

French Pronunciation

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Basic French Pronunciation Rules

- One of the fundamental rules of French pronunciation is that everything has to flow
 - This is where liaisons come in
- Liaisons are a phonetic link between two words that may sound awkward if they're left unconnected

Here's some examples

- Vous - you
- Vous avez - you have
- Un - a
- Un hôtel - a hotel
- Les - the (plural)
- Les aïeux - the ancestors

The silent “e”

The letter “e” is often silent in French, especially at the end of a word; for example

- Rue - road/street
- Inacceptable - unacceptable
- L'autoroute - the highway
- Soixante - sixty
- Canine - cabin

Masculine or Feminine?

The silent “e” poses an interesting situation when it comes to masculine and feminine adjectives and nouns. In the case of feminine adjectives and nouns, this typically means that the final consonant of the masculine form will be pronounced.

Here are some examples;

Ouvert - open (+masculine noun)

Ouverte - open(+ feminine noun)

Italien(m)/italienne(f) - Italian

The silent “h”

- The “h” in french is a 100% silent letter no matter where it’s located in a word
- The only exception to this is when the preceding letter is “c”, in which case the “ch” combination makes a “sh” sound or “k” sound

For example;

Un hamburger - a hamburger

Le haricot vert - French bean

Huit - eight

Hiver - winter

The final consonant

There are many french letters, that aren't pronounced at the end of certain words

Some examples include;

- Froid - cold
- Grand - big/large
- Beaucoup - a lot
- Temps - time
- Petit - small/little

Pronouncing difficult french sounds

- There are a few sounds in the french language that are particularly difficult for English speakers because they don't exist in English.
- Let's take a look at some of these and how we pronounce them

The infamous “r”

- This may be one of the hardest french sounds to learn
- The French “r” is pronounced in the same place as the English “k”, but with your throat closed
- To pronounce it, you’ll need to use your throat and imagine you’re trying to gargle

Let's practice this

- Arriver - to arrive
- Vraiment - really
- En sucre - made of sugar
- Le frère - brother

The tricky french “u”

- What’s so difficult about the French “u,” you may wonder? Brace yourself: along with the “r,” the French “u” has a pronunciation that doesn’t exist in the English language. Naturally, that makes it one of the most most tricky sounds to get right.

To practice;

- Tu - you
- Vue - sight
- Jus - juice

“u” or “ou”

- In addition to the “u,” there’s also the “ou,” which is pronounced just slightly differently. It’s important to make a distinction between the two.
- In order to pronounce the “ou,” all you need to do is think “soup.” You’ll probably find this sound much easier to pronounce than the “u,” since it already exists in English. When compared to “u,” your tongue will be out further than “ou” when it’s being pronounced.

Let's practice differentiating between the “u” and “ou”

- Tu
- Tout
- Vue
- Vous
- Jus
- Joue