Contents

Acknowledgements xi

Introduction xii

How to use this book xvii

Glossary xix

SECTION A Structures

I The noun group 2

1 Articles 2

2 The definite article 2

3 The indefinite article 9

4 The partitive article 11

5 Demonstrative adjectives 15

6 Demonstrative pronouns 17

7 Possessive adjectives 20

8 Possessive pronouns 22

9 Nouns 23

10 Adjectives 31

11 Indefinite adjectives, pronouns and adverbs 40

12 Personal pronouns 51

13 Reflexive pronouns 56

14 Emphatic pronouns; position and order of pronouns 56

15 Relative pronouns 62

16 Interrogative pronouns, adjectives and adverbs 67

17 Cardinal and ordinal numbers 72

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18	Fractions	77
19	Approximate quantities	78
20	Dimensions	78
21	Adverbs of quantity	80
II	**The verb group**	82
22	Agreement of verb and subject	82
23	Formation of tenses	86
24	The indicative tenses; the present tense	86
25	The future tense	93
26	The imperfect tense	97
27	The past historic	100
28	The compound tenses	103
29	How the perfect is used	104
30	How the future perfect is used	107
31	How the pluperfect is used	108
32	How the past anterior is used	109
33	The conditional and the conditional perfect	110
34	The subjunctive	114
35	The present subjunctive	114
36	The imperfect subjunctive	116
37	The perfect subjunctive	117
38	The pluperfect subjunctive	117
39	Sequence of tenses; uses of the subjunctive	117
40	Reflexive verbs	127
41	The passive	129
42	The past participle	132
43	The present participle	137
44	The imperative	139
45	The infinitive	142

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46	Impersonal verbs	145
47	Adverbs	147
48	Prepositions	156
SECTION B	**Functions**	
III	**Exposition**	159
49	Referring to people, things and places	159
49.1	Physical characteristics	159
49.2	Personality	161
49.3	Relationships	162
49.4	Age	165
49.5	Ownership	167
49.6	Dimensions	172
49.7	Quantity and number	174
49.8	Quality	179
49.9	Comparison	180
49.10	Directions	184
49.11	Location	187
49.12	Manner	191
50	Narrating	194
50.1	Present time	195
50.2	Past time	197
50.3	Future time	200
50.4	Dates and time	201
50.5	Sequence	205
51	Reporting	208
52	Asking questions	215
53	Negating	219
IV	**Attitude**	222
54	Greeting and leave-taking	222

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54.1 Greeting 222
54.2 Leave-taking 223
55 Expressing congratulations and appreciation 225
55.1 Congratulations 225
55.2 Appreciation 226
56 Expressing apologies and sympathy 228
56.1 Apologies 228
56.2 Sympathy 230
57 Expressing surprise and disgust 232
57.1 Surprise 232
57.2 Disgust 234
58 Expressing contrasting attitudes, emotions, feelings 235
58.1 Likes and dislikes 235
58.2 Preference 237
59 Love and hate 238
60 Enthusiasm and indifference 240
61 Hopes, fears and regrets 241
62 Approval and disapproval 243
V Argumentation 245
63 Agreeing and disagreeing 245
63.1 Agreeing 245
63.2 Disagreeing 247
63.3 Agreeing to differ 250
64 Asserting and confirming 251
64.1 Asserting 251
64.2 Confirming 252
65 Admitting and conceding 253
65.1 Admitting 253
65.2 Conceding 254

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66 Correcting and protesting 255
67 Contradicting and criticizing 258
68 Suggesting and persuading 260
68.1 Suggesting 260
68.2 Persuading someone to think the way you do 262
68.3 Persuading someone to do/not to do something 264
68.4 Other ways of persuading and dissuading 264
69 Expressing volition 267
69.1 Verbs expressing volition 268
69.2 Wishing and intending 269
69.3 Asking what someone intends 270
69.4 Asking someone for something 272
69.5 Expressing (un)willingness to act upon request 273
69.6 Deliberate or non-deliberate actions 275
69.7 Saying what you do not want 276
70 Expressing permission and obligation 278
70.1 Permission 278
70.2 Prohibition 279
70.3 Obligation 281
70.4 Exemption 285
71 Expressing doubt and certainty 287
71.1 Doubt and certainty 287
71.2 Possibility and probability 292
71.3 Condition and hypothesis 298
72 Expressing logical relations 302
72.1 Cause—explicit 302
72.2 Cause—implicit 306
72.3 Consequence—explicit 307
72.4 Consequence—implicit 311

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72.5	Aim	312
73	Expressing opposition	315
74	Structuring	321
74.1	Beginning	321
74.2	Continuing	326
74.3	Ending	328
VI	**The sounds of French**	333
75	Vowels	333
76	Nasal vowels	333
77	Semi-vowels/semi-consonants	333
78	Consonants	334
79	Accents, cedilla, diaeresis	334
80	Liaison	335
81	Elision	337
	Verb tables	339
	Index of grammar structures and functions	354

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Introduction

This book is designed to provide the essential elements of French grammar, for students in the final year of school and in the first and later years of higher education. Advanced learners will find much that is useful for extending their knowledge of French, and for revision. The book is organized in two major sections: a reference section containing the structures of grammar and a section containing functional grammar. Each section includes cross-references to the other.

The reference grammar, which is as comprehensive as possible, has been structured around the noun phrase—dealing with all the elements related to the noun: articles, pronouns, adjectives and numbers—and the verb phrase—dealing with all the elements related to the verb: tenses, mood, participles and adverbs.

The functional grammar is composed of three parts, each demonstrating how to do things with language in order to communicate. The three principal functions identified are exposition, attitude and argumentation. Each of these is divided into smaller function areas related to the principal function.

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The functions

Exposition

Communication involves both giving and obtaining information: we make statements and we ask questions about someone or something. This involves

(a) referring to people, things and places
(b) narrating events in some sort of sequence
(c) reporting what we or other people say or think.

In other words, we are giving or obtaining information about who, what, when, how, where and why. Exposition includes three groups of functions identified, very broadly, as *referring, narrating* and *reporting*.

Referring to people, things and places involves giving and obtaining information about physical characteristics, personality, relationships, age,

ownership dimensions, quantity and number, quality or distinguishing characteristics, comparison, direction, location and manner.

Narrating involves talking about events or actions in terms of present, past and future time, dates and time, and sequence. *Reporting* describes what we or other people say and write. Reporting is usually clearly indicated by the presence of an introductory verb. There are many verbs which can introduce reported speech of which the commonest is 'say'. Some of the others are 'think, remind, ask; hope, believe, want, suggest, answer, admit, forget'. Interrogative structures are included in this section because we need to know how to obtain information, and to do this we ask questions, and negation is included because, of course, sometimes we need to say that something is not the case.

Attitude

Expressing an attitude towards someone or something usually means that we are introducing a personal, subjective element into communication: we are indicating our reaction to someone or something, we are evaluating, and making judgements —in a non-detached way. And we may do so spontaneously or intentionally.

Closely related to attitudes are the emotions and feelings which most of us experience and express from time to time. These, too, are personal and subjective, and, on occasion, they may in fact be attitudes. The focus of this section is, then, on the communication of attitudes, emotions and feelings and how we express them. We look first at the ways in which we *greet* or *take leave of* people when we are speaking or writing to them. Then we turn to the ways in which we express *congratulations* and *appreciation, apologies* and *sympathy,* and *surprise* and *disgust*. Finally, we consider ways in which we express contrasting attitudes, emotions and feelings: *likes, dislikes* and *preference, love* and *hate, enthusiasm* and *indifference, hopes* and *fears, approval* and *disapproval*.

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Argumentation

Effective communication usually requires a certain amount of planning, and this involves the need to

(a) structure what we want to say or write
(b) determine the best strategies to employ
(c) select the means of expression most suited to the structure, to the strategies, and, above all, to a specific context or situation.

The structure is the *plan* in what we are saying or writing, the strategy is the *function* we are employing, and the means of expression is the *grammatical* or *lexical* structure (for example, verb construction, noun phrase) which is most appropriate for the plan and the function.

It may be that a single word is enough to achieve what we want, but more frequently we are involved in a discussion or explaining something or arguing a case and so on. Often, there is simply not enough time to plan carefully what we want to say— though there is more time when we are writing. Also, it would be virtually impossible to try to learn every function and every means of expression. However, if we are familiar with some kinds of plan, with various types of function, and with some of the means for expressing them, then we can not only use them ourselves, but recognize them when we are listening to or reading what other people are saying or writing.

There are many kinds of plan in what is said and written, and these plans vary in complexity. Examples of plans, or planning, are the following:

(a) creating a clear overall structure with an introduction, middle section and conclusion
(b) listing a series of points
(c) putting another point of view and defending it
(d) proceeding from cause to effect, or vice versa.

In some situations, parts of plans may be enough and indeed appropriate for achieving what we want, for example, only part of (c). At other times we may need to put into action a fully developed plan, for example, a combination of (a)–(d). Finally, we must remember that there is no single, perfect plan suitable for every situation or context.

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The functions available to us when we want to achieve something in argumentation are many. We may, for example, want to agree, indicate doubt, reject, criticize. We may wish to emphasize, persuade, influence, express obligation. Whatever it may be, whether we are initiating a discussion, making a speech, contributing to a conversation, reacting to a comment, broadcast or report, we have at our disposal a wide range of possible moves. We cannot, of course, know how someone is going to react to what we are saying or writing, so we need to have access to a range of responses in order to adapt to an unforeseen reaction, and respond appropriately.

The section on argumentation provides a comprehensive range of functions—and the means of expressing them—which are in fairly common use. You will recognize them when people are speaking and writing. It is recommended that you try to put them into practice in speech and writing whenever appropriate. The functions are presented as follows—*agreeing* and *disagreeing, asserting* and *confirming, admitting* and *conceding, correcting* and *protesting, contradicting* and *criticizing, suggesting* and *persuading,* expressing *volition, permission* and *obligation, doubt* and *certainty, logical relations, opposition,* and *structuring*.

The examples

The examples in the reference section are simple illustrations of the grammar structure in question. In the functional section the examples are selected from contemporary spoken and written French to demonstrate the function in question. They are actual examples which have been used in our own experience, and they are quoted within as much context as possible to illustrate the function and the related grammar structure.

The translations

The examples in both the reference and the functional sections are translated into English. In the reference section, translations are kept as close as possible to the French, in the functional section, on the other hand, where there is usually a substantial amount of context, the English equivalent is provided, rather than a direct and possibly, therefore, stilted version of the original.

Forms and functions

The forms in any living language are flexible and changing. At any one time they can vary according to the individual speaker or writer, to the part of the country he/she comes from or lives in, and indeed to fashion. There is seldom only one way of saying or writing something, and not very often a one-to-one equivalence of form and function.

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This is clearly illustrated in the section on the imperative (A.44) where this one grammar structure is shown to have a variety of functions: the imperative form can be used to express an order, an instruction, an invitation, etc. It is also illustrated in the many functions of each of the tenses. Similarly, in the functional section, many forms are suggested for expressing one function: giving directions (B.49.10), for example, can be expressed through the imperative, the future tense, a combination of the two, etc.

Just as there is a network of relations between forms and functions, so there is a network of functions related to each single function. Agreeing (B.63.1), for example, is naturally associated with its opposite—disagreeing (B.63.2), and then also with a combination of the two—agreeing to differ (B.63.3)

Register

Register refers by and large to the different vocabulary and grammar structures we use when we are talking or writing to different people, and the levels of formality and informality we use. For example, we would be more formal with a teacher, a doctor, a policeman, at an interview…, but fairly informal with members of our family, friends or when simply chatting. We usually take into

account the status, age, and the relationship we have with other people, and the situation we are in, and we automatically adjust our language to them.

At times, we switch from formality to informality, when, for example, we begin to feel more comfortable with a person, or from informality to formality if, for example, a conversation with our bank manager switches from friendly conversation to a request for an increase in a loan.

What we are doing is quite normal and acceptable and is simply adapting to a situation.

In the grammar it is not possible to cover the wide range of levels that exist between formality and informality, but we have indicated in the examples where the register is formal or informal. Otherwise, examples should be taken as standard register—the register used by an average, educated speaker or writer.

Don't you want to take them round all the museums?
Tu veux pas les balader dans tous les musées? (informal)
Voulez-vous leur faire visiter tous les musées? (formal)

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How to use this book

This book brings together two sets of guidelines on the French language:

A—A reference grammar covering the major points which need to be mastered so that you get things right.

B—A functional grammar covering the major types of communication you may want or need to carry out.

At your disposal, then, you have the essentials of grammar (section A) and applications of the grammar in a wide selection of functions (section B). When we were preparing this book, we kept in mind the frequent changes which any living language undergoes, and we have, therefore, included comments on exceptions to the guidelines. And, wherever appropriate, we have included informal ways of saying or writing something. The majority of examples have cross-references to information concerning one or more grammar points or concerning additional details on the function.

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How, then, will you use the book? If, for example, you want to greet someone you look up B.54.1. In this section you will find a number of suggestions on different ways of saying 'Hi!' or 'Good morning!', for example. It's not very difficult to know how to say hello, of course, but, are you aware of the difference between **Bonjour!** and **Bonsoir!?** On the other hand, you might want to persuade someone to do something. To find a suitable way of doing this you look up B.68.3 and you will again find a number of suggestions for persuading, and cross-references to the appropriate grammar guideline. When you are looking at the functions, we suggest that you also consider the much longer context that is provided to see what happens to a grammatical form when it is in use.

There are other ways of saying and writing the same things—the examples given here are only suggestions, and you are bound to come across other means of expression the more you come into contact with French either at university or in your professional life. We recommend that you consider the suggestions provided here, select the form, or forms, that suit you best and learn them; when you meet alternative ways of saying or writing something, add them to your repertoire.

Before the verb tables we have included a section with the sounds of French, and several words for you to practise the sounds. Your teacher will be able to help you with them.

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Glossary

Many of the terms used in this grammar are explained at the beginning of the section in which they are used, but there are some terms which are not explained in a specific section because they occur in several sections, and there are some which may cause difficulty for students. The short list which follows includes the terms which we think need special attention. We have assumed that most students using this grammar are familiar with most of the traditional grammar terms such as noun, verb, adjective.

Adverb

A word or phrase which gives information about how, where and/or when something occurs. There are adverbs of manner, place, time, degree, duration and frequency. Adverbs can modify a verb **(faire *avec soin*),** an adjective **(*très* difficile),** or another adverb **(*beaucoup* trop)**. Adverbs are always invariable, unlike some other parts of speech, that is, they never change their spelling to agree with another part of speech.

Antecedent

A word or group of words which precedes another word or group of words. Relative pronouns, or words such as **ce,** have antecedents to which they refer back **(*L'homme* qui a donné un pourboire n'a pas beaucoup d'argent)**.

Apposition

The placing of a word or phrase directly beside another word or phrase in order to provide more information about the other one **(*Jacques Chirac, Président* de la République)**. There is no article between the words in apposition.

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Cohesion

The linking of words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs by means of **cohesive devices,** which may be clauses, adverbs, pronouns, negatives, etc. (the adverbs include **et, mais, par contre, d'abord**).

Complement

A word or phrase which completes the meaning of, or gives more information about, something. The complement may be a word in apposition (see above), a direct object **(Elle a mangé *la pomme*),** an indirect object **(Il le *leur* a vendu),** the agent in a passive sentence **(La tarte a été volée *par le petit garçon*)** ….

Conjugation

This refers to all the endings of a verb. Verbs are usually classified according to one of four main conjugations in French: **-er, -ir, -re, -oir**. Each of the conjugations has its own set of six endings for each tense. Regular verbs have the set of endings which belong to a particular conjugation, so grammar books are able to give a model verb for each conjugation which all the regular verbs of that conjugation will follow (regular **-er** verbs follow **donner,** for example). Irregular verbs are those which do not follow either the stem or the endings of a conjugation. The most useful irregular verbs are included in verb tables in grammar books.

Determiners

These are words which are part of the noun group. There are many of them in French— all the articles **(le, un, du…);** the possessive adjectives **(mon, ton,**

son…); the demonstrative adjectives **(ce, cet, cette…);** the interrogative and exclamatory adjective **quel** (as in ***Quelle* maison?/!**); indefinite adjectives **(certain, chaque, différents, divers, maint, plusieurs, quelque, tout); aucun,** normally in the singular **(Elle n'a aucun talent);** the cardinal numbers used as adjectives (as in **deux journaux**).

Direct and indirect objects

The direct object is a noun or pronoun referring to a person or thing directly affected in some way by an action. The direct object is never introduced by a preposition **(Il a lu *le livre*)** The object is indirect when it is introduced by a preposition, usually **à** or **de (Nous le donnons *à nos parents*. Ça dépend *de nos parents*)**. Indirect object pronouns are **me, te, lui, nous, vous, leur**. These pronouns are not preceded by **à**—it is built into the pronoun **(Nous le *leur* donnons)**. Following **de,** and other prepositions, the emphatic pronouns are used **(Ça dépend de *toi*)**.

Finite

Refers to the many parts of verbs which have endings. These endings indicate whether the subject is singular or plural, the tense and the mood. The **infinitive** is the part of the verb which ends in **-er, -ir, -re, -oir,** and in this case there is no finite ending giving information about whether the subject is singular or plural, or the tense.

Gender and number

These are very important grammar concepts in French. If you forget to make adjectives agree with nouns or verbs with subjects, then you have simply made mistakes, and that can cost you marks! Gender in French is either masculine **(le, il…),** or feminine **(la, elle…),** and all nouns are masculine or feminine, and adjectives have to agree with their noun. Number refers to whether a noun or pronoun is singular (just one person, thing or action), or plural (two or more people, things or actions). Verbs have to agree with their noun or pronoun subject.

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Impersonal verb

A verb of which the subject is **il** 'it' (**il faut** 'it is necessary'). The impersonal verb can sometimes become personal by the addition of a personal pronoun (**il me faut** 'I must').

To modulate

To change or influence the meaning of a word or phrase in some way. There are various ways of doing this, using nouns, adjectives, verbs or adverbs which have specific nuances. You can also, for example, in greeting and leave-taking —merely by altering the intonation you use—make what you say courteous or discourteous, friendly or aggressive. A slight change of meaning is called a *nuance* (of meaning). You can achieve a different nuance simply by adding, or changing, the intonation you use.

Mood

This refers to the different forms in the conjugation of a verb which indicate the functions for which the verb is used. So, you have the indicative mood (fact), the subjunctive mood (non-fact); the interrogative mood (questions), the conditional mood (conditions and hypotheses), the imperative mood (orders). The mood of the verb can be changed according to what you want to express; for example, fact, non-fact, questions.

Transitive and intransitive verbs

Verbs can be transitive or intransitive. A transitive verb is a verb with a direct object **(Il a lu le livre)**. An intransitive verb does not have an object **(Il travaille bien)**. Verbs may be directly transitive **(Il a lu le livre. Mange ta soupe)** or indirectly transitive **(Pense à nous)**. Almost all normally transitive verbs can be used intransitively **(Il boit un verre. Il ne boit pas)**. And some normally intransitive verbs can be used transitively **(Il sort. Il sort sa voiture)**.

Abbreviations used in the grammar

f—feminine, m—masculine, s—singular, pl—plural
qn—quelqu'un, qch—quelque chose

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Section A

Structures

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I
The noun group

1
Articles

French has three articles: the definite article, the indefinite article and the partitive article. They agree with nouns in gender and number. In general, they are used in a similar way to English articles, but there are several important differences.

1.1 Forms

	Definite	Indefinite	Partitive
Masculine singular	**le (l')**	**un**	**du (de l')**
Feminine singular	**la (l')**	**une**	**de la (de l')**
Plural	**les**	**des**	**des**
		+de/d'	**+de/d'**

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2
The definite article

The definite articles are **le, la, les** 'the'. Contracted forms are used when the prepositions **de** 'of, from' or **à** 'to' (and sometimes 'from': **emprunter à** 'to borrow from') precede the articles **le, les: de+le>du, de+les>des, à+le>au, à +les>aux**.

C'est le livre *du* professeur.	It's the teacher's book.
Ce sont les copies *des* étudiants.	They are the students' papers.

English frequently uses's (singular) or s' (plural) to indicate possession, rather than 'of the'. It would sound odd to say: 'It is the book of the teacher'.

Elle parle *au* président.	She is speaking to the president/ chairman.

Nous avons donné les billets *aux* enfants.	We have given the tickets to the children.

But there is no change when **de** or **à** precede **la** or **l':**

La porte *de l'*école est fermée.	The school door is shut.
Elle va *à la* maison.	She is going home.

2

2.1 Contracted forms

When they precede words beginning with a vowel or a mute **h, le** and **la** are shortened to **l'** (see **81.1**):

***l'i*ssue**	the exit	***l'a*ccident**	the accident
***l'h*istoire**	history, the story	***l'h*omme**	man, the man

> **NOTE** The articles are not necessarily translated into English.

2.2 Place of the article

The article precedes nouns, and adjectives which precede nouns:

***la petite* table**	the little table	***le grand* garçon**	the big boy

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but note that they *follow* **tout, tous, toute(s)** 'all, every, the whole' (see **11.1**):

***tout le* vin**	all the wine	***toute la* famille**	the whole family
***tout l'*argent**	all the money	***toutes les* filles**	all the girls
***tous les* mois**	every month		

2.3 How the definite articles are used

The definite article refers to specific people or things:

***Le* livre est sur *la* table.**	The book is on the table.

In lists of nouns, the article is usually repeated before each noun:

Il aime *les* chats, *les* chiens et *les* chevaux.	He likes cats, dogs and horses.

but increasingly today, in written French, the article is omitted from lists:

Chats, chiens, chevaux, il les aime tous.	Cats, dogs and horses—he loves them all.

2.4 Differences between French and English articles

In certain contexts French and English articles are used differently.

(a) where the noun is used in a general sense:

***L'*herbe est verte.**	Grass is green.
Aime-t-il *le* vin?	Does he like wine?
Elle aime *la* musique.	She loves music.
***Les* ordinateurs deviennent de moins en moins chers.**	Computers are becoming less and less expensive.

(b) with parts of the body, or mind, where English uses the possessive adjective ('my, your…') French uses the definite article (see **49.1**):

2

Il secoua *la* tête.	He shook his head.
Ouvre *les* yeux.	Open your eyes.
Il a froid *aux* pieds.	He has cold feet.
Elle a mal *à la* tête.	She has a headache.
Elle a perdu *la* mémoire.	She has lost her memory.
Il souffre *du* dos.	He has back problems.

and with reflexive verbs (see **42.3** for agreement of participle, **49.5e**) referring to the owner:

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Elle s'est lavé *les* cheveux.	She washed her hair.

When something is done to someone else, that other person is indicated by including an indirect object pronoun (see **49.5e**):

Elle *lui* a saisi la main.	She took his/her hand.
Elle *lui* a lavé les cheveux.	She washed his/her hair.

The definite article is also used with parts of the body in description following **avoir** (see **49.1**):

Le bébé *a les* mains dodues.	The baby has chubby hands.
Elle *a les* cheveux longs.	She has long hair.

Note the use of the possessive adjective **mon, ton**…'my, your…' with verbs other than **avoir:**

Il *caressa sa* longue barbe noire.	He stroked his long black beard.

And note the following descriptive phrases where English uses 'with' (see **49.1**):

la femme *aux* yeux verts	the woman with the green eyes
la maison *aux* fenêtres ouvertes	the house with the open windows
Il marchait *les* mains derrière *le* dos.	He was walking with his hands behind his back.

French normally uses the singular form of nouns if they refer to something of which we have only one, e.g. **la *vie*** 'life', **la *tête*** 'head/face', **le *cou*** 'neck':

Elle leur a sauvé *la vie*.	She saved their lives.

(c) in many expressions of time, and with seasons, dates and festivals (see **50.4**):

à trois heures *du matin/de l'*après-midi	at three in the morning/ afternoon
II arrivera vers *les* sept heures.	He'll arrive about seven o'clock.
Elle le fera pendant *la* semaine.	She will do it during the week.

Note the English equivalent with the use or omission of the articles:

***la* semaine dernière/prochaine**	last/next week
***au* jour *le* jour**	from day to day
Elle travaille *le* matin.	She works in the morning(s).
Ils viennent *le* jour.	They come during the day.
tous *les* vendredis	every Friday
toutes *les* semaines	every week
tous *les* deux jours	every second/other day

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2

but

Elle le rencontre trois fois par semaine.	She meets him three times a week.

Some examples with the seasons:

***L'*hiver est merveilleux.**	Winter is wonderful.
On y va *l'*été prochain.	We are going there next summer.

The article is omitted with **en: *en* hiver, *en* été, *en* automne** 'in winter, summer, autumn', but not in ***au* printemps** 'in spring'.

Some examples with dates and use of the article:

Nous sommes *le* mardi 11 décembre.	It's Tuesday, 11th December.
***le* 26 mai 1968**	26th May 1968

***Le* jeudi on va au marché.**	On Thursdays we go to (the) market. (every Thursday)
On se voit *le 7*.	See you on the 7th.

but no article

Nous sommes mardi.	It's Tuesday.
Il me le donnera jeudi.	He'll give it to me on Thursday.
lundi dernier	last Monday

Some examples with festivals, which are usually feminine:

à *la* Toussaint	at Hallowe'en/on All Saints' Day
à *la* Pentecôte	at Whitsun

but

***à* Noël**	at Christmas
***à* Pâques**	at Easter

(d) in certain expressions of price, pay, quantity and speed:

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Cela se vend à 30 euros *le* kilo.	That costs 30 euros a kilo.
Cela se vend à 2 euros cinquante *les* 100 grammes.	That costs 2 euros fifty (for) a hundred grammes.
Ce tissu coûte 500 euros *le* mètre.	This material is 500 euros a metre.

but

Il est payé à *l'*heure.	He is paid by the hour.
La voiture roulait à 100 km/h. (you would *say* **100 kilometres heure**)	The car was travelling at 60 mph.

or

Elle roulait à 80 à *l'*heure.	It was going at 50 mph.

(e) with names of towns and cities 'from, to/in' are expressed by **de, à:** 'from Paris' ***de* Paris,** 'to/in Paris' ***à* Paris**. But if the town or city is qualified by an adjective, the article is used: ***le* vieux Paris** 'the old part(s) of Paris' (see **49.10, 49.11**). The names of some towns and cities include the article as part of the name. In such cases the rules for **de, à** and the article (see **2**) are followed:

2

Il revient *du* Mans, *de La* Rochelle, *des* Echelles.	He is just back from Le Mans, La Rochelle, Les Echelles.
Elle habite *Le* Havre.	She lives in Le Havre.
Elle va *au* Havre.	She is going to Le Havre.
Il est *à La* Rochelle.	He is in La Rochelle.

With countries and regions the article is usually included if the name of the country is masculine singular, or masculine or feminine plural:

Il revient *des* Philippines.	He is just back from the Philippines.
Elle va *au* Portugal.	She is going to Portugal.

But when names of countries and regions are feminine and singular—and most of them are **-en** is used for 'to/in' and there is no article: **aller/demeurer *en* Allemagne, *en* Ecosse, *en* Charente** 'to go to/live in Germany, Scotland, the Charente'. **De** is used for 'from' and there is no article: **revenir *de* Russie, *d'*Espagne, *de* Provence,** 'to return from Russia, Spain, Provence'.

> **NOTE** If the town or country is qualified by an adjective, the article is used: ***la* Chine moderne** 'modern China'. The article is also used when expressing north, south, east and west: ***le* nord *de la* France** 'the north of France', ***le* sud *de l'*Angleterre** 'the south of England'.

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There is no precise pattern in some expressions. They simply have to be learned. Some examples:

les vins *de* France	the wines of France/French wines
l'histoire *de* France	the history of France/French history

(Many phrases have the pattern **de**+noun which is very similar to an adjective: **une écharpe *de* soie blanche** 'a white silk scarf', **une maison *de* campagne** 'a house in the country'.)

but

la géographie *de la* France	the geography of France/French geography
la capitale *de la* France	the capital of France/the French capital

and

le président *de la* République	the president of France/the French president

There is a rule of thumb for a few phrases: feminine countries—*no* article, masculine countries—*include* an article:

la reine *d'*Angleterre	the Queen of England
l'ambassade *d'*Autriche	the Austrian embassy

2

but

l'empereur *du* Japon	the Emperor of Japan
l'ambassade *du* Sénégal	the Senegalese embassy

(f) in titles, forms of address, and qualified proper nouns:

***le* général de Gaulle**	General de Gaulle
As-tu connu *le* Président Mitterrand?	Did you know President Mitterrand?
Voilà *le* docteur Knock.	Here/there is Doctor Knock.
M.*le* Président…	(Mr) President,…
Messieurs *les* délégués…	Delegates,…
***le* vieux M.Guiat**	old Mr Guiat
***la* petite Isabelle**	little Isabelle

But the article is normally omitted before a noun in apposition:

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le général de Gaulle, Président de la république	General de Gaulle, (the) President of France
Paris, capitale de la France	Paris, the capital of France

Articles are not used in titles such as **Elizabeth II** 'Elizabeth the Second', **Henri IV** 'Henry the Fourth': in French you would *say* **Elizabeth deux, Henri quatre**.

(g) with names of languages, use of the article is also variable, but it is normally omitted after **parler:**

Parlez-vous italien?	Do you speak Italian?
Il ne parle pas français.	He doesn't speak French.
Il est difficile de trouver un équivalent en anglais.	It is difficult to find an equivalent in English/an English equivalent.

but

Apprenez-vous *l'*espagnol à l'école?	Are you learning Spanish at school?
***L'*allemand est une langue compliquée.**	German is a complicated language.

Note the use of capital letters in English, but not in French, for names of languages. Capitals are used in French *only* if referring to a human being—whatever his/her nationality:

le Français, la Française	the Frenchman, the Frenchwoman
le français	(the) French (language)
français, française(s)	French (adjective)

(h) with meals, games and musical instruments:

pendant *le* dîner	during dinner
jouer *au* tennis	to play tennis
jouer *du* violon	to play the violin

(i) with other parts of speech to form nouns:

***les* pauvres**	the poor (people)
***le* manger et *le* boire**	food and drink

3

***les* blessés**	the injured
***les* dires**	statements, sayings
***le* savoir**	knowledge
***le* rouge**	red (colour), red wine
***le* primaire, *le* secondaire**	the primary, secondary level of education

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(j) note that if the nouns are qualified, by a relative clause for example, **de**+the definite article are used:

Il a bu une carafe *du* vin *qu'on a acheté en Australie*.
He drank a carafe of the wine we bought in Australia.
Un ciel couvert *des* nuages *qui annoncent une tempête*.
A sky full of storm clouds.

3
The indefinite article

The indefinite articles are **un(e), des, de/d'** 'a, an; some, any'. Indefinite articles are repeated in lists; their English equivalents are often omitted.

J'ai *un* hérisson et *un* chat à la maison.
I have a hedgehog and a cat at home.
Il y a *des* livres intéressants dans ce magasin.

There are some interesting books in this shop.
***Une* femme m'a téléphoné ce soir.**
A woman telephoned me this evening.
Ya-t-il *des* voitures devant la mairie?
Are there (any) cars in front of the town hall?

3.1 Differences between French and English indefinite articles

In certain contexts French and English articles are used differently.

(a) the article is used with abstract nouns qualified by an adjective:

***un* équilibre parfait**	perfect balance/equilibrium
avec *une* grande émotion	full of emotion

(b) the article is not used when talking about occupations, religions, nationality:

Il est professeur.	He is a teacher.
J'ai été nommé ministre.	I've been appointed minister.
Son fils est protestant.	His/her son is a Protestant.
Sa femme est écossaise.	His wife is Scottish.

but when the noun is qualified, the article *is* used:

Son cousin est *un* peintre célèbre.	His/her cousin is a famous painter.

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Note the alternative possibilities:

4

Il est député./*C'*est *un* député.	He is a member of the National Assembly.
Elle est italienne./*C'*est *une* Italienne.	She's (an) Italian.

(c) the article is also omitted when two nouns are in apposition:

Le gouvernement, représentant du peuple, n'a pas le droit de lui refuser un référendum.

The government, the representative of the people, does not have the right to refuse them a referendum.

(d) the article is used for emphasis:

Elle a *des* pieds!	What feet she's got!
Il fait *un* temps!	What amazing weather!