

Adjectives

French adjectives agree in gender and number with the noun they describe. This means that the exact shape of the adjective will change, depending on whether the noun is masculine or feminine (gender) and singular or plural (number). So, in theory, there are up to four different shapes for each adjective, e.g.:



masc sing	fem sing	masc pl	fem pl
<i>petit</i>	<i>petite</i>	<i>petits</i>	<i>petites</i>

The feminine form of an adjective is often created by adding an 'e' to the masculine form:

grand – grande *allemand – allemande*

The plural form is most often formed by simply adding an –s to the masculine or feminine form:

grands-grandes *allemands – allemandes*

A number of masculine adjectives already end in an –e. In these cases, the feminine form remains the same. This also means the two plurals will look the same:

masc sing	fem sing	masc pl	fem pl
<i>calme</i>	<i>calme</i>	<i>calmes</i>	<i>calmes</i>

Here are a few examples of adjectives ending in –e:

calme

tranquille

facile

responsable

riche

pauvre

jeune

même

autre

Fill in the feminine forms of the following adjectives using the rules above:

1. Il est fatigué. Elle est
2. Le pull est gris. La robe est
3. Ce camion est japonais. Cette voiture est
4. Ce roman est mauvais. Cette nouvelle est
5. C'est un film français. C'est une émission

There are a few other regular patterns of change between masculine and feminine adjectives:

bon – bonne
ancien - ancienne
gentil – gentille

affreux – affreuse
heureux - heureuse
sportif – sportive

neuf - neuve
cher – chère
dernier - dernière

masc sing	fem sing	masc pl	fem pl
<i>gentil</i>	<i>gentille</i>	<i>gentils</i>	<i>gentilles</i>

Some adjectives are simply irregular, and need to be learnt by heart. Below are some key examples:

blanc – blanche
faux – fausse
fou – folle
frais – fraîche

long – longue
public - publique
sec - sèche
roux - rousse

Importantly, there is a third variant to learn for a few in this category: the form they take when they precede a masculine singular noun that starts with a vowel.

These are more closely linked to the feminine form, and it may be easier to remember them in this way:

Masc sing	Masc sing before vowel	Feminine
fou	fol	folle
vieux	vieil	vieille
nouveau	nouvel	nouvelle
beau	bel	belle

Examples:

Son nouvel emploi est ennuyeux – her new job is boring

Ce bel homme est son cousin – this handsome man is her cousin

Ce vieil édifice appartenait à un prince – this old building belonged to a prince.

Your turn! Fill out the feminine singular, masculine plural and feminine plural forms of the following adjectives. If you are unsure of the feminine form, **use a dictionary** to check the pattern – the feminine form is listed after the masculine entry. For instance: *italien, -enne, allemand, -e*

For the irregular adjectives, the masculine plural is formed by adding ‘s’ to the masculine singular. You need to look up the feminine singular form (given above) and add an ‘s’ to this for the feminine plural. Make sure you know what all of the words mean and note this.

masc sing	fem sing	masc pl	fem pl
Il est...	Elle est....	Ils sont...	Elles sont...
<i>grand</i>			
<i>riche</i>			
<i>séparé</i>			
<i>blanc</i>			
<i>fatigué</i>			
<i>bon</i>			
<i>naïf</i>			
<i>fou</i>			
<i>fier</i>			
<i>sec</i>			

Position

In English, adjectives tend to go before the noun they describe (my new house, my old grandmother etc).

In French, they almost all go after the noun (*les plats italiens, les chaussures noires, la langue française*).

There is a small group of adjectives, however, that normally precede the noun. These adjectives may be categorized as adjectives of **B**eauty, **A**ge, **N**umbers **G**oodness, and **S**ize (**BANGS**) (!)

B eauty	A ge	N umbers	G oodness	S ize
joli (jolie), pretty	jeune, young	premier (première), first	mauvais (mauvaise), bad	grand (grande), tall, big
beau (belle), beautiful	nouveau (nouvelle), new	deuxième, second	bon (bonne), good	petit (petite), little
	vieux (vieille), old	troisième, third		gros (grosse), big, fat
		dernier (dernière), last		long (longue), long
				court (courte), short

un petit garçon – a little boy

un vieil arbre – an old tree

un nouveau gazon – a new lawn

un beau jour d'été – a beautiful summer day

Insert the correct form of the given adjectives into the correct place in these sentences. The noun is given in italics:

1. J'ai fait un *voyage* (long)
2. C'est la *fois* que je t'écris (dernier)
3. Amanda est une *fille* (joli)
4. C'est une *faute* (petit)

Finally.....

Some adjectives can be used either before or after the noun – however their meaning varies according to their position:

- | | |
|---|---|
| un ancien élève – a former student | une ville ancienne – an ancient city |
| un cher ami – a dear friend | un bijou cher – an expensive jewel |
| ma propre voiture – my own car | ma voiture propre – my clean car |

Translate the following:

1. A former colleague (le collègue).....
2. My dear wife
3. A clean house