



# A COMPLETE FRENCH GRAMMAR FOR REFERENCE AND PRACTICE

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TRUDIE MARIA BOOTH

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## Preface

As the title indicates, *A Complete French Grammar for Reference and Practice* is a comprehensive grammar with readings and exercises which allow learners to practice newly acquired knowledge and thereby refine their writing, reading and speaking skills.

Since this manual describes every aspect of French grammar more thoroughly than most other grammar books, it is of considerable length. This book first reviews the basic grammar concepts and then clearly explains the more complicated structures of the language of Molière. It can be used as a classroom text at the intermediate and advanced levels, as well as for self-study and reference. The text is intended to be a reliable source of information and a workbook for all those Anglophone students who want to speak and write French correctly.

In order to facilitate comprehension, explanations are given in English and all example sentences are translated into English as well. In addition, grammatical terminology is clearly defined so that the student will not have to guess the meaning of terms such as *relative pronouns*, *direct* and *indirect objects* or *pronominal verbs*.

Useful current words and expressions as well as cultural information about France are incorporated in the examples and exercises in order to increase the students' cultural competence and to give them the opportunity to enrich their vocabulary while at the same time learning new grammatical concepts. The numerous oral and written exercises include translations, suggestions for communicative activities with a partner, as well as topics for written compositions. Since there is a wide variety of exercises, teachers and students will be able to choose what best corresponds to their needs.

Typical errors made by Anglophone speakers due to the influence of English (such as 'je cherche pour mon stylo', 'je téléphone ma mère', 'j'entre la chambre', or 'je te veux venir') are pointed out throughout the book and, the goal being accuracy, many opportunities are given to eliminate these common mistakes.

At the end of most of the chapters, sections entitled 'Translation Difficulties' deal with expressions and structures that cannot be translated literally from English into French, and indicate their idiomatic French equivalents. Whenever appropriate, poems and other authentic French texts (such as a fairy tale and an excerpt from 'Le Petit Nicolas') illustrate the grammar aspects discussed in a given chapter. And when it is helpful, phonetic transcriptions (using the symbols of the International Phonetic Association) show the correct pronunciation of difficult words.

*A Complete French Grammar for Reference and Practice* is divided into 30 chapters. The first chapter is devoted to numbers and presents clock time, dates and related

items. In my intermediate and advanced French classes, I always review numerals first, in order to give the students confidence (since they are familiar with this material already), and also to reinforce their knowledge of numerals, as well as help them avoid common mistakes such as ‘sur lundi’ or ‘le troisième de mai.’ The second chapter deals with the present indicative (forms and use) of regular and irregular verbs, gives lists of common idiomatic expressions and treats ‘problem verbs’, i.e., those English verbs which have several equivalents in French that cannot be used interchangeably (e.g. to spend = *passer* and *dépenser*; to leave = *partir*, *quitter*, *laisser*). Chapter 2 also describes impersonal verbs and shows how to use them correctly. The third chapter examines pronominal verbs and the fourth looks at the imperative. Chapters 5-7 are devoted to the past tenses and chapters 8-9 to the future and conditional. Chapter 10 focuses on the subjunctive and chapter 11 on personal pronouns. The remaining chapters deal with nouns and ‘problem nouns’, the present participle, the passive voice, indirect speech, and all other aspects of French grammar, such as articles, adjectives and adverbs, possessives and demonstratives, negative expressions, prepositions, conjunctions, the infinitive, etc. The last chapter is devoted to false cognates (also called ‘faux amis’ or false friends), i.e., to those French words which have a similar spelling as English words but not the same meaning (e.g. la librairie = the bookstore, NOT the library). This will remind the reader that ‘attendre’ does not mean ‘to attend’, and that ‘actuellement’ does not translate ‘actually’. An English-French and French-English glossary is provided, in which the student can look up unfamiliar words without having to consult a dictionary. Finally, there is a user-friendly detailed index that will allow learners to rapidly find the information they are looking for. An answer key is available through the author.

It is hoped that this grammar book will be a useful reference and practice tool for students and teachers alike, and that it will help learners acquire proficiency in oral and written French. Grammar does not have to be boring. Studying it can be fun and will be particularly rewarding when it leads to an accurate usage of the language, to successful communication without misunderstandings, and to encouraging compliments by native French speakers.

### Abbreviations used in this book are

adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
e.g.	for example
fam.	familiar, informal language
fam. (in exercises)	familiar: use <b>tu</b> to translate <i>you</i>
f.	feminine
fem.	feminine

fig.	figurative sense
i.e.	that is, that is to say
indic.	indicative
inf.	infinitive
jur.	in a legal context
ling.	linguistic (referring to language)
lit.	literally (indicating a literal translation of a French expression or sentence)
m.	masculine
masc.	masculine
p.	page
plur. <i>or</i> pi.	plural
pol. (in exercises)	polite: use <b>vous</b> to translate <i>you</i>
prov.	proverb
qqch	quelque chose ( <i>something</i> )
qqn	quelqu'un ( <i>somebody</i> )
sb	somebody
sing.	singular
sth	something
subj.	subjunctive
vs	versus

### **Symbols used in this book are**

a slash /	to indicate an alternative
an arrow →	to indicate a transformation
a single underscore _	to indicate a missing letter or word
an asterisk *	to indicate an additional comment

## Chapter 1

# Numbers, Clock time, Days, Months, Seasons and Dates

### A. Cardinal numbers (les nombres cardinaux)

0	zéro
1	un
2	deux
3	trois
4	quatre
5	cinq
6	six
7	sept
8	huit
9	neuf
10	dix
11	onze
12	douze
13	treize
14	quatorze
15	quinze
16	seize
17	dix-sept
18	dix-huit
19	dix-neuf
20	vingt
21	vingt et un
22	vingt-deux
23	vingt-trois
24	vingt-quatre
25	vingt-cinq
26	vingt-six

27	vingt-sept
28	vingt-huit
29	vingt-neuf
30	trente
31	trente <b>et</b> un
32	trente-deux
33	trente-trois
34	trente-quatre
35	trente-cinq
36	trente-six
37	trente-sept
38	trente-huit
39	trente-neuf
40	quarante
41	quarante et un
42	quarante-deux
43	quarante-trois
44	quarante-quatre
45	quarante-cinq
46	quarante-six
47	quarante-sept
48	quarante-huit
49	quarante-neuf
50	cinquante
51	cinquante <b>et</b> un
52	cinquante-deux
53	cinquante-trois
54	cinquante-quatre
55	cinquante-cinq
56	cinquante-six
57	cinquante-sept
58	cinquante-huit
59	cinquante-neuf
60	soixante
61	soixante <b>et</b> un

62	soixante-deux
63	soixante-trois
64	soixante-quatre
65	soixante-cinq
66	soixante-six
67	soixante-sept
68	soixante-huit
69	soixante-neuf
70	soixante-dix
71	soixante <b>et</b> onze
72	soixante-douze
73	soixante-treize
74	soixante-quatorze
75	soixante-quinze
76	soixante-seize
77	soixante-dix-sept
78	soixante-dix-huit
79	soixante-dix-neuf
80	quatre-vingts
81	quatre-vingt-un
82	quatre-vingt-deux
83	quatre-vingt-trois
84	quatre-vingt-quatre
85	quatre-vingt-cinq
86	quatre-vingt-six
87	quatre-vingt-sept
88	quatre-vingt-huit
89	quatre-vingt-neuf
90	quatre-vingt-dix
91	quatre-vingt-onze
92	quatre-vingt-douze
93	quatre-vingt-treize
94	quatre-vingt-quatorze
95	quatre-vingt-quinze
96	quatre-vingt-seize
97	quatre-vingt-dix-sept

98	quatre-vingt-dix-huit
99	quatre-vingt-dix-neuf
100	cent
101	cent un
102	cent deux
120	cent vingt
199	cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf
200	deux cents
201	deux cent un
302	trois cent deux
400	quatre cents
500	cinq cents
600	six cents
700	sept cents
800	huit cents
900	neuf cents
1 000	mille
1 001	mille un
1 100	mille cent (onze cents)
1 200	mille deux cents (douze cents)
1 900	mille neuf cents (dix-neuf cents)
2 000	deux mille
1 000 000	un million
2 000 000	deux millions
1 000 000 000	un milliard (English: <i>a billion</i> )
3 000 000 000	trois milliards
1 000 000 000 000	un billion (English: <i>a trillion</i> )

*Note:*

– Most cardinal numbers are invariable, i.e., they do not change.

les treize\_ premiers chapitres

- **Un** becomes **une** (even if it is part of a compound number) before a feminine noun, except if the feminine noun precedes the number.

une femme      vingt et une maisons

à la page **un**      l'année 2001 (deux mille **un**)

- **Cent** gets an **s** in the plural.

deux cents      trois cents voitures      cinq cents millions

*Except*

- if a number (other than *million*, *milliard* or *billion*) follows

cinq cent\_ douze

- in dates

en dix-huit cent\_      *in (the year) 1800*

- if a multiple of **cent** follows the noun it describes

l'an 600 (six cent\_)      la salle 800 (huit cent\_)

- **Mille** never has an **s** in the plural.

trois mille\_      dix mille\_ dollars      cinq mille\_ deux

- Contrary to English, **cent** and **mille** are not preceded by **un**.

cent *one hundred*      mille *one thousand*

- **Million** and **milliard**

- get **s** in the plural

trois millions d'habitants      deux milliards de dollars

This plural **s** remains, even if another number follows.

2 000 340      deux millions trois cent quarante

- are preceded by **un** (like in English)

**un** million *one million*      **un** milliard *one billion*

- take **de** before the following noun

un million **de** dollars      un milliard **d'**habitants

– **Quatre-vingts** loses its **s**

- when another number follows

quatre-vingt\_\_trois

- if it follows the noun it describes

dans les années quatre-vingt *in the eighties*  
page quatre-vingt

– There is a hyphen between tens and ones except when **et** is used.

trente-cinq          quarante **et** un

– **Et** is used in the following numbers [without a hyphen]:

21 vingt <b>et</b> un	41 quarante <b>et</b> un	61 soixante <b>et</b> un
31 trente <b>et</b> un	51 cinquante <b>et</b> un	71 soixante <b>et</b> onze

– **Et** is not used

- in the numbers

81 (quatre-vingt-un) and 91 (quatre-vingt-onze) [there are hyphens]

- between hundreds and tens or hundreds and ones [there are no hyphens]

cent un	<i>one hundred and one</i>
trois cent dix	<i>three hundred and ten</i>

- between thousands and hundreds, thousands and tens or thousands and ones [there are no hyphens]

deux mille trois cents	<i>two thousand and three hundred</i>
mille un	<i>one thousand and one</i>

– Between 1000 and 2000, years in dates can be expressed in two different ways.

1856 mille huit cent cinquante-six	or: dix-huit cent cinquante-six
1996 mille neuf cent quatre-vingt-seize	or: dix-neuf cent quatre-vingt-seize

– In French, one cannot omit the word *hundred* in a date as one does in English.

en mille neuf **cent** quarante-quatre          *in nineteen forty-four*

– In Belgium and Switzerland, the numbers 70, 80 and 90 are not the same as in France.

70 = septante    80 = octante    90 = nonante

– When written by hand, the 7 has a crossbar in French: 7.

– In French,

- a space is used to separate hundreds from thousands and thousands from millions (English uses a comma.)

French: 3 245    English: 3, 245, 000 (*three million two hundred and forty  
000                      five thousand*)

- a comma is used to separate whole numbers from decimals (English uses a decimal point.)

French: 3, 50 (trois virgule cinquante)                      English: 3. 50

French: 0, 5 (zéro virgule cinq)                                      English: 0. 5

– Contrary to English, cardinal numbers are used in dates and to designate rulers, except for *the first*.

le 3 (trois) avril *the third of April*    Louis XIV (Louis Quatorze)\* *Louis the  
Fourteenth*

le 1<sup>er</sup> (premier) mars *the first of*    Napoléon I<sup>er</sup> (Premier)\* *Napoleon the First  
March*

\* Note that with titles of rulers, French does not use the article (*the*) before the number.

– Unlike in English, cardinal numbers precede the adjective.

les **deux dernières** années                      *the last two years*

les **dix prochains** jours                      *the next ten days*

les **trois autres** élèves                      *the other three students*

## Proverbs and expressions

Une fois n'est pas coutume.                      *One time doesn't count. Just once  
won't hurt.*

Un tiens vaut mieux que **deux** tu l'auras.    *A bird in the hand is worth two in the  
bush.*

(tous / toutes) les **deux**                      *both*

joindre les **deux** bouts                      *to make ends meet*

être haut comme **trois** pommes                      *to be very short (person)*