GENDER AND NUMBER OF NOUNS

First lesson – Première leçon
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1. **Introduction**

- A noun is a label for places, things, and concepts.

- **Nouns may be categorised:**
  - **common or proper**
  - **counting or mass**
  - **singular (sg.) or plural (pl.),**
  - **masculine (m.) or feminine (f.).**
It is important to recognise the gender and the number of a noun.

These properties affect the form of the determiner, pronouns, and adjectival/participial agreement.
Thus, most of time French nouns are preceded by a determiner. Observe:

- *C’est la vie!*  
  That’s life!

The construction:

* *C’est vie*

is not possible in French
The most common determiners are articles, appearing before the noun, (e.g. la vie) and indicate definiteness. La introduces a feminine and singular noun.

French articles change form to agree in gender and number with the noun. There is also a contracted form used before words starting with a vowel and most words beginning with “H”.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masculine</strong></td>
<td>Le</td>
<td>Les</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feminine</strong></td>
<td>La</td>
<td>Les</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before vowel or h</strong></td>
<td>L’</td>
<td>Les</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some examples of noun with their corresponding definite article

- **Le garçon/les garçons** the boy(s)
- **la fille/les filles** the girl(s)
- **L’appartement/les appartements** the flat(s)
- **L’université/les universités** the universitie(s)
MASCULINE GENDER
2. IDENTIFYING A MASCULINE GENDER

- There are few general patterns and rules that help to identify the gender and number of French nouns.
2. **Masculine Gender**

2.1-Common endings:

- **A)** Nouns ending in –é, -er, -ier
  
  *Le café (the coffee), l’atelier (the studio), le dîner (the lunch)…*

- **B)** Nouns ending in –ent
  
  *Le document (the document), le moment (the moment), L’appartement (the appartment)*

- **C)** Nouns ending in –isme

  *Le socialisme (the socialism), le capitalisme (the capitalism), le nihilisme (the nihilism)...*
2. Masculine Gender

D) Nouns ending in –eau, -o, -eu

*Le cerveau* (the brain), *le vélo* (the bicycle), *le jeu* (the game) ...

E) Most compound nouns

*Le tire-bouchon* (the corkscrew), *le pique-nique* (the picnic), *le passe-temps* (the pastime) ...
## 2. Masculine Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All weekdays are masculine</th>
<th>All seasons are masculine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Le lundi</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le mardi</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le mercredi</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le jeudi</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le vendredi</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le samedi</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le dimanche</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le printemps</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’été</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’automne</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’hiver</td>
<td>Winter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ALL LANGUAGES ARE MASCUINE

- Le français
- Le zoulou
- Le suédois
- Le turc
- Le grec
- L’anglais
- Le portugais

- French
- Zulu
- Swedish
- Turkish
- Greek
- English
- Portuguese

...
3. **MASCULINE NUMBER**

3.1 The plural form of nouns

- To form the regular plural, add –s to the end of the noun.
  
  *L’étudiant/Les étudiants*  
  
  *the student(s)*

- Irregular nouns and compound nouns have different rules.
3.2. Particularities

- When a noun ends in \(-s, -x\) or \(-z\), there is no difference between the singular and plural forms:

  - *Le bras/Les bras*  
  - *Le gaz/Les gaz*  
  - *Le prix/Les prix*

  - *the arm(s)*  
  - *the gaz/gases*  
  - *the price(s)*
3.3 Irregular patterns
Observe:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ending</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ail</td>
<td>Le travail</td>
<td>Les travaux</td>
<td>Work, job(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-al</td>
<td>Le journal</td>
<td>Les journaux</td>
<td>Newspaper(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-eau</td>
<td>Le cadeau</td>
<td>Les cadeaux</td>
<td>Present(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-eu</td>
<td>Le jeu</td>
<td>Les jeux</td>
<td>game(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ou</td>
<td>Le bijou</td>
<td>Les bijoux</td>
<td>Jewel(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feminine gender
4. IDENTIFYING FEMININE GENDER

4.1 Common endings:

- A) Nouns ending in –ure or –ue

  *La culture* (the culture), *la voiture* (the car), *la rue* (the street), *l’aventure* (the adventure)…

- B) Nouns ending in –tion or –(s)tion

  *La passion* (the passion), *la dissertation* (the essay), *l’émotion* (the emotion), *la nation* (the nation)…
4. **Feminine gender**

- C) Nouns ending in –ée

  *La matinée (morning), la journée (day), la soirée (evening), l’idée (idea)…*

- D) Most common nouns ending in –té

  *La clarté (clarity), la médiocrité (mediocrity), la santé (health), la pauvreté (poverty) …*
4. **Feminine Gender**

- **E)** Most nouns ending in ‑ie

  *La pluie* (rain), *la pâtisserie* (pastry shop), *la pharmacie* (pharmacy), *l’académie* (academy) …

- **F)** Nouns ending in ‑ance

  *La méfiance* (distrust), *l’arrogance* (arrogance), *la chance* (chance), *la vengeance* (revenge) …
4. Feminine gender

- G) Most nouns ending in –ence

  La préférence (preference), l’absence (absence), la patience (patience), la conférence (conference)…

- H) Most nouns ending in –eur

  La peur (fear), la couleur (colour), la grandeur (size), l’erreur (mistake) etc…
4. **Feminine Gender**

I) Most nouns ending in a **double consonnant** followed by –e

*La ville (the city), la couronne (the crown), la famille (the family), l’adresse (address)*...
SCIENCES ARE FEMININE

- L’anthropologie
- La biologie
- La chimie
- La géographie
- La linguistique
- La médecine
- La physique
- La politique
- ...

- EXCEPT
  - Le droit

- Anthropology
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Geography
- Linguistics
- Medecine
- Physics
- Politics

- Law
4. Feminine gender

4.2 Particularities

- When referring to a person, most masculine nouns add –e to their ending for their feminine form:

  \[
  \begin{align*}
  \text{L’étudiant} & \Rightarrow \text{L’étudiante} & \text{the student} \\
  \text{Le français} & \Rightarrow \text{La française} & \text{the French person}
  \end{align*}
  \]
4. **Female Gender**

- If the masculine noun ends in -é, a **silent -e** (known as a **mute e**) is added. The pronunciation remains the same.

  - *Le fiancé ➔ La fiancée*  the fiancé
  - *Le marié ➔ La mariée*  the married man/woman
4. **Feminine Gender**

4.3 Irregular patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine ending</th>
<th>Feminine ending</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-an</td>
<td>-anne</td>
<td>Le paysan</td>
<td>La paysanne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ien</td>
<td>-ienne</td>
<td>Le gardien</td>
<td>La gardienne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-on</td>
<td>-onne</td>
<td>Le patron</td>
<td>La patronne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-er</td>
<td>-ère</td>
<td>Le boulanger</td>
<td>La boulangère</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-eur</td>
<td>-euse</td>
<td>Le danseur</td>
<td>La danseuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-teur</td>
<td>-trice</td>
<td>Le directeur</td>
<td>La directrice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. **Feminine gender**

- The rules above apply to both nouns and adjectives

  - L’étudiant → L’étudiante (noun)
  - Student/student
  - Paul est étudiant (adjective)
  - Paul is a student.
  - Marie est étudiante (adjective)
  - Mary is a student.
5. **Feminine number**

- In all these cases, the plural is formed by adding -s to the noun.

  - L’étudiante → les étudiantes
  - La directrice → les directrices
  - La danseuse → les danseuses
GENDER’S PARTICULARITIES
5. GENDER’S PARTICULARITIES

5.1 Some nouns ending in -e that refer to people have the same form for both masculine and feminine. In these cases, the article clarifies the meaning:

*Le/la révolutionnaire*  the revolutionary man/woman
*Le/la touriste*  the tourist man/woman
6. GENDER’S PARTICULARITIES

- Some nouns only exist in the feminine form:

  \[ \text{La victime (man/woman)} \quad \text{the victim} \]
  \[ \text{La personne (man/woman)} \quad \text{the person} \]
5. GENDER’S PARTICULARITIES

5.2 Some nouns denoting professions exist only in the masculine form

Le médecin  the doctor
Le juge     the judge
Note: In these cases, feminine nouns are sometimes formed by placing **femme** (*woman*) in front of the word, preceded by an article as determiner:

*Une femme médecin*  
*a female doctor*
5. GENDER’S PARTICULARITIES

5.3 Some other nouns denoting professions only exist only in the feminine form

*Une sage-femme*  
*a midwife*
C’est tout pour aujourd’hui!

Au revoir!

Merci!