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# French

FOR

# DUMMIES®

## Learn to:

- Speak French quickly and effectively
- Master basic grammar, verb conjugations, vocabulary, and pronunciations

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**Dominique Wenzel**

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# French For Dummies<sup>®</sup>, 2nd Edition

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# ***French For Dummies®*, 2nd Edition**

**by Dodi-Katrin Schmidt,  
Michelle M. Williams,  
Dominique Wenzel, and Zoe  
Erotopoulos**



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## About the Authors

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video language courses. Dodi has been teaching for more than two decades at high school, adult education, and college levels in Europe as well as the United States. She also writes test items for various national language tests and recorded textbook and test material. Together with her husband, she travels a great deal, and they continually host and entertain foreign students and former students in their home in Princeton, NJ.

**Michelle M. Williams** is an editor at a major educational publisher. A former French teacher, she has taught students ranging from 2-years old to adults in both the public and private sectors. She is a firm believer in making the language fun and accessible to all who want to learn. Her most rewarding experience, however, is in watching and listening to her son Nathaniel learn to speak and sing in French.

**Dominique Wenzel** has been a freelance teacher of French and a translator for 15 years. Born and raised in France, she received a Master's degree from the University of Paris-Sorbonne and studied at the University of Chicago on a postgraduate Fulbright scholarship. Her students include business professionals, children, and adults of all levels and interests. She travels regularly to France. Dominique raised two bicultural, bilingual children who are both active in the international field.

**Dr. Zoe Erotopoulos** was born in Greece and immigrated to the United States at a young age. Her love of the French language, literature, and culture inspired her to pursue her academic studies in these areas. She holds an MA, MPhil, and PhD in French and Romance Philology from Columbia University in New York, NY. Dr. Erotopoulos has also studied in Aix-en-Provence, at the Sorbonne, and at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris.

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## Dedication

Zoe: To my family.

# Authors' Acknowledgments

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# Introduction

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As society becomes increasingly more international and as we seek to become global citizens, knowing how to say at least a few words in other languages becomes more and more useful. The European Union is a great example of global citizenry as borders between the member countries become easier to cross. Furthermore, global business environments necessitate overseas travel. Thanks to numerous travel websites, finding a package deal for airfare and hotel stays makes travel abroad easier and more convenient than ever before. Moreover, the Internet allows us to have contact with people all over the world, making learning a foreign language a great asset.

Whether you are traveling overseas on business, exploring a different culture, or even connecting with your heritage, learning a little bit of the language has many advantages. Whatever your reason for wanting to learn some French, *French For Dummies*, 2nd Edition, can help. It gives you the skills you need for basic communication in French. We're not promising fluency here, but if you need to greet someone, purchase a ticket, ask for directions, make a hotel reservation, or order off a menu in French, you need look no further than this book.

Remember that everyday French is like everyday English. It makes use of simplified lingual forms which, although perfectly correct, avoid and ignore certain complicated verb tenses and moods such as, say, the future perfect or the subjunctive. In everyday French, you can express yourself adequately by following just a few easy-to-understand grammar rules and by knowing a minimum number of words. So you should find the lessons in this book to be fun and not the least bit overwhelming.

Now is playtime: **C'est la récréation** (seh lah rey-krey-ah-syohN).

## About This Book

*French For Dummies*, 2nd Edition, isn't like a class that you have to drag yourself to twice a week for a specified period of time. You can use this book however you want to, whether your goal is to learn some words and phrases to help you get around when you visit France or a francophone country, or you just want to be able to say "Hello, how are you?" to your French-speaking neighbor. Go through this book at your own pace, reading as much or as little at a time as you like. You don't have to trudge through the chapters in sequential order, either; just read the sections that interest you.

## Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book easy to navigate, we've set up some conventions:

- ✓ French terms are set in **boldface** to make them stand out.
- ✓ Pronunciation, set in parentheses, follows the French terms. Hyphens connect syllables in the same word as well as words that are linked by the French liaison (which you can find out all about in Chapter 3).
- ✓ Translation of the French terms is set in *italic* and follows the pronunciation.



- ✓ Because French nouns are typically preceded by an article, we include those articles in the word lists throughout this book, even though the English translation may not use the article. Furthermore, because articles indicate a noun's gender, they're helpful bits of information when you're learning a language. When the article is abbreviated (l'), however, you can't tell the gender. In those instances, we add a gender designation: (m) for masculine and (f) for feminine.
- ✓ Verb conjugations (lists that show you the forms of a verb) are given in tables in this order:
  - The "I" form
  - The "you" (singular, informal) form
  - The "he/she/it/one" form
  - The "we" form
  - The "you" (plural, and singular, formal) form
  - The "they" form.

Pronunciations follow in the second column. The example shown uses the verb **parler** (pahr-ley) (*to speak*). The conjugation starts with the French equivalent of *I speak* or *I am speaking*; *you speak*, or *you are speaking*, and so on.

### ***Conjugation***

je parle

tu parles

il/elle/on parle

nous parlons

vous parlez

ils/elles parlent

### ***Pronunciation***

zhuh pahrl

tew pahrl

eel/ehl/ohN pahrl

nooh parh-lohN

vooh parh-ley

eel/ehl parhl

So that you can make fast progress in French, this book includes a few elements to help you along:

- ✓ **Talkin' the Talk dialogues:** The best way to learn a language is to see and hear how it's used in conversation, so we include dialogues throughout the book. The dialogues come under the heading "Talkin' the Talk" and show you the French words, the pronunciation, and the English translation.
- ✓ **Words to Know blackboards:** Memorizing key words and phrases is also important in language learning, so we collect the important words in a chapter (or section within a chapter) in a chalkboard, with the heading "Words to Know."
- ✓ **Fun & Games activities:** If you don't have actual French speakers to practice your new language skills on, you can use the Fun & Games activities to reinforce what you learn. These games are fun ways to gauge your progress.

Also note that, because each language has its own way of expressing ideas, the English translations that we provide for the French terms may not be exactly literal. We want you to know the gist of what's being said, not just the words that are

being said. For example, the phrase **C'est normal** (seh nohr-mahl) can be translated literally as *It's normal*, but the phrase really means *It's no big deal*. This book gives the second translation.

## Foolish Assumptions

To write this book, we had to make some assumptions about who you are and what you want from a book called *French For Dummies*. Here are the assumptions that we've made about you:

- ✓ You know no or very little French — or if you took French back in school, you don't remember much of it.
- ✓ You're not looking for a book that will make you fluent in French; you just want to know some words, phrases, and sentence constructions so that you can communicate basic information in French.
- ✓ You don't want to have to memorize long lists of vocabulary words or a bunch of boring grammar rules.
- ✓ You want to have fun and learn a little bit of French at the same time.

If these statements apply to you, you've found the right book!

## How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided by topic into parts and then into chapters. The following sections tell you what types of information you

can find in each part.

## **Part I: Getting Started**

This part lets you get your feet wet by giving you some French basics: how to pronounce words, what the accents mean, and so on. We even boost your confidence by reintroducing you to some French words that you probably already know. Finally, we outline the basics of French grammar that you may need to know when you work through later chapters in the book.

## **Part II: French in Action**

In this part, you begin learning and using French. Instead of focusing on grammar points as many language textbooks do, this part focuses on everyday situations, such as asking for directions, shopping, dining, going out on the town, and making small talk.

## **Part III: French on the Go**

This part gives you the tools you need to take your French on the road, whether you're going to a local French restaurant or to a museum in France. This part covers all aspects of travel in French-speaking parts of the world, and it even has a chapter on how to handle emergencies.

## **Part IV: The Part of Tens**

If you're looking for small, easily digestible pieces of information about French, this part is for you. Here you can find

ten ways to learn French quickly, ten useful French expressions to know, ten things never to say in French, and more.

## Part V: Appendixes

This part of the book includes important information that you can use for reference. Appendix A is a mini-dictionary in both French-to-English and English-to-French formats. If you encounter a French word that you don't understand or you need to say something in French that you can't find quickly elsewhere in the book, you can look it up here. Appendix B features verb tables, which show you how to conjugate regular verbs and then how to conjugate those verbs that stubbornly don't fit the pattern. Appendix C gives you the answer keys to all of the Fun & Games activities that appear in the book, and Appendix D lists the tracks that appear on the audio CD that comes with this book so that you can find the dialogues easily and follow along.

## Icons Used in This Book

You may be looking for particular information while reading this book. To make certain types of information easier to find, we've placed the following icons in the left-hand margins throughout the book:



This icon highlights tips that can make learning French easier.



This icon points out interesting information that you ought not forget.



To help you avoid linguistic, grammatical, and cultural faux pas, we use this icon.



Languages are full of quirks that may trip you up if you're not prepared for them. This icon points to discussions of these peculiar grammar rules.



If you're looking for information and advice about culture and travel, look for this icon. It draws your attention to interesting tidbits about the countries in which French is spoken.



The audio CD that comes with this book gives you the opportunity to listen to real French speakers so that you can get a better understanding of what French sounds like. This icon marks the Talkin' the Talk dialogues that you can find on the CD.

## Where to Go from Here

Learning a language is all about jumping in and giving it a try (no matter how bad your pronunciation is at first). So make the leap! Start at the beginning, pick a chapter that interests you, or listen to a few dialogues on the CD. Before long, you'll be able to respond **Oui!** (wee!) (*Yes!*) when people ask **Parlez-vous français?** (pah-ley voooh frahN-seh?) (*Do you speak French?*).