

Learn the French Alphabet

Written by Administrator

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There are two aspects to learning the **French alphabet** (L'alphabet français) -- learning the letters and their names, and learning the sounds which are represented by letters, accent marks, and letter combinations. This lesson will teach you how to pronounce the names of the 26 letters of the *French alphabet*. The French sound inventory is explained in a lesson on French pronunciation where you will learn about French vowels, consonants, accent marks, and essential pronunciation rules. The French alphabet is based on the Latin alphabet. It consists of the same 26 letters as the modern English alphabet, however many letters are pronounced differently. Knowing the letter names will come in handy when you need to recite an alphabet or spell each letter in a word individually as if you were in a spelling bee contest. The table below shows proper letter names.

| French letter | Letter name | IPA transcription |
|---------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Aa | ah | /a/ |
| Bb | beh | /be/ |
| Cc | seh | /se/ |
| Dd | deh | /de/ |
| Ee | uh | /ə/ |
| Ff | eff | /ɛf/ |
| Gg | zheh | /ʒe/ |
| Hh | ahsh | /af/ |
| Ii | ee | /i/ |
| Jj | zhee | /ʒi/ |
| Kk | kah | /ka/ |
| Ll | ell | /ɛl/ |
| Mm | em | /ɛm/ |
| Nn | en | /ɛn/ |
| Oo | oh | /o/ |
| Pp | peh | /pe/ |
| Qq | koo | /ky/ |
| Rr | air | /ɛʁ/ |
| Ss | ess | /ɛs/ |
| Tt | teh | /te/ |
| Uu | ooh | /y/ |
| Vv | veh | /ve/ |
| Ww | doobl-veh | /dubløve/ |
| Xx | eeks | /iks/ |
| Yy | ee-grek | /igrøk/ |
| Zz | zed | /zɛd/ |

French accents

In addition, the base Latin letters are extended in French with accent marks and ligatures. There are five accent marks used in written French. The accents are used to change the sounds of the French letters, graphically distinguish words whose spelling would otherwise be the same,

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or indicate an S that existed in old French. Each accent mark can be applied only to certain letters. The accents are required on small letters, but they are often omitted on capital letters.

| Accent | Letters used | Examples | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| acute accent ´ | (accent aigu) | é only | éléphant: elephant |
| grave accent ` | (accent grave) | è, à, ù | fièvre: fever, là: there où: v |
| circumflex ^ | (accent circonflexe) | â, ê, î, ô, û | gâteau: cake, être: to be, î |
| diaeresis ¨ | (tréma) | ë, ï, ü, ÿ | Noël: Christmas, maïs: co |
| cedilla ¸ | (cédille) | ç only | français: French |

French ligatures

Æ æ - formed from the letters a and e. It is used to spell Latin and Greek borrowings like tænia and ex æquo. Œ œ - a ligature of o and e. It is most prominent in the words cœur ("heart"), sœur ("sister"), œuf ("egg") and œil ("eye"), in which it represents the sound /œ/ or /ø/. French also uses œ in direct borrowings from Latin and Greek. So, "cœliac" in French is cœliaque. In such cases, the œ is pronounced /e/. In some words, e.g. phénix, the œ is changed to a more French é.

More about the French alphabet

You may also like the following sites: [French alphabet](#) - with sound recordings [French alphabet](#) - on Wikipedia
[Latin-based alphabets](#) - on Wikipedia