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# French Phrases: Basic Greetings

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Even if you do not really speak French, it is worth knowing at least the following simple words and phrases. Although many French speakers will know the English equivalents, they will still appreciate the effort if you take the trouble to learn these basic French greetings. *(N.B. See the bottom of the page for seasonal greetings.)*

**Is there a phrase you need that isn't covered here?** Why not ask at the French language forum?

## Very basic greetings

Firstly, even if you "don't speak French", you may well have heard some of the following already.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **bonjour!** | bõʒuʁ | hello!, good morning! |
| **bonsoir!** | bõswaʁ | hello!, good evening! |
| **s'il vous plaît** | si(l)vuple | please |
| **pardon!** | paʁdõ | excuse me!, sorry! |

Pronounce these words

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

## Introducing yourself in French

The following are also useful for introducing yourself in French:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **je m'appelle...** | ʒmapɛl | I'm called..., my name is... |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **comment vous appelez-vous?** | kɔmɑ̃vuzaplevu | what are you called? *(formal)* |
| **comment tu t'appelles?** | kɔmɑ̃tytapɛl | what's your name? *(informal)* |
| **(comment) ça va?** | (kɔmɑ̃) sa va | how's it going? |

Pronounce these words

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

A question that sometimes arises among learners is "how do you say *'Pleased to meet you'* in French?" Well, the possibly surprising answer is that often, French people meeting for the first time will simply say *Bonjour!*. The following are also possible:

| | |
|---|---|
| **je suis très heureux de faire votre connaissance** | - (I'm) pleased to meet you! |
| **très heureux!** | - pleasure! |

Pronounce these words

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

Note that female speakers would say **heureuse**:

| | |
|---|---|
| **je suis très heureuse de faire votre connaissance** | - (I'm) pleased to meet you! |
| **très heureuse!** | - pleasure! |

Pronounce these words

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

An interesting point raised by Natalie Schorr (2004), *Tune Up Your French* is that some speakers may find the simple *"heureux"/"heureuse"* a little abrupt, and that in practice, you may be better off simply saying *Bonjour*...!

## Being polite in French

Here are some basic expressions of courtesy:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **merci!** | mɛʁsi | thank you! |
| **de rien** | də ʁjæ̃ | not at all!, no problem!, you're welcome!, sure! *(US)* |
| **je vous en prie** | ʒvuz ɑ̃ pʁi | you're welcome *(formal)* |
| **excusez-moi!** | ɛkskyze mwa | excuse me, can I get past |
| **je suis désolé** | jə sɥi dezole | (I'm) sorry |
| **pardon?** | paʁdõ | excuse me?, sorry? |
| **vous permettez?** | vu pɛʁmɛte | may I?, do you mind? |
| **après vous!** | apʁe vu | after you! |

Pronounce these words

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

## Saying goodbye in French

As in English, there are various ways to say *goodbye* in French. The following are commonly used:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **au revoir!** | ɔʁvwaʁ | bye! |
| **à plus tard!** | a ply taʁ | see you later! |
| **à tout à l'heure** | a tu ta lœʁ | see you soon!, see you in a while! |
| **à bientôt!** | a bjæ̃to | see you soon! |
| **à tout de suite!** | a tut sɥit | see you in a second!, see you in a little while! |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **à demain!** | a dəmæ̃ | see you tomorrow! |
| **à plus!** *(Informal)* | a plys | TTFN!, laters! |

Pronounce these words

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

In informal e-mails and SMS messages, it's common to write *A+* instead of *à plus*.

The following are used to 'wish somebody well'. Note that it's quite a common formula in French to use the adjective **bon(ne)** plus a noun to mean *enjoy your ...*, *good luck with the ....* Here are some common examples, but you may come across others:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **bonne journée!** | bɔn ʒuʁne | have a good day! |
| **bonne soirée!** | bɔn swaʁe | have a good evening! |
| **bonne chance!** | bɔn ʃɑ̃s | good luck! |
| **bonne route!** | bɔn ʁut | have a good journey!, safe journey! |
| **bonnes vacances** | bɔn vakɑ̃s | enjoy your holiday! |
| **bon voyage** | bõ vwajaʒ | have a good trip! |
| **bon appétit!** | bɔn apeti | enjoy your meal! |
| **bon ap!** *(Informal)* | bɔnap | enjoy your meal! |
| **santé!** | sɑ̃te | cheers! |

Pronounce these words

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

## Seasonal greetings

As well as he phrases and greetings are above, the following are useful at specific times of the year:

| | |
|---|---|
| **joyeux noël!** | - Merry Christmas! |
| **bonne année!** | - Happy New Year! |
| **"joyeuses fêtes!"** | - "Season's Greetings!"[1] |
| **bonnes Pâques!** | - Happy Easter! |
| **bon anniversaire!** | - Happy Birthday! |
| **joyeux anniversaire!** | - Happy Birthday! |

Pronounce these words

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

[1] This is the cover-all expression that implies *Happy Christmas* and *Happy New Year*.

If you're learning Spanish, you may also be interested in our sister site's page of Spanish greetings (with audio recordings).

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