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**TARGET:
LANGUAGES**

**LEARN
FRENCH**
Beginner level
A2

Tony Bulger



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I

MEETING

AND

GREETING

1. INTRODUCTIONS

PRISE DE CONTACT

AIMS

- INTRODUCING YOURSELF
- SAYING HELLO AND GOODBYE
- THANKING SOMEONE

NOTIONS

- MASCULINE AND FEMININE GENDERS
- *ÊTRE* (TO BE) AND *AVOIR* (TO HAVE)
- *TU* AND *VOUS*
- NEGATIVE

INTRODUCTIONS

- Hello (*good day*), I'm Léon. And you?
- My name is (*I me call*) Virginie. Pleased [to meet you].
- I'm here at the Sorbonne for the climate conference (*on the climate*).
- Me too.
- Are you (*you are*) French, Virginie? You have a slight (*small*) accent.
- No, I'm Swiss. But I live in (*at*) Lyon.
- Lyon is a beautiful city.
- Yes, very nice. And you? Are you (*you are*) from Paris?
- No, not at all. I'm not French. I'm Belgian!

- Hi, Virginie. How are you?
- Hi, Jean. Very well, thanks. And you?
- Fine. But I'm late for the conference.
- Then so am I (*me too*)! Goodbye, Léon.
- But wait for me!

03

PRÉSENTATIONS

- Bonjour, je suis Léon. Et vous ?
- Je m'appelle Virginie. Enchantée.
- Je suis ici à la Sorbonne pour la conférence sur le climat.
- Moi aussi.
- Vous êtes française, Virginie ? Vous avez un petit accent.
- Non, je suis suisse. Mais j'habite à Lyon.
- C'est une belle ville, Lyon.
- Oui, très sympa. Et vous ? Vous êtes de Paris ?
- Non, pas du tout. Je ne suis pas français. Je suis belge !

- Salut, Virginie. Tu vas bien ?
- Salut, Jean. Très bien, merci. Et toi ?
- Ça va. Mais je suis en retard pour la conférence.
- Alors, moi aussi ! Au revoir, Léon.
- Mais, attendez-moi !

■ UNDERSTANDING THE DIALOGUE

WORDS AND PHRASES

→ **Bonjour** literally means *good day* (**bon** + **jour**) but is used more broadly to mean *good morning, good afternoon* or simply *hello*. **Salut** is a familiar greeting used by young people or between good friends. To say *goodbye*, we use **au revoir**.

→ **enchanté**, literally “enchanted”, is used in everyday French to mean *Pleased to meet you*. In this conversation, the person using the expression is female, so the word has to “agree” with her gender. For this, we add another **-e** to the word ending: **Enchantée**. This does not change the pronunciation. We’ll tell you more about agreement later.

→ **sympa** is an abbreviation of the adjective **sympathique**, which translates a variety of English adjectives, such as *pleasant, kind* and *friendly*. The nearest equivalent is *nice*, also an all-purpose adjective.

→ **Français / français**: As in English, nouns of nationality take an initial capital: **Les Français sont sympas**, *French people are nice*. By contrast, we use a small letter for adjectives of nationality: **Il est français**, *He’s French*.

CULTURE NOTES

Although this book concentrates on the language spoken in France, French is an official language in 28 other nations across the world, from Algeria to the Seychelles. It is also used by a number of international organisations, including the United Nations, the OECD and the International Olympic Committee. So when you hear someone speaking French, it may be worth asking whether they were born in Bordeaux, Belgium or Burundi!

Lyon (sometimes written *Lyons* in English), in east-central France, is the country’s third-largest city. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is also famed for its claim to the title of Food Capital of the World.

La Sorbonne is a prestigious university founded in Paris in the 13th century by Robert de Sorbon. Although the main building is still located in the once-bohemian Latin Quarter (so-called because Latin was the only language used for teaching at the university in the Middle Ages), there are actually 14 Sorbonne-affiliated faculties and institutes dotted all over Paris.

◆ GRAMMAR

GENDER

All French nouns are either masculine or feminine. Identifying the right gender can sometimes be problematic, but here are some basic rules:

– Logically, all nouns referring to men (**homme**, *man*; **frère**, *brother*; **père**, *father*, **mari**, *husband*, etc.) are masculine, and those designating women (**femme**, *women/wife*, **sœur**, *sister*; **mère**, *mother*, etc.) are feminine;

– Nouns ending in **-é** (**café**, *coffee / café*), **-age** (**ménage**, *household*), **-isme** (**tourisme**, *tourism*), **-eau** (**manteau**, *coat*), **-in** (**vin**, *wine*) and **-ment** (**gouvernement**, *government*) are generally masculine;

– Nouns ending in **-be** (**robe**, *dress*), **-té** (**beauté**, *beauty*), **-erie** (**boulangerie**, *bakery*), **-tion** (**nation**, *nation*), **-ssion** (**émission**, *TV / radio programme*) are generally feminine. (There are, however, a number of exceptions.)

The accompanying articles also agree: **le** and **un** (*the* and *a*) are masculine, **la** and **une** are feminine: **un accent**, *un accent*; **une conférence**, *a conference / lecture*; **la ville**, *the city*, **le climat**, *the climat*. However, if the first letter of the noun is a vowel, the second letter of the definite article is elided: **l’accent**. That’s why it is so important to learn the gender of a French noun, along with its meaning!

There is no equivalent of the neutral pronoun *it* in French.

SUBJECT PRONOUNS

Here are the subject forms of French personal pronouns:

je	<i>I</i>	nous	<i>we</i>
tu	<i>you</i> (familiar)	vous	<i>you</i> (formal/plural)
il	<i>he / it</i>	ils	<i>they</i>
elle	<i>she / it</i>		

Since French does not have a neutral pronoun, **il** and **elle** can mean *it*. Note that **je**, *I*, does not take an initial capital. Remember also that the final **s** is not voiced, so **il** and **ils** are pronounced identically, as are **elle** and **elles**. However, because the accompanying verb will be in either the single or the plural, depending on the context, there is almost no chance of confusion.

ÊTRE AND AVOIR – “TO BE” AND “TO HAVE”

These are two of the most important verbs in French, because they are both main (or lexical) verbs and auxiliaries – as in English. They are also irregular:

	être, to be		
je suis	<i>I am</i>	nous sommes	<i>we are</i>
tu es	<i>you are</i> (familiar)	vous êtes	<i>you are</i>
il / elle est	<i>he / she / it is</i>	ils sont	<i>they are</i>

avoir, to have			
j'ai	<i>I have</i>	nous avons	<i>we have</i>
tu as	<i>you have (familiar)</i>	vous avez	<i>you have</i>
il / elle a	<i>he / she / it has</i>	ils ont	<i>they have</i>

* Pronunciation note: take care not to confuse **ils sont** (*they are*) – pronounced with a soft “s”, [eelssohn] – and **ils ont** (*they have*), pronounced with a “z”: [eelzohn]. Note that infinitives in French are single words; there is no equivalent of the infinitive particle *to*.

TU AND VOUS

French has two words for *you*: **tu** and **vous**, each with a corresponding verb form. Basically, **tu** is used when addressing family, friends and young people, while **vous** is more formal; it's also the plural form of *you*. So, when talking with your son or daughter, for instance, you say **Comment vas-tu ?**, *How are you?*, but if you address a stranger – or more than one person – the correct form is **Comment allez-vous ?**. There are subtle differences but the basic rule is: **tu** = familiar; **vous** = formal, plural.

THE NEGATIVE

The negative form uses two words: **ne** immediately before the word and **pas** immediately after it: **Je suis française** → **Je ne suis pas française**. Don't use one without the other!

THE INTERROGATIVE

There are several ways of asking a question. The simplest is to raise the intonation at the end of the sentence. Thus the declarative **Vous êtes française**, *You are French*, can be made into the question *Are you French?* simply by lifting the intonation on **française**: **Vous êtes française ?** We'll look at the other possibilities later on.

VOCABULARY

avoir *to have*

attendre *to wait*

être *to be*

s'appeler *to be called, to be named*

habiter *to live*

un accent *an accent*

le climat *the climate*

une conférence *a conference*

une ville *a town, a city*

suisse *Swiss (adjective)*

belge *Belgian (adjective)*

français *French (adjective)*

oui *yes*

non *no*

bien *well, good*

en retard *late (think “tardy”)*

sympa *nice, good*

Au revoir *Goodbye*

Bonjour *Good morning, Good afternoon, Hello*

Ça va *I'm fine*

Enchanté (m.) Enchantée (f.) *Pleased to meet you*

Merci *Thank you, Thanks*

Moi aussi *Me too*

Pas du tout *Not at all*

Salut *Hi*

That's the end of your first lesson. We're taking things slowly and progressively, but you can already construct simple sentences and ask basic questions. You could even attend a climate conference! **Allons-y** (“Let's go on”).

EXERCISES

1. CONJUGATE THE VERBS AVOIR AND ÊTRE

- Je (*être*) français et ma femme (*être*) belge.
- Virginie (*avoir*) un petit accent.
- Ils (*être*) en retard pour la conférence.
- Vous (*être*) très sympa.
- Elles (*avoir*) un frère et il (*avoir*) deux sœurs.

2. PUT THESE SENTENCES INTO THE NEGATIVE FORM

- Alain est français.
- Ils sont en retard.
- Virginie a deux sœurs.
- Lyon est une belle ville.
- Nous sommes à la Sorbonne.
- Je suis belge.

3. WHAT GENDER ARE THESE NOUNS? ADD THE DEFINITE AND THE INDEFINITE ARTICLES FOR EACH OF THEM

a. émission	__	__	g. robe	__	__
b. ville	__	__	h. manteau	__	__
c. manteau	__	__	i. vin	__	__
d. boulangerie	__	__	j. père	__	__
e. café	__	__	k. nation	__	__
f. conférence	__	__			



4. TRANSLATE THESE SENTENCES INTO FRENCH

03

When you have finished, listen to the recording then check your written answers:

- Hi Jean, how are you? – Very well, thanks.
- Are you Belgian? – Not at all. I'm Swiss.
- Lyon is a beautiful city.
- She's late. – Me too.
- Goodbye. – Wait for me!

2. GETTING TO KNOW YOU

FAIRE CONNAISSANCE

AIMS

- ASK SIMPLE QUESTIONS
- GIVE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR JOB

NOTIONS

- POSITION AND AGREEMENT OF ADJECTIVES
- PLURAL NOUNS
- GENDER (CONTINUED)
- INTERROGATIVE (CONTINUED)

WHAT DO YOU DO?

- What do you do for a living (*like work*), Lucien ?
- I'm [a] teacher in a primary school (*school primary*) in Marseille.
- How many students (*pupils*) do you have in your class?
- I have two classes of 30 students at the moment because one of my colleagues is ill.
- It's very a difficult profession (*profession very difficult*), isn't it?
- Not really. The children are sweet (*adorable*) and my colleagues are nice. You know, all my family is into teaching: my father is [a] French teacher, my sister teaches (*the*) English and (*the*) maths in a secondary school and my older brother is [a] head master (*director of school*).
- Are you married?
- Yes, and I have two children: a son [who is] (*of*) six (*years*) and a daughter [who is] (*of*) four (*years*).
- Is your wife [a] teacher, too (*also*)?
- No, she is [a] manager of a small travel agency. And you, what do you do, Sophie?
- I'm [a] computer scientist, specialised in networks.
- Very interesting. I have a cousin who is [a] computer scientist. What company do you work for?
- I don't work for a company: I'm [a] freelancer (*independent*).
- You're lucky!

04

QUE FAITES-VOUS ?

- Qu'est-ce que vous faites comme travail, Lucien ?
- Je suis professeur dans une école primaire à Marseille.
- Vous avez combien d'élèves dans votre classe ?
- J'ai deux classes de trente élèves en ce moment parce qu'un de mes collègues est malade.
- C'est une profession très difficile, non ?
- Pas vraiment. Les enfants sont adorables et mes collègues sont gentils. Vous savez, toute ma famille est dans l'enseignement : mon père est professeur de français, ma sœur enseigne l'anglais et les maths dans un lycée et mon frère aîné est directeur d'école.
- Est-ce que vous êtes marié ?
- Oui, et j'ai deux enfants : un fils de six ans et une fille de quatre ans.
- Est-ce que votre femme est professeur aussi ?
- Non, elle est directrice d'une petite agence de voyages. Et vous, que faites-vous, Sophie?
- Je suis informaticienne, spécialisée dans les réseaux.
- Très intéressant. J'ai un cousin qui est informaticien. Vous travaillez pour quelle société ?
- Je ne travaille pas pour une société : je suis indépendante.
- Vous avez de la chance !

■ UNDERSTANDING THE DIALOGUE

WORDS AND PHRASES

→ **combien** means both *how much* and *how many*: French makes no distinction between individual and collective nouns in this context: **combien d'élèves**, *how many students*, **combien de temps**, *how much time*.

→ **malade** (from which we get the English word *malady* as well as the prefix *mal-*, used in words like *maladjusted* and *malfunction*) is an adjective meaning *sick* or *ill*.

Mon fils est malade, *My son is ill*. The word can also be used as a noun to mean *an invalid* or *a sick person*. Many French words derived from Latin are used in English, as we will see.

→ **le travail** means *work*: **Le travail est essentiel**, *Work is essential*, while **un emploi** is *a job*, for which one is paid. (The government-funded employment agency in France is called **Pôle emploi**.) The two words sometimes overlap, and we will meet them again later on in this course.

→ **oui**, *yes*, and **non**, *no*, are quite sufficient in themselves: there is no equivalent of *yes I do* or *no she isn't*, for example. But with an informal question, formed raising the intonation at the end of a statement, it is possible to add **non** to emphasise the interrogative form: **C'est difficile, non ?**, *It's difficult isn't it?*

→ **avoir de la chance**: *to be lucky* (literally “to have the luck”). Several French expressions using the verb **avoir**, *to have*, are translated into English with *to be*.

→ **Je suis professeur, elle est informaticienne**, *I am a teacher, she is a computer engineer*: The indefinite article is not used immediately before a person's occupation.

→ **une fille** can be either *a daughter* or *a girl*: **Ma fille s'appelle Sophie**, *My daughter is called Sophie*. **Il enseigne dans une école de filles**, *He teaches in a girls' school*. In most cases, you can determine the meaning from the context. Likewise, **une femme** can mean *a woman* or *a wife*: **Sophie est ma femme**, *Sophie is my wife*. **Un de mes collègues est une femme**, *One of my colleagues is a woman*.

CULTURE NOTES

The French school system is divided into four levels: **l'école maternelle** (“maternal” or *nursery school*), **l'école primaire** (*primary school*), **le collège** (roughly equivalent to the middle school in the UK system) and **le lycée** (*secondary school*). Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16, but most children start school well before the minimum age.

◆ GRAMMAR

FAIRE, TO DO/MAKE

Another important – and irregular verb – is **faire**, which means both *to do* and *to make*:

je fais	<i>I do/make</i>	nous faisons	<i>we do/make</i>
tu fais	<i>you do/make</i> (familiar)	vous faites	<i>you do/make</i> (formal, plural)
il/elle fait	<i>he/she/it does/makes</i>	ils/elles font	<i>they make</i>

Unlike English, French has no continuous verb forms, so **je fais** means *I do* (or *make*) as well as *I am doing* (*making*). For the pronunciation, remember that the final consonant is silent.

PLURAL NOUNS

The usual way to form the plural is by adding a final – and silent – **s** to the noun: **un collègue, deux collègues**, etc. Singular nouns ending in **s** are unchanged in the plural: **un fils, deux fils**; *one son, two sons*. That same rule applies to nouns ending in **x** and **z**: **un nez, deux nez** (*nose*); **une voix, deux voix** (*voice*). There are a few slightly irregular forms, which we shall see later on.

POSITION AND AGREEMENT OF ADJECTIVES

Adjectives generally follow the noun they qualify (although some come before it) and always agree in both gender and number. For the gender, we generally add a final **e** to the masculine form to create the feminine: **un frère aîné**, *an older brother*, **une sœur aînée**, *an older sister*. For adjectives ending in **l**, **n**, and **s**, the consonant is doubled before adding the **e**: **Il est gentil, Elle est gentille**, *He is nice, She is nice*. However, the masculine form of certain adjectives ends in an **e** – for instance, **difficile**, *difficult*. In this case, they do not change in the singular: **un travail difficile, une profession difficile**.

To form the plural of an adjective, simply add a final **s**: **Le collègue est malade → Les collègues sont malades**, *The colleague is ill (remember that the s is silent in both cases)*.

These rules mean that the same adjective can have four forms, even though the pronunciation is almost identical:

gentil	masculine singular	un fils gentil	<i>a nice son</i>
gentille	feminine singular	une sœur gentille	<i>a nice sister</i>
gentils	masculine plural	des enfants gentils	<i>nice children</i>
gentilles	feminine plural	des familles gentilles	<i>nice families</i>

GENDER (CONTINUED)

Several nouns, especially those referring to occupations, have both a masculine and a feminine form:

- in many cases, adding a final **e** to the masculine noun is sufficient: **un avocat** → **une avocate** (*a lawyer*). If the noun already ends in **e**, simply change the definite or – indefinite article: **un/le journaliste** → **une/la journaliste** (*a journalist*)
 - the **-ien** ending is changed by adding **-ne**: **l'/un informaticien** → **l'/une informaticienne**
 - masculine nouns ending in **-eur** have one of three feminine endings: **-euse** – **un serveur** → **une serveuse** (*a waiter*), **-ice**: **le/un directeur** → **la/une directrice** (*a director or manager*)
 - esse**: **le/prince** → **la/une princesse** (*prince/princess*)
- Since French is a living language, words and usage are constantly evolving. Moreover, gender is a sensitive issue, so don't be surprised to find two forms for the same noun: **une maire** and **une mairesse** for a *mayoress*, for example.

DEFINITE ARTICLES

In many ways, the four definite articles – **le** (masculine), **la** (feminine), **l'** (used before masculine or feminine nouns starting with a vowel) and **les** (plural masculine or feminine) – are used in the same way as in English: to introduce a definite statement like the ones in this module: **Les enfants sont adorables**, *The children* (i.e. that I teach) *are lovely*. But they are also used before nouns in a general sense: **Elle enseigne l'anglais et les maths**, *She teaches English and maths*. **Il est spécialisé dans les réseaux**, *He's specialised in networks* (i.e. networks in general). This is a very important point to remember, as we'll see in the next module.

THE INTERROGATIVE (CONTINUED)

We know how to ask a question by raising the intonation at the end of a declarative sentence (see Module 1). Another simple interrogative form consists in adding **est-ce que** (literally “is it that”, pronounced [esske]) before the noun or pronoun: **Sophie est mariée** → **Est-ce que Sophie est mariée ?**, *Sophie is married* → *Is Sophie married?* The final **e** of **que** is elided if the following word begins with a vowel: **Est-ce qu'elle est mariée ?**

VOCABULARY

avoir de la chance *to be lucky*
enseigner *to teach*
faire *to make, to do*
savoir *to know*
travailler *to work*

une agence de voyages *a travel agency*
la chance *luck*
une classe *a class*
un(e) collègue *a colleague*
un(e) cousin(e) *a cousin*
un directeur / une directrice *a director, a manager*
une école *a school*
une école primaire *a primary school*
une famille *a family*
une femme *a wife, a woman*
une fille *a daughter, a girl*
un fils *a son* (le final “s” is voiced: [fees])
un(e) informaticien(ne) *a computer scientist, analyst, engineer, etc.*
un moment *a moment*
le travail *work*
un professeur *a teacher*
un réseau *a network* (the plural takes a silent **x**: **réseaux**)
une société *a company*

adorable *sweet, lovely*
aîné(e) (adj.) *older / elder*
difficile *difficult*
gentil(le) *nice, kind*

indépendant(e) *independent, freelance* (note the spelling)
malade *ill, sick*
marié(e) *married*

combien *how much/how many*
parce que *because*
trente *thirty*
très *very*
vraiment *really, truly*
en ce moment *at the moment*

EXERCISES

1. CONJUGATE THE VERB FAIRE

- Nous (*faire*) l'enseignement en français. →
- Je (*faire*) une conférence à Marseille. →
- Qu'est-ce qu'elle (*faire*) comme travail ? →
- Qu'est-ce que vous (*faire*) dans votre classe ? →

2. CHANGE THESE MASCULINE NOUNS TO THE FEMININE, AND VICE VERSA

- un serveur _____
- une journaliste _____
- un avocat _____
- un directeur _____
- une informaticienne _____

3. PUT THE ADJECTIVES INTO THE CORRECT FORM

- Les familles sont (*gentil*).
- L'école est très (*petit*).
- Mes collègues sont (*malade*).
- L'informaticien est (*spécialisé*) dans les réseaux.
- Sophie travaille dans une (*petit*) agence de voyages.



4. TRANSLATE THESE SENTENCES INTO FRENCH

- He teaches maths in a primary school. →
- Are you married, Sophie? – Yes, and I have a son. →
- What kind of work do you do? →
- How many children do you have in your class at the moment? →
- He is the manager of a small travel agency in Lyon. →

3. IN BRITTANY

EN BRETAGNE

AIMS

- ASK ABOUT DISTANCE / LOCATION
- GIVE DIRECTIONS
- EXPLAIN WHAT YOU WANT TO DO

NOTIONS

- INTERROGATIVE FORM (CONTINUED)
- PARTITIVE ARTICLES
- *DE*
- INTERROGATIVE ADJECTIVES



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