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French Phrases: Basic French words

Function words

The following are some basic 'function' words in French. They provide some of the 'glue' that allow other words (nouns, adjectives etc) to be put together to form sentences.

The words below are therefore useful for *forming a sentence* in French. For the French for simple salutations such as **hello, goodbye etc, see the section on greetings in French**.

See also: French subject pronouns, French greetings.

Very basic articles and prepositions

The following little words crop up extremely frequently. They are slightly tricky to begin with because they are words whose form changes depending on the following word.

de	də, d, t	of, from
du	dy	of/from the (masculine[1] singular); some
des	de	of/from the (plural); some
à	a	to; at; in[2]
au	o	to/at/in[2] the (masculine[1] singular)
aux	o	to/at/in[2] the (plural)
le	lə, lø	the (with masculine[1] word)

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la	la	the (with feminine[1] word)
les	le	the (with plural)

Pronounce these words

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

See also: When to use *le* and *la*.

Question words

quoi?	kwa	what?
quand?	kɑ̃	when?
pourquoi?	puʁkwa	why?
quel?	kɛl	which?
combien de...	kɔ̃bjæ̃d	how much...?, how many...?
comment?	kɔmɑ̃	how?; pardon?, what did you say?

Pronounce these words

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

Other basic words

pour	puʁ	for
par	paʁ	by; via
sur	syʁ	on
dans	dɑ̃	in[2]
en	ɑ̃	in[2]
avec	avɛk	with
dehors	dəɔʁ	outside, out
là	la	here, there; now
ici	isi	here
là-bas	laba	there, over there
mon	mɔ̃	my (masculine)
ma	ma	my (feminine)
mes	me	my (plural)

votre	vɔtʁə	your
parce que	paʁsk(ə)	because
près de...	pʁe də, pʁɛd	near to...
près d'ici	pʁɛdisi	nearby, near here
loin	lwæ̃	far
très	tʁe	very
peu	pø	little, hardly
bien	bjæ̃	well; rather
assez	ase	quite; enough, sufficiently
trop	tʁo	too; too much
trop de...	tʁod	too much...; too many...
pas	pa	not
jamais	ʒame	never
toujours	tuʒuʁ	always; still
encore	ɑ̃kɔʁ	still, yet
plus	ply, plys	more
moins	mwæ̃	less, fewer
que	kə	that; what

Suggest a change / proposez une modification

Notes:
1. As in many languages, French nouns are arbitrarily divided into groups called genders. In French, there are two genders, usually called 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Which gender a noun belongs to depends on various criteria such as the gender of the person/animal they represent (if any), or the ending of the noun (for example, nouns ending in -ation are feminine). The gender of the noun determines which form of determiners (words meaning 'the', 'a', 'some', 'any', 'my' etc) and adjectives are used.
2. As a very general rule, dans is used in cases where there is a determiner (a word like le/la *(the)*, un/une *(a)*; and en is used in other cases, such as before names of countries and regions and in figurative expressions. In some

cases, au, à la and aux are used with a similar meaning to dans le/dans la/dans les.

The following phrases are worth knowing:

il y a...	il i ja, ilja	there is...; there are...
y a... *(Informal)*	ja...	there is...; there are...
c'est...	se	it's...
ce n'est pas...	sne pa	it isn't...
ceci est...	søsi e	this is...
ce n'est pas...	s(ə)ne pa	it isn't...
voilà	vwala	here's..., there's...
voici	vwasi	here is...
est-ce que...	ɛsk(ə)	is it true that... (formula used to ask a question in French)
est-ce qu'il y a...?	ɛskilja	is there...?
j'ai...	ʒe	I have...
avez-vous...?	ave vu	do you have...?
je suis...	ʒə sɥi	I am...
je ne suis pas...	ʒən sɥi pas	I'm not...
êtes vous...?	ɛt vu	are you...?
(en) anglais	(ɑ̃n) ɑ̃gle	(in) English
(en) français	(ɑ̃) fʁɑ̃se	(in) French

Pronounce these words

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