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French Grammar

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Learn to:

- Grasp parts of speech, sentence construction, and verb tenses
- Enhance your descriptive speech with adverbs, adjectives, and prepositions
- Practice your grammar skills as you go

un nom

un verbe

un adjectif

un pronom

Véronique Mazet, PhD

Adjunct professor of French

**French
Grammar**
FOR
DUMMIES
A Wiley Brand

by **Véronique Mazet, PhD**

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A Wiley Brand

French Grammar For Dummies®

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Dedication

To my students of all ages: Thanks for believing in the beauty of the French language, and thanks for trusting me.

Author's Acknowledgments

Thanks to my agent, Grace Freedson, for calling me, and to my husband, for his super support.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Ideas, needs, and feelings are expressed with words. If you want to express yourself in any language, you need to know the right words, but words alone are not enough. If I say **dehors** (*outside*) to you, you can't guess if I want you *to go outside, look outside*, or something else. I need to add a verb like **allez** (*go*) and use it in the correct way to make my meaning clear.

In order to put words together in a coherent way, you need grammar. Unlike the English language, in which you can often string words together with minimum linking, French requires more formal structure. In this book I show you how the parts of French grammar work together so you can express what you need, how you feel, and even what you think, in French.

About This Book

French Grammar For Dummies tackles specific French grammar topics in detail, with plenty of examples and practice problems. An answer key at the end of each chapter allows you to check your work.

I start you off with basic French grammar on nouns, articles, adjectives, numbers, dates, and times. Then you move to verbs so you can build simple sentences in the present tense. From that point, you find out how to embellish simple French sentences with more detailed phrasing that makes you sound like a native speaker, thanks to adverbs, prepositional phrases, and pronouns. Then you're ready to move in time with different verb tenses, like the past and the future.

You don't have to read this book from cover to cover; you can simply read the sections or chapters that interest you. Put the book away until you need it again — it'll be ready and waiting for you!

Conventions Used in This Book

I use the following conventions to make this book easier for you to navigate:

- ✓ French words and sentences appear in **boldface**.
- ✓ English equivalents in *italics* follow French words and sentences.
- ✓ I usually present the English equivalent of French expressions, which is not always the literal translation. For example, you can translate the French phrase **de rien** literally as *of nothing*, but in English, the correct equivalent is *you're welcome*. This book usually gives you the *you're welcome* version of the translation, but in some spots, I provide the literal translation as well.
- ✓ An answer key at the end of every chapter provides the correct answers to all the practice questions in the chapter.

To make verbs stand out, I usually present verb conjugations in tables like this one:

aimer (*to like, to love*)

j'aime	nous aimons
tu aimes	vous aimez
il/elle/on aime	ils/elles aiment

The top of the table notes a French verb and its English translation, followed by six verb forms that vary according to who or what is performing the action: *I; you* (singular informal); *he, she, or one; we; you* (singular formal or plural formal and informal); and *they* (masculine and feminine plural).

Note: This book doesn't feature pronunciations after French text (with the exception of [Chapter 2](#), which is about sounding out French words). It concentrates on grammar and written communication. Be sure to check out a French dictionary for any pronunciation questions you have.

What You're Not to Read

If you don't have a lot time, or if you need more help with certain grammatical topics, you can skip around to stuff that most interests you. For instance, if you're already familiar with the gender of nouns but would like to put them in action with verbs, skip directly to [Chapter 6](#).

If you know right away what an exercise wants you to do, you can skip the examples and just dive into the exercise questions themselves. Also, if I present several examples to illustrate a particular grammar rule and you understand the rule after reading the first example, you don't need to bother with the rest of them. After all, this book is here to help you go at your own pace.

Foolish Assumptions

As I wrote this book, I made the following assumptions about you, dear reader:

- ✓ You want to be able to communicate more creatively in French, especially in writing — even if you already have a background in French and can carry on a conversation.
- ✓ You want to practice French grammar so you can be sure you can retain your newly acquired knowledge.
- ✓ You love French and find grammar fascinating . . . maybe?

How This Book Is Organized

French Grammar For Dummies is divided into six parts. The following sections introduce the parts and their contents.

Part I: Getting Started with French Grammar

This part is for beginners, or those of you who want a brief refresher on French basics. Here you find out how to pronounce French words; handle gender and number with nouns, articles, and adjectives; practice counting and telling time; and brush up on dates, days of the week, and months of the year.

Part II: Constructing Sentences, Saying No, and Asking Questions

In this part you find out how to put together a subject and a verb in the present tense to create a basic sentence, express reflexive or mutual actions with pronominal verbs like **se lever** (*to get up*) and **se parler** (*to talk to each other*), say *no* using words like **jamais** (*never*) and **rien** (*nothing*), and ask questions.