

# tALK French

for

# Rusty

learners



Arnaud Barge

# Bienvenue!

Thank you for choosing this course book from Arnaud's Language Kitchen.

In this **Rusty** volume, I aim to refresh your knowledge of French through a series of simple grammar lessons and exercises, including reading comprehension in the shape of blog entries, recommendations and recipes. You will cover most of what you need to conduct basic conversations in French and communicate in everyday situations; this is why I will take you through three time frames, tackling the present tense, immediate future and imperfect. I will also walk you through the intricacies of nouns, determiners and adjectives.



Before I go any further, let me introduce you to Monsieur tALK. He is the 'lime on a bike' on the cover of this book, and our proud mascot. He will accompany you through the lessons in this book and help you go through the exercises. Look out for him; he will pop up with helpful advice when you least expect him.

I also hope you enjoy Monsieur tALK's little forays into France, flights of fancy and recipes. He won't pretend to be objective, he really will only talk about things he knows and loves.

Most of all, I hope you find the lessons and exercises useful.

So, without further ado, let's **tALK!**

Arnaud  
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## chapter 2: nouns

A **noun** is basically a label for things, places, events, ideas, etc. As in English, a noun can be common or proper, singular or plural. However, in French, nouns are also masculine or feminine.

**Common nouns** are for things, and therefore never start with a capital letter, unless they begin a sentence.

une fourchette

a fork



**Proper nouns** are for places and people, and always start with a capital letter.

la France

France

In French as in English, a noun can be marked for number, that is to say that it will be either **singular** (only one) or **plural** (more than one). You normally form the plural by adding an 's' at the end of the noun, although some of them end in 'x'.

un mur, deux murs

a wall, two walls

un chou, deux choux

a cabbage, two cabbages

Finally, and bizarrely, every noun in French has a grammatical **gender**, which has, more often than not, very little to do with biology, as even inanimate objects, like a chair or a knife are either **masculine** or **feminine**.



**la** chaise (feminine)

the chair

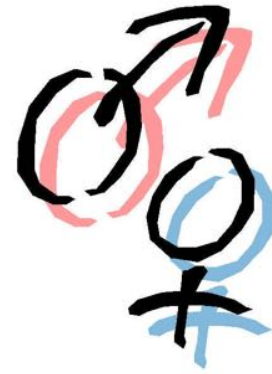
**le** couteau (masculine)

the knife

The arbitrary nature of gender assignation means that the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' are nothing more than two noun categories. It is, however, essential that you should learn the gender of a noun, alongside its spelling and pronunciation.

## 2.1 Gender of nouns

In French, all nouns have a gender, whether they name an object, an idea, a concept, an animal or a person. All nouns are either **masculine** or **feminine**. The article, or determiner, is usually a clue as to the gender of the noun that follows.



good

1.

### PEOPLE

When you talk about **people**, the gender is directly linked to the perceived sex of that person, although some exceptions do exist (some jobs only have a masculine version, for example, sorry ladies!). The **feminine** version of those nouns is usually formed by adding an 'e' to the masculine form.

un étudiant  
a male student

une étudiante  
a female student

Sometimes, the feminine ending is a little bit more dramatic:

un serveur  
a waiter

une serveuse  
a waitress

When a masculine noun already ends in 'e', its feminine version remains unchanged, and only the determiner or context will help you decide on its gender:

Je suis poète.

I am a poet.

### 2. ANIMALS

When you talk about **animals**, you'll have to take potluck, as genders have been assigned, seemingly, at random: some animals are always masculine (*un écureuil*, a squirrel), others are feminine (*une fourmi*, an ant).

However, just like in English, some animals have specific masculine and feminine forms:

le coq / la poule  
le boeuf / la vache  
le chat / la chatte  
le chien / la chienne

the cockerel / the hen  
the bull / the cow  
the cat  
the dog

### 3. INANIMATE OBJECTS

When you talk about things and abstract ideas, the minefield is even worse.

There are however some guidelines you can follow:



- words ending in **-age**, **-eau**, **-isme**, **-ment**, **-phone** and **-scope** are **masculine**

le fromage	cheese
le couteau	knife
le microscope	microscope

As a general rule, **foreign words** imported into French are also **masculine** : le tennis, un weekend, le canoë-kayak, etc. But *une pizza* is feminine.

- words ending in **-tion**, **-sion**, **-té**, **-ette**, **-ance**, **-ence**, **-ie**, **-ure**, **-ode/-ade/-ude** are **feminine**

la salade	salad
la télévision	television
la philosophie	philosophy

Weird and wonderful fact: *un squelette* ( a skeleton) is the only masculine noun ending in **-ette**.

### Exercice 3

Choose the correct **noun** from the box below to complete the sentences, and translate the sentences into English.

bus      poulet      Sophie      piscine      anniversaire  
fourchette      cerises      vin      film      croissants



1. J'ai un couteau, mais j'ai aussi besoin d'une \_\_\_\_\_, s'il vous plaît.
2. Mes fruits préférés, ce sont les \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. J'adore aller au cinéma pour voir un bon \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Ma soeur cadette s'appelle \_\_\_\_\_ , et elle a deux ans de moins que moi.
5. Je préfère le \_\_\_\_\_ rouge, c'est comme ça!
6. Pour mon \_\_\_\_\_ , je veux aller au restaurant.
7. Philippe va à la boulangerie pour acheter des \_\_\_\_\_ .
8. Comme plat principal, j'hésite entre le poisson et le \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Qu'en penses-tu?
9. Pour me déplacer dans Londres, je prends le métro ou \_\_\_\_\_ le  
\_\_\_\_\_, c'est moins cher qu'un taxi.
10. Pour garder la forme, elle va à la \_\_\_\_\_  
tous les jours.



# A l'épicerie

Can you match up the things I have to buy with their pictures?



- un litre de lait



- un kilo de farine

- un paquet de pâtes



- une barquette de fraises



- une boîte de sardines



- un pot de moutarde



- du sel et du poivre

- du café en grains



- une bouteille d'huile



- une douzaine d'oeufs



- une salade





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