

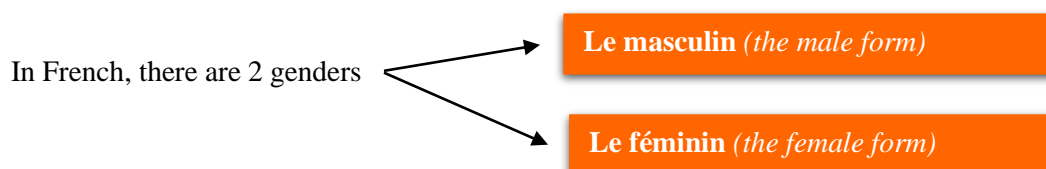
LE GENRE ET LES ARTICLES - (The Gender & articles)

A grammatical concept that is a bit strange for English speakers is the notion of gender in a word. Even though, it does not exist in English, it is present in most of the European languages; the most common being the *male* and *female* genders.

And if in many languages, you can recognize the gender of a word by looking at its ending, it does not apply to French. Furthermore, the only way for you to know whether a word is male or female, is by memorizing it, look into the dictionary or learn it with its article. This is why in this lesson; we will also focus on articles which accompany nouns.

1) The gender of nouns

This one particular grammatical point could be a bit hard for those who have never studied Latin languages, but no panic, thanks to this lesson and practice, you will master it very soon!




The gender of a noun could be compared to its identity. Depending on its root (*Greek or Latin mainly*), a word will be considered male or female. You should keep in mind that there is no logical explanation as to why such a word is male or female; it does not even depend on the use of the word in daily life. For example, “make-up” is usually a female item, but still, it is male in French. So, the best is not too think too much about the why, and focus more on learning the words by heart.





Now, the intricate part of gender in French is that unlike other Latin languages, it is impossible to determine- by looking at the ending of a word- whether it is male or female. So, just learn them by heart. Fortunately, there are a few tricks to help you out:

- **The male form:**

Nouns ending with:	Examples
-ment	<i>Le gouvernement; Le monument; L'appartement...</i>
-isme	<i>Le cubisme; Le capitalisme; L'alcoolisme...</i>
-al	<i>Le cheval; Le carnaval; Le festival...</i>
-ier	<i>Le tablier; Le collier; L'abricotier...</i>
-oir-	<i>Le couloir; Le plongeur; Le miroir...</i>

-age	<i>Le fromage ; Le maquillage ; L'équipage</i>  Exceptions: <i>La plage, La page, L'image, La rage (female form)</i>
-on	<i>Le garçon; Le balcon; Le coton</i>

- **The female form:**

Words ending with:	Examples
-ance/ence	<i>La concurrence ; La patience ; L'endurance</i>  Exception: <i>Le silence</i>
-ie	<i>La philosophie; L'harmonie; L'économie</i>
-ée	<i>La poupée ; La pensée ; La récréée</i>  Exceptions: <i>Le lycée; Le musée (male form)</i>
-ette	<i>La recette ; La courgette ; L'omelette</i>  Exception: <i>Le squelette (male form)</i>
-ion (tion/xion/sion)	<i>La pollution; La connexion; L'opinion; La conversation</i>
-ure	<i>L'usure; La culture; La peinture</i>
-té	<i>La beauté; La propriété; La bonté</i>
-eur	<i>La chaleur ; La fleur ; La peur</i>  Exceptions: <i>Le bonheur; Le malheur (male form)</i>

Exercise: Look at the words and circle whether they are male (M) or female (F).

- Voiture	M – F	- Espoir	M – F
- Chirurgie	M – F	- Fillette	M – F
- Melon	M – F	- Bananier	M – F
- Santé	M – F	- Comportement	M – F
- Exception	M – F	- Sculpture	M – F

2) Articles

Like in English, there are 2 types of articles in French.

- **Definite articles (= The):**

LE, LA and L' are what we call definite articles; they have the exact same use as the article "the" in English. They are named *definite* because they define a specific object. Unlike English however, **articles in French are compulsory and can never be omitted in a sentence.**

For example → *I don't know France = Je ne connais pas la France.*

Those articles give you an information on the gender of the words:

-LE is used for male nouns

-LA is for female ones

-L' will not be of any help however, since it can be used for both genders whenever the word it accompanies starts with a vowel.

ex:

Le chocolat/ **Le** pamplemousse/ **Le** citron → Male
La confiture/ **La** cuisine/ **La** famille → Female
L'eau (f)/ **L'**électricité (f)/ **L'**alcool (m)/ **L'**amour (m)

- **Indefinite articles (= a/an):**

Another category of articles exists; they are called indefinite articles; in English, they are translated by "a/an". They are named indefinite because they do not refer to any specific item. Once again, they differ based on their gender:

-UN is a countable male article which means "one" or "a/an"

-UNE is the female version.

As you may have noticed, in this case, it no longer matters whether the noun starts with a vowel or not. So, when you see a noun starting with a vowel accompanied by its indefinite article, you will be able to know whether it is male or female- unlike for definite articles.

ex:

un chocolat/ **un** pamplemousse/ **un** citron → Male
une confiture/ **une** cuisine/ **une** famille → Female
une eau/ **une** électricité/ **un** alcool/ **un** amour