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forms


In French, few nouns can stand alone. Most need to be introduced or 'determined' by an article. As in English, an article is characterized as either **definite** ('the') or **indefinite** ('a', 'an'). In addition, French articles are also **masculine** or **feminine**, **singular** or **plural**, according to the gender and number of the noun they determine. Here are the **definite articles** in French:

<p> Masculine singular: le (l')</p> <p>Feminine singular: la (l')</p> <p>Masculine and feminine plural: les</p>	<p>Tex le tatou Joe-Bob l'écureuil</p> <p>Bette la chatte l'Université du Texas</p> <p>les tatous les écureuils les chats les universités</p>	<p>Tex the armadillo Joe-Bob the squirrel</p> <p>Bette the cat (female) The University of Texas</p> <p>the armadillos the squirrels the cats the universities</p>
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élision and liaison

In the examples above, note that **le** and **la** both become **l'** when they precede a noun beginning with a vowel or a silent **h**: **l'**escargot, **l'**université. This is called **élision**.

Unlike **le** and **la**, **les** does not have a contracted, reduced form. When **les** is followed by a word starting with a vowel, the normally silent final **s** of **les** is pronounced, making a /z/ sound. This additional sound linking two words is called **liaison**. Listen to the following examples:


 Compulsory liaison with a vowel or silent h	No liaison with a consonant
<p>les insectes les animaux les hommes</p>	<p>les tatous les fourmis</p>

Note that **élision** and **liaison** occur with most words starting with **h**: **l'**homme, **les** hommes, **l'**hiver, **les** hivers. Exceptions to this rule are words beginning with an aspirate 'h'.

to identify a specific noun

The definite article is used to identify a specific noun or to refer to a noun that has already been specified.



<p> Corey: Tu connais la tour de l'Université du Texas?</p>	<p>Corey: Do you know the UT Tower?</p>
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Tex: Bien sûr, c'est **le** symbole de l'Université!

Corey: Et **la** Sixième rue?

Tex: Eh bien, c'est **les** Champs-Élysées d'Austin!

Tex: Of course, it is the symbol of the University!

Corey: What about Sixth street?

Tex: Well, it's the Champs-Elysees of Austin.

to express general truths or concepts

French uses the definite article to express general truths or concepts. English, in contrast, uses no article at all. Compare the following sentences:



Tex: **L'**argent ne rend pas **l'**homme heureux!

Tammy: Tu as raison. **L'**amour et **la** santé sont plus importants!

Tex: Bien sûr, pour **les** insectes et **les** animaux, **l'**argent n'existe pas! Mais **l'**amour est aussi important pour nous que pour les humains. Ah oui ... **l'**amour **l'**amour, toujours **l'**amour!

Tex: Money does not make man happy!

Tammy: You are right. Love and health are more important!

Tex: Of course, for insects and animals, money does not exist! But love is as important for us as it is for humans. Ah, yes, love, love, love, always love!

to express likes and dislikes

The French also use the definite article with **verbs of preference**, such as **aimer, préférer, détester**. Once again, English omits the article in such general statements. For example:



Tex adore **les** croissants.

Joe-Bob préfère **les** doughnuts.

Tammy n'aime pas **le** café.

Edouard apprécie **la** bonne cuisine française.

Tex loves croissants.

Joe-Bob prefers doughnuts.

Tammy does not like coffee.

Edouard appreciates good French cuisine.



to indicate habitual recurrence

The definite article is used in French with moments of the **day, days of the week, and seasons to indicate habitual recurrence**. For example:



Le matin, Tammy va en cours.

L'après-midi, elle va à la bibliothèque.

Le lundi, Tex fait son jogging.

L'été, il se baigne avec Tammy à Barton

Every morning, Tammy goes to class.

Every afternoon, she goes to the library.

On Mondays, Tex goes for a jog.


Every summer, he bathes with Tammy at

Springs. **L'**hiver, il skie à Purgatory.

Barton Springs. **Every winter**, he skis in Purgatory.

in a series


The article is usually repeated in a **series**, in contrast to English. For example:

 Tammy: Tex, aide-moi à mettre la table!
Apporte **les** assiettes, **les** couteaux, **les**
verres, **les** serviettes et **le** vin.

Tex, help me set the table! Bring the
plates, knives, glasses, napkins, and wine.

no article


Cities usually do not require an article in French. For example:

 Tex habite à **Austin**.
mais il préfère **Paris**.

Tex lives in Austin,
but he prefers Paris.


Continents, countries, states, regions, and oceans usually require an article (**l'**Afrique, **la** France, **le** Texas, **la** Bourgogne, **l'**Atlantique etc.), but there are a few exceptions, usually islands: Haïti, Israël, Madagascar. See [prepositions with place names](#) for more information.

Months never require an article: **janvier, février, mars, etc.**

 Cependant Tex adore **mars** à Austin.


Nevertheless Tex adores March in Austin.

Days of the week do not require an article in instances where they do not indicate habitual recurrence. For example:

 **Lundi**, il a rendez-vous avec Tammy.

Monday he has a date with Tammy.

Listen to the dialogue:

 Tammy: J'aime beaucoup **le** français. C'est
la langue de Molière et de Hugo, et surtout
c'est **la** langue maternelle de Tex!

Tammy: I like French a lot. It is the
language of Molière and of Hugo, and
above all it is the mother tongue of Tex!

Bette: Alors comme ça Tammy, tu aimes
bien **les** Français?

Bette: So Tammy, you really like French
men?

Tammy: Oh oui! Surtout **les** Français qui
portent **le** béret!

Tammy: I sure do! Especially French men
who wear a beret!



exercices

fill in the blanks

Fill in the blank with the correct definite article : le, la, l', or les.

1. Tex : J'adore _____ chattes!
2. Corey : J'adore _____ odeur des pesticides!
3. Tammy : _____ femmes sont sensibles.
4. Corey : Je déteste _____ professeur de maths.

5. Tammy : _____ salle de classe est romantique!
6. Tammy : _____ affiche de Paris est super!
7. Corey _____ télévision.
8. Tex déteste _____ Texas.
9. Tammy : _____ tatous sont intelligents!
10. Tex : _____ dictionnaire est intéressant!
11. Tammy est _____ amie de Tex.
12. Tex est prof à _____ université.