

L'ALPHABET ET LES SONS - (The French alphabet & sounds)

1) The Alphabet

The French alphabet is the same as the English one (26 letters), it is based on the Latin alphabet, but the reading of each letter is different. It is also composed of **5 diacritics** (written accents) and **2 typographic ligatures** (2 letters stuck together to make one sound):

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
à/â- æ		ç		é/è/ë/ê			
I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
î						ô-œ	
Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
				ù/û			
			Y	Z			

Practice:

Avion	Barbie	Cornichon	Date	Encore	Fin	Gens	Habit
Intelligent	Joli	Koala	Lama	Maman	Nord	Ordinateur	Papa
Quoi	Rare	Soleil	Tortue	Univers	Voisin	Wagon	Xylophone
Yoga	Zigzag						

2) Stresses

Written accents are very important in French, especially in the writing form as based on the letter onto which they are, it either changes the pronunciation of the word (= *pronunciation accents*), or its meaning (= *grammatical accents*); Let's have a look at some examples:

→ Pronunciation accents:

- The letter E has 4 different stresses but only 2 concern pronunciation:

É → the stress goes up, E becomes [æ] as in *fiancé* or *fairy*

È → the stress goes down, E becomes more open as in *bet*

- Here, it is not really an accent as it is stuck under, but this little “tail” modifies the sound of the letter C:

Ç → [K] sound becomes [S] sound as in Sasha

→ Grammatical accents:

- Grammatical accents can be found on A, O, I or U mainly. Those accents do not interfere with the pronunciation. For instance, A or À will always be pronounced [A] but the stress changes the meaning:

A ≠ À → A= Verb “To Have” conjugated ≠ À= preposition of place “at”

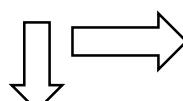
U ≠ Ù → OU= or ≠ OÙ= where

Practice of the different stresses:

à (prep.)	français	éléphant	hôpital	île	où	maestro
âge		ère			août	cœur
		être				
			Noël			

3) Sounds

If French is not a difficult language in terms of speaking (it usually takes foreigners about 3 months to be able to speak), writing it can- on the contrary- prove to be quite challenging. You will soon realize that unlike Spanish for example, French is not written the way it is spoken. This is why, you will not be able to read as long as you do not practise and learn the sounds. And the tricky part is that **one same pronunciation has different spellings!**



Vowels	Consonants	Semivowels
[a] pas	[p] plein	[j] yo-yo
[ɑ] pâtre	[b] bois	[ɥ] cuit
[e] blé	[d] dent	[w] oui
[ɛ] bête, lait	[t] tige	[œ] heure
[i] fil	[k] clair, kiwi	[wa] victoire
[ɔ] sol	[g] gare	
[ø] beau, do	[f] fille, éléphant	
[u] trou	[s] sac, bosse	
[y] mur	[ʃ] chameau	
[ø] bleu	[v] vert	
[œ] fleur	[z] zèbre	
[ə] renâitre	[ʒ] jeune	
[ɛ̃] pain, fin	[l] larme	
[ã] blanc	[ʁ] route	
[ɔ̃] mont	[m] mode	
[œ̃] parfum	[n] note	
	[ɲ] campagne	

⊕ [ɛ]: <u>canadienne</u> , <u>première</u> , <u>fête</u> , <u>laine</u> , <u>neige</u>
⊕ [œ]: <u>premier</u> , <u>déjeuner</u> , <u>nœud</u> , <u>auteur</u> , <u>bœuf</u>
⊕ [ø]: <u>domino</u> , <u>hôpital</u> , <u>chaude</u> , <u>bateau</u>
⊕ [ã]: <u>grand</u> , <u>lampe</u> , <u>content</u> , <u>tempête</u> , <u>paon</u> , <u>Jean</u>
≠ [ɛ̃]: <u>magasin</u> , <u>besoin</u> , <u>synthétique</u> , <u>timbre</u> , <u>sympathique</u>
≠ [œ̃]: <u>un</u> , <u>brun</u> , <u>commun</u> ,
⊕ [ɔ̃]: <u>garçon</u> , <u>pompier</u>
⊕ [u]: <u>kangourou</u> , <u>où</u> , <u>Août</u>