

BASIC GRAMMAR: PARTS OF SPEECH

Words are classified by parts of speech. There are 8 parts of speech in French:

NOUNS (*un nom or un substantif*)
VERBS (*un verbe*)
ADJECTIVES (*un adjectif*)
ADVERBS (*un adverbe*)
PRONOUNS (*un pronom*)
ARTICLES (*un article*)
PREPOSITIONS (*une préposition*)
CONJUNCTIONS (*une conjonction*)

Certain parts of speech are VARIABLE, which means their form changes:

ARTICLES ADJECTIVES NOUNS VERBS

1. Form can change in GENDER (*le genre*) (masculin= *masculin* /feminin= *féminin*):

ARTICLES (le/la, un/une, du/de la)
ADJECTIVES (blanc/blanche)
SOME NOUNS (cousin/cousine)

2. Form can also change according to NUMBER (*le nombre*) (singular=*singulier*/plural = *pluriel*):

ARTICLES: (le/les, la/les, un/des, une/des, du/des, de la/des)
ADJECTIVES: (blanc/blancs, grande/grandes)
NOUNS: (livre/livres, femme/femmes, journal/journaux)

3. Forms of verbs change according to PERSON (*la personne*) and NUMBER:

Person:

first person includes the person who is speaking (I = *je*/we = *nous*)
second person is the person or persons one is speaking to (you = *tu/vous*)
third person is the person/s one is speaking about (he = *il*/ they = *elles* etc.)

A. NOUNS. See NOUNS under “Basic grammr: Sentence Structure,”here.

B. VERBS. See VERBS under “Basic Grammar: Sentence Structure,” here.

- C. ADJECTIVES.** ADJECTIVES modify (that is "describe" or "tell something about") nouns and pronouns. They are clustered around the noun they modify, either before or after it, depending on the adjective. (An exception is sentences with "être," in which the adjectives follow the verb.)

ADJECTIVES agree in GENDER and NUMBER (see above) with the nouns they describe.

une belle robe bleue

("robe" is feminine/singular, so the adjectives--as well as the article--are in the feminine singular form)

There are four types of adjectives:

1. DESCRIPTIVE adjectives (*adjectifs descriptifs*). They tell what kind of person or thing the noun is:
une grande maison des hommes intelligents
2. POSSESSIVE adjectives (*adjectifs possessifs*). They tell whose noun it is:
mes parents ton livre
3. INTERROGATIVE adjectives (*adjectifs interrogatifs*). They ask which noun it is:
Quel livre as-tu perdu? Quelles chaussures veux-tu acheter?
4. DEMONSTRATIVE adjectives (*adjectifs démonstratifs*) They point out things ("this"/"that"/"these"/"those"):
Cette classe est intéressante. Je n'aime pas ces fraises.

- D. ADVERBS.** Adverbs usually indicate quantity, time, place, intensity, and/or manner ("how"). ADVERBS are INVARIABLE. They modify:

1. Verbs:
Je danse bien.
Tu chantes mal.
Il voyage souvent en Italie avec ses parents.
Mes cousins vont arriver bientôt.

ADVERBS which modify VERBS are placed DIRECTLY AFTER the verb.

2. Adjectives:
Robert est complètement stupide.
Le chien est très grand.
C'est une femme assez pessimiste.

ADVERBS which modify ADJECTIVES are placed DIRECTLY BEFORE the adjective. They usually indicate intensity.

3. Other adverbs:
Maurice parle trop rapidement.
J'ai très bien compris la question.
Tu fais assez bien la cuisine.

ADVERBS which modify other ADVERBS are placed DIRECTLY BEFORE the adverb they modify. They usually indicate intensity.

4. Whole sentences:
Maintenant, nous allons faire du ski.
Nous allons faire du ski maintenant.

ADVERBS which modify a sentence are usually placed either at the BEGINNING or at the END of the sentence.

- E. **PRÉPOSITIONS.** Prepositions indicate a relationship between a noun and other nouns. The most common prepositions in French include:

à (in/at/to)	de (of/from)	pour (for)
avec (with)	sans (without)	chez (at X's place)
en (in, by)	sur (on)	sous (below)

- F. **CONJUNCTIONS.** CONJUNCTIONS join together words or parts of sentences. A few of the most common conjunctions in French are:

ou (or)	et (and)	que (that)
parce que (because)	mais (but)	ni (nor)