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Masculine and feminine verbs in french

One of the main ways that French grammar differs from English is the existence of genders for things as well as people. While in the English language you will say “he” for a man or a stallion and “she” for a woman or a cow - you wouldn’t call a table “she” or a bucket “he”. Yet that is exactly how French grammar works. It’s “une table” and “un sceau”, and when you are using pronouns you will say “elle est mise” (“she (the table) is set”) and “il est plein” (“he (the bucket) is full”). Fortunately, one thing the French language doesn’t do (but some other languages such as German and Greek do) is decline its articles or nouns. Like most Romance languages - and even English - it does decline its pronouns. So let us first take a look at the pronouns involved and see how we decline our tables and buckets. Then we can look at the definite and indefinite articles and finally answer the most burning question of all: how can you tell the gender of a French word? The best French tutors availableFirst Lesson FreeFrench Personal Pronouns and Their Cases Like many languages, French personal pronouns are declined - that is, they look different depending on their grammatical function within a French sentence. Let’s go through it in English first: He is reading a book by Gustave Flaubert. “He” is subject. If this person is the object of the sentence, we say: Flaubert is taking him places I had never known. And if he or she is the indirect object. Reading is the best thing that ever happened to him. Here are the basic French pronouns: EnglishSubjectDirect ObjectIndirect Object I(moime you (sing,tutoite heille lui sheellelalui wenousnounsyou (plur:vousvousyou they (masc.)ilslelaur they (fem.)elleslelaur Note: If you want to use a plural encompassing both masculine and feminine things, use “ils”. Another note: in French, me, te, le, la are contracted if the word that follows begins with a vowel: Je t’aime. - I love you. Tu m’aimes - you love me. Je l’aime. - I love him (or her). Some examples of pronouns in different grammatical positions within a French sentence (with their translation): She gives the ball to the dog. Elle donne la balle au chien. She gives the ball to him. Elle lui donne la balle. She gives it to the dog. Elle la donne au chien. He reads the book to the mouse.* Il lit le livre à la souris. He reads it to the mouse. Il le lit à la souris. He reads the book to it. Il lui lit le livre. He reads it to it. Il le lui lit. *lots of people read to their pets. French Articles: Definite and Indefinite When taking French grammar lessons, the easiest way to know if a word is masculine or feminine is quite simply by learning it with its article (or looking it up in the dictionary). If you come upon a word you don’t know, if you are lucky the article will be right there next to it to help you along. And while French fortunately doesn’t decline its articles, it’s useful to know them in all their iterations, from indefinite articles to possessive pronouns: Definite article Indefinite article Demonstrative pronounPossessive adjective Possessive pronoun Masculineleuncemon ton son notre votre leur Feminineleuneccetema ta sa notre votre leurmiennetiennesiennenôtre vôtres leurs Plural (fem.)lesdescesettesmes tes ses nos vos leursmiennes tiennes siennes nôtres vôtres leurs The best French tutors availableFirst Lesson FreeLearning French Gender Words: Making Adjectives Agree in Gender and Number So, when speaking French, do you have put the adjectives in the feminine and masculine? Well, mostly. The rule for gender and number of French adjectives Generally, the feminine is formed with -e, the masculine or general plural in -s and the feminine plural in -es: Amusant - amusante - amusants - amusantes Court - courtre - courts - courtes Vert - verte - verts - vertes Grand - grande - grands - grandes “Since “école” is feminine, the adjecti “maternal” has to agree and becomes “maternelle”. Photo credit: caribbeanfreephoto on Visual hunt However, French has a rather impressive number of irregular adjectives, which is one of the many things that makes it hard to learn French for beginners. Weak masculines - that is, masculines ending in -e - will not change in the feminine: un clown drôle (a funny clown) - une blague drôle (a funny joke) - des films drôles (funny films). Most masculines ending in the consonants “L”, “N”, “S” and “T” will double the consonant and add an -e in the feminine: Masculine singular Feminine singularMasculine pluralFeminine plural Translation ancienancienneanciensanciennesold, ancient gentilgentillegentilsgentillesnice grosgrossegrosgrosseslarge, fat sotsototesotssottesidiot, stupid Here is a list of some of the most common irregular feminine endings: Masculine singular Feminine singular Masculine plural Feminine plural ExampleTranslation -eux-euse-eux-eusesmalheureux-malheureuseunhappy -f-ve-fs-vesactif-activeactive -er-ère-ers-èrescher-chèrdear (both cherished and costly) Practice your French with graffiti - did this person write correctly? Photo credit: gillesklein on VisualHunt And of course, to add to the joys of French spelling, there is a whole series of exceptions you quite simply have to memorize. In these vocabulary words, the masculine plural form is often the same as the masculine singular. Here is a list of words with unusual feminines: Masculine singularFeminine singularMasculine plural Feminine plural Translation Beau Blanc Complet Doux Faux Favori Franc Public Sec Secret vieuxvabelle blanche complète douce fausse favorite franche publique sèche secrète vieillebeaux blancs complets doux faux favoris francs publics secs secrets vieuxbelles blanches complètes douces fausses favorites franches publiques sèches secrètes vieillesbeautiful white complete soft wrong favourite frank, honest public dry secret old Careful! To further confuse things, the following adjectives have a special form in the masculine when the noun that follows begins with a vowel. Here is a list so you know how to use these words correctly: Vieux - vieil: un vieux château - un vieil arbre. BUT l’arbre est vieux (the noun doesn’t follow the adjective) Beau-bel: un beau jardin - un bel oranger BUT l’oranger est beau Nouveau-nouvel: un nouveau pont - un nouvel appartement BUT l’appartement est nouveau NOTE: some French nouns starting with “h” are treated as though they start with a vowel: Homme: un vieil homme - un bel homme Qualifying adjectives All qualifying adjectives (the ones used right next to a noun) must agree in gender and number with the noun they are describing. Plural nouns will take the masculine plural if the noun is masculine and the feminine plural if the noun is feminine. If it is a collective noun or if a pronoun designates a group of both men and women (nous, vous), the masculine applies. Qualifying adjectives will generally come after the noun: Un garçon blond. - a blonde boy Une fille blonde. - a blonde girl Des enfants blonds - blonde children Des filles blondes - blonde girls. Sometimes, though, they come between the article and the noun. This is only for expressions describing the beauty (beau, joli...) but not the adjectives “laïd” (ugly) age (jeune, vieux, nouveau...) except for “âgé” (aged) goodness (bon, mauvais, gentil...) with the exception of “méchant” size (petit, grand...) In “le café gourmand”, “café” is masculine so it’s the basic form “gourmand”. The adjective is not one of the BAGS groups, so it comes after the noun, hence: le café gourmand”. Photo on VisualHunt. When you learn to speak French, the acronym BAGS is a good way to memorize these exceptions to the rule. Thus, you say: Un petit garçon - a little boy Une jolie fille - a pretty girl. Des gentils enfants - nice children Des jeunes filles - young girls Adjectives used with the verb “être” - to be Adjectives used with “être” - to be - also agree with their subjects in gender and number: Le garçon est petit. - the boy is small. La fille est petite. - the girl is small. Les enfants sont petits. - the children are small. Les filles sont petites. - the girls are small. Start learning French language from a reputable French tutor today. French Gender and Number With Compound Verbs When you study French, remember that when using compound verbs - that is, verb tenses using an auxiliary verb - the rule is that the participle has to agree in gender and number ONLY if the auxiliary verb is “être” (to be). Thus, a conjugation of French verbs using “avoir” would be: J’ai cassé le vase. - I broke the vase. - I broke the vase. - I broke the vase. Elle avait cassé le vase. - She broke the vase. - She broke the vase. Ils ont cassé le vase. - They broke the vase. BUT when you conjugate with “être”, the participle will agree with the subject: Je suis né. - I was born (I = masculine). Elle est née. - She was born. Nous sommes nés. - We were born. Elles sont nées. - They (fem.) were born. An exception to this rule is if the OBJECT PRECEDES the verb in a conjugation with “avoir”, then the participle agrees with the OBJECT: Thus, in the phrase: Marie a aimé Mireille. (Marie has loved Mireille.) “Aimé” doesn’t have to agree with Marie. Nor does it have to agree in this phrase: Jean a aimé Mireille. But in the phrase: Jean l’a aimée. (Jean has loved her.) “Aimée” agrees with the object - in this case, a woman. How Do You Know If A French Word Is Masculine or Feminine? Some words are easy. A female person is a “she”, a male person is a “he”. A lot of professions have a masculine and a feminine, so that a teacher, for example, is an “instituteur” if he’s male and an “institutrice” if she’s female. You will note, however, that there is some debate on how to designate someone when the word has no feminine. When they speak French, a lot of women won’t mind being called “le docteur”, but some will prefer to be called “la docteur.” At the same time, some words designating people differ in meaning depending on whether they are used in the masculine and feminine. Thus, traditionally, the expression “l’ambassadrice” is referring to the ambassador’s wife; therefore a female ambassador is called “Madame l’ambassadeur”. Typical French masculine and feminine endings While words that are the names of professions and of male and female animals are pretty evident (l’étafon - the stallion; la jument - the mare), other words are a little more puzzling. Is a bed masculine? (Yes, “le lit”.) What about a plate? (No. “Une assiette” is feminine.) This is what tends to throw English speakers off when learning how to speak French. So how can you tell the gender of the words designating inanimate objects? Some rules, at least, apply. And ending in “e” generally designates a feminine, excepte when it doesn’t (le vacarme - the noise but une arme), Compound nouns of the type “verb-noun” are generally masculine: le tire-bouchon (the corkscrew), le porte-monnaie (the wallet). Certain endings are either masculine or feminine, and if you learn them, you can quickly recognise the right gender. Here is a list of some masculine endings: -eux (le creux - the crook, the depression; le peureux - the coward) -aire (le maire - the mayor; l’apothicaire - the pharmacist/apothecary) -isme (le fantasme, le féminisme) -é (le café) -ot (le jouet - the toy; le bleuot - the cornflower) endings with the sound “o”: -eau, -au, -ot, -aud (le fourreau - the sheath; le sot - the idiot; le réchaud - the hob; except for “une eau” - the water) - ment (le moment - the moment; le vent - the wind) -ail (l’ail - garlic; le travail - work) -eil (le reveil - the alarm clock; le sommeil - sleep) -age (l’âge - the age; le breuvage - the drink; except for: la cage - the cage; une image - an image; la page - the page and la plage - the beach) -oir (le miroir - the mirror; le terroir - the region) -al (le cheval - the horse; le carnaval - the carnival) “Carte” has an ending in -e and feminine - so “postal” is written with an -e at the end, too. Here is a list of some feminine endings: most endings in -e. -son, -tion, -sion (la raison - reason; la potion - the potion; la tension - the tension; but le son - the sound) -ure (la piqûre - the insect bite or needle prick; la moisissure - the mold) -ette (la belette - the badger; la ciboulette - chives) -ère (la ménagère - the housewife; la rivière - the river; except for “le cimetière”- the graveyard; le réverbère - the street light) -euse (la veilleuse - the pilot light; la tricoteuse - the knitter) -ture (la voiture - the car; la teinture - the dye) -ise (la cerise - the cherry; la banquise - the ice floe) -ie (la mairie - the town hall; la pénurie - the shortage) -elle (la marelle - hopscotch; la pelle - the shovel) -ée (la buée - the steam; la nuée - the swarm; except for: le lycée - secondary school; le musée - the museum) When learning to master a new language, having the right resources is essential. Find out more about the best books to learn French grammar. A noun is a word that represents a person, place, or thing, whether concrete (e.g., chair, dog) or abstract (idea, happiness). In French, all nouns have a gender—they are either masculine or feminine. The gender of some nouns makes sense (homme [man] is masculine, femme [woman] is feminine) but others don’t: the words personne [person] and victime [victim] are always feminine, even when the person or victim is a man! It is very important to learn a noun’s gender along with the noun itself because articles, adjectives, some pronouns, and some verbs have to agree with nouns; that is, they change depending on the gender of the noun they modify. The best way to learn the gender of French nouns is to make your vocabulary lists with the appropriate definite article or indefinite article. That is, rather than a list like this: un livre - book une chaise - chair Make French vocabulary lists like this: un livre - book une chaise - chair This will help you learn the gender with the noun. The gender is part of the noun and you will be much better off learning it now, as a beginner, than trying to go back after years of study and memorizing the genders of all the words you’ve already learned (we speak from experience). Also, there are quite a few French nouns with different meanings depending on whether they are masculine or feminine. French nouns are always masculine or feminine, and you usually can’t determine the gender just by looking at the word or thinking about what it means. While there are some tendencies in the gender of French nouns - see the table below - there are always exceptions. Please don't use these patterns as a way to avoid learning the genders of nouns - just learn each word as gender + noun and then you'll know them forever. Nearly all French nouns have different forms for singular and plural. In addition, many nouns that refer to people and animals have both a masculine and a feminine form. Ending is usually: -age masculine Exceptions: une cage, une image, une nage, une page, une plage, une rage -eau masculine Exceptions: l'eau, la peau -ée feminine Exceptions: un lycée, un musée -ion feminine Exceptions: un avion, un bastion, billion, un million, un lion, un scion -té feminine Exceptions: un comité, un invité In addition, most countries and names that end in e are feminine. Most French nouns become feminine according to regular patterns, but there are a number of irregular nouns, based on the final letter(s) of the masculine singular noun. Nouns that end in a vowel plus L, N, or T usually become feminine by doubling the consonant before adding E. Ending: en > enne Noun: le gardien (guard) Masculine singular le gardienFeminine singular la gardienneMasculine plural les gardiensFeminine plural les gardiennes Ending: el > elle Noun: le colonel (colonel) Masculine singular le colonelFeminine singular la colonelleMasculine plural les colonelsFeminine plural les colonelles Nouns that end in er need a grave accent. Ending: er > ère Noun: le boulanger (baker) Masculine singular le boulangerFeminine singular la boulangèreMasculine plural les boulangersFeminine plural les boulangères The final letters er have two possible irregular feminine endings: Ending: eur > euse Noun: un danseur (dancer) Masculine singular un danseurFeminine singular une danseuseMasculine plural des danseursFeminine plural des danseuses Ending: eur > rice Noun: un acteur (actor) Masculine singular un acteurFeminine singular une actriceMasculine plural des acteursFeminine plural des actrices Notes These rules are similar for making adjectives feminine The rules for making nouns feminine apply only to people and some animals. They do not apply to objects, which have only one form: masculine or feminine. Compound nouns have their own gender rules. Most French nouns become plural according to regular patterns, but there are a number of irregular nouns, based on the final letter(s) of the singular noun. The endings al and ail change to aux in the plural: Noun: un cheval (horse) Masculine singular un chevalMasculine plural des chevaux Noun: un travail (task, job) Masculine singular un travailMasculine plural des travaux The endings au, eau, and eu take an X for plural: Noun: un tuyau (pipe, tip) Masculine singular un tuyauMasculine plural des tuyaux Noun: un château (castle) Masculine singular un châteauMasculine plural des châteaux Noun: un feu (fire) Masculine singular un feuMasculine plural des feux

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