     |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>le crépuscule</b> | <i>dusk</i>             | <b>le préambule</b> | <i>preamble</i>                      | <b>le scrupule</b>  | <i>scruple</i>    |
| <b>l'émule</b>       | <i>emulator</i>         | <b>le ridicule</b>  | <i>absurdity/<br/>ridiculousness</i> | <b>le véhicule</b>  | <i>vehicle</i>    |
| <b>le funambule</b>  | <i>tightrope walker</i> |                     |                                      | <b>le vestibule</b> | <i>hall/lobby</i> |

Feminine nouns ending in **-ule**:

|                     |                  |                     |                           |                     |                 |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| <b>la canicule</b>  | <i>heat wave</i> | <b>la majuscule</b> | <i>upper case/capital</i> | <b>la pilule</b>    | <i>pill</i>     |
| <b>la cellule</b>   | <i>cell</i>      | <b>la mule</b>      | <i>mule</i>               | <b>la spatule</b>   | <i>spatula</i>  |
| <b>la formule</b>   | <i>formula</i>   | <b>la pellicule</b> | <i>film/dandruff</i>      | <b>la tentacule</b> | <i>tentacle</i> |
| <b>la libellule</b> | <i>dragonfly</i> | <b>la péninsule</b> | <i>peninsula</i>          |                     |                 |

Ils ont fait le tour de Venise dans **une gondole** bleu nuit.

**Une libellule** voletait au-dessus d'un champ de maïs.

*They toured Venice in **a** midnight blue gondola.*

*A **dragonfly** was fluttering over a cornfield.*

## -iste, -que

Nouns ending in **-iste** and **-que** that refer to persons can be either masculine or feminine:

|                         |                         |                           |                   |                         |                  |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| <b>le/la paysagiste</b> | <i>landscape artist</i> | <b>le/la scientifique</b> | <i>scientist</i>  | <b>le/la violoniste</b> | <i>violinist</i> |
| <b>le/la scénariste</b> | <i>scriptwriter</i>     | <b>le/la spécialiste</b>  | <i>specialist</i> |                         |                  |

Other nouns ending in **-iste** are feminine:

|                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>la liste</b> | <i>list</i>       |
| <b>la piste</b> | <i>track/path</i> |

Agnès Varda est l'une **des** plus grandes **scénaristes** du cinéma français.

Fais **une liste** de tout ce dont on a besoin d'acheter.

*Agnès Varda is one of **the** greatest **scriptwriters** of French cinema.*

*Make **a** list of everything we need to buy.*

## Nouns derived from past participles

Nouns derived from adjectives and the masculine forms of the past participle are masculine:

|                  |                         |                  |                     |                 |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| <b>l'aîné</b>    | <i>the oldest</i>       | <b>le favori</b> | <i>the favorite</i> | <b>le nu</b>    | <i>naked</i>            |
| <b>le beau</b>   | <i>the handsome one</i> | <b>l'inconnu</b> | <i>the unknown</i>  | <b>le vécu</b>  | <i>lived experience</i> |
| <b>le bien</b>   | <i>good</i>             | <b>le mal</b>    | <i>evil</i>         | <b>le vieux</b> | <i>the old one</i>      |
| <b>le détenu</b> | <i>prisoner</i>         |                  |                     |                 |                         |

Nouns derived from adjectives and the feminine forms of past participles are feminine:

|                    |                         |                     |                       |                 |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>la belle</b>    | <i>the beautiful</i>    | <b>la mariée</b>    | <i>the bride</i>      | <b>la venue</b> | <i>the coming</i> |
| <b>la crue</b>     | <i>flood</i>            | <b>la petite</b>    | <i>the little one</i> | <b>la vue</b>   | <i>vision</i>     |
| <b>la disparue</b> | <i>the vanished one</i> | <b>la retraitée</b> | <i>the retiree</i>    |                 |                   |

Ce que le lecteur veut, c'est **du vécu**.

*What the reader wants is **real-life experience**.*

**La mariée** était si belle dans sa robe d'organdi.

***The bride** was so beautiful in her organdy dress.*

EXERCICE

2.1

Indicate the gender and definite article.

- |                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. _____ tolérance  | 11. _____ ruisseau     |
| 2. _____ pain       | 12. _____ architecture |
| 3. _____ compliment | 13. _____ classement   |
| 4. _____ sapin      | 14. _____ symbolisme   |
| 5. _____ présence   | 15. _____ égalité      |
| 6. _____ courage    | 16. _____ odeur        |
| 7. _____ agneau     | 17. _____ pudeur       |
| 8. _____ orangerie  | 18. _____ vignoble     |
| 9. _____ chaîne     | 19. _____ paille       |
| 10. _____ plage     | 20. _____ calepin      |

EXERCICE

2.2

Complete this nursery rhyme with the definite article, masculine or feminine, and translate the possessive adjectives.

J'aime \_\_\_\_\_ eau  
J'aime \_\_\_\_\_ eau dans \_\_\_\_\_ (my) baignoire  
Et sur \_\_\_\_\_ carrelage de \_\_\_\_\_ cuisine quand maman le nettoie  
J'aime \_\_\_\_\_ eau sur \_\_\_\_\_ plage  
J'aime les vaguelettes  
Qui me chatouillent les doigts de pied  
Et s'en vont avec \_\_\_\_\_ marée

J'aime \_\_\_\_\_ eau des flaques et des étangs  
 Des lacs et des barrages où elle se heurte en écumant  
 J'aime \_\_\_\_\_ pluie qui me mouille \_\_\_\_\_ langue  
 Et qui fait pousser les plantes dans \_\_\_\_\_ jardin  
 J'aime \_\_\_\_\_ eau des fleuves  
 \_\_\_\_\_ eau où pullulent les petits poissons  
 J'aime \_\_\_\_\_ eau quand elle est bien chaude  
 \_\_\_\_\_ matin dans \_\_\_\_\_ (my) lavabo  
 J'aime \_\_\_\_\_ eau quand elle est gelée  
 Quand je peux patiner sur les mares glacées.

EXERCICE

2.3

*Indicate the gender of the nouns and the definite article.*

- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. _____ meuble    | 11. _____ sculpture   |
| 2. _____ soja      | 12. _____ libéralisme |
| 3. _____ référence | 13. _____ signal      |
| 4. _____ cocktail  | 14. _____ délicatesse |
| 5. _____ rail      | 15. _____ horlogerie  |
| 6. _____ fin       | 16. _____ citadin     |
| 7. _____ attitude  | 17. _____ tact        |
| 8. _____ lainage   | 18. _____ orthographe |
| 9. _____ parlement | 19. _____ clavecin    |
| 10. _____ centaine | 20. _____ fraternité  |

EXERCICE

2.4

*Indicate the gender of the nouns and the definite article.*

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. _____ acacia       | 5. _____ signature    |
| 2. _____ chanson      | 6. _____ écaille      |
| 3. _____ portefeuille | 7. _____ millefeuille |
| 4. _____ domino       | 8. _____ cinéma       |

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 9. _____ tribu          | 15. _____ confirmation |
| 10. _____ tracteur      | 16. _____ noix         |
| 11. _____ établissement | 17. _____ main         |
| 12. _____ altitude      | 18. _____ inclinaison  |
| 13. _____ hamac         | 19. _____ soif         |
| 14. _____ ghetto        | 20. _____ faim         |
-

# More French nouns and their gender

•3•

## Naming people and animals

As a rule, professions are masculine when they refer to a man and feminine when they refer to a woman. You can just add a final *e*:

|                    |                   |                      |                    |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>l'apprenti/</b> | <i>apprentice</i> | <b>l'avocat/</b>     | <i>lawyer</i>      |
| <b>l'apprentie</b> |                   | <b>l'avocate</b>     |                    |
| <b>l'attaché/</b>  | <i>attaché</i>    | <b>le magistrat/</b> | <i>magistrate,</i> |
| <b>l'attachée</b>  |                   | <b>la magistrate</b> | <i>judge</i>       |

In the past, traditionally masculine professions, even if practiced by women, remained masculine:

|                       |                 |                      |                          |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>le compositeur</b> | <i>composer</i> | <b>le procureur</b>  | <i>prosecutor</i>        |
| <b>le peintre</b>     | <i>painter</i>  | <b>le professeur</b> | <i>professor/teacher</i> |

In 1998, Lionel Jospin, the socialist prime minister, created a new commission to study the question. *Femme, j'écris ton nom*, the commission's resulting guide for the feminization of professions and titles, was published in 1999. If you are an insomniac, you may enjoy reading this hundred-page guide of some obscure professions in French or in English, which is available online. The guide had a major impact.

In addition, Quebec, at the cutting edge of feminization, played a key role, even if we, the French, won't admit it. . . . Over ten years ago, I started consulting and hosting workshops for the Blue Metropolis Montreal International Festival. I gasped when I saw myself listed in the festival's program as «**Annie Heminway, professeure à New York.**» I have to admit it took me some time to get used to it.

These days, you will read more frequently in the newspapers and magazines: **l'écrivaine** (*writer*), **l'ingénieure** (*engineer*), **la juge** (*judge*). Even the newspaper *Le Monde* talks about a famous writer as **l'écrivaine** Léonora Miano.

You have to use caution, though. Were you to send a letter to a minister of the government, you should ask the Chief of Protocol if she uses **Madame le ministre** or **Madame la ministre**. In a speech made by Roselyne Bachelot on January 2008, for example, the headline was: «**Discours de Madame le ministre de la santé, de la jeunesse et des sports.**» Then Roselyne Bachelot herself had written, a few lines down: «**La ministre de la qualité des soins que je veux être ne peut que reprendre à son compte de tels propos.**» As you can see, anything goes! The tendency today, however, is to use **Madame la ministre**.

# Human beings

One way of identifying the nouns is to learn if they have identical or different root words.

## Identical roots

In numerous cases, the noun of a profession is identical in the masculine and the feminine:

|                                      |                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>l'architecte/l'architecte</b>     | <i>architect</i>    |
| <b>le vétérinaire/la vétérinaire</b> | <i>veterinarian</i> |
| <b>le dentiste/la dentiste</b>       | <i>dentist</i>      |

In many instances, you add an -e at the end of the noun:

|                                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>l'avocat/l'avocate</b>       | <i>lawyer</i>   |
| <b>le marchand/la marchande</b> | <i>merchant</i> |
| <b>l'associé/l'associée</b>     | <i>partner</i>  |

In other cases, there are many possible endings depending on the noun. Here are some examples, but always check in the dictionary.

|                                       |                                      |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>l'ouvrier/l'ouvrière</b>           | <i>worker</i>                        |
| <b>le conseiller/la conseillère</b>   | <i>adviser</i>                       |
| <b>le chocolatier/la chocolatière</b> | <i>chocolate maker</i>               |
| <b>l'acheteur/l'acheteuse</b>         | <i>buyer</i>                         |
| <b>le vendeur/la vendeuse</b>         | <i>salesperson</i>                   |
| <b>le coiffeur/la coiffeuse</b>       | <i>hairdresser</i>                   |
| <b>le musicien/la musicienne</b>      | <i>musician</i>                      |
| <b>le doyen/la doyenne</b>            | <i>dean, most senior member</i>      |
| <b>le pharmacien/la pharmacienne</b>  | <i>pharmacist</i>                    |
| <b>le rédacteur/la rédactrice</b>     | <i>editor</i>                        |
| <b>le concepteur/la conceptrice</b>   | <i>designer, project manager</i>     |
| <b>le spectateur/la spectatrice</b>   | <i>viewer, member of an audience</i> |
| <b>le patron/la patronne</b>          | <i>boss</i>                          |
| <b>le baron/la baronne</b>            | <i>baron</i>                         |
| <b>le vigneron/la vigneronne</b>      | <i>wine grower</i>                   |
| <b>le prince/la princesse</b>         | <i>prince/princess</i>               |
| <b>le maître/la maîtresse</b>         | <i>master/mistress</i>               |
| <b>le comte/la comtesse</b>           | <i>count/countess</i>                |

If there is an adjective, it will agree accordingly:

|                                                            |                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>le directeur financier/la directrice<br/>financière</b> | <i>financial director</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|

**La coiffeuse** d'Alice est aussi **musicienne**.  
Les ouvriers ont demandé une  
augmentation à **leur patronne**.

Alice's **hairdresser** is also a **musician**.  
The workers asked **their boss** for a raise.

*She has the same profession as her cousin, she is . . .*

1. Il est directeur. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Il est chanteur. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Il est gardien. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Il est commerçant. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Il est pédiatre. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Il est consultant. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Il est traducteur. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Il est agriculteur. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Il est technicien. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Il est psychologue. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Il est assistant technique. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
12. Il est astrologue. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
13. Il est mécanicien. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Il est boucher. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Il est électricien. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
16. Il est archiduc. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
17. Il est dessinateur. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
18. Il est baron. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
19. Il est infirmier. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.
20. Il est viticulteur. Elle est \_\_\_\_\_.

## Different root words

Sometimes the basis for the masculine and the feminine is different or the root word happens to be different.

**le beau-frère/la belle-sœur**  
**le beau-père/la belle-mère**

*brother-in-law/sister-in-law*  
*father-in-law, stepfather/mother-in-law,*  
*stepmother*

**le garçon/la fille**  
**le gendre/la belle-fille**  
**l'homme/la femme**  
**le mari/la femme**  
**l'oncle/la tante**  
**le parrain/la marraine**

*boy/girl*  
*son-in-law/daughter-in-law*  
*man/woman*  
*husband/wife*  
*uncle/aunt*  
*godfather/godmother*

**le père/la mère**

*father/mother*

**le roi/la reine**

*king/queen*

Le cardinal de Mazarin fut **le parrain** de Louis XIV.

*Cardinal Mazarin was Louis XIV's **godfather**.*

C'est triste mais Corrine ne s'entend pas avec **son gendre**.

*It is sad but Corrine does not get along with **her son-in-law**.*

Some nouns follow no rule:

**le barman/**

*barman/*

**la barmaid**

*barmaid*

**le couturier**

*couturier/*

*fashion designer*

**la couturière**

*seamstress*

**le steward/**

*flight attendant*

**l'hôtesse de l'air**

Coco Chanel était **un grand couturier**.

*Coco Chanel was **a great fashion designer**.*

As mentioned in the introduction, the feminization of nouns is widespread. And yet, the masculine form is still used by a lot of women. You may want to ask for the business card of the woman you are talking to so you'll have an answer as to which she prefers.

Here are more professions that are often feminized. But always ask to double-check.

**l'acuponcteur/**

*acupuncturist*

**l'acuponctrice**

**l'inventeur/**

*inventor*

**l'inventrice**

**le chirurgien/**

*surgeon*

**la chirurgienne**

**le poète/**

*poet*

**la poétesse**

**le compositeur/**

*composer*

**la compositrice**

**le sculpteur/**

*sculptor*

**la sculpteure**

**l'écrivain/l'écrivaine**

*writer*

**or la sculptrice**

Catherine a obtenu son diplôme d'**acuponctrice** à Paris.

*Catherine got her **acupuncture** diploma in Paris.*

Agnès Vincent est une talentueuse **compositrice** de musique de film.

*Agnès Vincent is a talented film **composer**.*

## Masculine nouns for both men and women

Some nouns are always masculine whether referring to a man or a woman:

**l'acolyte**

*acolyte/associate*

**le chef**

*leader, boss*

**le mannequin**

*model*

**l'agresseur**

*attacker*

**le clerc**

*clerk*

**le monarque**

*monarch*

**l'ange**

*angel*

**le déserteur**

*deserter*

**le sauveur**

*savior*

**l'apôtre**

*apostle*

**le forçat**

*convict*

**le successeur**

*successor*

**l'assassin**

*murderer*

**le génie**

*genius*

**le témoin**

*witness*

**le bandit**

*bandit*

**le goinfre**

*glutton*

**le tyran**

*tyrant*

**le brigand**

*brigand*

**le gourmet**

*epicure*

**le vandale**

*vandal*

**le charlatan**

*charlatan, quack*

**l'imposteur**

*impostor*

**le voyou**

*hooligan, rascal*

Violène est **un beau mannequin**.

*Violène is **a beautiful model**.*

**La femme** de Louis est **un ange**.

*Louis's wife is **an angel**.*

## Feminine nouns for both men and women

Some nouns are always feminine whether referring to a man or a woman:

|                     |                  |                   |                             |                    |               |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| <b>l'Altesse</b>    | <i>Highness</i>  | <b>l'étoile</b>   | <i>star, leading dancer</i> | <b>la personne</b> | <i>person</i> |
| <b>l'autorité</b>   | <i>authority</i> | <b>l'idole</b>    | <i>idol</i>                 | <b>la star</b>     | <i>star</i>   |
| <b>la célébrité</b> | <i>celebrity</i> | <b>la Majesté</b> | <i>Majesty</i>              | <b>la vedette</b>  | <i>star</i>   |

## Feminine nouns used only for men

Some feminine nouns are used only for men:

|                    |                    |                   |                         |                     |                     |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>la brute</b>    | <i>bully, boor</i> | <b>la crapule</b> | <i>villain, crook</i>   | <b>Son Éminence</b> | <i>His Eminence</i> |
| <b>la canaille</b> | <i>scoundrel</i>   | <b>l'huile</b>    | <i>big shot, bigwig</i> | <b>Sa Sainteté</b>  | <i>His Holiness</i> |

**Ce type, c'est une véritable crapule.**

**Son Éminence** Dzogchen Rinpoché a participé à une conférence avec le Dalai Lama à Toulouse.

**This guy is a real crook.**

**His Eminence** Dzogchen Rinpoché took part in a conference with the Dalai Lama in Toulouse.

In the army, some terms that were used only for men in the past are applicable for women today.

|                     |                |                      |                        |                 |                      |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| <b>l'estafette</b>  | <i>courier</i> | <b>la recrue</b>     | <i>recruit</i>         | <b>la vigie</b> | <i>lookout/watch</i> |
| <b>l'ordonnance</b> | <i>orderly</i> | <b>la sentinelle</b> | <i>sentry/sentinel</i> |                 |                      |

### EXERCICE

### 3.2

Complete with the indefinite article *un* or *une*.

1. Son cousin est \_\_\_\_\_ célébrité dans le monde du spectacle.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ altesse royale que nous n'avons pas vraiment reconnue, a fait halte dans notre village hier.
3. Ta tante est \_\_\_\_\_ ange!
4. Mathieu est \_\_\_\_\_ personne sur qui on peut compter.
5. Sandrine est \_\_\_\_\_ mannequin célèbre pour ses coiffures excentriques.
6. Monsieur Thibault est \_\_\_\_\_ génie en informatique.
7. Sa femme est \_\_\_\_\_ gourmet par excellence.
8. Ce chanteur, c'est \_\_\_\_\_ idole depuis des années.
9. Ce type, c'est \_\_\_\_\_ véritable crapule!
10. Julie est \_\_\_\_\_ témoin que le juge veut entendre.

Put the possessive adjective *son* or *sa* before the noun.

1. L'impresario et \_\_\_\_\_ star prenaient un verre sur la Croisette.
2. Mélanie voudrait inviter \_\_\_\_\_ oncle et \_\_\_\_\_ tante pour son anniversaire.
3. La police n'a pas encore retrouvé \_\_\_\_\_ assassin.
4. Hervé est arrivé avec Anna, \_\_\_\_\_ successeur.
5. Alice, tu es \_\_\_\_\_ sauveur!
6. \_\_\_\_\_ parrain lui a offert un joli bracelet.
7. Lui et \_\_\_\_\_ acolyte, ils ne font que des bêtises!
8. Yan est venu nous voir avec \_\_\_\_\_ beau-frère et \_\_\_\_\_ belle-mère.
9. Ce pays ne peut pas se débarrasser de \_\_\_\_\_ tyran.
10. Quelle est \_\_\_\_\_ vedette préférée?

## Animals

Since the animal kingdom, just like the human world, has genders, one usually has to learn two nouns for each species.

### Animal couples with identical root words

Couples may be made of the male noun plus different suffixes:

|                            |                              |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>agneau/agnelle</b>      | <i>lamb/ewe lamb</i>         | <b>hérisson/hérissonne</b> | <i>hedgehog</i>          |
| <b>âne/ânesse</b>          | <i>donkey/she-donkey</i>     | <b>héron/héronne</b>       | <i>heron</i>             |
| <b>buffle/bufflonne</b>    | <i>buffalo</i>               | <b>lapin/lapine</b>        | <i>rabbit/doe rabbit</i> |
| <b>chameau/chamelle</b>    | <i>camel/she-camel</i>       | <b>lion/lionne</b>         | <i>lion/lioness</i>      |
| <b>chat/chatte</b>         | <i>cat/she-cat</i>           | <b>loup/louve</b>          | <i>wolf/she-wolf</i>     |
| <b>chevreuil/chevrette</b> | <i>roe buck/roe deer</i>     | <b>ours/ourse</b>          | <i>bear/she-bear</i>     |
| <b>chien/chienne</b>       | <i>dog/female dog</i>        | <b>renard/renarde</b>      | <i>fox/vixen</i>         |
| <b>éléphant/éléphante</b>  | <i>elephant/cow elephant</i> | <b>paon/paonne</b>         | <i>peacock/peahen</i>    |
| <b>faisan/faisane</b>      | <i>pheasant/hen pheasant</i> | <b>tigre/tigresse</b>      | <i>tiger/tigress</i>     |

Les enfants ont vu **une ourse polaire** et **un chameau** au zoo.

François, **le chat** de Michael, aime s'asseoir sur le clavier de l'ordinateur.

The children saw **a polar she-bear** and **a camel** at the zoo.

François, Michael's **cat**, likes to sit on the computer keyboard.

## Animal couples with different root words

Some male and female nouns of animals are totally different, just as in English:

|                      |                         |                      |                             |
|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>bélier/brebis</b> | <i>ram/ewe</i>          | <b>dindon/dinde</b>  | <i>turkey/turkey hen</i>    |
| <b>bouc/chèvre</b>   | <i>goat/she-goat</i>    | <b>jars/oie</b>      | <i>gander/goose</i>         |
| <b>canard/cane</b>   | <i>duck/female duck</i> | <b>porc/truie</b>    | <i>hog/sow</i>              |
| <b>cerf/biche</b>    | <i>stag/doe</i>         | <b>sanglier/laie</b> | <i>wild boar/wild sow</i>   |
| <b>cheval/jument</b> | <i>horse/mare</i>       | <b>singe/guenon</b>  | <i>monkey/female monkey</i> |
| <b>coq/poule</b>     | <i>rooster/hen</i>      | <b>taureau/vache</b> | <i>bull/cow</i>             |

## Épicène

Most names of animals are **épicène**. This strange-sounding word comes from the Greek *epikoinos*, meaning “common.” **Épicène** nouns work with either gender. To differentiate between the two sexes, you add **mâle** or **femelle**. Here are some masculine names:

|                   |                    |                    |                     |                     |                   |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>aigle</b>      | <i>eagle</i>       | <b>faucon</b>      | <i>falcon</i>       | <b>mille-pattes</b> | <i>millipede</i>  |
| <b>blaireau</b>   | <i>badger</i>      | <b>gorille</b>     | <i>gorilla</i>      | <b>oiseau</b>       | <i>bird</i>       |
| <b>brochet</b>    | <i>pike</i>        | <b>guépard</b>     | <i>cheetah</i>      | <b>panda</b>        | <i>panda</i>      |
| <b>cachalot</b>   | <i>sperm whale</i> | <b>hanneton</b>    | <i>cockchafer</i>   | <b>papillon</b>     | <i>butterfly</i>  |
| <b>canari</b>     | <i>canary</i>      | <b>hibou</b>       | <i>owl</i>          | <b>perroquet</b>    | <i>parrot</i>     |
| <b>castor</b>     | <i>beaver</i>      | <b>hippocampe</b>  | <i>sea horse</i>    | <b>phoque</b>       | <i>seal</i>       |
| <b>cochon</b>     | <i>pig</i>         | <b>hippopotame</b> | <i>hippopotamus</i> | <b>pigeon</b>       | <i>pigeon</i>     |
| <b>corbeau</b>    | <i>crow</i>        | <b>homard</b>      | <i>lobster</i>      | <b>pingouin</b>     | <i>penguin</i>    |
| <b>crapaud</b>    | <i>toad</i>        | <b>jaguar</b>      | <i>jaguar</i>       | <b>requin</b>       | <i>shark</i>      |
| <b>crocodile</b>  | <i>crocodile</i>   | <b>kangourou</b>   | <i>kangaroo</i>     | <b>rhinocéros</b>   | <i>rhinoceros</i> |
| <b>cygne</b>      | <i>swan</i>        | <b>koala</b>       | <i>koala</i>        | <b>saumon</b>       | <i>salmon</i>     |
| <b>dauphin</b>    | <i>dolphin</i>     | <b>lama</b>        | <i>llama</i>        | <b>scorpion</b>     | <i>scorpion</i>   |
| <b>dromadaire</b> | <i>dromedary</i>   | <b>léopard</b>     | <i>leopard</i>      | <b>serpent</b>      | <i>snake</i>      |
| <b>écureuil</b>   | <i>squirrel</i>    | <b>lézard</b>      | <i>lizard</i>       | <b>vautour</b>      | <i>vulture</i>    |
| <b>escargot</b>   | <i>snail</i>       | <b>lynx</b>        | <i>lynx</i>         | <b>zèbre</b>        | <i>zebra</i>      |

Here are some feminine names:

|                      |                |                         |                       |                    |                   |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| <b>abeille</b>       | <i>bee</i>     | <b>girafe</b>           | <i>giraffe</i>        | <b>mouche</b>      | <i>fly</i>        |
| <b>autruche</b>      | <i>ostrich</i> | <b>grenouille</b>       | <i>frog</i>           | <b>mouette</b>     | <i>gull</i>       |
| <b>baleine</b>       | <i>whale</i>   | <b>grive</b>            | <i>thrush</i>         | <b>panthère</b>    | <i>panther</i>    |
| <b>chauve-souris</b> | <i>bat</i>     | <b>guêpe</b>            | <i>wasp</i>           | <b>perruche</b>    | <i>budgie</i>     |
| <b>chouette</b>      | <i>owl</i>     | <b>hirondelle</b>       | <i>swallow</i>        | <b>pie</b>         | <i>magpie</i>     |
| <b>cigale</b>        | <i>cicada</i>  | <b>huître</b>           | <i>oyster</i>         | <b>souris</b>      | <i>mouse</i>      |
| <b>cigogne</b>       | <i>stork</i>   | <b>libellule</b>        | <i>dragonfly</i>      | <b>taupe</b>       | <i>mole</i>       |
| <b>colombe</b>       | <i>dove</i>    | <b>loutre</b>           | <i>otter</i>          | <b>tortue</b>      | <i>turtle</i>     |
| <b>crevette</b>      | <i>shrimp</i>  | <b>mante religieuse</b> | <i>praying mantis</i> | <b>tourterelle</b> | <i>turtledove</i> |
| <b>fourmi</b>        | <i>ant</i>     | <b>marmotte</b>         | <i>woodchuck</i>      | <b>truite</b>      | <i>trout</i>      |
| <b>gazelle</b>       | <i>gazelle</i> | <b>méduse</b>           | <i>jellyfish</i>      | <b>vipère</b>      | <i>viper</i>      |

Flaubert a emprunté **un perroquet**  
empaillé au musée de Rouen et l’a placé  
sur son bureau.

Tu commandes **le homard** ou **des huîtres**?

Flaubert borrowed **a stuffed parrot**  
from the Rouen Museum and placed  
it on his desk.

Are you ordering **lobster** or **oysters**?

## EXERCICE

## 3•4

Complete with the definite article le or la.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ vache est agacée par \_\_\_\_\_ mouche qui tourne autour de sa tête.
2. En théorie, \_\_\_\_\_ lièvre court plus vite que \_\_\_\_\_ tortue.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ perroquet de \_\_\_\_\_ tante de Xavier répète sans cesse les mêmes mots.
4. Je veux choisir \_\_\_\_\_ chameau qui me plaît pour faire un tour dans le désert.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ louve et \_\_\_\_\_ ourse protègent farouchement leurs petits.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ cigale chante pendant que \_\_\_\_\_ fourmi travaille.
7. LÉO, \_\_\_\_\_ chat de Mademoiselle Gallatin est un magnifique Maine Coon.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ oiseau qui se perche sur notre balcon est un rouge-gorge.
9. As-tu mangé \_\_\_\_\_ saumon que tu as attrapé?
10. \_\_\_\_\_ guêpe qui était sur la table a fini par la piquer.

## EXERCICE

## 3•5

Indicate the corresponding male animals.

1. la chamelle \_\_\_\_\_
2. la chèvre \_\_\_\_\_
3. la truie \_\_\_\_\_
4. la louve \_\_\_\_\_
5. l'oie \_\_\_\_\_
6. la chevrette \_\_\_\_\_
7. la jument \_\_\_\_\_
8. l'agnelle \_\_\_\_\_
9. la biche \_\_\_\_\_
10. la brebis \_\_\_\_\_

# Places and the calendar

No, geography is not neutral either. There are rules—and exceptions. Let's start with cities.

## Cities

The masculine is used more commonly for cities, but the feminine is still used in a more aesthetic or romantic sense. There is no set rule. You will find many examples in literature. Look at the following examples:

**Le Paris** populaire des années  
1930

**Paris** est si **bruyant**; c'est  
**épuisant**.

**Paris, la** magnifique  
**Paris, traversée** de fragrances  
**enivrantes**

**Le Tout-Paris** était **présent** pour  
l'inauguration du nouveau  
musée.

**Tout Venise** souffrait des  
inondations.

**Venise La Sérénissime**

**Venise, la belle, l'enchanteresse**

*The working-class **Paris** of the  
1930s*

***Paris** is so **noisy**; it's **exhausting**.*

***Paris** the magnificent  
**Paris, bathed in intoxicating**  
fragrances*

***Everybody who is anybody** in  
Paris **attended** the inauguration  
of the new museum.*

***All of Venice** suffered from the  
floods.*

***Venice the Most Serene***

***Venice, the beautiful, the**  
**bewitching***

Names of towns preceded by a masculine definite article are masculine:

**Le Havre** est **un grand port**.

**Le Caire** est **connu** pour son  
musée de l'Antiquité  
Égyptienne.

**Le Mans** est **connu** pour sa  
course automobile.

***Le Havre** is **a big harbor**.*

***Cairo** is **known** for its museum of  
Egyptian antiquity.*

***Le Mans** is **known** for its car  
racing.*

Names of towns preceded by a feminine definite article are feminine:

**La Rochelle** est très **prisée** par les  
vacanciers.

**La Havane** est **fréquentée** par de  
merveilleux musiciens.

**La Seyne-sur-Mer** est **située** dans le Var.

***La Rochelle** is highly **rated** by  
vacationers.*

*Marvelous musicians are to be **found**  
in **Havana**.*

***La Seyne-sur-Mer** is **in** the Var.*

The gender of Italian cities varies:

**La Florence** des Médicis

**Le Florence** de James Ivory (in *Room with a View*)

**La Venise** de Casanova

**Le Venise** de Pasolini

It all depends on the context.

Usually, when the nouns of cities are preceded by the adjectives **grand**, **nouveau**, and **vieux**, they are used in the masculine form:

**Le Grand** Prague  
**Le Nouveau**-Belleville

**Le Vieux**-Marseille  
**Le Vieux**-Québec

## Departments, regions, and states

Now we are going to travel around the provinces and departments of France and states of America and try to figure out their genders.

### Departments

Many departments take the gender of a river, a mountain, or a geographic site, like the coast.

**l'Auvergne**  
**le Cantal**

**la Dordogne**  
**le Finistère**

**la Loire**  
**la Manche**

Le tunnel sous **la Manche** est ouvert depuis 1994.

*The Chunnel has been open since 1994.*

Dans **le Finistère**, Concarneau, ville médiévale entourée de remparts, attire de nombreux touristes.

*In **the Finistère**, Concarneau, a medieval walled town, attracts many tourists.*

Some departments are named after two rivers. If one river is masculine, it goes first and the noun is masculine. If both are feminine, the department is feminine.

**l'Ille-et-Vilaine**  
**l'Indre-et-Loire**  
**le Loir-et-Cher**

**le Maine-et-Loire**  
**la Meurthe-et-Moselle**

**la Saône-et-Loire**  
**le Tarn-et-Garonne**

Chenonceau est l'un des plus beaux châteaux de **l'Indre-et-Loire**.

*Chenonceau is one of the most beautiful castles in **Indre-et-Loire**.*

**La Meurthe-et-Moselle** a l'une des productions les plus élevées de mirabelles de France.

***La Meurthe-et-Moselle** has one of the highest productions of mirabelle plums in France.*

Some departments are classified according to geographic parameters:

**les Bouches-du-Rhône**  
**les Côtes-d'Armor**  
**la Côte-d'Or**

**les Hauts-de-Seine**  
**le Puy-de-Dôme**

**la Seine-Saint-Denis**  
**le Val-de-Marne**

**Le Puy-de-Dôme** porte le nom du volcan endormi en Auvergne.

***Le Puy-de-Dôme** bears the name of the dormant volcano in Auvergne.*

**La Seine-Saint-Denis** est le 93ème département français. On l'appelle 9-3.

***La Seine-Saint-Denis** is the 93rd French department. It is called 9-3.*

Others are determined by an adjective. Departments ending in **-e** tend to be feminine.

**les Alpes-Maritimes**  
**le Bas-Rhin**

**la Haute-Loire**  
**la Haute-Savoie**

**la Haute-Vienne**  
**les Pyrénées-Atlantiques**

Le lac d'Annecy **en Haute-Savoie** est l'un des plus grands de France.

*The Annecy Lake **in Haute-Savoie** is one of the largest in France.*

Le festival du cinéma a lieu à Cannes dans les **Alpes-Maritimes**.

*The film festival takes place in Cannes in the **Alpes-Maritimes**.*

Many nouns of departments that do not end in **-e** tend to be masculine:

**l'Ain**  
**l'Allier**  
**l'Aveyron**  
**le Calvados**

**le Cantal**  
**le Cher**  
**le Gard**

**le Gers**  
**l'Hérault**  
**le Jura**

**le Loiret**  
**le Nord**  
**le Tarn**

*L'Enfant sauvage* de Truffaut est basé sur une histoire vraie dans l'**Aveyron** du dix huitième siècle.  
Le pont du **Gard** est un aqueduc romain qui enjambe le Gard.

*The Wild Child by Truffaut is based on a true story in the eighteenth-century Aveyron department.*  
*The Pont du Gard is a Roman aqueduct that crosses the Gard River.*

The overseas departments, called **les départements ultramarins**, are:

**la Guadeloupe**  
**la Guyane**

**la Martinique**  
**Mayotte**

**la Réunion**

There are many ultramarine territories and collectives like:

**la Nouvelle-Calédonie**  
**la Polynésie**

**Saint-Pierre et Miquelon**  
**les Terres Australes et Antarctiques**

Le plus grand poète de **la Martinique** fut Aimé Césaire.  
**Mayotte** est devenu le 101ème département français en mars 2011.

*The greatest poet in Martinique was Aimé Césaire.*  
*As of March 2011, Mayotte has become the 101st French Department.*

If you are interested in the topic, visit the government website on the ultramarine departments and collectives: <http://www.outre-mer.gouv.fr>.

## Regions and states

Regions, provinces, and states ending in **-e** tend to be feminine. The others tend to be masculine—with some exceptions, of course. Here are some examples in the masculine in France:

**le Bordelais**  
**le Jura**

**le Languedoc**  
**le Limousin**

**le Midi**  
**le Nord-Pas-de-Calais**

**le Poitou**  
**le Roussillon**

Les châteaux cathares **du Languedoc** sont remplis de mystère.  
La capitale **du Poitou** est Poitiers.

*The Cathar castles in Languedoc are full of mystery.*  
*The capital of Poitou is Poitiers.*

Here are some examples in the feminine in France:

**l'Alsace**  
**l'Aquitaine**  
**l'Auvergne**  
**la Bourgogne**

**la Bretagne**  
**la Champagne**  
**la Côte d'Azur**

**la Franche-Comté**  
**la Lorraine**  
**la Normandie**

**la Picardie**  
**la Provence**  
**la Savoie**

Un des personnages les plus célèbres **d'Aquitaine** est Aliénor d'Aquitaine qui fut reine de France puis d'Angleterre.  
**La Picardie** est composée de trois départements: l'Aisne, l'Oise et la Somme.

*One of most famous figures of Aquitaine was Eleanor of Aquitaine who was queen of France, then of England.*  
*The Picardy region is composed of three departments: l'Aisne, l'Oise, and la Somme.*

Here are some examples in the masculine in the United States:

**le Colorado**  
**le Kansas**  
**le Maine**  
**le Michigan**

**le Minnesota**  
**le Mississippi**  
**le Nebraska**

**le New-Hampshire**  
**le Nouveau-Mexique**  
**l'Ohio**

**le Texas**  
**le Vermont**  
**le Wyoming**

Here are some examples in the feminine in the United States:

**la Californie**  
**la Caroline-du-Sud**

**la Floride**  
**la Géorgie**

**la Louisiane**  
**la Pennsylvanie**

**la Virginie**

**La Californie** est l'un des États les plus visités par les Européens.  
Napoléon vendit **la Louisiane** en 1803.

**California** is one of the states most visited by Europeans.  
Napoleon sold **Louisiana** in 1803.

Note that you will say **l'État de New York** to avoid the confusion between New York State and New York City and **l'État de Washington** to distinguish between the state of Washington and Washington, D.C., the capital of the country. There are quite a few tricks to be aware of, so double-check the article and the preposition in the dictionary.

#### EXERCICE

### 3·6

Indicate the gender of the nouns by adding the definite article *le, la, or les*.

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. _____ Californie        | 11. _____ Maine           |
| 2. _____ Seine-Saint-Denis | 12. _____ Lorraine        |
| 3. _____ Louisiane         | 13. _____ New Jersey      |
| 4. _____ Bretagne          | 14. _____ Limousin        |
| 5. _____ Guadeloupe        | 15. _____ Gard            |
| 6. _____ Caire             | 16. _____ Poitou          |
| 7. _____ Languedoc         | 17. _____ Missouri        |
| 8. _____ Dordogne          | 18. _____ Provence        |
| 9. _____ Nebraska          | 19. _____ Martinique      |
| 10. _____ Vermont          | 20. _____ Alpes-Maritimes |

## Countries

Like regions and states, the countries with an **-e** ending tend to be feminine. Other endings tend to be masculine, although you must watch out for the exceptions.

First, let's look at the feminine countries:

**l'Albanie**  
**l'Algérie**  
**l'Allemagne**  
**l'Angleterre**  
**l'Arabie saoudite**  
**l'Argentine**  
**l'Australie**  
**l'Autriche**  
**la Belgique**  
**la Biélorussie**

*Albania*  
*Algeria*  
*Germany*  
*England*  
*Saudi Arabia*  
*Argentina*  
*Australia*  
*Austria*  
*Belgium*  
*Belarus*

**la Hongrie**  
**l'Inde**  
**l'Irlande**  
**l'Italie**  
**la Jordanie**  
**la Malaisie**  
**la Mauritanie**  
**la Mongolie**  
**la Namibie**  
**la Norvège**

*Hungary*  
*India*  
*Ireland*  
*Italy*  
*Jordan*  
*Malaysia*  
*Mauritania*  
*Mongolia*  
*Namibia*  
*Norway*

|                         |                    |                        |                     |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>la Bolivie</b>       | <i>Bolivia</i>     | <b>la Pologne</b>      | <i>Poland</i>       |
| <b>la Bulgarie</b>      | <i>Bulgaria</i>    | <b>la Roumanie</b>     | <i>Romania</i>      |
| <b>la Chine</b>         | <i>China</i>       | <b>la Russie</b>       | <i>Russia</i>       |
| <b>la Colombie</b>      | <i>Columbia</i>    | <b>la Suède</b>        | <i>Sweden</i>       |
| <b>la Côte d'Ivoire</b> | <i>Ivory Coast</i> | <b>la Syrie</b>        | <i>Syria</i>        |
| <b>l'Égypte</b>         | <i>Egypt</i>       | <b>la Tanzanie</b>     | <i>Tanzania</i>     |
| <b>l'Espagne</b>        | <i>Spain</i>       | <b>la Thaïlande</b>    | <i>Thailand</i>     |
| <b>l'Éthiopie</b>       | <i>Ethiopia</i>    | <b>la Tunisie</b>      | <i>Tunisia</i>      |
| <b>la Finlande</b>      | <i>Finland</i>     | <b>la Turquie</b>      | <i>Turkey</i>       |
| <b>la France</b>        | <i>France</i>      | <b>la Sierra Leone</b> | <i>Sierra Leone</i> |
| <b>la Grèce</b>         | <i>Greece</i>      | <b>l'Ukraine</b>       | <i>Ukraine</i>      |
| <b>la Guyane</b>        | <i>Guyana</i>      | <b>la Zambie</b>       | <i>Zambia</i>       |

Here are some exceptions. The following nouns end with an -e but are masculine:

|                     |                 |                       |                   |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>le Cachemire</b> | <i>Kashmir</i>  | <b>le Mozambique*</b> | <i>Mozambique</i> |
| <b>le Cambodge</b>  | <i>Cambodia</i> | <b>le Zimbabwe**</b>  | <i>Zimbabwe</i>   |
| <b>le Mexique</b>   | <i>Mexico</i>   |                       |                   |

\*officially **la République du Mozambique**

\*\*or **la République du Zimbabwe**

**La Suède** attribue les prix Nobel chaque année.

*Sweden awards Nobel prizes every year.*

Attiré par Istanbul, son frère s'est installé **en Turquie** l'an passé.

*Attracted by Istanbul, his brother settled in Turkey last year.*

Now let's look at some of the masculine countries:

|                      |                    |                     |                  |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| <b>l'Afghanistan</b> | <i>Afghanistan</i> | <b>le Kenya</b>     | <i>Kenya</i>     |
| <b>le Bangladesh</b> | <i>Bangladesh</i>  | <b>le Laos</b>      | <i>Laos</i>      |
| <b>le Bénin</b>      | <i>Benin</i>       | <b>le Liban</b>     | <i>Lebanon</i>   |
| <b>le Bhoutan</b>    | <i>Bhutan</i>      | <b>le Maroc</b>     | <i>Morocco</i>   |
| <b>le Brésil</b>     | <i>Brazil</i>      | <b>le Mali</b>      | <i>Mali</i>      |
| <b>le Canada</b>     | <i>Canada</i>      | <b>le Nigéria</b>   | <i>Nigeria</i>   |
| <b>le Chili</b>      | <i>Chile</i>       | <b>le Pakistan</b>  | <i>Pakistan</i>  |
| <b>le Congo</b>      | <i>Congo</i>       | <b>le Paraguay</b>  | <i>Paraguay</i>  |
| <b>le Danemark</b>   | <i>Denmark</i>     | <b>le Pérou</b>     | <i>Peru</i>      |
| <b>l'Équateur</b>    | <i>Ecuador</i>     | <b>le Portugal</b>  | <i>Portugal</i>  |
| <b>le Gabon</b>      | <i>Gabon</i>       | <b>le Sénégal</b>   | <i>Senegal</i>   |
| <b>l'Iran</b>        | <i>Iran</i>        | <b>le Tchad</b>     | <i>Chad</i>      |
| <b>l'Irak</b>        | <i>Iraq</i>        | <b>le Venezuela</b> | <i>Venezuela</i> |
| <b>le Japon</b>      | <i>Japan</i>       | <b>le Viêt-Nam</b>  | <i>Vietnam</i>   |

Some countries do not have articles: **Israël, Oman.**

**Le Viêt-Nam** est l'un des plus grands producteurs de riz.

*Vietnam is one of the largest rice producers.*

**Le Maroc** a de nombreux sites protégés par l'UNESCO.

*Morocco has many sites protected by UNESCO.*

## EXERCICE

## 3.7

Indicate the gender of the nouns by adding the definite article le, la, or les.

- |                    |                              |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. _____ France    | 11. _____ Italie             |
| 2. _____ Danemark  | 12. _____ Portugal           |
| 3. _____ Grèce     | 13. _____ Chine              |
| 4. _____ Mexique   | 14. _____ Turquie            |
| 5. _____ Belgique  | 15. _____ Russie             |
| 6. _____ Japon     | 16. _____ Bolivie            |
| 7. _____ Chili     | 17. _____ Malaisie           |
| 8. _____ Guatemala | 18. _____ Nouvelle-Calédonie |
| 9. _____ Brésil    | 19. _____ Costa Rica         |
| 10. _____ Cambodge | 20. _____ Philippines        |

## EXERCICE

## 3.8

Indicate the gender of the country or province by adding the definite article le or la.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Népal est un endroit idéal pour le trekking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Jordanie abrite l'ancienne cité de Pétra, patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO.
- En mars, Erwan visitera \_\_\_\_\_ Togo, \_\_\_\_\_ Bénin et \_\_\_\_\_ Sierra Leone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Nouvelle-Zélande attire Carla depuis longtemps.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Guyane est un département ultramarin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Burkina Faso organise un gigantesque festival de cinéma tous les deux ans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Qatar a invité des architectes français pour construire des édifices.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Viêt-Nam a fortement influencé l'écriture de Marguerite Duras.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pays-Bas sont de grands exportateurs de tulipes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Québec est traversé par le Saint-Laurent.

# Islands, rivers, seas, and oceans

Now we are going to investigate the gender of islands and rivers. Could there be set rules?

## Islands

The rules for the gender of isles are as fluid as their waters. You will find variations from one dictionary to the other, from one writer to the other. It remains a poetic enigma of islands . . . Even if the island is a state, the tendency is to use the feminine, referring to **l'île**, but not always. In fact, some islands do not even have articles:

|                                                         |           |                                                                    |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Aruba                                                   | Guernesey | Jersey                                                             | Samoa       |
| Bora, Bora                                              | Haïti     | Madagascar                                                         | Terre-Neuve |
| Chypre                                                  | Hawaï     | Malte                                                              | Taiwan      |
| Cuba                                                    | Hong-Kong | Ouessant                                                           |             |
| Madagascar est situé dans l'océan Indien.               |           | Madagascar is in the Indian Ocean.                                 |             |
| Haïti chérie                                            |           | Darling Haiti (political song, 1920)                               |             |
| Cuba, la belle                                          |           | Cuba, the beautiful                                                |             |
| Au quinzième siècle, Cuba était peuplée par les Taïnos. |           | In the fifteenth century, Cuba was inhabited by the Taino Indians. |             |
| Taïwan est située au centre de l'Asie.                  |           | Taiwan is in the center of Asia.                                   |             |

Some islands have a definite article, making things easy:

|                                                                     |               |                                                                    |                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| la Barbade                                                          | la Grenade    | l'Île de Sein                                                      | les Marquises      |
| le Cap-Vert                                                         | la Guadeloupe | la Jamaïque                                                        | la Nouvelle-Guinée |
| la Corse                                                            | l'Île Maurice | les Maldives                                                       | les Seychelles     |
| la Crête                                                            | l'Île de Ré   | la Martinique                                                      | la Sicile          |
| La Corse est renommée pour ses falaises.                            |               | Corsica is renowned for its cliffs.                                |                    |
| L'Île de Ré est l'île favorite des politiques français.             |               | The island of Ré is the favorite island of French politicians.     |                    |
| Jacques Brel a passé de longues années aux enchantresses Marquises. |               | Jacques Brel spent many years on the enchanting Marquesas Islands. |                    |

## Rivers

In French, there is a difference between **un fleuve**, a river that flows into the sea or the ocean, and **une rivière**, which does not. Most **fleuves** not ending with **-e** are masculine. Watch out for exceptions! Here are a few examples from around the world:

|                                                        |                |                                                            |                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Feminine                                               |                |                                                            |                 |
| l'Amazone                                              | la Krishnâ     | la Seine                                                   | la Volga        |
| la Garonne                                             | la Loire       | la Vistule                                                 |                 |
| Masculine                                              |                |                                                            |                 |
| le Colorado                                            | le Mékong      | le Rhin                                                    | la Tamise       |
| le Congo                                               | le Mississippi | le Rhône                                                   | le Tibre        |
| le Danube                                              | le Missouri    | le Rio Grande                                              | le Yangzy Jiang |
| le Gange                                               | le Niger       | le Saint-Laurent                                           | le Yukon        |
| l'Hudson                                               | le Nil         | le Sénégal                                                 | le Zambèze      |
| Le Mississippi est le plus long fleuve des États-Unis. |                | The Mississippi is the longest river in the United States. |                 |
| Le Gange est le fleuve sacré de l'Inde.                |                | The Ganges is the sacred river of India.                   |                 |

Les rivières are either masculine or feminine. Here are a few examples in France:

le Cher

la Creuse

la Dordogne

le Doubs

la Drôme

le Gard

le Gers

le Loir

le Lot

la Mayenne

la Moselle

La Dordogne est une rivière serpentine de presque 500 kilomètres.

Le château de Chenonceau est construit sur un pont qui enjambe le Cher.

*The Dordogne is a serpentine river almost 500 kilometers long.*

*The Chenonceau castle is built on a bridge across the river Cher.*

# EXERCICE

## 3-9

Indicate the gender of the river by adding the definite article le or la.

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. _____ Rio Grande  | 11. _____ Potomac  |
| 2. _____ Somme       | 12. _____ Tumen    |
| 3. _____ Mékong      | 13. _____ Loir     |
| 4. _____ Volga       | 14. _____ Seine    |
| 5. _____ Loire       | 15. _____ Pô       |
| 6. _____ Mississippi | 16. _____ Drôme    |
| 7. _____ Têt         | 17. _____ Nil      |
| 8. _____ Drâ         | 18. _____ Rhône    |
| 9. _____ Niger       | 19. _____ Dordogne |
| 10. _____ Rance      | 20. _____ Vienne   |

## Seas and oceans

La mer (sea) is feminine and l'océan (ocean) is masculine; that is fairly easy. The common mistakes have to do with capitalization. Always check in the dictionary.

le golfe de Californie *the Gulf of California*

le golfe du Mexique *the Gulf of Mexico*

le golfe Persique *the Persian Gulf*

la mer des Caraïbes *the Caribbean Sea*

la mer de Chine *the China Sea*

la mer Noire *the Black Sea*

la mer du Nord *the North Sea*

l'océan Atlantique *the Atlantic Ocean*

l'océan Indien *the Indian Ocean*

l'océan Pacifique *the Pacific Ocean*

L'Île Maurice, territoire ultramarin de la France, se trouve dans l'océan Indien.

Éric Tabarly a fait la traversée de l'océan Atlantique bien des fois.

*Mauritius Island, ultramarine territory of France is in the Indian Ocean.*

*Éric Tabarly crossed the Atlantic Ocean many times.*

## Days, months, seasons, cardinal points

The days of the week are masculine:

|                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>le lundi</b>    | <i>Monday</i>    |
| <b>le mardi</b>    | <i>Tuesday</i>   |
| <b>le mercredi</b> | <i>Wednesday</i> |
| <b>le jeudi</b>    | <i>Thursday</i>  |
| <b>le vendredi</b> | <i>Friday</i>    |
| <b>le samedi</b>   | <i>Saturday</i>  |
| <b>le dimanche</b> | <i>Sunday</i>    |

The months of the year are also masculine:

|                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>janvier</b>             | <i>January</i>           |
| <b>février</b>             | <i>February</i>          |
| <b>mars</b>                | <i>March</i>             |
| <b>avril</b>               | <i>April</i>             |
| <b>mai</b>                 | <i>May</i>               |
| <b>juin</b>                | <i>June</i>              |
| <b>juillet</b>             | <i>July</i>              |
| <b>août</b>                | <i>August</i>            |
| <b>septembre</b>           | <i>September</i>         |
| <b>octobre</b>             | <i>October</i>           |
| <b>novembre</b>            | <i>November</i>          |
| <b>décembre</b>            | <i>December</i>          |
| <b>un avril ensoleillé</b> | <i>a sunny April</i>     |
| <b>un septembre venté</b>  | <i>a windy September</i> |

The seasons are masculine:

|                            |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>un hiver froid</b>      | <i>a cold winter</i>   |
| <b>un printemps tardif</b> | <i>a late spring</i>   |
| <b>un été pourri</b>       | <i>a rotten summer</i> |
| <b>un automne pluvieux</b> | <i>a rainy fall</i>    |

Cardinal points are also masculine:

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| <b>le nord</b> | <i>north</i> |
| <b>le sud</b>  | <i>south</i> |
| <b>l'est</b>   | <i>east</i>  |
| <b>l'ouest</b> | <i>west</i>  |

## Religious celebrations and holidays

**Noël** is usually used in the masculine form and without an article:

|                                                      |                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nous serons chez notre grand-mère<br>à <b>Noël</b> . | <i>We'll be at our grandmother's for<br/><b>Christmas</b>.</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|

However, you may find an article when the day is qualified:

|                                             |                                                |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Nous avons eu <b>un Noël</b> sous la neige. | <i>We had <b>a</b> snowy <b>Christmas</b>.</i> |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|

Do not be surprised if you find articles in front of the noun in old tales and literature:

|                                  |                                    |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Voici <b>la Noël</b> qui arrive. | <i><b>Christmas</b> is coming.</i> |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|

Some other holiday-related terms to keep in mind:

- ♦ **Pâque** used in the singular means *Passover*.
- ♦ **La Pâque orthodoxe** means *Orthodox Easter*.
- ♦ **Pâques** in the plural means *Easter*.
- ♦ **L'Ascension** (*Ascension Day*), **la Pentecôte** (*Pentecost*), and **la Toussaint** (*All Saints' Day*) are all feminine.
- ♦ **Le Ramadan** and **l'Aïd al Kébir** are masculine.
- ♦ **Thanksgiving** is masculine.

Now, let's see how to send holiday greetings:

**Je vous souhaite...**

...un Joyeux Noël

...un bon Ramadan

...un joyeux Thanksgiving

...de joyeuses Pâques

...une bonne et heureuse année

...une bonne année du singe

*I wish you . . .*

... Merry Christmas

... Happy and Blessed Ramadan

... Happy Thanksgiving

... Happy Easter

... Happy New Year

... Happy Year of the Monkey

EXERCICE

3•10

Indicate the gender of the noun by adding the definite article *le* or *la*.

\_\_\_\_\_ automne prochain, j'irai à l'Île Maurice dans \_\_\_\_\_ océan Indien. L'Île Maurice est merveilleuse car c'est une île volcanique. Puis \_\_\_\_\_ été suivant, mon amie Anne et moi envisageons de faire une croisière en Norvège. Anne connaît \_\_\_\_\_ mer Noire et \_\_\_\_\_ golfe du Mexique. En raison du travail de ses parents, elle a beaucoup voyagé. Elle rêve de voir \_\_\_\_\_ océan Pacifique. Nous irons sans doute ensemble un de ces jours.

## Plants, wine, and cheese

We are going to explore the world of flowers, trees, and bushes and see if we can figure out a rule.

### Flowers, tree, shrubs

Let's start with flowers. They play an important role in French life and also in art, especially in painting.

#### Flowers

One could think that flowers are feminine since flowers are delicate and feminine. That would be not only politically incorrect but also totally wrong. The truth is that most flowers not ending in *-e* tend to be masculine.

Hint: Try memorizing the gender of some flowers and connecting them with a person you know: Jérôme/**le tournesol**, Marie/**l'aubépine**, and so on.

Here are flowers with a masculine gender:

|                        |                      |                     |                         |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>l'arum</b>          | <i>arum lily</i>     | <b>le glaïeul</b>   | <i>gladiola</i>         |
| <b>l'aster</b>         | <i>aster</i>         | <b>l'hortensia</b>  | <i>hydrangea</i>        |
| <b>le bégonia</b>      | <i>begonia</i>       | <b>l'iris</b>       | <i>iris</i>             |
| <b>le bouton d'or</b>  | <i>buttercup</i>     | <b>le jasmin</b>    | <i>jasmine</i>          |
| <b>le cactus</b>       | <i>cactus</i>        | <b>le myosotis</b>  | <i>forget-me-not</i>    |
| <b>le camélia</b>      | <i>camellia</i>      | <b>le narcisse</b>  | <i>narcissus</i>        |
| <b>le chrysanthème</b> | <i>chrysanthemum</i> | <b>le nénuphar</b>  | <i>water lily</i>       |
| <b>le coquelicot</b>   | <i>poppy</i>         | <b>le nymphéa</b>   | <i>white water lily</i> |
| <b>le cyclamen</b>     | <i>cyclamen</i>      |                     | (Monet)                 |
| <b>le freesia</b>      | <i>freesia</i>       | <b>l'œillet</b>     | <i>carnation</i>        |
| <b>le géranium</b>     | <i>geranium</i>      | <b>le tournesol</b> | <i>sunflower</i>        |

Here are flowers with a feminine gender. Note that they all end with **-e**:

|                      |                      |                         |                           |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>l'anémone</b>     | <i>anemone</i>       | <b>la pivoine</b>       | <i>peony</i>              |
| <b>l'angélique</b>   | <i>angelica</i>      | <b>la primevère</b>     | <i>primrose</i>           |
| <b>la capucine</b>   | <i>nasturtium</i>    | <b>la rose</b>          | <i>rose</i>               |
| <b>la colchique</b>  | <i>autumn crocus</i> | <b>la rue</b>           | <i>rue</i>                |
| <b>la jacinthe</b>   | <i>hyacinth</i>      | <b>la rose d'Inde</b>   | <i>African marigold</i>   |
| <b>la jonquille</b>  | <i>daffodil</i>      | <b>la rose pompon</b>   | <i>button rose</i>        |
| <b>la marguerite</b> | <i>daisy</i>         | <b>la rose trémière</b> | <i>hollyhock</i>          |
| <b>l'orchidée</b>    | <i>orchid</i>        | <b>la tulipe</b>        | <i>tulip</i>              |
| <b>la patience</b>   | <i>patience dock</i> | <b>la véronique</b>     | <i>speedwell/veronica</i> |
| <b>la pensée</b>     | <i>pansy</i>         | <b>la violette</b>      | <i>violet</i>             |

Elle effeuillait **la marguerite**.

She was playing "**he loves me, he loves me not.**"

**Le tournesol** était une des fleurs favorites de Van Gogh.

**The sunflower** was one of Van Gogh's favorite flowers.

## Trees and shrubs

Most trees and shrubs tend to be masculine:

|                         |                      |                        |                        |                        |                     |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>l'abricotier</b>     | <i>apricot tree</i>  | <b>l'érable</b>        | <i>maple</i>           | <b>le palmier</b>      | <i>palm tree</i>    |
| <b>l'acacia</b>         | <i>acacia</i>        | <b>l'eucalyptus</b>    | <i>eucalyptus</i>      | <b>le pêcher</b>       | <i>peach tree</i>   |
| <b>l'acajou</b>         | <i>mahogany</i>      | <b>le figuier</b>      | <i>fig tree</i>        | <b>le peuplier</b>     | <i>poplar tree</i>  |
| <b>l'aulne</b>          | <i>alder</i>         | <b>le frangipanier</b> | <i>frangipani tree</i> | <b>le pin</b>          | <i>pine</i>         |
| <b>le bananier</b>      | <i>banana tree</i>   | <b>le genévrier</b>    | <i>juniper</i>         | <b>le platane</b>      | <i>plane tree</i>   |
| <b>le bambou</b>        | <i>bamboo</i>        | <b>le groseillier</b>  | <i>currant bush</i>    | <b>le poirier</b>      | <i>pear tree</i>    |
| <b>le bouleau</b>       | <i>birch</i>         | <b>le hêtre</b>        | <i>beech tree</i>      | <b>le pommier</b>      | <i>apple tree</i>   |
| <b>le cèdre</b>         | <i>cedar</i>         | <b>l'hévéa</b>         | <i>hevea</i>           | <b>le prunier</b>      | <i>plum tree</i>    |
| <b>le cerisier</b>      | <i>cherry tree</i>   | <b>le houx</b>         | <i>holly</i>           | <b>le rhododendron</b> | <i>rhododendron</i> |
| <b>le charme</b>        | <i>hornbeam</i>      | <b>le laurier</b>      | <i>laurel</i>          | <b>le rosier</b>       | <i>rosebush</i>     |
| <b>le châtaignier</b>   | <i>chestnut tree</i> | <b>le lilas</b>        | <i>lilac tree</i>      | <b>le sapin</b>        | <i>fir tree</i>     |
| <b>le chêne</b>         | <i>oak</i>           | <b>le marronnier</b>   | <i>chestnut tree</i>   | <b>le saule</b>        | <i>willow</i>       |
| <b>le chèvrefeuille</b> | <i>honeysuckle</i>   | <b>le mélèze</b>       | <i>larch</i>           | <b>le séquoia</b>      | <i>sequoia</i>      |
| <b>le citronnier</b>    | <i>lemon tree</i>    | <b>l'olivier</b>       | <i>olive tree</i>      | <b>le tilleul</b>      | <i>lime tree</i>    |
| <b>le cocotier</b>      | <i>coconut palm</i>  | <b>l'orme</b>          | <i>elm tree</i>        | <b>le tremble</b>      | <i>aspen</i>        |
| <b>le cyprès</b>        | <i>cypress</i>       |                        |                        |                        |                     |

Here are a few exceptions:

|                   |                 |                 |                |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <b>l'aubépine</b> | <i>hawthorn</i> | <b>la ronce</b> | <i>bramble</i> |
| <b>la bruyère</b> | <i>heather</i>  | <b>la vigne</b> | <i>vine</i>    |

En France, de nombreuses routes sont bordées de **marronniers**.

**Le bambou** est très utilisé dans le décor moderne.

*In France, many roads are lined with **chestnut trees**.*

***Bamboo** is used a lot in modern décor.*

EXERCICE

3.11

Complete with the definite or indefinite article un, une, le, or la.

1. Dans le jardin de Victoire, il y a \_\_\_\_\_ lilas et \_\_\_\_\_ laurier rose.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ rose sur ton chapeau est fanée.
3. Nous étions à la campagne et il a cueilli \_\_\_\_\_ bouton d'or.
4. Quand il était jeune, Bernard est tombé sur \_\_\_\_\_ cactus.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ chrysanthème est l'emblème national du Japon.
6. La mariée tenait \_\_\_\_\_ orchidée de la main gauche.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ séquoia que j'ai pris en photo faisait huit mètres de diamètre.
8. L'automobiliste s'est écrasé contre \_\_\_\_\_ platane.
9. Sur chaque table du restaurant, il y avait \_\_\_\_\_ rose rouge dans un vase noir.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ chêne dans le jardin de mon grand-père a près de 150 ans.

EXERCICE

3.12

Add the definite article le or la.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ pivoine rose signifie la sincérité. Vous pouvez compter sur moi.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ tournesol signifie que vous êtes mon soleil; je ne vois que vous.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ pensée signifie que je ne veux pas que vous m'oubliez.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ mimosa signifie que je doute de votre amour.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ jacinthe signifie que je suis conscient de votre beauté.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ bégonia signifie que mon amitié pour vous est sincère.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ véronique signifie fidélité, âme sœur.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ bouton d'or signifie que vous vous moquez de moi.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ narcisse signifie l'égoïsme.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ rue signifie que j'aime l'indépendance.

**Les fleurs ont leur langage.** Check online sites for the meanings of flowers, and you will find quite a few versions of their significance. But never offer a chrysanthemum, as it is related to death. You will see them in the cemeteries **à la Toussaint**.

## Fruit and vegetables

The names of fruit, nuts, and vegetables not ending in **-e** are usually masculine:

|               |                        |              |                 |                |                      |
|---------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| l'abricot     | <i>apricot</i>         | le coing     | <i>quince</i>   | le navet       | <i>turnip</i>        |
| l'ail         | <i>garlic</i>          | le cornichon | <i>gherkin</i>  | l'oignon       | <i>onion</i>         |
| l'ananas      | <i>pineapple</i>       | le cresson   | <i>cress</i>    | le piment      | <i>chili, pepper</i> |
| l'artichaut   | <i>artichoke</i>       | l'épinard    | <i>spinach</i>  | le poireau     | <i>leek</i>          |
| l'avocat      | <i>avocado</i>         | le fenouil   | <i>fennel</i>   | le petit pois  | <i>garden pea</i>    |
| le brocoli    | <i>broccoli</i>        | le haricot   | <i>bean</i>     | le pois chiche | <i>chickpea</i>      |
| le brugnon    | <i>white nectarine</i> | le kiwi      | <i>kiwi</i>     | le poivron     | <i>sweet pepper</i>  |
| le cassis     | <i>black currant</i>   | le litchi    | <i>litchi</i>   | le potiron     | <i>pumpkin</i>       |
| le céleri     | <i>celery</i>          | le maïs      | <i>corn</i>     | le pruneau     | <i>prune</i>         |
| le champignon | <i>mushroom</i>        | le manioc    | <i>manioc</i>   | le quinoa      | <i>quinoa</i>        |
| le chou       | <i>cabbage</i>         | le marron    | <i>chestnut</i> | le radis       | <i>radish</i>        |
| le chou-fleur | <i>cauliflower</i>     | le melon     | <i>melon</i>    | le raisin      | <i>grapes</i>        |
| le citron     | <i>lemon</i>           |              |                 |                |                      |

Here are a few exceptions:

|              |                 |              |               |                 |                   |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| le concombre | <i>cucumber</i> | le gingembre | <i>ginger</i> | le pamplemousse | <i>grapefruit</i> |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|

Here are some feminine nouns of fruit, nuts, and vegetables:

|               |                   |              |                     |                   |                     |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| l'airelle     | <i>cranberry</i>  | la courge    | <i>squash</i>       | l'olive           | <i>olive</i>        |
| l'amande      | <i>almond</i>     | la courgette | <i>zucchini</i>     | l'orange          | <i>orange</i>       |
| l'asperge     | <i>asparagus</i>  | la datte     | <i>date</i>         | la pastèque       | <i>watermelon</i>   |
| l'arachide    | <i>peanut</i>     | l'échalote   | <i>shallot</i>      | la patate douce   | <i>sweet potato</i> |
| l'aubergine   | <i>eggplant</i>   | l'endive     | <i>chicory</i>      | la pêche          | <i>peach</i>        |
| la betterave  | <i>beet</i>       | la fraise    | <i>strawberry</i>   | la pistache       | <i>pistachio</i>    |
| la cacahouète | <i>peanut</i>     | la framboise | <i>raspberry</i>    | la poire          | <i>pear</i>         |
| la carotte    | <i>carrot</i>     | la frisée    | <i>curly endive</i> | la pomme          | <i>apple</i>        |
| la châtaigne  | <i>chestnut</i>   | la laitue    | <i>lettuce</i>      | la pomme de terre | <i>potato</i>       |
| la cerise     | <i>cherry</i>     | la mirabelle | <i>mirabelle</i>    | la prune          | <i>plum</i>         |
| la ciboulette | <i>chives</i>     | la myrtille  | <i>blueberry</i>    | la tomate         | <i>tomato</i>       |
| la citrouille | <i>pumpkin</i>    | la noisette  | <i>hazelnut</i>     | la truffe         | <i>truffle</i>      |
| la clémentine | <i>clementine</i> | la noix      | <i>nut</i>          |                   |                     |

La glace à **la pistache** de chez Berthillon est la meilleure.

**Le citron** est bon pour la peau.

Berthillon's **pistachio** ice cream is the best.

**Lemon** is good for your skin.

Complete by adding the indefinite article *un* or *une*.

C'est le vingtième anniversaire de Chloé. Sa cousine Lucie a invité une vingtaine de personnes. Chloé est végétarienne alors Lucie a fait un énorme gâteau et l'a décoré de toutes sortes de fruits et légumes.

Lucie a mis au milieu \_\_\_\_\_ demi-kiwi, puis \_\_\_\_\_ abricot, \_\_\_\_\_ petite poire. Ensuite, en forme de bouquet, \_\_\_\_\_ mirabelle, \_\_\_\_\_ cassis, \_\_\_\_\_ cerise, \_\_\_\_\_ myrtille, \_\_\_\_\_ framboise, \_\_\_\_\_ cassis. À chaque coin, elle a placé \_\_\_\_\_ marron et \_\_\_\_\_ cacahouète. Pour finir, elle a mis \_\_\_\_\_ truffe au chocolat pour chaque invité tout autour du gâteau.

## Wine and cheese

Names of wines and other alcoholic beverages tend to be masculine:

|               |                      |                   |                  |
|---------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| l'armagnac    | le chablis           | le madère         | le rhum          |
| le beaujolais | le champagne         | le margaux        | le saint-Émilien |
| le bordeaux   | le chinon            | le médoc          | le sake          |
| le bourbon    | le cognac            | le muscadet       | le saumur        |
| le brandy     | le côtes de Duras    | le pernod         | le sauternes     |
| le cabernet   | le côtes de Provence | le pouilly-fuissé | le vouvray       |
| le calvados   | le gin               | le rosé d'Anjou   | le whisky        |
| le bourgogne  |                      |                   |                  |

Here are a few feminine exceptions:

|            |                |              |
|------------|----------------|--------------|
| l'anisette | la bénédictine | la mirabelle |
| la bière   | l'eau de vie   | la vodka     |

On utilise **le rhum** pour faire du punch.  
**Le calvados** est fait avec des pommes.

*Rum is used to make punch.*  
*Calvados is made from apples.*

Names of cheeses also tend to be masculine:

|                     |               |               |                  |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| le beaufort         | le chabichou  | le gorgonzola | le pont-l'évêque |
| le bleu d'Auvergne  | le chaumes    | le gouda      | le port-salut    |
| le bleu des Causses | le cheddar    | le gruyère    | le raclette      |
| le boursin          | le chèvre     | le livarot    | le reblochon     |
| le brie             | le comté      | le maroilles  | le rocamadour    |
| le brillat-savarin  | le crottin de | le mascarpone | le roquefort     |
| le brin d'amour     | Chavignol     | le munster    | le sainte-maure  |
| le camembert        | l'emmental    | le parmesan   | le vacherin      |
| le cantal           | l'époisse     |               |                  |

**La raclette** goes back to the Middle Ages and was consumed by Swiss peasants who were in need of a hot meal after a long day of labor and by herders who would cook **la raclette** on a campfire. Today in France, families and especially children enjoy it in the winter. It also has become trendy in upscale restaurants that have all the proper utensils.

**Raclette** comes from **racler** (*to scrape*). It is served with small potatoes and Savoy wine or Pinot Gris. It is definitely not **cuisine minceur** . . .

Here are a few feminine names of cheeses:

la faisselle  
la feta

la fourme  
la mimolette

la mozzarella  
la ricotta

la tome

**Le roquefort** est le fromage idéal pour la  
salade d'endives.

Achète **un chèvre** et **un camembert** au  
marché!

**Roquefort** is the ideal cheese for endive  
salad.

Buy **a goat cheese** and **a camembert** at  
the market!

EXERCICE

3.14

Add the indefinite article *un* or *une*.

Des copains sont réunis pour une soirée vin et fromage.

—Alex, qu'est-ce que tu prends? \_\_\_\_\_ médoc et \_\_\_\_\_ beaufort?

—Non, aujourd'hui, je voudrais \_\_\_\_\_ rosé d'Anjou et \_\_\_\_\_ gorgonzola.

—Et toi, Yves?

—\_\_\_\_\_ vodka et \_\_\_\_\_ vacherin.

—\_\_\_\_\_ vodka? En quel honneur? Tu prends toujours \_\_\_\_\_ saumur!

—Oui mais demain, on part pour Moscou. Je veux m'habituer.

—D'accord, \_\_\_\_\_ vodka pour Yves et \_\_\_\_\_ chablis pour Raoul?

—Exact. \_\_\_\_\_ chablis et \_\_\_\_\_ crottin de Chavignol.

—Tout le monde est servi?

—Non, Julien, tu m'as oublié. \_\_\_\_\_ pernod et \_\_\_\_\_ chabichou.

—Désolé. Ça arrive tout de suite.

## Slang

What about learning some slang? The themes of this chapter are rich in idiomatic expressions. Learning them will help you memorize the gender.

Ce film est **un navet** (turnip).

Ton oncle est **une grosse légume** chez  
Renault?

C'est **la fin des haricots**!

Il était rouge comme **une tomate**.

*This film is **a flop**.*

*Your uncle is **a big shot** at Renault?*

*That's **the last straw**!*

*He was as red as **a beet**.*

Arrête de raconter **des salades!**  
 Ce journal, c'est **une feuille de chou!**  
 Je n'ai plus **un radis.**  
 Zoé a fait **le poireau** une demi-heure.

N'oublie pas **ta banane!**  
 Ça permettra **de mettre du beurre dans les épinards.**

Jean **a failli tomber dans les pommes.**  
 Il est **haut comme trois pommes.**  
 Il a **un cœur d'artichaut.**  
**Les carottes sont cuites.**  
 J'ai **la tête comme une citrouille.**  
**Occupez-vous de vos oignons!**  
 Elle a **une peau de pêche.**  
 Ils ont **la pêche.**  
 Il est **bonne poire.**  
 Lucien est souvent **entre deux vins.**  
 Elle a **le vin gai.**  
 Il faudra mettre **de l'eau dans ton vin.**  
 Ce n'est pas la peine d'en faire **tout un fromage.**

Stop telling **tall tales!**  
 This paper is **a rag!**  
 I haven't got **a penny** to my name.  
 Zoé was left **cooling her heels** for half an hour.

Don't forget **your fanny pack!**  
 That'll help you **make ends meet.**

Jean **almost fainted.**  
 He is **knee-high to a grasshopper.**  
 He **falls in love with every girl he meets.**  
**We've had it!**  
 I feel like my head is going to **explode.**  
**Mind your own business!**  
 She has **a peachlike complexion.**  
 They are **in top form.**  
 He is **a real sucker.**  
 He is often **tipsy.**  
 She gets **merry when she drinks.**  
 You'll have **to make concessions.**  
 No need to make **a big fuss** about it.

After this, I am sure a few correct genders will stick in your mind.

## Colors and fabric, the elements, cars, and brands and acronyms

One could dream that some nouns would be neutral for a change. But this is not the case, even for stones or fabric.

### Colors and fabric

Let's start with the palette of colors.

#### Colors

The word **couleur** (*color*) is feminine, as it ends with **-eur**. The colors themselves, however, are masculine:

|                    |                  |                  |               |                  |                      |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|
| <b>l'ambre</b>     | <i>amber</i>     | <b>l'indigo</b>  | <i>indigo</i> | <b>l'orange</b>  | <i>orange</i>        |
| <b>l'aubergine</b> | <i>aubergine</i> | <b>l'ivoire</b>  | <i>ivory</i>  | <b>le rose</b>   | <i>pink</i>          |
| <b>le beige</b>    | <i>beige</i>     | <b>le jaune</b>  | <i>yellow</i> | <b>le rouge</b>  | <i>red</i>           |
| <b>le blanc</b>    | <i>white</i>     | <b>le kaki</b>   | <i>khaki</i>  | <b>le safran</b> | <i>saffron</i>       |
| <b>le bleu</b>     | <i>blue</i>      | <b>le marron</b> | <i>brown</i>  | <b>le saumon</b> | <i>salmon</i>        |
| <b>le cramoisi</b> | <i>crimson</i>   | <b>le noir</b>   | <i>black</i>  | <b>le vert</b>   | <i>green</i>         |
| <b>le gris</b>     | <i>gray</i>      | <b>l'ocre</b>    | <i>ochre</i>  | <b>le violet</b> | <i>violet/purple</i> |

**Le bleu** de sa robe est parfaitement assorti au **le jaune doré** de sa ceinture.

**The blue** of her dress coordinates perfectly with the **golden yellow** of her belt.

Pierre, **le vert** et **le bleu**... ça ne  
va pas dans cette pièce!

Pierre, **green** and **blue** . . . it does  
not work in this room!

## Fabric

Most names of fabric are masculine:

|                         |                       |                    |                      |                     |                   |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>l'acrylique</b>      | <i>acrylic</i>        | <b>l'écossais</b>  | <i>plaid</i>         | <b>l'organdi</b>    | <i>organdy</i>    |
| <b>l'alpaga</b>         | <i>alpaca</i>         | <b>le feutre</b>   | <i>felt</i>          | <b>le polyamide</b> | <i>polyamide</i>  |
| <b>l'angora</b>         | <i>angora</i>         | <b>le Gore-tex</b> | <i>Gore-Tex</i>      | <b>le polyester</b> | <i>polyester</i>  |
| <b>le bambou</b>        | <i>bamboo</i>         | <b>le jacquard</b> | <i>jacquard</i>      | <b>le prince</b>    | <i>Prince of</i>  |
| <b>le batik</b>         | <i>batik</i>          | <b>le jersey</b>   | <i>jersey</i>        | <b>de Galles</b>    | <i>Wales suit</i> |
| <b>le brocard</b>       | <i>brocade</i>        | <b>le jute</b>     | <i>jute</i>          | <b>le raphia</b>    | <i>raffia</i>     |
| <b>le cachemire</b>     | <i>cashmere</i>       | <b>le lamé</b>     | <i>lamé</i>          | <b>le satin</b>     | <i>satin</i>      |
| <b>le coton</b>         | <i>cotton</i>         | <b>le lin</b>      | <i>linen</i>         | <b>le stretch</b>   | <i>stretch</i>    |
| <b>le crêpe de</b>      |                       |                    |                      |                     |                   |
| <b>Chine</b>            | <i>crêpe de Chine</i> | <b>le lycra</b>    | <i>Lycra</i>         | <b>le taffetas</b>  | <i>taffeta</i>    |
| <b>le crêpe de soie</b> | <i>silk crêpe</i>     | <b>le madras</b>   | <i>madras</i>        | <b>le tulle</b>     | <i>tulle</i>      |
| <b>le cuir</b>          | <i>leather</i>        | <b>le mohair</b>   | <i>mohair</i>        | <b>le tweed</b>     | <i>tweed</i>      |
| <b>le damas</b>         | <i>damask</i>         | <b>le molleton</b> | <i>cotton fleece</i> | <b>le velours</b>   | <i>velvet</i>     |
| <b>le denim</b>         | <i>denim</i>          | <b>le nylon</b>    | <i>nylon</i>         | <b>le voile</b>     | <i>voile</i>      |

Here are some exceptions:

|                     |                  |                         |                        |                   |                 |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| <b>la dentelle</b>  | <i>lace</i>      | <b>la laine polaire</b> | <i>wool fleece</i>     | <b>la serge</b>   | <i>serge</i>    |
| <b>la flanelle</b>  | <i>flannel</i>   | <b>la moire</b>         | <i>moiré</i>           | <b>la soie</b>    | <i>silk</i>     |
| <b>la gabardine</b> | <i>gabardine</i> | <b>la mousseline</b>    | <i>muslin/ chiffon</i> | <b>la suédine</b> | <i>suedette</i> |
| <b>la gaze</b>      | <i>gauze</i>     | <b>la paille</b>        | <i>straw</i>           | <b>la viscose</b> | <i>viscose</i>  |
| <b>la laine</b>     | <i>wool</i>      | <b>la popeline</b>      | <i>poplin</i>          |                   |                 |

Le pantalon de Katia est en **lin beige**.  
Le chapeau de M. Fillon est en **paille**  
**orange**.

Katia's pants are made of **beige linen**.  
Mr. Fillon's hat is made of **orange straw**.

## Precious and semiprecious stones

Stones can either be masculine or feminine. These are some masculine stones:

|                   |                |                        |                     |                  |                 |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <b>le corail</b>  | <i>coral</i>   | <b>le jade</b>         | <i>jade</i>         | <b>le quartz</b> | <i>quartz</i>   |
| <b>le diamant</b> | <i>diamond</i> | <b>le lapis-lazuli</b> | <i>lapis lazuli</i> | <b>le rubis</b>  | <i>ruby</i>     |
| <b>le granit</b>  | <i>granite</i> | <b>le marbre</b>       | <i>marble</i>       | <b>le saphir</b> | <i>sapphire</i> |
| <b>le grenat</b>  | <i>garnet</i>  | <b>l'onyx</b>          | <i>onyx</i>         |                  |                 |

These are some feminine stones:

|                       |                   |                   |                |                      |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>l'agate</b>        | <i>agate</i>      | <b>la citrine</b> | <i>citrine</i> | <b>l'opale</b>       | <i>opal</i>       |
| <b>l'aigue-marine</b> | <i>aquamarine</i> | <b>l'émeraude</b> | <i>emerald</i> | <b>la topaze</b>     | <i>topaz</i>      |
| <b>l'améthyste</b>    | <i>amethyst</i>   | <b>la kunzite</b> | <i>kunzite</i> | <b>la tourmaline</b> | <i>tourmaline</i> |
| <b>l'ardoise</b>      | <i>slate</i>      |                   |                |                      |                   |

Félix a offert **un rubis** à Marianne.  
**Ce granit** rose sera idéal pour notre table.

Felix gave **a ruby** to Marianne.  
**This pink granite** will be ideal for our  
table.

# Metals, minerals, chemical elements

Most names of metals, minerals, and chemical elements tend to be masculine:

|              |                   |              |                  |              |                  |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| l'acier      | <i>steel</i>      | le cuivre    | <i>copper</i>    | l'oxygène    | <i>oxygen</i>    |
| l'aluminium  | <i>aluminum</i>   | l'étain      | <i>pewter</i>    | le platine   | <i>platinum</i>  |
| l'anthracite | <i>anthracite</i> | le fer       | <i>iron</i>      | le plomb     | <i>lead</i>      |
| l'argent     | <i>silver</i>     | le fluor     | <i>fluorine</i>  | le potassium | <i>potassium</i> |
| l'azote      | <i>nitrogen</i>   | l'hélium     | <i>helium</i>    | le plutonium | <i>plutonium</i> |
| le bronze    | <i>bronze</i>     | l'hydrogène  | <i>hydrogen</i>  | le radium    | <i>radium</i>    |
| le carbone   | <i>carbon</i>     | l'iode       | <i>iodine</i>    | le sel       | <i>salt</i>      |
| le calcium   | <i>calcium</i>    | le lithium   | <i>lithium</i>   | le soufre    | <i>sulfur</i>    |
| le charbon   | <i>coal</i>       | le magnésium | <i>magnesium</i> | le sulfite   | <i>sulfite</i>   |
| le chlore    | <i>chlorine</i>   | le manganèse | <i>manganese</i> | le titane    | <i>titanium</i>  |
| le chrome    | <i>chrome</i>     | le nickel    | <i>nickel</i>    | le zinc      | <i>zinc</i>      |
| le cobalt    | <i>cobalt</i>     | l'or         | <i>gold</i>      |              |                  |

Here are a few feminine exceptions:

|            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| la bauxite | <i>bauxite</i> |
| la chaux   | <i>lime</i>    |
| la roche   | <i>rock</i>    |

As-tu vu le film *La Ruée vers l'or*?  
Il y a **du fer** dans les épinards.

*Have you seen the film The Gold Rush?*  
*Spinach contains **iron**.*

## EXERCICE

3-15

Indicate the gender of the nouns by adding the definite article *le* or *la*.

- \_\_\_\_\_ émeraude
- \_\_\_\_\_ diamant
- \_\_\_\_\_ tourmaline
- \_\_\_\_\_ étain
- \_\_\_\_\_ potassium
- \_\_\_\_\_ fer
- \_\_\_\_\_ lithium
- \_\_\_\_\_ marbre
- \_\_\_\_\_ chaux
- \_\_\_\_\_ charbon
- \_\_\_\_\_ citrine
- \_\_\_\_\_ quartz
- \_\_\_\_\_ topaze
- \_\_\_\_\_ bronze
- \_\_\_\_\_ corail

16. \_\_\_\_\_ plomb
17. \_\_\_\_\_ bauxite
18. \_\_\_\_\_ sel
19. \_\_\_\_\_ jade
20. \_\_\_\_\_ rubis

## Cars

In most cases, cars are used in the feminine form:

J'adore **ma nouvelle Citroën Picasso**. *I love **my new Citroën Picasso**.*

However, as this list shows, some minivans or SUVs use the masculine form. It depends on the model:

|                                          |                               |                           |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>la 206</b> (Peugeot)                  | <b>la Land Rover</b>          | <b>la Panda</b> (Fiat)    |
| <b>le 4x4</b>                            | <b>la Lexus</b>               | <b>la Porsche</b>         |
| <b>la BMW</b>                            | <b>la Mini</b> (BMW)          | <b>la Renault Clio</b>    |
| <b>la Coccinelle</b> (Beetle/Volkswagen) | <b>la Mondéo</b> (Ford)       | <b>la Renault Scénic</b>  |
| <b>la Ferrari</b>                        | <b>le monospace</b> (minivan) | <b>la Smart</b>           |
| <b>la Golf</b>                           | <b>le (ou la) Kangoo</b>      | <b>la Volvo familiale</b> |
| <b>la jeep</b>                           | <b>le Pajero</b> (Mitsubishi) |                           |

**Mon monospace** est en panne. Peux-tu me prêter **ton Pajero**? *My **minivan** has broken down. Can you lend me **your Mitsubishi**?*

**Sa Volvo** est parfaite pour son travail. Mais moi, je préfère **ma Coccinelle**. *His **Volvo** is perfect for his job. But I prefer **my Beetle**.*

An anecdote from Quebec: In the past, a car was called **un véhicule automobile** and was little by little abbreviated to **un automobile**. The change was made in the 1940s. However, this is often described as **usage flottant** and you may hear:

Il s'est offert **un gros Chevrolet**. *He treated himself **to a big Chevrolet**.*

instead of:

Il s'est offert **une grosse Chevrolet**. *He treated himself **to a big Chevrolet**.*

We can use some of the many slang terms to talk about cars:

|                                                                    |                   |                                                                        |                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>In France</b>                                                   |                   |                                                                        |                       |
| <b>la bagnole</b>                                                  | <i>car/wheels</i> | <b>le tacot</b>                                                        | <i>clunker</i>        |
| <b>la caisse</b>                                                   | <i>car/wheels</i> | <b>un tas de ferraille</b>                                             | <i>pile of junk</i>   |
| <b>la guimbarde</b>                                                | <i>jalopy</i>     | <b>la tire</b>                                                         | <i>old rattletrap</i> |
| <b>In Quebec</b>                                                   |                   |                                                                        |                       |
| <b>le char</b>                                                     | <i>car/wheels</i> | <b>la minoune</b>                                                      | <i>clunker</i>        |
| Il a pris <b>sa caisse</b> pour aller faire un tour avec sa meuf.  |                   | <i>He took <b>his wheels</b> to go for a ride with his girlfriend.</i> |                       |
| On va pas descendre sur la Côte avec <b>ton tas de ferraille</b> ! |                   | <i>We're not going to the Riviera with <b>your pile of junk</b>!</i>   |                       |

Complete with the possessive adjective *son* or *sa*.

Le père de mon copain Luc adore \_\_\_\_\_ BMW alors que sa femme préfère \_\_\_\_\_ Mini. Luc voudrait bien avoir \_\_\_\_\_ Pajero à lui tout seul mais ses parents ne sont pas d'accord. S'il passe le bac, il pourra rendre ses copains jaloux avec \_\_\_\_\_ Smart ou \_\_\_\_\_ Coccinelle.

## Brands and acronyms

Like anything else, brands and acronyms follow a rule.

### Brands

Brand names take the gender of the products they represent. For example, **une poupée** (*doll*) is feminine, so *Barbie* will be **une Barbie**.

| Brand name          | Derivation                                  |                                    |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| le bikini           | le maillot de bain                          | <i>bathing suit</i>                |
| le Bic              | le stylo à bille                            | <i>pen</i>                         |
| le Botox            | le comestique                               | <i>Botox</i>                       |
| le Canson           | le papier dessin                            | <i>drawing paper</i>               |
| la cellophane       | la pellicule transparente                   | <i>cellophane</i>                  |
| le coca             | le soda                                     | <i>soda</i>                        |
| la cocotte minute   | la marmite                                  | <i>pressure cooker</i>             |
| le digicode         | le système                                  | <i>door-entry system</i>           |
| l'escalator         | l'escalier roulant                          | <i>escalator</i>                   |
| le frigidaire/frigo | le réfrigérateur                            | <i>refrigerator</i>                |
| le jacuzzi          | le bain bouillonnant                        | <i>Jacuzzi</i>                     |
| le Kärcher          | le nettoyeur haute pression                 | <i>high-pressure water cleaner</i> |
| le kleenex          | le mouchoir                                 | <i>Kleenex</i>                     |
| le K-way            | le coupe-vent                               | <i>windbreaker</i>                 |
| l'Opinel            | le couteau pliable                          | <i>folding knife</i>               |
| le perfecto         | le blouson en cuir                          | <i>leather jacket</i>              |
| le polaroid         | l'appareil photo à développement instantané | <i>Polaroid camera</i>             |
| le Post-it          | le pense-bête autocollant                   | <i>Post-It</i>                     |
| la poubelle         | le cuve                                     | <i>garbage can</i>                 |
| le scotch           | le ruban adhésif                            | <i>Scotch tape</i>                 |
| le spam             | le courrier électronique non sollicité      | <i>spam</i>                        |
| le Stabilo          | le surligneur                               | <i>highlighter</i>                 |
| le taser            | le pistolet électrique                      | <i>Taser gun</i>                   |
| la Tefal            | une poêle anti-adhésive                     | <i>Teflon pan</i>                  |
| le ou la thermos    | le récipient/la bouteille isolant           | <i>Thermos</i>                     |

**La poubelle** was introduced in 1884 by Eugène-René Poubelle, préfet de la Seine. All owners of buildings had to provide **une poubelle** to their tenants, a measure of public hygiene.

Dorothée ne fait jamais de randonnée sans **son Opinel**. *Dorothée never goes hiking without **her Opinel knife**.*  
C'est à toi de descendre **la poubelle**. *It's your turn to take out **the garbage**.*

The name of Casanova, the famous and talented Venetian adventurer, writer, and musician, is often used as a “brand.”

Son frère Fabrice, c'est un véritable **Casanova**. *He is a real seducer.*

## Acronyms

Acronyms take the gender of the nouns they represent:

|                  |                                            |                                              |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>la BBC</b>    | la radio/la chaîne de télévision           | <i>BBC</i>                                   |
| <b>la BD</b>     | la bande dessinée                          | <i>comic strip</i>                           |
| <b>la CIA</b>    | l'agence                                   | <i>CIA</i>                                   |
| <b>la CNN</b>    | la chaîne de télé                          | <i>CNN</i>                                   |
| <b>le FBI</b>    | le bureau                                  | <i>FBI</i>                                   |
| <b>le FMI</b>    | Fonds monétaire international              | <i>IMF</i>                                   |
| <b>le GPS</b>    | le service de positionnement par satellite | <i>GPS</i>                                   |
| <b>l'HLM</b>     | l'habitation à loyer modéré                | <i>public housing</i>                        |
| <b>le KGB</b>    | le comité                                  | <i>KGB</i>                                   |
| <b>la NASA</b>   | l'administration                           | <i>NASA</i>                                  |
| <b>l'OGM</b>     | l'organisme génétiquement modifié          | <i>GMO</i>                                   |
| <b>l'OMS</b>     | L'organisation mondiale de la Santé        | <i>WHO</i>                                   |
| <b>l'ONG</b>     | l'organisation non gouvernementale         | <i>NGO</i>                                   |
| <b>l'ONU</b>     | l'organisation                             | <i>UN</i>                                    |
| <b>l'OTAN</b>    | l'organisation                             | <i>NATO</i>                                  |
| <b>l'OVNI</b>    | l'objet volant non-identifié               | <i>UFO</i>                                   |
| <b>le PACS</b>   | le pacte civil de solidarité               | <i>civil union between two people</i>        |
| <b>le/la PDG</b> | le président directeur/trice général(e)    | <i>CEO</i>                                   |
| <b>le RER</b>    | le réseau express régional                 | <i>suburban train that goes around Paris</i> |
| <b>le TGV</b>    | le train à grande vitesse                  | <i>express train</i>                         |
| <b>l'UE</b>      | l'Union européenne                         | <i>EU</i>                                    |
| <b>l'UNESCO</b>  | l'organisation                             | <i>UNESCO</i>                                |

There are also acronyms without articles, as they refer to famous people:

|             |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| <b>BB</b>   | Brigitte Bardot          |
| <b>VGE</b>  | Valéry Giscard d'Estaing |
| <b>DSK</b>  | Dominique Strauss-Kahn   |
| <b>PPDA</b> | Patrick Poivre d'Arvor   |

Ils ont créé **une ONG** au Brésil. *They set up **an NGO** in Brazil.*  
Tout le monde attend la décision **du FMI** sur la fraude fiscale. *Everyone is waiting for **the IMF's** decision about tax evasion.*

# Other languages, parts of speech, and the sciences

In this chapter, we'll cover the gender of different languages, parts of speech, and also sciences. Do they have some mystery in store for us?

## Names of languages

Nouns denoting particular languages are masculine. Note that, in French, the names of languages are in lowercase:

|                    |                |                    |                 |                     |                   |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>l'allemand</b>  | <i>German</i>  | <b>le grec</b>     | <i>Greek</i>    | <b>le portugais</b> | <i>Portuguese</i> |
| <b>l'anglais</b>   | <i>English</i> | <b>l'hindi</b>     | <i>Hindi</i>    | <b>le russe</b>     | <i>Russian</i>    |
| <b>l'arabe</b>     | <i>Arabic</i>  | <b>l'italien</b>   | <i>Italian</i>  | <b>le serbe</b>     | <i>Serbian</i>    |
| <b>le bembé</b>    | <i>Bembe</i>   | <b>le japonais</b> | <i>Japanese</i> | <b>le swahili</b>   | <i>Swahili</i>    |
| <b>le chinois</b>  | <i>Chinese</i> | <b>le mandarin</b> | <i>Mandarin</i> | <b>le tamoul</b>    | <i>Tamil</i>      |
| <b>l'espagnol</b>  | <i>Spanish</i> | <b>le polonais</b> | <i>Polish</i>   | <b>le turc</b>      | <i>Turkish</i>    |
| <b>le français</b> | <i>French</i>  |                    |                 |                     |                   |

|                                                            |                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mai Hien a appris <b>le français</b> à<br>Aix-en-Provence. | <i>Mai Hien learned <b>French</b> in<br/>Aix-en-Provence.</i> |
| Hervé a appris <b>le swahili</b> au<br>Kenya.              | <i>Hervé learned <b>Swahili</b> in Kenya.</i>                 |

## Nouns of foreign origin

Over the centuries, because of history, wars, colonialism, and the exploration of continents, the French language has absorbed words from all over the world. You will often hear that French is being contaminated by English. This is a backward approach to languages. During the Renaissance, for example, it was trendy and very chic to use Italian words in the French language. And it is a good thing, considering that French, even after borrowing words from many languages, has a much smaller vocabulary than does English, perhaps a half or a third of the English lexicon.

A large number of the nouns of foreign origin tend to be masculine. Let's look at a few examples, starting with words borrowed from English.

## Nouns of English origin

Many nouns of English influence are masculine:

|                         |                           |                     |                             |                         |                                      |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>le baby-sitting</b>  | <b>le camping</b>         | <b>le flirt</b>     | <b>le knock-out</b>         | <b>le poker</b>         | <b>le slogan</b>                     |
| <b>le badge</b>         | <b>le cash</b>            | <b>le footing</b>   | <b>le know-how</b>          | <b>le pressing</b>      | <b>le smoking</b>                    |
| <b>le barman</b>        | <b>le challenge</b>       | <b>le freelance</b> | <b>le laser</b>             | <b>le pull-over</b>     | <b>le snack</b>                      |
| <b>le bermuda</b>       | <b>le charter</b>         | <b>le freezer</b>   | <b>le leader</b>            | <b>le puzzle</b>        | <b>le snob</b>                       |
| <b>le best-seller</b>   | <b>le chewing-gum</b>     | <b>le gospel</b>    | <b>le lifting</b>           | <b>le rap</b>           | <b>le sponsor</b>                    |
| <b>le blazer</b>        | <b>le coach</b>           | <b>le hamburger</b> | <b>le listing</b>           | <b>le reporter</b>      | <b>le talkie-walkie (in reverse)</b> |
| <b>le blues</b>         | <b>le coach (trainer)</b> | <b>le holding</b>   | <b>le living-room</b>       | <b>le ring (boxing)</b> |                                      |
| <b>le boss</b>          | <b>le cocktail</b>        | <b>le hold-up</b>   | <b>le lobby (political)</b> | <b>le rock</b>          | <b>le tank</b>                       |
| <b>le boycott</b>       | <b>le crash</b>           | <b>le jackpot</b>   | <b>le manager</b>           | <b>le self-service</b>  | <b>le thriller</b>                   |
| <b>le brainstorming</b> | <b>le dealer</b>          | <b>le jazz</b>      | <b>le marketing</b>         | <b>le shopping</b>      | <b>le timing</b>                     |
| <b>le briefing</b>      | <b>le fair-play</b>       | <b>le jean</b>      | <b>l'outsider</b>           | <b>le show</b>          | <b>le training</b>                   |
| <b>le building</b>      | <b>le fast-food</b>       | <b>le job</b>       | <b>le parking</b>           | <b>le skateboard</b>    | <b>le week-end</b>                   |
| <b>le bulldozer</b>     | <b>le feeling</b>         | <b>le jogging</b>   | <b>le kidnapping</b>        | <b>le skipper</b>       |                                      |
| <b>le business</b>      |                           |                     |                             |                         |                                      |

Here are a few feminine exceptions:

|             |                  |              |
|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| la barmaid  | l'overdose       | la start-up  |
| la basket   | la rocking-chair | la superstar |
| l'interview | la snob          |              |

Trop de **snobs** fréquentent **ce bar**.  
**Le boss** a dit que **le briefing** aurait lieu  
au **snack-bar**.

*Too many **snobs** go to **this bar**.*  
***The boss** said that **the briefing** would*  
*take place **in the snackbar**.*

It would be a mistake to think that the additions of English words to the French language are a sudden occurrence. When you hear the French complaining about the invasion of the English language, do not take it too seriously. As a French person, I'm giving myself permission to say it may be more a matter of "American envy."

Foreign words have enriched the French language for centuries. The word **camping**, for instance, has been in the French dictionary since 1903 when the concept of recreational activities started to flourish before World War I.

Also be aware of the origins of English words. For example, **flirter** was borrowed from the English but actually comes from the old French **fleureter**.

The origin of the word **gadget** is uncertain. Some sources say that in the 1850s it was similar to **gâchette**, a small tool. Other sources maintain that **gadget** comes from **Gaget-Gauthier**, the French company that designed miniatures of the Statue of Liberty to finance Frédéric Bartholdi's project. The name *Gaget* was written on the base of the miniatures, and the Americans started calling the statue *gadget*. Then the word crossed the Atlantic again and found its place in Le Robert's dictionary in 1946 under **gadget** with the English pronunciation. And then the French created a wonderful verb: **gadgétiser**.

Some new nouns, especially those connected to technology, are added on a regular basis.

|              |            |                |               |          |            |
|--------------|------------|----------------|---------------|----------|------------|
| le Bluetooth | le geek    | l'iPhone       | le podcast    | le texto | le Twitter |
| le buzz      | l'internet | le mail        | le podcasting | le tweet | le website |
| le chat      | l'iPad     | le multi-touch | le SMS        |          |            |

French has borrowed from many other languages you may identify, as they are similar or close to English. If you are not sure of the meaning of a word, check your dictionary at home or any bilingual dictionary online.

## Nouns of Arabic origin

The influence of the Arabic language on the French language has been significant in many fields (mathematics, alchemy, botany, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, and mysticism). The Arab army came all the way to Poitiers in the eighth century and left quite a few words behind. Arabo-Andalusian music played an important role from the ninth to the fifteenth century, spreading gradually to Provence and becoming a source of inspiration for the French troubadours. Inevitably, words traveled back and forth from Spain to France, and many words were adopted by the French. For example, who does not like to rest on a **sofa**? Until the eighteenth century, Arab architects worked their way to England and left their mark, the arabesque. In addition, about two-thirds of the names of stars come from the Arabic language, such as **Al Bali**, **Aldébaran**, **Algol**, **Almanac**, **Altaïr**, **Mizar**, **Regulus**, **Rigel**, **Sadalmelek**, **Yad**, **Zaniah**, and so on.

At least five hundred Arabic words are used in the French language on a regular basis. Another factor in play is that the second, third, and fourth generations of immigrants from Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, and so on living in France have been so creative with the

language through literature and music that the count keeps going up, and the French language enriches itself.

Here are a few examples, both masculine and feminine, of words of Arabic origin:

|            |            |             |           |                 |            |
|------------|------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|------------|
| l'alambic  | l'azimut   | le couscous | le harem  | le magasin      | le taboulé |
| l'alcool   | le baobab  | le cramoisi | le hasard | la maroquinerie | le tambour |
| l'algèbre  | le bled    | l'élixir    | le henné  | le matelas      | le tajine  |
| l'almanach | le camaïeu | la gazelle  | la jupe   | le moucharabieh | le talc    |
| l'amalgame | le camphre | le goudron  | kif-kif   | le sofa         | le toubib  |
| l'ambre    | le carmin  | le hammam   | le luth   | le sumac        | le zénith  |
| l'amiral   |            |             |           |                 |            |

## Nouns from other languages

The French language, over the centuries, has borrowed words from numerous other languages as well.

### Nouns of Chinese origin

|              |            |            |         |        |
|--------------|------------|------------|---------|--------|
| le feng shui | le kung-fu | le tai-chi | le yang | le wok |
| le ginseng   | le litchi  | le Tao     | le yin  |        |

### Nouns of German origin

|            |            |              |           |
|------------|------------|--------------|-----------|
| le bretzel | l'ersatz   | le kitsch    | le putsch |
| le diktat  | le hamster | le leitmotiv |           |

### Nouns of Indian origin

|          |            |            |         |
|----------|------------|------------|---------|
| l'atoll  | le bouddha | le karma   | le yoga |
| l'avatar | le gourou  | le nirvana |         |

### Nouns of Italian origin

|              |              |              |          |             |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| le carnaval  | le farniente | le graffiti  | l'opéra  | la pizzeria |
| le chianti   | le ghetto    | la loggia    | le piano | la polenta  |
| le crescendo | le gnocchi   | la mezzanine | la pizza |             |

### Nouns of Japanese origin

|              |             |            |             |          |
|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|----------|
| le bonsaï    | l'ikébana   | le karaoké | l'origami   | le sushi |
| la geisha    | le judo     | le karaté  | le saké     | le tofu  |
| le haïku     | le kabuki   | le kimono  | le samouraï | le zen   |
| le hara-kiri | le kamikaze | le manga   | le sashimi  |          |

### Nouns of Russian origin

|            |             |           |            |
|------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| le blini   | la datcha   | le morse  | la toundra |
| le bortsch | la douma    | la steppe | la vodka   |
| le cosaque | le mammouth | la taïga  |            |

L'amiral a commandé **une pizza** et une bouteille de **saké**.

En arrivant à Marrakech, elle a mangé **un couscous** avec du thé à la menthe puis elle s'est fait teindre les cheveux au **henné**.

*The admiral ordered **a pizza** with a bottle of **sake**.*

*Upon arriving in Marrakech, she ate **couscous** with mint tea and she **hennaed** her hair.*

Complete with the definite article.

1. Antoine apprend \_\_\_\_\_ japonais car il veut aussi apprendre \_\_\_\_\_ karaté.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ marketing pour \_\_\_\_\_ vodka Van Gogh a bien réussi.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ tweet a été envoyé par \_\_\_\_\_ gourou de l'ashram d'Aurobindo.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ pizza et \_\_\_\_\_ polenta qu'elle a préparées étaient délicieuses.
5. Je cherche un interprète qui parle très bien \_\_\_\_\_ chinois et \_\_\_\_\_ russe.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Carnaval de Venise a lieu en février.
7. Dans \_\_\_\_\_ datcha, cela sentait \_\_\_\_\_ bortsch et \_\_\_\_\_ vodka.
8. Akiko, aimez-vous \_\_\_\_\_ saké? Et \_\_\_\_\_ karaoké?
9. \_\_\_\_\_ nouveau manga de Yoshihiro Togashi connaît un grand succès.
10. Ils ont chevauché dans \_\_\_\_\_ steppe de Mongolie.

## Compound nouns

After memorizing the genders of single nouns, could there be a trick to figure out the gender of compound ones?

### Compound nouns composed of a verb derivative and a noun

Compound nouns composed of a verb derivative and a noun tend to be masculine:

|                           |                                        |                          |                                    |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>l'abat-jour</b>        | <i>lamp shade</i>                      | <b>le faire-part</b>     | <i>announcement</i>                |
| <b>l'aide-mémoire</b>     | <i>memorandum</i>                      | <b>le garde-fou</b>      | <i>railing, parapet, safeguard</i> |
| <b>l'allume-gaz</b>       | <i>gas lighter</i>                     | <b>le gratte-ciel</b>    | <i>skyscraper</i>                  |
| <b>l'amuse-gueule</b>     | <i>appetizer</i>                       | <b>le lave-vaisselle</b> | <i>dishwasher</i>                  |
| <b>le brise-glace</b>     | <i>icebreaker</i>                      | <b>l'ouvre-boîte</b>     | <i>can opener</i>                  |
| <b>le cache-cache</b>     | <i>hide and seek</i>                   | <b>le porte-clés</b>     | <i>keychain</i>                    |
| <b>le casse-noisette</b>  | <i>nutcracker</i>                      | <b>le porte-monnaie</b>  | <i>wallet</i>                      |
| <b>le chasse-neige</b>    | <i>snowplow</i>                        | <b>le porte-savon</b>    | <i>soapdish</i>                    |
| <b>le coupe-vent</b>      | <i>windbreaker</i>                     | <b>le presse-papier</b>  | <i>paper weight</i>                |
| <b>le croque-monsieur</b> | <i>toasted ham and cheese sandwich</i> | <b>le serre-livres</b>   | <i>bookends</i>                    |
| <b>l'essuie-glace</b>     | <i>windshield wiper</i>                | <b>le trompe-l'œil</b>   | <i>trompe-l'œil</i>                |

One feminine exception is **la garde-robe** (*wardrobe*).

Elle vient d'acheter un **abat-jour** turquoise qui est parfait pour le vestibule.

Les **amuse-gueule** qu'ils ont servis étaient exquis.

She just bought a turquoise **lamp shade** that is perfect for the foyer.

**The appetizers** they served were exquisite.

## Compound nouns composed of an adverb and a noun

Compound nouns composed of an adverb and a noun tend to take the gender of the noun. For example, **rasage** ends in **-age** so it is masculine. **L'après-rasage** is also masculine.

|                           |                         |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>l'après-soleil</b>     | <i>after-sun lotion</i> | <b>l'avant-veille</b>     | <i>two days before</i>    |
| <b>l'arrière-boutique</b> | <i>back shop</i>        | <b>la mini-jupe</b>       | <i>mini-skirt</i>         |
| <b>l'avant-goût</b>       | <i>foretaste</i>        | <b>le sous-bois</b>       | <i>undergrowth, trees</i> |
| <b>l'arrière-goût</b>     | <i>aftertaste</i>       | <b>le sous-continent</b>  | <i>subcontinent</i>       |
| <b>l'arrière-pensée</b>   | <i>ulterior motive</i>  | <b>le sous-emploi</b>     | <i>underemployment</i>    |
| <b>l'arrière-plan</b>     | <i>background</i>       | <b>la sous-estimation</b> | <i>underestimation</i>    |
| <b>l'avant-bras</b>       | <i>forearm</i>          | <b>le sous-marin</b>      | <i>submarine</i>          |
| <b>l'avant-première</b>   | <i>preview</i>          | <b>la sous-traitance</b>  | <i>subcontracting</i>     |

Here are a couple of exceptions: **l'avant-guerre** (*prewar years*) can be both masculine or feminine; **l'après-guerre** (*postwar years*) is only masculine.

## Compound nouns composed of a noun plus a noun

Compound nouns composed of a noun and a noun tend to take the gender of the first noun:

|                                 |                          |                              |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>l'appui-tête</b>             | <i>headrest</i>          | <b>l'oiseau-mouche</b>       | <i>hummingbird</i>       |
| <b>l'arc-en-ciel</b>            | <i>rainbow</i>           | <b>la porte-fenêtre</b>      | <i>French window</i>     |
| <b>le bébé-éprouvette</b>       | <i>test tube baby</i>    | <b>le portrait-robot</b>     | <i>identikit picture</i> |
| <b>le drap-housse</b>           | <i>fitted sheet</i>      | <b>le soutien-gorge</b>      | <i>bra</i>               |
| <b>la langue-de-chat</b>        | <i>finger biscuit</i>    | <b>le timbre-poste</b>       | <i>postage stamp</i>     |
| <b>la main-d'œuvre</b>          | <i>workforce/labor</i>   | <b>la voiture-restaurant</b> | <i>dining car</i>        |
| <b>la moissonneuse-batteuse</b> | <i>combine harvester</i> |                              |                          |

Je n'ai pas trouvé de **drap-housse** assorti à ma couette.

*I have not found **the fitted sheet** that matches my duvet cover.*

Hier, nous avons vu **un** bel **arc-en-ciel** au-dessus de la mer.

*Yesterday we saw **a** beautiful **rainbow** over the sea.*

## Nouns derived from verbs and adverbs

Nouns derived from verbs and adverbs tend to be masculine:

|                   |                  |                    |                       |                    |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>l'arrière</b>  | <i>back/rear</i> | <b>le derrière</b> | <i>bottom/behind</i>  | <b>le manger</b>   | <i>food</i>      |
| <b>l'avant</b>    | <i>front</i>     | <b>le dessous</b>  | <i>underside/back</i> | <b>le pourquoi</b> | <i>the why</i>   |
| <b>le boire</b>   | <i>drink</i>     | <b>le dessus</b>   | <i>top/right side</i> | <b>le rire</b>     | <i>laugh</i>     |
| <b>le comment</b> | <i>the how</i>   | <b>le devant</b>   | <i>front</i>          | <b>le tout</b>     | <i>the whole</i> |

Tu vas t'asseoir à **l'avant** de la voiture.

*You'll sit in **the front** of the car.*

Je ne comprends pas **le pourquoi** de cette décision.

*I don't understand **why** this decision is being made.*

## Abbreviated nouns

Abbreviated nouns keep the gender of the complete noun:

|                                       |                                                 |                                   |                    |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>l'apéro/l'apéritif</b>             | <i>before lunch or dinner drink</i>             | <b>la photo/la photographie</b>   | <i>photography</i> |
| <b>le ciné/le cinéma</b>              | <i>cinema/movie theater</i>                     | <b>le pseudo/le pseudonyme</b>    | <i>pseudonym</i>   |
| <b>la fac/la faculté</b>              | <i>school in a university, college, ability</i> | <b>la radio/la radiodiffusion</b> | <i>radio</i>       |
| <b>le métro/le métropolitain</b>      | <i>subway</i>                                   | <b>le stylo/le stylographe</b>    | <i>pen</i>         |
| <b>la moto/la motocyclette</b>        | <i>motorbike</i>                                | <b>le taxi/le taximètre</b>       | <i>taxi</i>        |
| <b>le petit dej/le petit déjeuner</b> | <i>breakfast</i>                                | <b>la télé/la télévision</b>      | <i>television</i>  |
|                                       |                                                 | <b>le vélo/le vélocipède</b>      | <i>bicycle</i>     |

Mon **pseudo** sur ton blog, c'est Cléopâtre. *My **pseudonym** on your blog is Cleopatra.*  
 Et si on allait faire un tour en **vélo**? *And what about taking **a bike ride**?*

## Nouns of the sciences and academic disciplines

Names of sciences and disciplines are almost all feminine:

|                        |                     |                          |                         |                         |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>l'agronomie</b>     | <i>agronomy</i>     | <b>l'électronique</b>    | <i>electronics</i>      | <b>la musicologie</b>   | <i>musicology</i>   |
| <b>l'anatomie</b>      | <i>anatomy</i>      | <b>la génétique</b>      | <i>genetics</i>         | <b>la nanoscience</b>   | <i>nanoscience</i>  |
| <b>l'anthropologie</b> | <i>anthropology</i> | <b>la géographie</b>     | <i>geography</i>        | <b>l'océanographie</b>  | <i>oceanography</i> |
| <b>l'archéologie</b>   | <i>archeology</i>   | <b>la géologie</b>       | <i>geology</i>          | <b>la pédagogie</b>     | <i>pedagogy</i>     |
| <b>l'astronomie</b>    | <i>astronomy</i>    | <b>la géométrie</b>      | <i>geometry</i>         | <b>la philosophie</b>   | <i>philosophy</i>   |
| <b>la biologie</b>     | <i>biology</i>      | <b>l'histoire</b>        | <i>history</i>          | <b>la phonétique</b>    | <i>phonetics</i>    |
| <b>la botanique</b>    | <i>botany</i>       | <b>l'informatique</b>    | <i>computer science</i> | <b>la physique</b>      | <i>physics</i>      |
| <b>la chimie</b>       | <i>chemistry</i>    | <b>la linguistique</b>   | <i>linguistics</i>      | <b>la psychologie</b>   | <i>psychology</i>   |
| <b>la cosmologie</b>   | <i>cosmology</i>    | <b>la logique</b>        | <i>logics</i>           | <b>la sociologie</b>    | <i>sociology</i>    |
| <b>la criminologie</b> | <i>criminology</i>  | <b>les mathématiques</b> | <i>mathematics</i>      | <b>la spéléologie</b>   | <i>speleology</i>   |
| <b>l'écologie</b>      | <i>ecology</i>      | <b>la mécanique</b>      | <i>mechanics</i>        | <b>les statistiques</b> | <i>statistics</i>   |
| <b>l'économie</b>      | <i>economics</i>    | <b>la météorologie</b>   | <i>meteorology</i>      | <b>la théologie</b>     | <i>theology</i>     |
| <b>l'éducation</b>     | <i>education</i>    |                          |                         |                         |                     |

Here are a couple of masculine exceptions:

**l'art** *art*  
**le droit** *law*

Ma meilleure amie étudie **l'anthropologie judiciaire** à Paris.  
 Laura est professeur de **linguistique** à l'Université d'Angers.

*My best friend studies **forensic anthropology** in Paris.*  
*Laura is a **linguistics** professor at the University of Angers.*

### EXERCICE

**3.18**

Complete with the definite article.

- \_\_\_\_\_ nouvel abat-jour que tu as acheté est trop grand.
- \_\_\_\_\_ devant de la maison a besoin de réparations.
- Je ne peux pas trouver \_\_\_\_\_ casse-noisette. Où l'as-tu mis?
- Thierry lui a offert \_\_\_\_\_ presse-papier en cristal dont elle rêvait.
- Clara se demandait \_\_\_\_\_ pourquoi de toute chose.
- Ils envisagent de construire \_\_\_\_\_ plus haut gratte-ciel du monde.
- Quentin étudie \_\_\_\_\_ philosophie et \_\_\_\_\_ droit à la Sorbonne.
- À quelle heure ouvre \_\_\_\_\_ voiture-restaurant?
- \_\_\_\_\_ sous-marin *Le Redoutable* a fait une escale à Hawaï.
- \_\_\_\_\_ lave-vaisselle est en panne. Allons au restaurant!

# Épicène nouns: Nouns with two genders

Some nouns have their own idiosyncrasies: their gender varies for multiple reasons, and some are androgynous. This is just another twist to the never-ending story.

Some nouns can be either masculine or feminine. They are called **noms épicènes**. You encountered some earlier where, for example, **une tortue** can be either male or female.

The words that can be used with either gender are:

|                     |                     |                    |                                 |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>après-midi</b>   | <i>afternoon</i>    | <b>oasis</b>       | <i>oasis</i>                    |
| <b>avant-guerre</b> | <i>prewar years</i> | <b>palabres*</b>   | <i>never-ending discussions</i> |
| <b>enzyme</b>       | <i>enzyme</i>       | <b>parka</b>       | <i>parka</i>                    |
| <b>laque</b>        | <i>lacquer</i>      | <b>perce-neige</b> | <i>snowdrop</i>                 |
| <b>météorite</b>    | <i>meteorite</i>    | <b>régisse</b>     | <i>licorice</i>                 |

\*Used in the plural.

|                                                                                             |                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Arnaud a photographié <b>une merveilleuse oasis</b> couverte de palmiers dattiers.          | Arnaud photographed <b>a wonderful oasis</b> covered with date palms.           |
| <b>Une météorite</b> de 150 kg est tombée dans un champ de blé à Ensisheim, Alsace en 1492. | A 150-kilo <b>meteorite</b> fell in a wheatfield in Ensisheim, Alsace, in 1492. |

## Nouns that are masculine in the singular and feminine in the plural

The gender of some nouns changes if an adjective follows or precedes them. We'll look at **amour**, **délice**, and **gens**. **Amour** is masculine in the common, singular usage:

|                                                                                                       |                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>L'amour fou</b> est éternel.<br>« Mais combien fait mal <b>un amour</b> qui meurt! » (Pierre Loti) | <b>Being madly in love</b> is eternal.<br>“How <b>a dying love</b> is painful!” |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

If the adjective precedes the noun when it is plural, the noun and the adjective are used in the feminine plural:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dans son roman, il raconte <b>ses folles amours</b> avec la marquise.<br>Elle n'oubliera jamais <b>ses premières amours</b> .<br>« J'aspirais secrètement à de <b>belles amours</b> . » (Honoré de Balzac) | In his novel, he writes about <b>his mad love</b> for the marquise.<br>She'll never forget <b>her first romantic experiences</b> .<br>“I was secretly longing for <b>beautiful love</b> .” |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

In the case of **délice**, it is more a matter of degree. In the masculine singular, **délice** means *joy, fun*:

|                                                      |                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Quel délice</b> de manger ces mangues bien mûres! | <b>What a delight</b> to eat these very ripe mangoes! |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|

In the feminine plural, there is a sense of pleasure, intense transport of the mind and body:

|                                                                                                        |                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ils profitaient <b>des délices</b> de l'amour à Venise.<br>Nous goûtions <b>les délices</b> de la vie. | They enjoyed <b>the pleasures</b> of love in Venice.<br>We enjoyed <b>the delights</b> of life. |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The noun **gens** is usually masculine plural. However, if an adjective precedes the noun, both the noun and the adjective become feminine and the meaning changes:

J'ai rencontré **des gens** très **distrayants**.  
**Ces vieilles gens** vivent de très peu!  
**Quelles honnêtes gens!**  
 Ce sont des **petites gens** sans ressources.  
 Leurs voisins, ce sont **des braves gens**.

*I met very **entertaining people**.  
**These old people** live on very little!  
**How honest these people are!**  
 They are **poor people** without resources.  
 Their neighbors are **good folks**.*

However, **jeunes gens**, considered as a block, remains masculine:

De nombreux **jeunes gens** faisaient la queue devant le cinéma.

*Many **young people** were standing in line in front of the cinema.*

## Homographic homonyms

A number of nouns are differentiated only by their gender. The spelling and the pronunciation are identical, but the meaning is different. It is very important to be aware of these *homographic homonyms*. Let's take an example from the hair salon:

Je voudrais **une mousse** de qualité pour ma croisière dans les îles des Caraïbes.

*I would like **a quality styling mousse** for my cruise in the Caribbean Islands.*

Versus:

Je voudrais **un mousse** de qualité pour ma croisière dans les îles des Caraïbes.

*I would like **a quality cabin boy** for my cruise in the Caribbean Islands.*

Memorize the gender of such words little by little, using them in full sentences and engraving them in your mind to keep out of trouble. Compare these masculine and feminine nouns:

### Masculine

|                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>l'aide</b>         | <i>aide, assistant</i>  |
| <b>l'aigle</b>        | <i>eagle</i>            |
| <b>l'aria</b>         | <i>worry, problem</i>   |
| <b>l'aune</b>         | <i>alder</i>            |
| <b>le barbe</b>       | <i>horse</i>            |
| <b>le boum</b>        | <i>boom</i>             |
| <b>le cache</b>       | <i>mask, cover</i>      |
| <b>le carpe</b>       | <i>carpus</i>           |
| <b>le champagne</b>   | <i>champagne</i>        |
| <b>le coche</b>       | <i>stage coach</i>      |
| <b>le crêpe</b>       | <i>crêpe, fabric</i>    |
| <b>le critique</b>    | <i>critic</i>           |
| <b>le garde</b>       | <i>guard, warden</i>    |
| <b>le gène</b>        | <i>gene</i>             |
| <b>le gîte</b>        | <i>shelter, cottage</i> |
| <b>le greffe</b>      | <i>clerk's office</i>   |
| <b>le laque</b>       | <i>lacquer</i>          |
| <b>le légume</b>      | <i>vegetable</i>        |
| <b>le livre</b>       | <i>book</i>             |
| <b>le manche</b>      | <i>handle</i>           |
| <b>le/la manœuvre</b> | <i>unskilled worker</i> |
| <b>le mémoire</b>     | <i>master's thesis</i>  |
| <b>le mode</b>        | <i>mode, way</i>        |
| <b>le moule</b>       | <i>mold, pan</i>        |

### Feminine

|                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>l'aide</b>           | <i>assistance, help</i>     |
| <b>l'aigle</b>          | <i>military insignia</i>    |
| <b>l'aria</b>           | <i>aria</i>                 |
| <b>l'aune</b>           | <i>measure/in term</i>      |
| <b>la barbe</b>         | <i>beard</i>                |
| <b>la boum</b>          | <i>party</i>                |
| <b>la cache</b>         | <i>cache, hiding place</i>  |
| <b>la carpe</b>         | <i>carp</i>                 |
| <b>la Champagne</b>     | <i>Champagne region</i>     |
| <b>la coche</b>         | <i>notch, gash, groove</i>  |
| <b>la crêpe</b>         | <i>pancake, crêpe</i>       |
| <b>la critique</b>      | <i>review, criticism</i>    |
| <b>la garde</b>         | <i>guard, custody</i>       |
| <b>la gène</b>          | <i>embarrassment</i>        |
| <b>la gîte</b>          | <i>bed of sunken ship</i>   |
| <b>la greffe</b>        | <i>transplant, graft</i>    |
| <b>la laque</b>         | <i>hairspray, shellac</i>   |
| <b>la grosse légume</b> | <i>big shot, bigwig</i>     |
| <b>la livre</b>         | <i>pound/pound sterling</i> |
| <b>la manche</b>        | <i>sleeve</i>               |
| <b>la Manche</b>        | <i>the English Channel</i>  |
| <b>la manœuvre</b>      | <i>maneuver, operation</i>  |
| <b>la mémoire</b>       | <i>memory</i>               |
| <b>la mode</b>          | <i>fashion</i>              |
| <b>la moule</b>         | <i>mussel</i>               |

|                 |                                    |              |                           |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| le mousse       | <i>cabin boy</i>                   | la mousse    | <i>moss, foam, mousse</i> |
| l'œuvre         | <i>shell of a building</i>         | l'œuvre      | <i>work, works</i>        |
| l'ombre         | <i>grayling</i>                    | l'ombre      | <i>shade, shadow</i>      |
| le page         | <i>page (boy)</i>                  | la page      | <i>page, episode</i>      |
| le parallèle    | <i>parallel</i>                    | la parallèle | <i>parallel line</i>      |
| le pendule      | <i>pendulum</i>                    | la pendule   | <i>clock</i>              |
| le physique     | <i>physical appearance</i>         | la physique  | <i>physics</i>            |
| le platine      | <i>platinum</i>                    | la platine   | <i>deck, turntable</i>    |
| le poêle        | <i>heating stove</i>               | la poêle     | <i>frying pan</i>         |
| le/la politique | <i>politician</i>                  | la politique | <i>politics</i>           |
| le poste        | <i>job, extension</i>              | la poste     | <i>post office</i>        |
| le soi          | <i>self, oneself</i>               | la soie      | <i>silk</i>               |
| le solde        | <i>balance of an account, sale</i> | la solde     | <i>soldier's pay</i>      |
| le somme        | <i>nap, snooze</i>                 | la somme     | <i>sum, amount</i>        |
| le transat      | <i>deckchair</i>                   | la transat   | <i>transatlantic race</i> |
| le trompette    | <i>trumpet player</i>              | la trompette | <i>trumpet</i>            |
| le vague        | <i>vagueness</i>                   | la vague     | <i>wave</i>               |
| le vase         | <i>vase</i>                        | la vase      | <i>slime, mud</i>         |
| le vapeur       | <i>steamship</i>                   | la vapeur    | <i>steam, vapor</i>       |
| le voile        | <i>veil</i>                        | la voile     | <i>sail, sailing</i>      |

On lui a fait **une greffe** de la cornée.

Amina est contente de **son nouveau poste** chez Fauchon.

He received **a corneal transplant**.

Amina is happy with **her new position** at Fauchon's.

#### EXERCICE

### 3.19

Complete with the definite article *le, la, or l'*.

- \_\_\_\_\_ livre qu'Éric a écrit est sur \_\_\_\_\_ mode en Italie.
- Il a marché dans \_\_\_\_\_ vase et ses chaussures sont sales.
- \_\_\_\_\_ seul légume que mon fils accepte de manger, c'est \_\_\_\_\_ brocoli chinois.
- Elles m'ont suggéré \_\_\_\_\_ gîte dans le Lot où elles ont séjourné l'an passé.
- \_\_\_\_\_ crêpe a collé à \_\_\_\_\_ poêle. Elle est immangeable!
- Tu savais que Jean s'était laissé pousser \_\_\_\_\_ barbe?
- Voudrais-tu faire de \_\_\_\_\_ voile au large de l'Île de Ré?
- On doit lire le roman jusqu'à \_\_\_\_\_ page 150?
- Xavier a oublié \_\_\_\_\_ mémoire qu'il doit remettre à son professeur.
- \_\_\_\_\_ mousse pour le bain est parfumée à la lavande.

# Homophonous homonyms

*Homophonous homonyms* are nouns that are pronounced in the same manner but have a different spelling and meaning. Some share the same gender. Others are either masculine or feminine. Let's start with the masculine.

## Masculine homophonous homonyms

|                     |                               |                     |                             |                                          |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>l'abîme</b>      | <i>abyss, gulf</i>            | <b>abyme</b>        | <i>story within a story</i> |                                          |
|                     |                               | (mise en abyme)     |                             |                                          |
| <b>l'autel</b>      | <i>altar</i>                  | <b>l'hôtel</b>      | <i>hotel</i>                |                                          |
| <b>le baccara</b>   | <i>baccarat, casino</i>       | <b>le baccarat</b>  | <i>Baccarat crystal</i>     |                                          |
| <b>le ban</b>       | <i>applause, banns</i>        | <b>le banc</b>      | <i>bench</i>                |                                          |
| <b>le brocard</b>   | <i>brocket (deer), gibe</i>   | <b>le brocart</b>   | <i>brocade</i>              |                                          |
| <b>le cahot</b>     | <i>jolt, bump</i>             | <b>le chaos</b>     | <i>chaos</i>                |                                          |
| <b>le cep</b>       | <i>vine stock</i>             | <b>le cèpe</b>      | <i>porcini mushroom</i>     |                                          |
| <b>le champ</b>     | <i>field, domain</i>          | <b>le chant</b>     | <i>song</i>                 |                                          |
| <b>le cœur</b>      | <i>heart</i>                  | <b>le chœur</b>     | <i>choir, chorus</i>        |                                          |
| <b>le compte</b>    | <i>count, account</i>         | <b>le comte</b>     | <i>count (nobility)</i>     | <b>le conte</b> <i>tale, story</i>       |
| <b>le cor</b>       | <i>horn</i>                   | <b>le corps</b>     | <i>body, corpse</i>         |                                          |
| <b>le crack</b>     | <i>ace, wizard</i>            | <b>le krach</b>     | <i>financial crash</i>      |                                          |
| <b>le dessein</b>   | <i>goal, intention</i>        | <b>le dessin</b>    | <i>drawing, pattern</i>     |                                          |
| <b>le différent</b> | <i>the different person</i>   | <b>le différend</b> | <i>disagreement</i>         |                                          |
| <b>le filtre</b>    | <i>filter</i>                 | <b>le philtre</b>   | <i>love potion</i>          |                                          |
| <b>le flan</b>      | <i>custard flan</i>           | <b>le flanc</b>     | <i>flank, side, slope</i>   |                                          |
| <b>le fond</b>      | <i>back, bottom</i>           | <b>le fonds</b>     | <i>fund, funds, capital</i> | <b>le fonts</b> <i>baptismal font</i>    |
| <b>le galon</b>     | <i>piece of braid, stripe</i> | <b>le gallon</b>    | <i>gallon</i>               |                                          |
| <b>le golf</b>      | <i>golf</i>                   | <b>le golfe</b>     | <i>gulf</i>                 |                                          |
| <b>le lac</b>       | <i>lake</i>                   | <b>le laque</b>     | <i>lacquer</i>              |                                          |
| <b>le Marocain</b>  | <i>Moroccan man</i>           | <b>le maroquin</b>  | <i>Morocco leather</i>      |                                          |
| <b>le martyr</b>    | <i>martyr</i>                 | <b>le martyre</b>   | <i>martyrdom, agony</i>     |                                          |
| <b>le péché</b>     | <i>sin</i>                    | <b>le pêcher</b>    | <i>peach tree</i>           |                                          |
| <b>le plan</b>      | <i>plan, map</i>              | <b>le plant</b>     | <i>seedling, patch</i>      |                                          |
| <b>le point</b>     | <i>period, dot, point</i>     | <b>le poing</b>     | <i>fist</i>                 |                                          |
| <b>le rancart</b>   | <i>scrap, heap</i>            | <b>le rancard</b>   | <i>rendezvous</i>           |                                          |
| <b>le saint</b>     | <i>saint</i>                  | <b>le sein</b>      | <i>breast, womb</i>         | <b>le seing</b> <i>signature (legal)</i> |
| <b>le saut</b>      | <i>jump, leap</i>             | <b>le sceau</b>     | <i>seal/stamp</i>           |                                          |
| <b>le seau</b>      | <i>bucket</i>                 | <b>le sot</b>       | <i>fool</i>                 |                                          |
| <b>le ver</b>       | <i>worm</i>                   | <b>le verre</b>     | <i>glass</i>                |                                          |
| <b>le vers</b>      | <i>verse</i>                  | <b>le vert</b>      | <i>green</i>                |                                          |

Ce **dessin** de Matisse a été vendu aux enchères.

Leur maison est construite à **flanc** de colline.

This Matisse **drawing** was sold at auction.

Their house is built **on** the hillside.

## Feminine homophonous homonyms

Other homophonous homonyms are feminine:

|                   |                                |                   |                         |                             |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>l'amande</b>   | <i>almond</i>                  | <b>l'amende</b>   | <i>fine</i>             |                             |
| <b>la balade</b>  | <i>walk, drive, ride, trip</i> | <b>la ballade</b> | <i>ballad</i>           |                             |
| <b>la cane</b>    | <i>female duck</i>             | <b>la canne</b>   | <i>cane/stick</i>       |                             |
| <b>la cession</b> | <i>transfer/abandon</i>        | <b>la session</b> | <i>session</i>          |                             |
| <b>la chair</b>   | <i>flesh</i>                   | <b>la chaire</b>  | <i>university chair</i> | <b>la chère</b> <i>food</i> |
| <b>l'encre</b>    | <i>ink</i>                     | <b>l'ancre</b>    | <i>anchor</i>           |                             |
| <b>la pause</b>   | <i>pause, break</i>            | <b>la pose</b>    | <i>pose, posing</i>     |                             |
| <b>la pensée</b>  | <i>thought</i>                 | <b>la pensée</b>  | <i>pansy</i>            |                             |
| <b>la tache</b>   | <i>spot, stain</i>             | <b>la tâche</b>   | <i>task</i>             |                             |
| <b>la taule</b>   | <i>jail</i>                    | <b>la tôle</b>    | <i>sheet metal</i>      |                             |
| <b>la voie</b>    | <i>way/lane</i>                | <b>la voix</b>    | <i>voice</i>            |                             |

Le capitaine a jeté **l'ancre** dans le port de Dakar. *The captain cast **the anchor** in the Dakar port.*

Jean a dû payer **une amende** de 300 euros. *Jean had to pay a 300-euro **fine**.*

## Masculine and feminine homophonous homonyms

In the case of masculine and feminine homophonous homonyms, the gender and the spelling are different but the pronunciation is the same.

|                    |                           |                        |                                        |                                        |
|--------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>l'air</b>       | <i>air/tune</i>           | <b>l'aire</b>          | <i>area/surface</i>                    | <b>l'ère</b> <i>era</i>                |
| <b>le bal</b>      | <i>ball</i>               | <b>la balle</b>        | <i>ball, bullet</i>                    |                                        |
| <b>le bamboula</b> | <i>tam-tam</i>            | <b>la bamboula</b>     | <i>African dance</i>                   |                                        |
| <b>le bar</b>      | <i>bar</i>                | <b>la barre</b>        | <i>rod, bar</i>                        |                                        |
| <b>le bout</b>     | <i>end, tip</i>           | <b>la boue</b>         | <i>mud</i>                             |                                        |
| <b>le cerf</b>     | <i>stag</i>               | <b>la serre</b>        | <i>greenhouse</i>                      |                                        |
| <b>le chèvre</b>   | <i>goat cheese</i>        | <b>la chèvre</b>       | <i>goat</i>                            |                                        |
| <b>le col</b>      | <i>collar, pass</i>       | <b>la colle</b>        | <i>glue</i>                            |                                        |
| <b>le cours</b>    | <i>course, rate</i>       | <b>la cour</b>         | <i>yard, the royal court, courting</i> |                                        |
| <b>le court</b>    | <i>tennis court</i>       | <b>la Cour suprême</b> | <i>Supreme Court</i>                   |                                        |
| <b>le chêne</b>    | <i>oak tree</i>           | <b>la chaîne</b>       | <i>chain, channel</i>                  |                                        |
| <b>le faite</b>    | <i>crest, ridge</i>       | <b>la fête</b>         | <i>holiday, party</i>                  |                                        |
| <b>le faux</b>     | <i>forgery, falsehood</i> | <b>la faux</b>         | <i>scythe</i>                          |                                        |
| <b>le foie</b>     | <i>liver</i>              | <b>la foi</b>          | <i>faith</i>                           | <b>la fois</b> <i>time, occurrence</i> |
| <b>le gaz</b>      | <i>gas</i>                | <b>la gaze</b>         | <i>gauze</i>                           |                                        |
| <b>le gril</b>     | <i>broiler</i>            | <b>la grille</b>       | <i>gate, grid, scale</i>               |                                        |
| <b>le lit</b>      | <i>bed</i>                | <b>la lie</b>          | <i>sediment, dregs</i>                 |                                        |
| <b>le luth</b>     | <i>lute</i>               | <b>la lutte</b>        | <i>struggle, wrestling</i>             |                                        |
| <b>le mal</b>      | <i>evil</i>               | <b>la malle</b>        | <i>trunk</i>                           |                                        |
| <b>le/la maire</b> | <i>mayor</i>              | <b>la mer</b>          | <i>sea</i>                             | <b>la mère</b> <i>mother</i>           |
| <b>le mythe</b>    | <i>myth</i>               | <b>la mite</b>         | <i>moth</i>                            |                                        |
| <b>le mort</b>     | <i>dead man</i>           | <b>la mort</b>         | <i>death</i>                           |                                        |
| <b>le mur</b>      | <i>wall</i>               | <b>la mûre</b>         | <i>blackberry</i>                      |                                        |
| <b>le pair</b>     | <i>peer</i>               | <b>la paire</b>        | <i>pair</i>                            |                                        |
| <b>le parti</b>    | <i>party</i>              | <b>la partie</b>       | <i>part, game</i>                      |                                        |
| <b>le poche</b>    | <i>paperback</i>          | <b>la poche</b>        | <i>pocket, bag</i>                     |                                        |
| <b>le pois</b>     | <i>pea</i>                | <b>le poids</b>        | <i>weight</i>                          |                                        |
| <b>le pot</b>      | <i>pot/jar</i>            | <b>la peau</b>         | <i>skin</i>                            |                                        |
| <b>le pouce</b>    | <i>thumb</i>              | <b>la pousse</b>       | <i>sprout, shoot</i>                   |                                        |
| <b>le racket</b>   | <i>racketeering</i>       | <b>la raquette</b>     | <i>racket</i>                          |                                        |

|           |                       |            |                |                |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| le rai    | ray                   | la raie    | line/hair part |                |
| le renne  | reindeer              | la rène    | rein           | la reine queen |
| le repère | landmark              | le repaire | den, hideout   |                |
| le roux   | roux, russet, redhead | la roue    | wheel          |                |
| le satyre | satyr, maniac         | la satire  | satire         |                |
| le sel    | salt                  | la selle   | saddle         |                |
| le sol    | ground, floor         | la sole    | sole           |                |
| le tic    | tic, habit            | la tique   | tick           |                |
| le tome   | tome, volume          | la tome    | Savoy cheese   |                |
| le tout   | whole                 | la toux    | cough          |                |
| le tribut | tribute               | la tribu   | tribe          |                |
| le vice   | vice/defect           | la vis     | screw          |                |

**Quels cours** suis-tu cette session?

Le château nous a servi de point de **repère**.

**What courses** are you taking this session?

We used the castle as **a landmark**.

EXERCICE

3-20

Complete with the definite article le, la, or l'.

1. Je n'ai pas pu enlever \_\_\_\_\_ tache de vin sur ta chemise.
2. Le maître-nageur a mis \_\_\_\_\_ drapeau rouge car \_\_\_\_\_ mer est très agitée.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ diva a perdu \_\_\_\_\_ voix au beau milieu de \_\_\_\_\_ aria.
4. Vous aurez \_\_\_\_\_ peau lisse si vous utilisez cette crème hydratante.
5. La police a trouvé \_\_\_\_\_ repaire des trafiquants de drogue.
6. Attention! \_\_\_\_\_ sole jaune est tombée sur \_\_\_\_\_ sol.
7. Je ne connais pas \_\_\_\_\_ tribu dont elle a parlé lors de sa conférence.
8. Lucie a vu \_\_\_\_\_ plus vieux chêne de sa vie dans \_\_\_\_\_ forêt de Tronçais.
9. Prépare un bon repas. Bertrand aime \_\_\_\_\_ bonne chère.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ verre dans lequel tu bois est en cristal de Baccarat.