

Telling people what to do in French

The grammatical name for giving orders is the “imperative”. We are going to learn how to give a group of people orders.

You probably already know some orders in French as your teacher has been ordering you about for some time.

What has your teacher been telling you to do?



Écoutez la cassette!
Copiez la date!
Écrivez!
Parlez en français!



What do all of the commands have in common?

Look at how they are spelt. They all end in

How do you make your own imperatives in French?

You look up a verb in the dictionary. Verbs in French come in three types

Ending in –ER

Ending in –RE

Ending in –IR

You remove these endings

e.g. écouter (remove the –er) = écout + you add

for –ER verbs remove the –er and add –EZ

for –RE verbs remove the –re and add –EZ

for –IR verbs remove the –ir and add –ISSEZ

e.g. turn left	= (tourner) à gauche	= tournEZ à gauche
e.g. go down the road	= (descendre) la rue	= descendEZ la rue
e.g. finish the exercise	= (finir) l' exercice	= finISSEZ l' exercice

Exercise A

How would you say the following in French?

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| a) Watch less TV | = | moins la télévision. (regarder) |
| b) Eat more fruit | = | plus du fruit. (manger) |
| c) Finish the homework | = | les devoirs. (finir) |
| d) Cross the road | = | la rue. (traverser) |
| e) Turn left | = | à gauche. (tourner) |
| f) Continue straight on. | = | tout droit. (continuer) |
| g) Get on the bus. | = | dans le bus. (monter) |
| h) Stop the car. | = | la voiture. (arrêter) |

Exercise B

These instructions are for a soufflé recipe. Make them into commands.

- a) Preheat the oven = le four. (préchauffer)
- b) Chop the onions = les oignons (émincer)
- c) Beat the eggs = les oeufs (battre)
- d) Put the onion into a bowl = l' oignon dans un saladier (mettre)
- e) Add the oil & the beaten eggs = l' huile et les oeufs battus (ajouter)
- f) Mix well = bien. (mélanger)
- g) Butter an oven-proof dish = un moule. (beurrer)
- h) Pour the mixture into the dish = le mélange dans le moule. (verser)
- i) Put the dish into the oven = le moule au four. (mettre)

Exercise C

How would you say a negative command e.g. **Don't jump! Don't push!**

You place **NE** and **PAS** around the verb.

Example:

Sautez = **Jump!**
NE sautez PAS = **Don't jump!**

How would you say the following negative commands?

1. **Don't speak English!** (parler = to speak)
2. **Don't listen!** (écouter = to listen)
3. **Don't go to Greece!** (aller = to go)
4. **Don't close the window!** (fermer = to close)
5. **Don't stay at home!** (rester = to stay)
6. **Don't move!** (bouger = to move)

