What is Grammar?

Grammar is the set rules that we need to follow if we are going to write correctly and speak correctly in whatever language we are learning.

Learning the rules of French grammar gives us a greater understanding of French and how the language works. If we are to understand what we read or hear in French, we need to have a good grasp of the rules of grammar.

Many French grammar rules are the same as English and grammar terminology (names of words) are the same.

However, there are a lot of differences too. What might be correct in English may not be correct French.

We need to learn the differences so that our French is accurate. We also need to be able to understand and describe grammatical terms so we can learn how language works.

Some Main Differences

Gender Every French noun has a gender, either masculine or feminine. Nouns preceded by *la* or *une* are feminine. Nouns preceded by *le* or *un* are masculine. Gender can affect other words in a sentence.

Word order in French is similar to English: subject ⟹ verb ⟹ object.
However there are differences that you need to know about. Adjectives usually come after the noun they are describing and need to agree in number and gender with the noun.
Object, reflexive and adverbial pronouns are usually placed between the two verbs and after the preposition (if there is one) that follows the conjugated verb:
Je vais te le donner.
Negative constructions should surround the conjugated verb and precede the preposition, if there is one: *Elle ne va pas jouer du piano ce soir.*

Do some research on these!

Conjugation: In French, verbs change according to who is doing the verb and the context. They change in English too, but not nearly as much, for example we add an *-s* on the verb when we are talking about he/she/it, or we add an *-ed* to put it in the past. In French, **verb endings change** for almost every subject pronoun and tense. We need to learn these endings. Some verbs (regular verbs) follow a predictable pattern, which makes it easier to learn them. Some (irregular verbs) don't follow a pattern at all, and we need to learn these off by heart as they are the verbs we use the most.

What is a noun?

A noun is simply a thing. It can be a place, an object, a person, an idea, or a name, like a month of the year:

- the school – *l'école*
- happiness – *le bonheur*
- the table – *la table*

It can be a real thing you can touch (concrete noun) or a thing that you can't touch (abstract noun). Proper nouns are people**'s** names or the name of a place like a country or a town.

In French, all nouns are usually preceded by an article whereas in English we can leave out the article. The only time you wouldn't need an article is if you use a possessive adjective (*mon*, *ton*, etc.) or a demonstrative adjective (*ce*, *cette*, etc.).

What is an article?

An article tells us whether the noun we are talking about is definite/specific or indefinite/unspecific. **The partitive article indicates an unknown quantity of something, usually food or drink. It is often left out in English.**

	Definite	Indefinite	Partitive
masculine	*le*	*un*	*du*
feminine	*la*	*une*	*de la*
in front of a vowel	*l'*	*un/une*	*de l'*
plural	*les*	*des*	*des*

What is an adjective?

An adjective is a word that gives us some information about the noun. It describes the noun. Look at where the adjective comes in the sentence and how it changes to match the noun in number and gender.

the blue car – ***la voiture bleue***
a short pencil – ***un crayon court.***
the dirty bag – ***le sac sale***
the green shoes – ***les chaussures vertes***

Some adjectives go before the noun. Find out what they are.

What is a verb?

A verb is a grammar term for the word in a sentence that describes or indicates **an action**:

- to play – ***jouer***
- to finish – *finir*
- **to sell** – *vendre*

The verbs above are in their **infinitive form** – they do not yet tell us **when** the action is happening or **who or what** is doing the action. In French, you need to know the verb endings as these change depending on **who or what** is doing the action. Verbs in French fall in to one of three groups: *-er, -ir* or *–re. T*hese are the letters they end in. Verbs in each group follow the same pattern which helps us to learn them. However there are lots of verbs that don't follow the pattern. We simply have to learn them.

What is tense?

Tense is the form of a verb which tells us when something happens. There are three main tenses: present, past and future. However there are more than this that you will need to learn.

Present tense: I play/I am playing – ***je joue***
Past tense (perfect): I played – ***j'ai joué***
Future tense: I will play – ***je jouerai***

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Grammar terms and examples

What is Gender?

Every French noun has a gender, either masculine or feminine.
Nouns preceded by *la* or *une* are feminine.
Nouns preceded by *le* or *un* are masculine*.*
Gender can affect other words in a sentence. When you learn a new word try to learn its gender. Sometimes you can predict the gender by looking at how the noun ends. However there are exceptions.

ENDING	IN GENERAL
-ion	Feminine
-té	Feminine
-ée	Feminine
-age	Masculine
-eau	Masculine

What is a preposition?

A preposition tells us about the relationship between a noun and another word in the sentence. It tells us where things are.

- My bag is on the chair. – *Mon sac est **sur** la chaise.*
- The cinema is opposite the train station.
  – *Le cinéma est **en face de** la gare.*
- The dog is in the garden. – *Le chien est **dans** le jardin.*
- *T*he hotel is near to the beach. – *L'hôtel est **près** de la plage.*

What is an adverb?

An adverb is a word that gives us some more information about the verb in a sentence. It describes how the verb is being performed.

- He reads slowly – *Il lit **lentement***
- She works hard – *Elle travaille **dur***
- I speak softly – *Je parle **doucement***
- We get on well – *Nous nous entendons **bien***