Les accents en français : é, è, ê, ç et autres œ

French Accents: é, è, ê, ç and other œ

Print this lesson and download the recording.
Read and practice several times in a short period of time.
That's the key to success to bring your French to the next level!

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Lisez et révisez plusieurs fois en peu de temps.
C’est ça, la clé du succès pour faire des progrès en français!

Liens pour cette fiche

1. Retrouvez la leçon sur French Hour

2. Téléchargez l’audio

3. Voici le lien du cours
   • https://frenchhour.com/course/it-s-so-french/
Les accents en français : é, è, ê, ç et autres œ

The French alphabet has 26 letters, just like in English.

However, some letters have accents, which makes it a longer alphabet.

Accents in French serve two main purposes:
1. to modify the sound of a word
   o dés = dice / dês = as soon as
   o lés = widths of fabric/wallpaper / lès = next to
2. to distinguish the meaning of two words that would otherwise be spelled the same way
   o la = the / là = there
   o ou = or / où = where

Be careful, an accent in writing doesn’t mean a stress in speaking.

Where do French accents come from?

In the Middle Ages, the French language started losing certain sounds, such as its Ss. Then, French writers started to replace the Ss with an accent. However, not all Frenchmen were writing accents with the same consistency. It is only later on and little by little that the accents became popular in France. However, there was no general rule. As a result, written French of today is not consistent in terms of accents.

In the meantime, English has kept an older form of spelling, keeping Ss. As a result, often – not always – when you see an accent on a French word, the English translation often has kept the original S.

Examples

- beast .... f .... bête
- castle .... m .... château
- cost .... m .... coût
- disgusting .... m/f .... dégoûtant/e
- fest .... f .... fête
- haste .... f .... hâte
- hospital .... m .... hôpital
- island .... f .... île
- master .... m .... maître
- oyster .... f .... huître
- pasta .... f .... pâte
- school .... f .... école
- stall .... m .... étal
- student .... m/f .... étudiant/e
- study .... f .... étude
- task .... f .... tâche
**Most common accents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>type of accent</th>
<th>where</th>
<th>name</th>
<th>purpose</th>
<th>example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>é</td>
<td>accent aigu (acute)</td>
<td>/e/ becomes /é/</td>
<td>été - summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>à è ù</td>
<td>accent grave (grave)</td>
<td>distinguishing the meaning</td>
<td>là - the // là - there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>^</td>
<td>â è ô ù</td>
<td>accent circonflexe (circumflex)</td>
<td>replaces an old S + vowel</td>
<td>pâte - pasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ç</td>
<td>ç+a, o, u</td>
<td>cédille (cedilla)</td>
<td>/k/ becomes /s/</td>
<td>Ça va ? – How are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>´</td>
<td>ê i ü</td>
<td>tréma (dieresis)</td>
<td>keep two vowel-sound separate</td>
<td>Noël – Christmas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ò</td>
<td>mostly in front of i, u and s</td>
<td>oe collés or e dans l’o</td>
<td>tends to be pronounced /eu/ + vowel and pronounced /é/ + consonant</td>
<td>œuf – egg. œstrogène</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Accent aigu (acute)**
   - Looks like: `
   - Goes over the E → é
   - Example: été – summer

2. **Accent grave (grave)**
   - Looks like: ``
   - Goes over the A, E and U → à è ù
   - Example: là – there

3. **Accent circonflexe (circumflex)**
   - Looks like: `^`
   - Goes over the A, E, I, O, U → â è ê ô ù
   - Example: pâte – pasta

4. **Cédille (cedilla)**
   - Looks like: ç
   - Goes under the C and only before an A, O, U → ça, ço, çu
   - Example: Ça va ? – How are you?

5. **Tréma (dieresis or umlaut)**
   - Looks like: ´´
   - Goes over the E, I, U → é ê ü
   - Example: noël – Christmas

6. **And there is also the ö (oe collés or e dans l’o), which is not an accent, but a letter used in the French alphabet. It tends to be pronounced /eu/ in front of a vowel and it’s pronounced /é/ in front of a consonant.**
   - Looks like: ò
   - Generally goes before the I, U, S → òi, òu, òes
   - Example: œuf – egg
Exercice – Practice

Exercice 1
Look back at the words in the two left column and write its correct spelling in the right column. The first word ‘bonjour’ is already filled-in as an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bonjour</th>
<th>bonjôur</th>
<th>bonjour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>genial</td>
<td>génial</td>
<td>génial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hotel</td>
<td>hôtel</td>
<td>hôtel</td>
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<tr>
<td>ici</td>
<td>ici</td>
<td>ici</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rouge</td>
<td>roûge</td>
<td>rouge</td>
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<tr>
<td>salade</td>
<td>sâlade</td>
<td>salade</td>
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<tr>
<td>the</td>
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<td>thé</td>
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<tr>
<td>vert</td>
<td>vèrt</td>
<td>vert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xeres</td>
<td>Xérès</td>
<td>Xérès</td>
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<tr>
<td>zut</td>
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</table>

Answers – Réponses

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>zut</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercice 2
Fill in the blanks with one of the two words provided.

______ (La, Là) fête était ______ (a, à) Loguivy-______ (les, lès)-Lannion, ______ (ou, où) les grands-parents avaient la maison familiale. ______ (Les, Lès) fêtes se faisaient toujours ______ (la, là).
La ______ (tache, tâche) de France était de mettre la table. Lorsqu’elle ______ (a, à) sorti la nappe ______ (du, dû) buffet, elle s’est aperçue qu’il y avait une ______ (tache, tâche). Elle aurait ______ (du, dû) vérifier avant ______ (ou, où) en choisir une autre.

In English
The party was at Loguivy-lès-Lannion, where the grandparents had a family house. Parties were always there. France’s task was to set the table. When she took the tablecloth out from the dresser, she realized there was a stain. She should have checked beforehand or picked another one.

Réponses – Answers
La fête était à Loguivy-lès-Lannion, où les grands-parents avaient la maison familiale. Les fêtes se faisaient toujours là. La tâche de France était de mettre la table. Lorsqu’elle a sorti la nappe du buffet, elle s’est aperçue qu’il y avait une tache. Elle aurait dû vérifier avant ou en choisir une autre.

Ensuite – Next

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