

French Pronunciation Charts

What follows are two representations of French pronunciations: 1. a list of all the French spellings in all positions and linkings with their IPA equivalent; and 2. a list of all IPA sounds found in the French language and their spellings. In learning to correctly pronounce French without the aid of a IPA transcriptions, I find it best for the beginning student to follow the route of the French spellings rather than working from the sounds themselves. Although there are *many* rules and spellings, French is an extremely regular language. With the exception of a few words with variable word endings and some proper nouns, almost all French words will follow the rules to the letter.

Part one: French Spellings - Vowel Pronunciation

French spellings for the vowel -a	IPA	French example with IPA
-a or -à usually	[a]	Paris [pa.ri] là [la]
-â in a few verb forms	[a]	allâtes [a.la.tə]
-â (except as above) -a before [s] and [z] sounds	[ɑ]	pale [pa.lə] extase [ɛks.ta.zə] lacer [la.sə]
-ai, -aî, -aie, -ais, -aise, -ait, -aient usually	[ɛ]	mais [mɛ]
-ai in some verb forms of <i>faire</i> when before [z]	[ə]	faisais [fə.zɛ] faisons [fə.zɔ]
-ai final	[e]	gai [ge]
-ail, -aill, -aille	[aj]	travail [tra.vaj] cailloux [ka.ju]
-aim, -ain when final or before a consonant except -m or -n, or -h	[ɛ̃]	faim [fɛ̃] ainsi [ɛ̃.si]
-aim, -ain when followed by a vowel	[ɛm]	aime [ɛ.mə]
	[ɛn]	plaine [plɛ.nə]
-am, -an, -aon when final or before a consonant ex. -m or -n, or -h	[ɑ̃]	champ [ʃɑ̃] fumant [fy.mɑ̃]
	[am] [an]	tamis [ta.mi] manne [ma.nə]
-au	[o]	chaud [ʃo]
-au before -r	[ɔ]	Fauré [fɔ.re]
-ay, -aye, -ayes	[ɛj]	payer [pɛ.jɛ]

French spellings for vowel -e	IPA	French example with IPA
-é	[e]	été [e.te]
-è, -ê, -ë	[ɛ]	père [pɛ.rə]
		forêts [fɔ.rɛ]
		Noël [nɔ.ɛl]
-e before a single consonant and a vowel	[ə]	cheval [ʃə.val]
-e before two consonants	[ɛ]	elle [ɛ.lə]
-e before final pronounced consonants	[ɛ]	fer [fɛr]

-e before final silent consonants (except -s and -t)	[e]	pied	[pje]
-e final	spoken	silenc	parle [parl]
	sung	[ə]	parle [par.lə]
-e final in monosyllables	[ə]	je	[ʒə]
-er final - generally in non-verb forms	[ɛr]	hiver	[i.vɛr]
-er final - in verb endings and some nouns and adjectives.	[e]	parler	[par.le]
		boulangier	[bu.lɑ̃.ʒe]
-es final	[ə]	parles	[par.lə]
-es final in monosyllables before a closed vowel	[e]	les	[le]
-es final in monosyllables before an open vowel	[ɛ]	des	[dɛ]
-et final	[ɛ]	filet	[fi.lɛ]
et (the words meaning <i>and</i>)	[e]	et	[e]
-eau	[o]	beau	[bo]
-ei	[ɛ]	seize	[sɛ.zə]
-eim & -ein when final or before a consonant ex. -m or -n, or -h	[ɛ̃]	plein	[piɛ̃]
-em & -en when final or before a consonant ex. -m or -n, or -h	[ɑ̃]	ensemble	[ɑ̃.sɑ̃.blɛ]
-em & -en when followed by a vowel the -e is not nasal	[ə]	tenir	[tə.nir]
	[ɛ]	tennis	[tɛ.nis]
-emm & -enn when initial remain nasal except <i>ennemi</i> [ɛ.nø.mi]	[ɑ̃m]	emmêler	[ɑ̃.me.le]
	[ɑ̃n]	ennui	[ɑ̃.nɥi]
-en after -i	[jɛ̃]	viens	[vjɛ̃]
-ent final	[ɑ̃]	firmament	[fir.ma.mɑ̃]
-ent final in third person plural verb endings	[ə]	parlent	[par.lə]
-eu in the interior of a word	[œ]	heure	[œ.rø]
-eu before [z]	[ø]	creuse	[kø.zø]
-eu as a final sound	[ø]	peu	[pø]
-ge before a back vowel (-a, -o, -u)	[ə]	Georges	[ʒo.ʒə]

French spellings for the vowel -i	IPA	French example with IPA	
-i single including before a mute -e	[i]	finir [fi.nir]	
-î with the <i>circumflexe</i> [sir.kõ.fleks]	[i]	île [i.lø]	
-ï with the <i>diérèse</i> [dje.rɛz]	[i]	Aïda [a.i.da]	
-i preceding a stressed vowel	[j]	bien [bjɛ̃]	
Final -il and -ille, and medial -ill	[j]	aille [aj]	
-ill and ille with no other vowel	[ij]	fille [fi.jø]	
-im and -in when final or before a consonant ex. -m or -n, or -h	[ɛ̃]	timbre	[tɛ̃.brø]
		brin	[brɛ̃]

French spellings for the vowel -o	IPA	French example with IPA
-o preceding a consonant or a vowel	[ɔ]	doter [dɔ.te]
-o when final sound	[o]	mot [mo]
-ô	[o]	ôter [o.te]
-o before [z]	[o]	rose [ro.zə]
-oe and -oeu	[œ]	coeur [kœr]
-oi	[wa]	voix [vwa]
-oin when final or before a consonant ex. -h	[wɛ̃]	loin [lwɛ̃]
-oy	[waj]	royal [rwa.jal]
-ou are before a stressed vowel	[w]	oui [wi]
-om -on when final or before a consonant ex. -m or -n, or -h	[õ]	nom [nõ]
-eon.	[õ]	pigeon [pi.ʒõ]
-ou, -où and -ouï	[u]	vous [vu]

French spellings for the vowel -u	IPA	French example with IPA
-u after g- and q-	silent	guitare [gi.ta.rə]
-u, -û, -ü(e), and -ue	[y]	murmure [my.my.rə]
-um and -un followed by a vowel, but not -m, -n, or -h.	[y]	unanime [y.na.ni.mə]
-ue when followed by -il, -ill, or -ille	[œ]	orgueil [ɔr.gœj]
-que when final or not followed by double consonants	[œ]	que [kœ]
-ueu after -g and -q	[œ]	vainqueur [vɛ̃.kœr]
-u before a stressed vowel	[ɥ]	lui [lɥi]
-um and -un when final or before a consonant except -m or -n, or -h	[œ̃]	brun [brœ̃]

French spellings for the vowel -y	IPA	French example with IPA
-y or -ÿ except when nasal	[i]	martyr [mar.tir]
-ym and -yn before a vowel	[i]	hymne [im.nə]
-yn and -ym when final or before a consonant ex. -m or -n, or -h	[ɛ̃]	thym [tɛ̃]
-y initial in a word	[j]	yeux [jø]
-y between two vowels	[j]	royal [rwa.jal]

Consonant pronunciation

While consonant pronunciation is considerably easier than for vowels, it still offers some challenges for the singer. Each individual consonant will be presented with a minimum of two pronunciation examples: first, a general pronunciation for the single and double consonant in the initial and medial position, and second, a possible final pronunciation. If such exist, pronunciation variants in liaison, and combination will also be presented.

Letter	French Spelling	IPA	French Word with IPA
b	-b or -bb initial and medial	[b]	beau [bo]
			abbesse [a.be.sə]
	final	silent	plomb [plɔ̃]
	followed by -s or -t	[p]	absolu [ap.sɔ.ly]
c	-c before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)	[s]	ciel [sjɛl]
	-cc before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)	[ks]	accent [ak.sɑ̃]
	-c or -cc before a back vowel (-a, -o, -u) or a cons.	[k]	encore [ɑ̃.kɔ.rə]
	final	[k]	parc [pɑ̃rk]
	final after -n	silent	blanc [blɑ̃]
	-ct final	[kt]	direct [di.rɛkt]
		silent	respect [rɛ.spɛ]
	-ç with the <i>çédille</i> [se.di.jə]	[s]	garçon [gar.sɔ̃]
	-ch	[ʃ]	blanche [blɑ̃.ʃ]
	-ch in words of Greek origin	[k]	Christ [krist]
	-cqu	[k]	acquisition [a.ki.zi.sjɔ̃]
d	-d or -dd initial or medial	[d]	doux [du]
			addition [a.di.sjɔ̃]
	final	silent	pied [pjɛ]
	in liaison	[t]	grand_arbre [grɑ̃. tar.brɛ]
f	-f or -ff initial or medial	[f]	enfant [ɑ̃.fɑ̃]
			effort [ɛ.fɔ̃r]
	final	[f]	comparatif [kɔ̃.pa.ra.tif]
	in liaison	[v]	neuf_heures [nœ. vœ.re]
g	-g before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)	[ʒ]	sabotage [za.bɔ.ta.ʒə]
	-gg before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)	[gʒ]	suggestion [syg.ʒɛs.tjɔ̃]
	-g or -gg before a back vowel (-a, -o, -u) or a cons.	[g]	grave [gra.və]
	final	silent	sang [sɑ̃]
	in liaison	[k]	sang_et_eau [sɑ̃. ke o]
	-ge before a back vowel (-a, -o, -u) or a consonant	[ʒ]	pigeon [pi.ʒɔ̃]
	-gu before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)	[g]	gigue [ʒi.gə]
	-gn	[ɲ]	compagnon [kɔ̃.pa.ɲɔ̃]
	-gt	silent	doigt [dwa]

h	Initial -h is classified as mute and aspirate - both are always silent but,		
	-h initial mute allows liaison or elision	silent	douze_heure [du. zœ.rə]
	-h initial aspirate allows no linking	silent	tres *hideuse [trɛ i.dœ.zə]
	-h medial	silent	souhaiter [su.ɛ.te]
j	-j	[ʒ]	jardin [ʒar.dɛ̃]
k	found in words of foreign origin only	[k]	kilo [ki.lo]
	final	[k]	kodak [kɔ.dak]
l	-l or -ll initial or medial	[l]	large [lar.ʒə]
			ballet [ba.lɛ]
	final	[l]	ideal [i.de.al]
	-il, -ill, and -ille (but not final -ile)	[j]	soleil [so.lɛj]
			papillons [pa.pi.jɔ̃]
	In the these words and their derivatives	[l]	mille [mi.lə] (thousand)
tranquille [trɑ̃.ki.lə] (tranquil)			
		ville [vi.lə] (villages)	
m	-m or -mm initial or medial	[m]	mardi [mar.di]
			flamme [fla.mə]
	after a nasal vowel	silent	parfum [par.fœ̃]
	in liaison	[m]	nom_à tiroirs [nɔ̃. ma ti.rwar]
n	-n or -nn initial or medial	[n]	neige [nɛ.ʒə]
			année [a.ne.ə]
	after a nasal vowel	silent	ensemble [ɑ̃.sɑ̃.blə]
	in liaison	[n]	en_aimant [ɑ̃. nɛ.mɑ̃]
p	-p or -pp initial or medial	[p]	captive [kap.ti.və]
			support [sy.pɔr]
	final	silent	trop [tro]
	in liaison	[p]	trop_en [tro. pɑ̃]
	-mpt	silent	compter [kɔ̃.te]
	-ph	[f]	philosophe [fi.lɔ.so.fə]
q	-qu initial or medial	[k]	liqueur [li.kœr]
	final	[k]	cinq [sɛ̃k]
	in liaison	[k]	cinq_enfants [sɛ̃. kɑ̃.fɑ̃]
r	Spoken French makes use of the uvular [ʀ] that is appropriate for dialogue and cabaret songs.		
	-r or -rr initial,	[r]	rapide [ra.pi.də]
	-r or -rr medial or final	[r]	garage [ga.ra.ʒə]
			terrible [tɛ.ri.blə]
			hiver [i.vɛr]
	-er, -ier, or -yer final in some nouns and adjectives	silent	foyer (noun) [fwa.je]
-er in the infinitive verb form	[e]	parler [par.le]	

S	-s and -ss initial or medial	[s]	séance	[se.ã.sə]
			Debussy	[də.by.si]
	-s medial between vowels	[z]	maison	[mɛ.zõ]
	-s final	silent	toujours	[tu.ʒur]
	-s final in exceptions	[s]	hélas	[e.las]
			lis	[lis]
			fil	[fis]
	in liaison	[z]	mes_yeux	[mɛ. zjø]
-sc before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)	[s]	descendre	[dɛ.sã.drə]	
-sc before a back vowel (-a, -o, -u) or a consonant	[sk]	scandale	[skã.da.lə]	
-sch initial or medial	[ʃ]	schéma	[ʃɛ.ma]	
t	-t or -tt initial or medial	[t]	total	[tɔ.tal]
			glotte	[glɔ.tə]
	-t final	silent	tuot	[tu]
	-t in liaison	[t]	tout_un	[tu. tœ]
	-th	[t]	Thomas	[tɔ.ma]
	-ti in endings -tion and -tience	[sj]	attention	[a.tã.sjõ]
-tie when final	[ti.ə]	sortie	[sɔr.ti.ə]	
V	-v initial or medial	[v]	souvenir	[su.və.nir]
W	-w found in words of foreign origin	[v]	Wagon	[va.gõ]
X	before consonants	[ks]	texte	[tɛk.stə]
	before vowels or -h	[gz]	exemple	[ɛg.zã.plə]
	in numbers	[z]	deuxieme	[dœ.zjɛ.mə]
	in liaison	[z]	deux_enfants	[dø. zã.fã]
Z	initial or medial	[z]	zèle	[zɛ.lə]
			douze	[du.zə]
	final	silent	chez	[ʃe]
	Final as an exception	[z]	Berlioz	[ber.ljɔz]

Part two: A list of French sounds with some of the more common French spellings.

Adapted and expanded from *Le Petit Robert* CD-Rom.

	Vowels		Consonants
[i]	i l, épi , lyre	[p]	p ère, sou p e
[e]	blé , aller , chez , et , j' ai , tes	[t]	t erre, vite
[ɛ]	lait , merci , fête , Noël, forêts , hiver , Seigneur soleil , hotel , bouquet	[k]	c ou, qui , sac , képi
[a]	a mi, patti ,	[b]	b on, robe
[ɑ]	pas , pâte	[d]	d ans, aide
[ɔ]	fort , donner , sol	[g]	g ar, bague , gui
[o]	mot , dôme , eau , saule	[f]	f eu, neuf , photo
[u]	genou , roue	[s]	s ale, celui , ça , dessous , tasse
[ø]	peu , deux , creuse	[ʃ]	ch at, tach e schéma
[œ]	peur , meuble , ceuille	[v]	v ous, rêve
[ɛ̃]	brin , plein , bain	[z]	z éro, maison , rose
[ɑ̃]	sans , vent	[ʒ]	j e, gilet , geôle
[ɔ̃]	ton , ombre , bonté	[l]	l ent, sol
[œ̃]	lundi , brun , parfum	[r]	r ue, venir
		[m]	m ot, flamme
	Semi-vowels	[n]	n ous, tonne , animal
[j]	y eux, paille , pi ed, panier	[ɲ]	agn eau, vign e
[w]	ou i, fou et, jou a, jo ie		
[ɥ]	hu ile, lui		no liaison or elision allowed