Contents

The following Help Topics are available:

For Help on Help for Windows, press F1.
For Help on Help for Macintosh, select Help with Quick Help from the menu .

Overview of Canadian French

French, one of Canada's two official languages, is the first language of about 6,000,000 Canadians, nearly one quarter of the country's population. Canadian French, while very similar to the European French, has developed unique qualities. Those used to hearing European French will encounter different pronunciations, new vocabulary and some grammatical variants when conversing with a Canadian French speaker.

Canadian French is also the base for the French spoken by Americans of French descent in the Northeastern United States.

The grammar of Canadian French is very similar to that of the European French. If you want more details on grammatical points, please refer to the French Grammar Basics.

Alphabet and Pronunciation

Canadian French is most unique in its pronunciation, particularly of vowels. In this table, you will see how the various letters are pronounced.

a, à (accent grave)	as in f**a**ther
â (accent circonflexe)	as in y**a**cht
ai	as in pl**ay**
ail	as in bu**y**
au	as in b**o**at
b	as in **b**ed
c	before e, i or y as in **c**ity
	or as in **c**amp, **c**ook elsewhere
ç (cédille)	as in **s**it
ch	as in **sh**ip
d	as in **d**andy
	or **dz** before i or u (unique to Canadian French)
e	(long) as in m**e**n
	or (short) as in f**u**r
	or (silent) at the end of a polysyllabic word
	or dipthongized as in s**i**ze (unique to Canadian French)
é (accent aigu)	as in d**e**but
è (accent grave)	as in gh**e**tto
ê (accent circonflexe)	as in gh**e**tto
eau	like **oh**
er	at the end of a polysyllabic word, like **eh?**
	or at the end of a one-syllable word, like **air**
eu	as in f**u**r
ez	at the end of a word, like **eh?**
f	as in **f**ork
g	before **a, o, u** as in **g**et before **e** or **i** as in rou**ge**
gn	as in compa**ni**on
h	silent
	or like **h**ello (unique to Canadian French)
i	(long) as in mach**i**ne
	or (short) as in f**i**t (rare in France but common in Canada)
j	as in rou**ge**
k	(used in foreign words only) as in **k**ind
l	as in **l**abel
m	as in **m**aster
n	as in **n**o
o	as in f**o**rever
ou	as in r**oo**t
	as in p**u**t (unique to Canadian French)
p	as in **p**et
ph	as in **ph**rase
qu	as in **k**ick
r	as in ca**rr**ot (but pronounced in the back of the throat)
s	as in **s**ink

	or as in rea**s**on
t	as in cashe**d**
	or **ts** before i or u (unique to Canadian French)
u	No English equivalent; round lips (as if to whistle) and pronounce "he."
v	as in **v**ase
w	as in **v**ase (used in foreign words only)
x	as in a**x**e
y	as in m**ee**t
z	as in **z**innia

French also has nasalized vowels:
[an], [en], [in], [on], [un]:

enf**an**t (child), ch**am**p (field), d**en**t (tooth), t**em**ps (time), v**in** (wine)
b**on** (good) **un** (one), br**un** (brown)

While standard French is known for pure vowels, in Canadian French vowels often become diphthongs, sounds that glide from one vowel to another (as in the English word b**oi**l).

Sounds most likely to become diphthongs are the nasal vowels, and the sounds **â**, **ê**, **oi**, **a** before r, **o** before r. The word **moi** (me), pronounced m**wa** in France, is pronounced m**oé** in Canada.

Nouns

A noun is a word that names a person, place or thing.

père (father)
tour (tower)
amour (love)

Only proper nouns are capitalized in French.

French is characterized by gender. Each noun is either masculine or feminine. Some nouns change form as they change gender. French nouns also generally change to indicate the plural.

See Also:
Gender and Agreement
Number and Agreement
Articles

Gender and Agreement

Nouns in French are either feminine or masculine; there is no neuter gender. The names of countries and abstract and inanimate nouns may be feminine or masculine; these nouns and their articles are best learned together.

Nouns require the article **le, la, l'**, or **les**. Nouns naming males are masculine; nouns naming females are feminine.

Nouns ending in **-age** or **-âge**, **-ment**, and **-eau** are masculine (except for **eau** (water), which is feminine):

le mariage	marriage
l'âge	age
le paiement	payment
le couteau	knife

Nouns ending **-ance**, **-ence**, **-tion**, and **-ette** are feminine:

l'ambiance	atmosphere
la permanence	permanence
l'attention	attention
la serviette	napkin

Many nouns add **-e** to the masculine noun to form the feminine:

un ami	male friend
une amie	female friend

There are nouns that change the **-eur** masculine ending to **-euse** for the feminine, for example:

un chanteur	male singer
une chanteuse	female singer

There are nouns that change the **-eur** masculine ending to **-trice** for feminine:

le directeur	male director
la directrice	female director

Unique aspects of Canadian French

When adapting words from English, Canadian French will assign them either masculine or feminine gender, unlike European French, where all adopted words are masculine.

Canadians are also more apt to create feminine nouns than their French counterparts. Particularly for professions, words that are invariable in France, such as **docteur** (doctor) or **maire** (mayor), have feminine forms in Canada (**docteure, mairesse**).

Canadian French uses a number of suffixes to form words unknown to European French speakers. An example is the word **comprenable** (understandable), taken from the verb **comprendre** (to understand). The European equivalent is **compréhensible**.

See also:

Articles
Pronouns

Number and Agreement

The plural of most nouns is formed in the same way as in English, by adding **-s**.

Almost all nouns ending in **-al** form their plural in **-aux**. The exceptions are **bal** and **festival**.
Almost all nouns ending in **-au**, **-eau**, and **-eu** form their plural by adding **-x**. The exceptions are **bleu** and **pneu**.

Seven nouns ending in **-ou** form their plural in **-oux** (instead of **-ous**): **bijou, caillou, chou, genou, hibou, joujou, pou**.

Four nouns ending in **-ail** form their plural in **-aux** (instead of **-ails**): **corail, émail, travail, vitrail**.

Family names usually do not change form in the plural, except for very famous historical families.

Seven nouns have irregular plurals and must be learned:
aïeul	aïeuls
bonhomme	bonshommes
ciel	cieux
oeil	yeux
madame	mesdames
mademoiselle	mesdemoiselles
monsieur	messieurs

Unique aspects of Canadian French

Certain nouns that appear singular, such as **le monde** (the world, people) are treated as plurals where European French treats them as singular.

Canadian	**European**
Le monde sont drôles. (People are funny.)	**Le monde est drôle.** (People are funny.)

See Also
   Nouns
   Pronouns
   Adjectives
   Articles
   Verbs

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that stands for a previously mentioned (or understood) noun. That noun is called the **antecedent** of the pronoun.

In the sentence
   The house was badly damaged when **it** was hit by the hurricane.
the pronoun **it** refers back to the noun **house** (the antecedent).

Subject pronouns such as **il** (he) represent the subject in a sentence. The subject pronouns are:
Singular
je (j)	I
tu	you (familiar)
vous	you (formal)
il, elle, on	he, she, one

Plural
nous	we
vous	you
ils, elles	they

The familiar **"tu"** is used instead of the formal **"vous"** with family members, close friends, children and pets.

Direct object pronouns replace the noun used as the direct object of a verb. They are:
me	me
te	you
le, la, l	him, her, it
nous	we
vous	you
les	them

Indirect object pronouns replace the noun used as the indirect object of a verb. They are:
me	me
te	you
lui	him, her, it
nous	we
vous	you
leur	them

Stressed or disjunctive pronouns are used after a preposition, for emphasis or in answer to a question. They are:
moi	me
toi	you
lui, elle, soi	him, her, it
nous	we
vous	you
eux, elles	them

The relative pronoun **qui** is the subject of the verb it introduces, whereas **que** is the object.

Unique aspects of Canadian French

When using indirect object pronouns, Canadian speakers often say **nous autres**, **vous autres** and **eux autres** in place of **nous**, **vous** and **eux**.

The relative pronoun **que** tends to replace other relative pronouns.

Articles

The definite article in French for masculine singular nouns is **le** (plural **les**), for example: **le boucher** (the butcher).

The definite article for feminine singular nouns is **la** (plural **les**), for example: **la bonne** (the maid).

Both **le** and **la** elide before a noun beginning with a vowel or a mute "h", for example: **l'air** (the air), **l'homme** (the man).

Le and **les** contract with the preposition **à** to form **au** in the singular and **aux** in the plural. They contract with the preposition **de** to form **du** in the singular and **des** in the plural.

On va **au** cinéma.	We are going to the movies.
On va **aux** magasins.	We are going to the stores.
Je viens **du** Mexique.	I come from Mexico.
Elle vient **des** Pays Bas.	She comes from the Netherlands.

The indefinite article is **un** for the masculine singular, **une** for the feminine singular:

un boucher	a butcher
une bonne	a maid

Des is used with the plural of both genders to mean "some":

des étudiants	some students

See Also:
Nouns
Gender and Agreement
Number and Agreement

Adjectives

Adjectives describe or modify nouns and pronouns. They agree in gender (masculine or feminine) and number (singular or plural) with the words they modify. The feminine is regularly formed by adding an **-e** to the masculine form; the plural is regularly formed by adding an **-s** to the singular form:

le grand bateau   the big boat
les grands bateaux   the big boats
la jolie fille   the pretty girl
les jolies filles   the pretty girls

There are exceptions, which must be memorized.

Descriptive adjectives usually follow the noun they modify, but some of them always come before. There are even some descriptive adjectives that change meaning depending on whether they are placed before or after the noun When they follow, they have a more literal sense. For example, although both **une femme pauvre** and **une pauvre femme** can be translated as a poor woman, the former means a woman with little money whereas the latter means a woman to be pitied.

Adjectives made from proper nouns are not capitalized in French as they are in English:
un écrivain canadien   a Canadian writer

See Also:
<u>Nouns</u>
<u>Gender and Agreement</u>
<u>Number and Agreement</u>

Adverbs

Adverbs, which modify verbs, adjectives or other adverbs, never change their form. Adverbs of manner are regularly formed by adding **-ment** to the feminine form of an adjective:

doux	soft (masculine adjective)
douce	soft (feminine adjective)
doucement	softly (adverb)

Many French adverbs, like **bien** (well) and **mal** (badly), are not directly formed from an adjective.

See Also:
Adjectives

Verbs

French verbs are generally classified according to the ending of their infinitive form. The most common verbs categories are **-er, -ir** and -**re.** To conjugate verbs, remove the infinitive ending and add the appropriate ending.

Present tense

-er verbs
monter **(to go up)**
Singular

je	mont**e**
tu (familiar)	mont**es**
vous (formal)	mont**ez**
il, elle, on	mont**e**

Plural

nous	mont**ons**
vous	mont**ez**
ils elles	mont**ent**

-ir verbs (two basic patterns)
courir (to run)
Singular

je	cour**s**
tu (familiar)	cour**s**
vous (formal)	cour**ez**
il, elle, on	cour**t**

Plural

nous	cour**ons**
vous	cour**ez**
ils elles	cour**ent**

remplir (to fill)
Singular

je	rempl**is**
tu (familiar)	rempl**is**
vous (formal)	rempl**issez**
il, elle, on	rempl**it**

Plural

nous	rempl**issons**
vous	rempl**issez**
ils elles	rempl**issent**

-re verbs
perdre (to lose)
Singular

je	perd**s**
tu (familiar)	perd**s**
vous (formal)	perd**ez**
il, elle, on	per**d**

Plural

nous	perd**ons**
vous	perd**ez**
ils elles	perd**ent**

Verbs ending in -**re** change their root, and are best learned as irregular verbs.

Many important verbs in French are irregular and do not follow these patterns. These verbs include **aller** (to go), **avoir** (to have), **être** (to be) and **faire** (to do or to make). Irregular verbs must be learned individually.

Past tense

French has two ways of expressing the past, the perfect and the imperfect. The perfect (**passé composé**) generally represents a completed action, while the imperfect (**imparfait**) refers to habitual or incomplete action.

To form the **passé composé**, use the conjugated form of **avoir** or **être** combined with the past participle of the verb. Past participles are formed by removing the infinitive ending and adding: -**é** for **-er** verbs, **-i** for **-ir** verbs, and -**u** for **-re** verbs.

Infinitive	past participle	meaning of past participle
parler	parl**é**	spoken
finir	fin**i**	finished
perdre	perd**u**	lost

However, many verbs have irregular past participles.

To form the **imparfait**, remove the infinitive ending and add the endings: **je -ais, tu -ais, il/elle/on -ait, nous -ions, vous -iez, ils/elles -aient**.

Parler (to speak)

je	parl**ais**
tu	parl**ais**
il, elle, on	parl**ait**
nous	parl**ions**
vous	parl**iez**
ils, elles	parl**aient**

Only the verb **être** (to be) is irregular in the imperfect.

Future tense

The future tense is generally formed by adding endings to the infinitive. These endings are:
je -ai, tu -as, il/elle/on -a, nous -ons, vous -ez, ils/elles -ont. However, many verbs have irregular future stems.

A number of other tenses and moods express time and aspect (completion, certainty, emotion). For more details on French tenses and moods, please see the French Grammar Basics.

Unique aspects of Canadian French

Canadian French occasionally has unique spellings or conjugations. Certain verbs use a **y** in verbs that are spelled with **i** in European French.

Canada	Europe	English
Ils vo**y**ent.	Ils vo**i**ent.	They see.
Je men **vas**.	Je men **vais**.	I am leaving.

Prepositions

Prepositions are the connecting words that show the relationships between words in the sentence. Nouns, pronouns, noun phrases, gerunds or noun clauses can be the complement of the prepositions:

Prepositions have invariable forms and are followed by their object:
pour toi   for you
sans argent   without money

The prepositions **à**, **pour**, and **de** can introduce an infinitive:
Rien à faire (nothing to do)

In order to express an intention, **pour** (for, in order to) is used:
 on travaille pour vivre (one works in order to live)

The preposition **de** is used to express possession, origin, or quantity:
le chat de Claude (Claude's cat)
Il vient de Marseille. (He comes from Marseille)
un kilo de pommes de terre (a kilo of potatoes)

The prepositions **à** and **de** have contracted forms before **le** and **les**: la plume **de la** fille (the girls pen) but le livre **des** garçons (the boys book)
à+le   = au
à+les   = aux
de+le   = du
de+les   = des

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that join two or more phrases or clauses together.

Coordinating conjunctions link two phrases or sentences of equal value:
et (and)
ou (or)
mais (but)

Coordinating conjunctions which they link sentences in the main clause are always in the indicative mood.
Subordinating conjunctions link a subordinate clause with the main clause:
bien que (although)
si (if)
quand (when)
car (for)
comme (as, since)

Subordinating conjunctions can introduce either the indicative or subjunctive mood.

Negatives and Questions

The French negative generally consists of two adverbs of negation which surround the verb. The most common expression of negation is **ne. . .pas** (not):
Je naime pas jouer au hockey (I do not like to play hockey.)

Other common negatives include:
ne. . .jamais (never)
ne. . .rien (nothing)
ne. . .plus (no longer)
ne. . .personne (no one)

Some expressions are negative in French but not in English, such as **ne. . .que** (only):
Je nai que deux dollars (I only have two dollars.)

When speaking, **ne** often is not pronounced, particularly by Canadian speakers. Canadian speakers also tend to use **pas** in combination with other negatives:

Canadian French   European French
Il y a **pas personne**. (There is no one there.)   Il **n**y a **personne**. (There is no one there.)

Questions

The simplest way to form a question in French is to change the intonation, ending the sentence with a rising tone.

Ça va? (Is it all right?)
Ça va. (It is all right.)

Questions can also be formed by inverting the subject and verb:
Avez-vous entendu le bruit? (Did you hear the noise?)

When inverted, subject and verb are connected by a hyphen. An additional **-t** is added for ease of pronunciation when the verb ends in a vowel and is followed by il or elle:
Va-t-il manger? (Is he going to eat?)

Another way to form questions is to place **est-ce que** in front of the subject and verb, without inversion but with rising intonation:
Est-ce que tu viens? (Are you coming?)

Canadian speakers sometimes use the personal pronoun **tu** in question formation:
Ils travaillent-tu demain? (Are they working tomorrow?)