



LESSON 4

TALK TO PEOPLE: HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS, AND USE VERBS WITH “YOU” AND “HE/SHE.”

Bonjour ! Hi!

Now that you know some sentences you can use to talk about yourself, you might want to talk to someone else. A great way to create a connection or to make friends is by giving compliments. And asking questions!

For this, you'll need vocabulary and grammar. Ahh! French grammar is scary! Yes! ...But it's easier to learn and use vocabulary once you've got the basic grammar in place. I want you to quickly get to the point where you can express yourself and create connections, and not just pass tests about how many French nouns you know!

So let's dive in.



LEARNING GOALS

AT THE END OF THIS LESSON, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Ask people questions to get to know them a little better
- Give someone a nice compliment (or tell someone a compliment about someone else)
- Put together a wide range of useful sentences, using some basic, easy French verbs and conjugation



Subject pronouns

In French, the singular subject pronouns are:

Je - I as in **Je suis** - I am

Tu - you, at the singular - as in **Tu aimes le fromage**, you love cheese. *Tu* is informal, we use it with friends and family, or potential friends. Not for shopkeepers! We'll come back to this later.

Il / Elle mean "he" and "she." As in **Il aime le pain, elle aime le fromage** - He loves bread, she loves cheese. We also use "Il" for neutral or impersonal subjects, like the English "It"

On is the last singular subject pronoun. It's a colloquial and common way to say *We*, and the conjugation is much simpler! You'll find more about it in the Homework section if you want. For now, remember : **Je, Tu, Il, Elle. I, You, He, She**

Verbs and conjugation: talk about who you are, and what you have

To say anything in French, you'll need to learn some verbs - and their conjugation. I get it, this is scary! There are tons of tenses and special cases and stuff. But don't worry! We'll start small with the present tense for singular subjects. Many verbs actually follow some simple rules!

Today we're going to focus on four important French verbs.

Être

Let's start with **être**. It means "to be", remember? It's a very useful verb, but it's also very irregular, so you'll have to specifically learn its conjugation for each pronoun and tense.

For now the conjugation goes:

Je suis - I am

Tu es - You are.

Il est - He is



Elle est - She is.

On est - We are

As you can see, *Il*, *Elle* and *On* are followed by the same conjugation. This is true for all verbs, for any tense!

So now you can say:

Je suis canadienne - I am a Canadian woman.

Tu es polonaise. - You are a Polish woman.

Il est journaliste. - He's a journalist.

It's that simple!

You can add basically any adjective after "*Être*." It's an effective way to give compliments and make friends!

For instance, you can say:

Tu es jolie - You're pretty. Or **Tu es beau !** - You're handsome.

It might be useful for your next French holiday, who knows? :) By the way, you can notice that [**"eau" = "o"**] "eau" makes the sound "o".

Another compliment French people like to hear is **Tu es drôle !** - *You're funny.*

For someone who's nice and friendly, we say : **Elle est sympa / Il est sympa.** It's a very common French word, and a basic positive judgement.

A similar positive sentence is "This is nice" : **C'est sympa.** For instance, when someone does something nice for you, you can answer **Merci, c'est sympa** - *Thank you, this is nice.* Or when you're in a nice setting, like a good bar or a show with good music, you can give your opinion safely with "**C'est sympa !**"

Avoir

Now let's get to our second most used verb in French: it's **avoir**, to have. It's very irregular too. Learning the conjugation of **Être** and **avoir** is an important symbolic step for French children at school - it's the key to our language!

So it goes:



J'ai - I have.

Tu as - You have.

Il a / Elle a - He has, she has.

We use it for material stuff, like **un ticket de métro**, a metro ticket, or **une voiture**, a car, but also for more general stuff like **un problème**, a problem, or even **faim**, hunger.

J'ai faim. - I'm hungry. → This can be a useful sentence! We don't use *être* to say "I'm hungry." In French, we literally "*I have hunger.*" It feels a bit more like something that happens to us rather than an inside feeling. By the way, we also say **J'ai froid**, I'm cold or "I have coldness", and **J'ai chaud**, I'm too hot, "*I have warm.*"

Tu as un ticket de métro. - You have a metro ticket

Elle a une voiture. - She has a car.

Il a un problème - He has a problem.

Can you try to mix and match these sentences? Repeat after me, and guess what they mean.

Elle a faim. J'ai une voiture. Il a un ticket de métro. Tu as un problème.

You can add basically any material noun after "*Avoir*"... And we're going to learn some more examples later!

But for now, you can use "*Avoir*" to give a compliment that will make French people love you at first sight. You just need to say: **Tu as raison !** - *You're right!*

French people generally love debating and being contrarian... So it's a delightful surprise when someone is ready to say "*Tu as raison*"!

Verbs and conjugations: what you like and what you want

Aimer

Our third verb is one you've already used.



It's **aimer**, to love. It's a beautiful word, and it's also our first *regular* verb!

It's easy to conjugate: it sounds the same for all singular subjects!

J'aime - I love.

Tu aimes - You love.

Elle aime - She loves

You might have noticed it already, but for "tu", there's always a silent "s" at the end of the verb.

You can love many things, or people:

J'aime le camembert - I love camembert cheese.

Tu aimes le vin. - You love wine.

Elle aime Pierre. - She loves Pierre.

You don't need a lot of vocabulary to use "*aimer*". Two adverbs can go a long way:

J'aime bien means "I like it." When you taste a new strange French dish, for instance, and you find it weird but tasty, you can simply say "**J'aime bien**".

J'aime beaucoup means "I like it a lot." Don't be afraid of the silent letters!

Beaucoup - it's only two syllables! When you taste a very good French dish, or you find a painting that speaks to you in the Louvre museum, you can say: "**J'aime beaucoup !**"

Vouloir

Finally, our fourth verb is "*to want*". It goes like this:

Je veux - I want.

Tu veux - You want.

Il veut - He wants.

The silent letters change, but it sounds the same!

What you want and what you love can be very similar things. You can use them with nouns, for instance:

Elle aime ta voiture. - She likes your car.



Elle veut ta voiture. - She *wants* your car.

Tu aimes mes chaussures - You like my shoes.

Tu veux mes chaussures. - You *want* my shoes.

Or you can use them with other verbs!

Tu veux voyager - You want to travel.

Elle aime voyager - She loves travelling.

J'aime manger ! - I *love* to eat.

Je veux manger - I want *to eat*.

Ask a question in French - It's easy!

So now you can affirm who you are, what you have, what you want, and what you like. That's basically half of having a conversation! The other half is asking questions, to get the other person's point of view.

Luckily, it's very easy to ask a question in everyday spoken French. Just make an affirmation, and add a question mark.

Je veux manger. Tu veux manger ? - I want to eat. Do you want to eat?

J'aime le fromage. Tu aimes le fromage ? - I like cheese. Do you like cheese?

Now, can you guess what these questions mean?

Tu as faim ?

Il est beau ?

Tu aimes mes chaussures ?

There are other ways to ask questions, but you don't need them right now! Adding a question mark to an affirmation is how we really ask questions in our everyday life.

If you want to go deeper, you can find alternative ways to ask questions in the Homework section, and in the written table with all the words, verbs and conjugations for this lesson.



By the way, we say **une question** (a question). “The answer” is **la réponse** (“the answer”)

And “To ask a question” is **poser une question** (to ask a question.)

Poser is a verb with several meanings, but it has the same conjugation as “**aimer**”. For the three persons of the singular, it ends with “e, es, and e” respectively:

Je pose, tu poses, il pose.

Poser and *Aimer* both end in *-er*. The regular French verbs that end in *-er* are called “the first group” of verbs. They’re the most common French verbs, and they all share the same conjugation!

We’ll see other useful “first group” verbs in the next lessons, such as “**acheter**” - to buy, or **payer** - to pay.