FRENCH STUDY GUIDE

(Part 1 – Articles, Nouns, and Pronouns)

The Definite Article

The definite article in French has four forms and they all mean the.

Gender	*Singular*	*Plural*
Masculine	*le, l'*	*les*
Feminine	*la, l'*	*les*

Singular   Plural

le garçon – the boy   *les garçons* –the boys
l'arbre (m.) – the tree   *les arbres* – the trees
la jeune fille – the young girl   *les jeunes filles* – the young girls
l'actrice (f) – the actress   *les actrices* – the actresses

The article must be included with the noun, even when there is more than one in succession.
Le pain, le beurre, et le lait sont sur la table. (The bread, butter and milk are on the table).

When *à* or *de* are used in front of a definite article, the situation will change as follows

à + le = au   *de + le = du*
à + les = aux   *de + les = des*

But there is NO CHANGE with l' or la :

à + la = â la   *de + la + de la*

à l'hôtel   *de l'hôtel*
à l'aéroport   *de l'aéroport*
à la gare   *de la gare*

Use of definite article :

Before a proper name when qualified by title or adjective :

le président Bush
Monsieur le docteur

le professeur Lambert

Le Professeur Lambert est absent aujourd'hui.
Professor Lambert is absent today.

Before names of countries, large European islands, continents:
la France, la Corse, l'Australie

Before seasons:
le printemps, l'été, l'automne, l'hiver.

The Indefinite Article

In French it has three forms—***un***, ***une***, and ***des***—which are organized like this:

Gender	*Singular*	*Plural*
Masculine	*un*	*des*
Feminine	*une*	*des*

Singular   Plural

J'ai un frère / I have a brother   *J'ai des frères* / I have brothers
J'ai une sœur / I have a sister   *J'ai des sœurs* / I have sisters

The indefinite article is used when you want to say "a" or "an".

It can also be used as the numeral "one":

un livre = **a** book or **one** book
une orange = **an** orange or **one** orange

Use it in front of each noun in a series (even if in English you would not say it after the first noun in a series…see below):

J'ai un cahier, un crayon et une gomme. / I have a notebook, pencil, and eraser.

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The Partitive Article

The partitive article is used when you want to indicate a *part* of a whole. You form it by using *de* + the definite article (remember that….)

<div align="center">

de + le = <u>du</u>
de + la = <u>de la</u>
de + les = <u>des</u>

</div>

Again, you'll use it when you want to indicate part of something and it is usually translated as "some" or "any."

manger du pain, de la viande / to eat **some** bread, **some** meat
Avez-vous de l'argent ? / Do you have **any** money?

You'll also use it in what's call the simple affirmative, such as the following:

J'ai du café, de la viande, de l'eau, des bonbons. / I have some coffee, meat, water, and candies.

You'll use it, too, in the simple negative (but notice in negative you get rid of the "le" or "la"):

Je n'ai pas de café, pas de viande, pas d'eau, pas de bonbons / I don't have any coffee, meat, water and candies.

NOUNS

GENDER -- It means *masculine* or *feminine*.

All nouns in French are either masculine or feminine, even if they are simply things that have no life. Here are some pointers that may either help you or confuse you. I hope they help:

The ending of the noun is not always a sure way to determine its gender.

le garç*on* (masc.) but also la mais*on* (fem.)
l'ho*mme* (masc.) but also la fe*mme* (fem.)

Yikes !

To make matters worse, some nouns are feminine even when referring to a male person :

une personne (f.) / a person (whether male or female)
une victime (f.) / a victim (whether male or female)

But then, other nouns are masculine or feminine, depending on the person referred to

un artiste for a male artist
une artiste for a female artist
un dentiste (for a male) *une dentiste* (for a female).
un enfant (boy baby) *une enfant* (girl baby), etc.

BUT….

a number of nouns add "e" to the masculine ending to form the feminine:

un cousin / une cousine
un ami / une amie
un marchand / une marchande

some nouns make ending changings to go from masculine to feminine.
for example the change from *–eur* to *–euse*.

un vendeur (a salesman) / *une vendeuse* (a saleswoman)
un menteur (a male liar) / *une menteuse* (a female liar)
un chanteur (a male singer) / *une chanteuse* (a female singer)

some nouns add –sse to the masculine to form the feminine:
le comte (the count) / *la comtesse* (the countess)
le maitre (the master) / *la maitresse* (the mistress)
le prince (the prince) / *la princesse* (the princess)

but unfortunately, there are many exceptions to the above :

un acteur but *une actrice*
un directeur but *une directrice*. (dang!)

However, there are some typical endings that can tip off what is the gender of a noun (but remember, as with just about everything else, there ARE exceptions) :

Masculine

-age	garage	**Feminine**	
-ard	canard	-ance	alliance
-ement	arrangement	-ation	conversation
-eur	téléviseur	-erie	boulangerie
-ier	mobilier	-esse	politesse
-iment	bâtiment	-ette	sonnette
-isme	modernisme	-ière	poussière
-issage	apprentissage	-ion	télévision
-issement	agrandissement	-oire	mémoire
-oir	miroir	-té	beauté

-tion   question

NUMBER -- It means *singular* or *plural*.

In French (as in English) you generally add *–s* to the singular to form the plural:

le livre → *les livres*
la maison → *les maisons*
l'étudiant → *les étudiants*

But, guess what….there are exceptions:

Nouns ending in *–s*, *–x*, or *–z* in the singular do not change in the plural:

le fils → *les fils*   (the son, the sons)
la voix → *les voix*   (the voice, the voices)
le nez → *les nez*   (the nose, the noses)

Nouns ending in *–al* in the singular, change the *–al* to *–aux* in the feminine:

les cheval → *les chevaux*   (the horse, the horses)
le journal → *les journaux*   (the newspaper, the newspapers)
le canal → *les canaux*   (the channel, the channels)

Nouns ending in *–au*, *–eu*, *–eau*, or *–ou* in the singular generally add *–x* to form the plural:

le château → *les châteaux*   (the castle, the castles)
le feu → *les feux*   (the fire, the fires)
le bureau → *les bureaux*   (the desk, the desks)
le bijou → *les bijoux*   (the jewel, the jewels)

To make matters a little worse, there are some very irregular plurals:

le ciel → *les cieux*   (the heaven, the heavens)
l'œil → *les yeux*   (the eye, the eyes)
madame → *mesdames*   (madam, madams)
mademoiselle → *mesdemoiselles* (miss, misses)
monsieur → *messieurs*   (mister/sir, misters/sirs)
le travail → *les travaux*   (the work, the works)

The Pronouns

A pronoun is a word **used in place of** a noun. In English these are such words as:
I, you, he, she, it, we, y'all, they, me, him, her, us, them, and so on. French has them to.

We'll start with the French SUBJECT PRONOUS (pronouns used as subjects of sentences or clauses)

Subject pronouns in French			
je/j'	I	nous	we
tu	you (one person who is a friend, a family member, someone your own age, or a child)	vous	you (plural or formal for one person)
il	he	ils	they (all masculine or mixed group of males and females)
elle	she	elles	they (all female)
on	we, they/people in general, one		

Remember that the French drop the –e on je when it is followed by a vowel or a vowel sound. This is especially important because numerous verbs begin with vowels

j'ai – I have
j'espere – I hope
j'aime – I love
j'adore – I adore

DIRECT OBJECT PRONOUNS :

singular	**plural**
moi (me)	*nous* (us)
te (you-*familiar*)	*vous* (you…plural or singular formal)
le/la (him/her or it*)	*les* (them…whether feminine or masculine)

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* because all nouns are either masculine or feminine in French, then sometimes you will have to translate *le/la* as *it*—if, for example, the *le* or *la* refers to a thing that is not living, like a notebook or a table.

Remember, a direct object is a person, place or thing that receives the action of a verb. For example, in the sentence

I see him.

"**him**" is the direct object pronoun because it receives the action of the verb "**see**."

(What would be the subject pronounc in that sentence? That's right! "**I**")

Don't forget, too, that in French, usually, the direct object pronoun comes BEFORE the verb. So that setnence above would be written in French:

Je le vois.

Je = I
vois = see
le = him

How would you say
I see her.   (?)

That's right….change the *le* to *la*.

But remember: if you had just been talking about a notebook (*un cahier*) or a table (*une table*), then the *le* might refer to the notebook or the *la* might refer to the table, in which case you would translate the sentence:
I see it.

Now let's take a look at ***indirect object pronouns***….

These pronouns do NOT receive the direct action of a verb, but rather receive indirect action. Here's an example of a sentence that shows an indirect object:

I throw the ball to the boy.

In that setence the ball is the direct object because it is ***what*** I throw.
The INdirect object is the boy. He isn't what I throw but he's ***to whom*** I throw the ball.

For this reason, in the box below, all of the the indirect object pronouns are translated with "to" in front of them. But…it's not always "to." Sometimes it can be "in" or "for" or almost any other preposition.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2"><u>INDIRECT OBJECT PRONOUNS :</u></td></tr>
<tr><td><u>singular</u></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td><u>plural</u></td></tr>
<tr><td><i>me/m' (to me)</i></td><td><i>nous (to us)</i></td></tr>
<tr><td><i>te/t' (to you-familiar)</i></td><td><i>vous (to you…plural or singular formal)</i></td></tr>
<tr><td><i>lui (to him/to her or to it*)</i></td><td><i>leur (to them…whether feminine or masculine)</i></td></tr>
</table>

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So, let's look at our sentence again

I throw the ball to the boy.
Je jette le ballon au garçon.

So now, if I want to say
I throw the ball to him….

It is.

Je lui jette le ballon.

Interestingly, because lui covers all three third-person singluar pronouns (him, her, it), that sentence above could be translated :

I throw the ball to him (or her, or it).
(You would have to know what was said prior to the sentence to know what was being referred to.)