28th ed.

Peter's Pragmatic Guide to Idiomatic English

Rapid solutions
for French-speaking students
to common difficulties in
speaking and writing English

USE BOOKMARKS TO NAVIGATE

Signs and abbreviations used in this handbook

*	an asterisk in front of an example indicates, as in linguistics, that it is not acceptable English. Examples are printed in light sans serif.
✷	the 'explosion' flags a linguistic situation that may lead to serious misunderstanding. It means 'Handle with care!'
☞	the manicule (a pointing hand) flags an exception.
|	the vertical bar separates different examples, and
/	the slash separates alternatives *within* an example.
AmE	American English
BrE	British English
cf.	confer, meaning 'compare with'.
FA	signals *faux amis* ('false friends').
inv.	invariable; qualifies a noun that has the same form in the plural as in the singular.
q.v.	(*quod vide*) is a cross-reference meaning 'see the entry for this word'.
s.o.	someone
s.t.	something
vs	(*versus*) means 'as opposed to' or 'contrasted with'.

Definitions

A **transitive** verb takes a direct object.
An **intransitive** verb does not take an object.
A **pronominal** adjective goes in front of a noun.
A **predicate** adjective cannot be used in front of a noun.

Please note

This booklet presents the rules and conventions of modern educated BrE. As no one speaks or writes correctly all of the time, you may hear and read many departures from it in Britain.

Feedback

Comments, corrections and suggestions for improving this handbook are always welcome. Contact me by email: gpeter.winnington@gmail.com

28th edition, November 2022

ISBN 978-2-9700654-1-8

USE BOOKMARKS TO NAVIGATE

British vs American English

From the moment English-speaking immigrants began to settle in North America, their language evolved independently of Britain. They coined new words for the unfamiliar animals and objects they saw, and the meaning of old words evolved to reflect their new way of life. Their accent changed too, so that by the end of the eighteenth century the few Americans who visited Britain were immediately identifiable by their speech. It grated disagreeably on the ears of the British; the unfamiliar words seemed equally uncouth, although some of them, like *gotten* and *cookie*, were in fact British words that had largely fallen out of use. American English sounded 'wrong' to educated speakers, yet many 'American' words were nonetheless adopted.

Right from the start, a section of British society deplored the 'Americanization' of their language and loudly expressed their disapproval. That sentiment continues today, except that words like *influential*, *lengthy*, *reliable*, *talented*, and *tremendous*, which were once vigorously denounced – Coleridge thought *talented* was 'vile and barbarous' – have now been assimilated, along with thousands of other words from other languages. Yet we still hear that 'Americanisms are killing the English language' (the title of a BBC Culture programme in September 2017), and books with titles like *That's the Way It Crumbles: The American Conquest of the English Language* by Matthew Engel (2017), continue to appear.

It is largely young people who embrace the novelty of Americanisms, along with American fashions, films, and popular culture. As they grow up, their choices get assimilated, while their parents and grandparents continue to inveigh against the 'invasion'. (Britain having no authority like the *Académie* in France to outlaw foreign influences, the process goes quite unchecked.) This animosity is not reciprocated: Americans have no corresponding rejection of British English. This is why students of English as a foreign language (EFL) will find that if they embrace American pronunciation, American spelling and American vocabulary, they are liable to be frowned upon by educators in Britain and praised for their knowledge of 'English' by all comers in America. Yet they need to be familiar with both varieties of English, and (at any rate when they write) stick to one or the other.

The aim of PPG is to resolve the difficulties regularly encountered by French-speaking students of EFL. In doing so, it regularly has to confront this BrE / AmE opposition. It favours BrE, because that is the language of English literature; you have to know British English to appreciate British poetry, for instance. It also points out some relevant differences between BrE and AmE, warning you in particular of possibilities of misunderstanding. That said, it recognizes that BrE is spoken by only a tiny minority compared with AmE and all the other varieties of English that are spoken around the world. GPW

@ Long before it was adopted for email addresses, the '**at**' symbol (*l'arobase*) expressed the idea of 'at the price (or rate) of', e.g. 3 books @ £4 each.

A- WORDS

Adjectives and adverbs formed with the prefix **a-** are predicate, that is, they must follow the group they qualify. A man alone | They think alike. They include aback, aboard (not as a preposition of course, as in to climb aboard a yacht, but as in 'We have a stowaway aboard!'), abroad, ablaze *(en flammes)*, adrift *(à la dérive)*, afield, afire *(en feu)*, agape *(bouche bée)*, ahoy ('Ship ahoy!'), ajar *(entr'ouvert)*, alive, aloft, aloof, amiss, aside (q.v.), askew, asleep, awake, aware, awry (see silent **w**), etc.

- Adding the prefix **a-** to certain verbs makes them less concrete and more metaphorical. **rise** (stand or get up) > **arise** (e.g. the symbolic act of rising from a kneeling position); **rouse** (wake up) > **arouse** (for emotions); **wake** (from sleep) > **awaken** (memories).

☞ **A- WORDS** cannot generally be used as nouns. See **ADJECTIVES**

- On the other hand, **ado** [ə'du:] – familiar from Shakespeare's play, *Much Ado about Nothing* – *is* a noun, meaning *agitation, noise, bustle, coming-and-going,* or simply *fuss.* The title is usually translated as *Beaucoup de Bruit pour rien,* but in fact *Ado* would be better rendered by *remue-ménage.*
- In poetry, the prefix **a-** may be added to a verb to supply an extra syllable in the line. If anything, it reinforces the iterative or durative **ASPECT** of the verb.

ABBREVIATIONS

BrE usage omits the full stop when abbreviations end with the final letter of the complete word they represent. So **Mr** and **Dr** do not need stops as both the words and the abbreviations end with **r**, whereas **Prof.** (Professor), **etc.** (*et cetera*), **i.e.** (*id est,* 'that is to say'), and **e.g.** (*exempli gratia,* 'for example') do need them.

Under the influence of AmE practice, however, many editors (q.v.) now use stops after all abbreviations that include lower-case letters (see **CAPITAL LETTERS**).

☞ The honorific **Miss** is not treated as an abbreviation. See **HONORIFICS**

ability

- **to be (un)able to do s.t.** is usually due to physical causes, whereas
- **to be (in)capable of doing s.t.** is usually mental, on grounds of morality (q.v.) or scruple.
- The **ability to do s.t.** is a quality possessed by both able and capable persons, whereas the **capacity for s.t.** suggests quantity rather than quality. So while an **inability to do s.t.** is merely a handicap, **incapacity** suggests some moral or

intellectual failing. Tess's capacity for suffering is enormous, and for most of the novel Angel is quite incapable of perceiving it. At the moment when he might have been more receptive, she is unable to contact him.

ADJECTIVES

In English the adjective is invariable, whatever the gender, number, or case of the noun it qualifies, including compound adjectives with numbers; thus you could read a five-hundred-page novel about an eighteen-year-old heroine. (Note the use of **HYPHENS** in compound adjectives.)

See also **TIME** and **SPACE**

☞ A unique exception to the gender rule is **blond-e**, which 'agrees' with the human gender of the following noun. A blond man. A blonde girl.

☞ Nouns used as adjectives are invariable, except for **man** and **woman** which 'agree' with the plural: girl students but men and women students. Of course, an adjectival noun may in itself be plural: the admissions office.

☞ **sport** as an adjective and **overseas** as both adjective and adverb are always 'plural': a sports car / day / jacket | an overseas appointment.

- Adjectives and participles used as nouns are invariable: the young and the old | the quick, the dying, and the dead | the working poor | the unaware.
- When several adjectives precede a noun, place them in this order: subjective evaluation, size, age, appearance (e.g. shape, colour), origin, material, purpose + noun. A lovely, small, antique, pear-shaped, brown, French, earthenware, wine jug. Set phrases may depart from this 'rule': see **REDUPLICATION**.

ADJECTIVES and PAST PARTICIPLES

Many English adjectives and similar past participles having rather different meanings correspond to a single word in French. As a general rule, the adjective qualifies a state, and the past participle a state *resulting from a (recent) action*. This is the distinction between appropriate and appropriated; considerate and considered; corrupt and corrupted; definite and defined; elaborate and elaborated; incomplete and uncompleted; melted and molten; open and opened; opposite and opposed; polite and polished; requisite and required; resolute and resolved; rotten and rotted; welcome and welcomed, etc.

- Note that the final **-ate** of adjectives, nouns and adverbs is pronounced with a schwa /ə/, e.g. separate ['sepərət / 'seprət], whereas it is a diphthong in all **-ate** verb forms, e.g. separated ['sepəreɪtɪd]. So although their *spelling* is the same, their different *function* is signalled by pronunciation, e.g. a delegate ['delɪgət] vs to delegate ['delɪgeɪt]. See **z/s**

ADJECTIVES ending -ed

We all know the rule that past participles ending in -ed are pronounced /ɪd/ after a /d/ or a /t/. A few past participles always end in /ɪd/ when they are used as adjectives:

aged ['eidʒɪd] old, elderly. 'I saw an aged aged man, / A-sitting on a gate' — Lewis Carroll. (See **a- WORDS)**

beloved, blessed, dogged (tenacious; determined), **legged** (as in a three-legged dog) and

learned, which is a special case because it is pronounced ['lɛːnɪd] when it means *erudite* but ['lɛːnd] when it qualifies something that has actually been learned, like a learned response or learned behaviour.

- In the past, some of these adjectives were printed (especially in poetry) with a grave accent, e.g. blessèd, to indicate that the -ed should be pronounced and counted as an extra syllable in the line.
- A few adjectives that look like past participles – some actually deriving from long-forgotten verbs – do the same. The most common ones are:

crooked ['krʊkɪd] bent or twisted out of shape; dishonest; illegal. A crooked business deal. (A crook is a person who is dishonest, a minor criminal.)

jagged ['dʒægɪd] sharp and irregular (*en dents de scie*). Mind, the jagged edges will cut your fingers.

naked ['neikɪd] not wearing any clothes (q.v.) *(nu)*

ragged ['rægɪd] badly-torn clothes, just rags (*haillons*); a ragged beggar; or (of clothes) *ayant des bords effilés*

rugged ['rʌgɪd] qualifying irregular features of mountains, or a face; hard-wearing, longlasting

wicked ['wɪkɪd] mischievous, naughty or (in a religious context) evil; and

wretched ['retʃɪd] (see **w**) miserable, forlorn, heartbroken, sorrowful, or even grieving; base, contemptible, dishonourable, or execrable *(misérable)*.

ADJECTIVES in –IC and –ICAL

As a general rule, prefer the **-ic** form of adjectives derived from nouns. Most of those based on nouns ending **–ism**, like **paternalistic**, **realistic** and **idealistic**, **pessimistic** and **optimistic**, exist only in this form.

- Some adjectives, however, such as **ethical, hysterical, logical, practical, sceptical, statistical** and **tactical**, exist only in the **-ical** form, because there is (or used to be, e.g. *practic*) a corresponding **NOUN ENDING –IC**.
- The adjectives of all the **-ology** sciences end with the **-ical** form only.
- A few adjectives exist in both the **-ic** and **-ical** forms. Consider the first as the 'true' or 'direct' form, and the second as only indirectly related to the concept in question. What a tragic decision! (It had a truly tragic consequence: people died.) Oh, he and his comical manner! (I find his behaviour

funny, but it is not something out of a comedy (q.v.). It was his economic policy that dictated his choice of an economical car. Here **economic** relates to money; **economical** relates to running costs, primarily fuel consumption, and thus only indirectly to economics.

- With **classic** and **classical** a convenient rule is to think of what is (or used to be) taught in class. Thus **classic** qualifies an instance that is often cited in the classroom (a classic approach to fiction-writing), whereas **classical** relates to traditional Greek and Roman culture, as in classical literature and classical mythology, or to whatever preceded a modern form: you might listen to a classic piece of classical music. Newtonian physics is classical physics.
- The case of **history** is very clear: a historic event (like the battle of Waterloo) made history. A historical novel is merely situated in the past.
- Actions that are **politic** seem 'sensible and judicious in the circumstances', whereas **political** relates to 'the state or government or public affairs of a country' (NODE); it is only optatively sensible or judicious.

admission (and **to admit**) can be used both for *confession* (He admitted that he had committed the robbery, and on the strength of this admission he was jailed for three years.), and for

- (the concept of) *permission to enter:* ADMISSION FOR TICKET HOLDERS ONLY (sign at a concert), but the noun **admittance** is only for the *physical act of entering*. The sign NO ADMITTANCE means ENTREE INTERDITE.

after having done s.t. is a Latinate structure, heavier than English generally requires. Use either **having done s.t.** or **after doing s.t.**

all + **SPACE** and **TIME**

all + a preposition emphasizes continuity. Compare She spilled coffee on her dress; she spilled coffee down her dress and She spilled coffee all down her dress. The first might cause a localized stain; the second something longer; the third involves the entire length.

- Use (**all**) **along** with measurable, *horizontal* objects: wild flowers were growing all along the banks of the river. **All over** adds the notion of 'everywhere-on-the-surface' of the object. Ants were climbing all over the flowers.
- **all … long** is used with monosyllabic units of time: **day**, **night**, **week**, **month**, **year.** It's been raining all day long! Use **throughout** (q.v.) or **for the whole** with **morning, afternoon, evening, winter, decade**, etc.
- **all through** enters or penetrates the associated object or fills a unit of time: all through the city / the day. For greater emphasis use **throughout** (q.v.), which is to be preferred with objects that are not spatially measurable. Jane Austen uses this technique throughout the novel.

all the vs **the whole**

As a general rule, use **all the** with uncountable nouns (all the poetry), and **the whole** with countable ones in the singular (the whole poem).

- **all (of) the** with plural, countable nouns (all the poems) means 'each and every one of the [noun]'.
  See also **all** + **SPACE** and **TIME**, and **throughout**

all what? can only be a question: *Tout quoi?*

In French, it is possible to add *tout* in front of *ce que* without changing anything else in the sentence. In English, however, **what** has to change to **that** when it is preceded by **all.** *Ce qu'il a dit était sensé:* What he said made good sense. But *Tout ce qu'il a dit était sensé:* All that he said made good sense. For this, you can often use **everything** instead, and you may have to do so on occasion to avoid the limitative meaning of **all:** That's all I know.

altération and ***altérer*** are false friends: **alteration** and **to alter** are perfectly neutral, like **modification** and to **modify** or **change.** To render the idea of 'to change for the worse' use to **spoil, taint, mar, adulterate,** or **impair** (depending on the context).

ancien (FA)

Ancient qualifies something that is very old, dating from classical antiquity or earlier. So *mon ancienne amie* has to be **my ex-girlfriend. Former** is also possible, but more formal: a former President (see **sometime**). For *mon ancien prof d'anglais,* say 'the English teacher I had at school/university.'

ANGLICIZED FRENCH WORDS (aka French loan words)

As French words like *café* and *régime* pass into English, they tend to lose their accents, except to distinguish them from English words with the same spelling, e.g. **exposé** (vs to expose), **lamé** (vs lame), **résumé** (vs to resume), or to indicate their pronunciation: **cliché, fiancé(e), roué** ['ruːeɪ]. French loan words ending -et – ballet, bouquet, gourmet, valet – also end with /eɪ/: no /t/.

The **ANGLO-SAXON GENITIVE**

Reserve the possessive form (i.e. an apostrophe+*s* after a singular noun and irregular plurals, and *s*+apostrophe after regular plurals) for animate(d) nouns. This includes towns, countries, noun phrases (the King of Spain's daughter), objects to which animation is traditionally attributed (the river's edge | the ship's captain) and a few set phrases like a stone's throw. (When the object is not considered to 'own' the complement, the possessing noun is often turned into an adjective: the group leader rather than the group's leader. Sometimes both forms are possible.)

- Intrinsic qualities of a piece of writing may also be expressed in this way: the poem's structure | the book's title | the article's conclusion.

- The apostrophe+*s* may also be descriptive, as in a ladies' hairdresser (i.e. *for* ladies), and the ladies' or the men's (i.e. toilet). (In the past, *the men's* was often shortened to the gents, signed simply GENTS, i.e. for gentlemen, with no apostrophe. Today, people tend to refer to 'male' and 'female' toilets, which are identified by pictographs rather than words.)
- The designation of shops, churches, and places of abode uses this form elliptically, omitting the following noun: the butcher's, the baker's (i.e. their respective shops); St Paul's; and Tom's or Mary's (i.e. their homes).
- For periods of time, see **TIME** & **SPACE**; for values, see **worth**.
- Distinguish between Emma's description (what she said in describing s.t. or s.o.) and the description of Emma (how s.o. else described her). The same applies to her drawing (of Harriet), a drawing of her (by s.o. else, depicting Emma), and a drawing of hers (i.e. one of many drawings by her, depicting subjects unknown), the possessor being written *without* an apostrophe when it's a pronoun (hers, its, ours, yours, theirs), and *with* when it's a proper name: Mr Elton admired a drawing of Emma's.

The **ANGLO-SAXON (IDIOMATIC) PLURAL**

When a number of individuals each possess or manipulate a countable object, that object is expressed in the plural. With their guns in their hands, they drove off in their cars. Each has only one gun in one hand and drives one car, but English sees several people, guns, hands and cars.

ANIMATION

French likes to animate abstractions and inanimate nouns, often with reflexive verbs: *La grande route étendait sans en finir son long ruban de poussière* — Madame Bovary | *Les élections se sont déroulées dans le calme* | *Les vers suivants se présentent* …. English does not, prefering concrete nouns and active verbs. The elections passed off without incident | The following lines are …

as or **like**?

- **as** is a *conjunction*, introducing a group with a verb, a prepositional phrase, or an adverb. So Donne plays with words as often as he can, rather as Shakespeare does, in his plays as in his sonnets.

  Rule 1: If there's a verb in the group that follows, or just an adverb, or a preposition, it must be **as**. Resist the temptation to infer a verb where none is expressed. Do as I do!
- **like** is a *preposition* and as such can introduce only a noun or pronoun. Like Shakespeare, Donne plays with words.

  In literary essays, shun the colloquial use of **like** as a conjunction.

  Rule 2: If there's no verb, use **like** + (pro)noun, but—
- **as** is also a *preposition* meaning *en tant que* or *dans le rôle de*. Did you enjoy Johnny Depp as Jack Sparrow? Thus we find minimal pairs like He went as a

soldier (*comme soldat*: he had joined the Army) and He went like a soldier (*comme un soldat:* he was not a soldier but he was behaving like one). Rule 3: if a noun follows, without a verb, decide whether you mean 'similar to' (**like**) or 'in the role of' (**as**).

- *tel que* may be rendered by **such as**, or **like** if no verb follows (Rule 2).

aside

When a character in a play or film says s.t. that only the audience (and not the other characters present) can supposedly hear, it is an **aside**.

ASPECT

'**Aspect** is the way that a verb group shows whether an activity is continuing, is repeated, or is completed' (COBUILD). Types of aspect include: **inchoative** (beginning); **iterative** (repeated); **durative** (continuing or long-lasting); **punctual** (of minimal duration, brief); and **terminative** (ending or completed).

Applying Aspect to Lexis

Noticing the sound of English words can help you choose them.

Durative verbs and nouns tend to have a long vowel sound, as in boom, gleam, roar and weep, or a diphthong: glow, glide, groan, howl, and shine.

Punctual verbs and nouns tend to have a short vowel: bang, flash, glint, pop, and tap.

Iterative verbs and nouns tend to have a double consonant followed by *-er* (glimmer, glitter, clatter, stammer, totter and flicker), or a double consonant plus *-le* (giggle, rattle, ripple, and wobble); they may end with *-ble* (dribble, grumble, rumble, tumble), or *-kle* (chuckle, crackle, sparkle, and twinkle).

Thus we have contrasts like the *blaze* of a campfire as opposed to a *flash* of lightning. Of course, if the single *flash* is rapidly repeated, it becomes a *flicker* of lighting. A single *flash* is accompanied by a *clap* or *crash* of thunder, whereas *flickers* may come with a durative *roll* or a more distant iterative *rumble* of thunder.

More contrasts: impatient horses (and angry children) *stamp* their feet, whereas an old person tends to *shuffle*, *totter*, and sometimes *stumble*. If you catch your foot, you might *trip*; on ice you might inadvertently *slip,* or you may go and enjoy longer-lasting (durative) *sliding* or *skating*.

Water may *drip* in little *drops* (*plink; plonk!*) or *bubble up* from under a rock with a *gurgling* sound, gently *flow* in a steady *stream*, and occasionally *splash* over rocks. Or it may *spout* (like a geyser), or more unexpectedly *spurt*.

Make a habit of noticing aspect: it will improve both your understanding and your ability to express yourself clearly in English.

assister

- To **assist** s.o. is to **help** them (see **PRONOUNS** for this use of *them*); for the noun, use **assistance** or **help.** Can I be of any assistance / help?
- ***assister à*** is a FA. When the subject's presence at an event is *voluntary*, as at a ceremony or performance of some kind, use **to attend** (q.v.) (a concert | a funeral); when it is *fortuitous*, use **to witness** (an accident).
- *Dans ce roman nous assistons à* is a dangerous metaphor to have in mind when analysing literature because it implies that you are a passive witness of an active text. Think rather that reading is creative; the text is nothing but inert little black marks on white paper until you start to read it and bring it to life in your mind. No other person experiences the text in exactly the way you do. So use some other expression, even as neutral as This novel contains….

at first suggests that things are different subsequently; it is opposed to **later. First** (or **firstly**) by itself indicates merely the first (in order of importance or time) without implying (see ***impliquer***) subsequent change.

at and **in** with **the beginning** and **the end**

In the beginning refers to *all* time, as in the Bible: In the beginning *(au commencement)* was the Word. Use **at the beginning** for a story or poem.

- Distinguish between what happens **at the end** (*à la fin*) of a story and what happens **by the end**, i.e. before the end is reached. **In the end** adds suspense (*finalement* – see also ***enfin***). Contrast They all get married at the end (i.e. in the final scene) with the relief of They do get married in the end.

  NB **at the end** may be followed by a defining phrase ('of the novel', for instance), but **in the end** (being an adverb of time) cannot.
- For **middle**, see ***milieu***. See also **since** vs **from**

at and in the same time (see also **DEFINITE ARTICLE**, and **NUMBERS**)

Distinguish between s.t. that happens **at the same time** as s.t. else, i.e. **simultaneously** (Don't speak at the same time as her!), and two things that are done **in the same time**, i.e. within the same **space of time** or **duration:** We ran the marathon in the same time (she last year and me this year).

at, in and **on** in text analysis

Use: **at** a certain **line or page** for a *fixed* point in the work. I stopped reading at page 224. Not used for spans, i.e. you cannot say *at lines 10–15.

- **in** to indicate things *within* **lines, chapters, acts, and scenes**. A change of rhythm in chapter 24. Used for spans: as can be seen in lines 10–15.

- **on** a certain **line** or **page** to locate something *dynamically* within the work. The new chapter begins on p.123. | The Invocation ends on line 26. May be used for spans, but we tend to say on pages 24, 25, and 26 instead.

attend (FA)

To **attend** plus a direct object means to be present at a social or professional gathering of some kind (All the staff attended the meeting), or to go regularly to an institution: What school did you attend? (This is quite formal.)

- To **attend to** s.t. or s.o. is to **pay attention.** You're not attending! *Listen* to what I'm saying, please.
- To **attend to s.t.** may also mean **to deal with it**, especially with care and attention. I know this paragraph needs attending to; I'll revise it later.

both vs **the two**

Generally speaking, **both** serves to *merge* the two elements in question (or stress their similarity), and **the two** to *differentiate* them (in quality or in time, for instance). The heroines of *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice* both marry the man they love, yet the two novels are quite different in tone. Use **the two** when making a *rapprochement:* The two men are similar.

to bury (*enterrer*) is pronounced ['berɪ], like *berry*; **burial** (*enterrement*) is ['berɪəl].

CAPITAL LETTERS (also called 'upper case', as opposed to 'lower case')

All proper nouns (including religions, languages, nationalities, and the Christian God), the days of the week and the months of the year, and all adjectives derived from them take an initial capital letter. A Buddhist Chinaman speaking Mandarin. A Sunday driver. See also **HONORIFICS**

- The seasons and abstractions take capital letters only when personified. Both Time and Death are generally male figures in English literature.
- For the titles of books, articles, chapters and poems, and the titles of works of art in general, including films, operas, ballets, paintings, and pieces of sculpture, use a capital for the initial letter of the first word, and for the initial letter of all subsequent nouns and adjectives, personal pronouns, verbs, and adverbs. After the first word, function words (aka 'grammatical words': articles, conjunctions, prepositions, etc.) are not given capitals: *Of Mice and Men* | *The War of the Worlds* | *All's Well That Ends Well.*
- Capital letters are familiarly known as 'caps', and words ALL IN CAPITAL LETTERS are in 'running caps'. Don't use running caps for emphasis in an essay.

chance is a FA. The French word corresponds to **luck** in English, and the English word to ***une occasion*** in French, in the sense of **a fortuitous opportunity**.

chercher may be to **search for** s.t. that is lost; to **seek** s.t. new or a solution; to **try to think** of a name or an idea; or to **look for**, or **try to find**, any of these.

CIRCUMLOCUTIONS

English is happy to repeat names or titles far more frequently than French, which seeks to avoid repetition, preferring *ce dernier* or *le romancier* to repeating a writer's name. For Fowler, 'it is the second-rate writers, those intent rather on expressing themselves prettily than on conveying their meaning clearly' (*Modern English Usage*) who are seduced (q.v.) by circumlocutions like 'the writer' or 'her novel'.

Worse, they can be misleading. If you write 'Conrad's character' for 'Marlow', you might appear to be referring to *the personality of Conrad the novelist*, not *the character that he created*. Similarly, if you write 'the poet' when discussing Keats, your reader may think that you are now referring to all poets in general, not just Keats. So repeat 'James' or 'Dickens' ten times rather than mislead by switching to 'the novelist', for instance.

See also **NAMES**

cite vs **quote**

You **quote** actual words (from a text) but **cite** only the title or author. She cited Shakespeare as a case in point, but couldn't quote him. See also **refer** vs **reference**

COLLECTIVE NOUNS

Nouns designating institutions and groups of people may take a singular *or* a plural verb, depending on whether they are considered *collectively* or *individually*. They include: army, audience, committee, crowd, enemy, family, government, group, parliament, police, public, staff, team, and unit.

Singular and plural may be used within the same sentence: A television crew was chased when they tried to interview people in the street —*The Times*.

- This dual aspect affects the relative pronoun; use **who** for the persons concerned, and **which** for the unit or institution: a couple who were arguing | a couple which was walking hand-in-hand. See also **PRONOUNS**
- Fractions and proportions also enjoy dual aspect: The majority was in favour of Brexit; a minority were not. | One third of all nurses in the UK are foreigners. | Of the objects found floating on the ocean, only one fifth were not made of plastic.

comedy is either uncountable (the theatrical genre) or countable (a play of this genre). (See **COUNTABLE** vs **UNCOUNTABLE**)

- *Le comique* is usually **comedy** when it is a concept (comedy of character or situation), and '(what we find) funny or laughable' when we refer to a specific instance of it. He could not see the funny side of / what was so funny about his mistake: *le comique de son erreur*. See also **laugh**
- For the adjectives **comic** (relating directly to comedy) and **comical** (something that we find funny) see **ADJECTIVES** in **–ic** and **–ical**.
- An actor of comedy is **a comedian**, of tragedy **a tragedian** [trəˈdʒiːdɪən] – the two words rhyme. *Un comédien* is a FA: it's just **an actor**.

- **A comic** is a magazine containing cartoon strips for children; it is also a stand-up comedian (telling jokes and funny stories).

compare

Use **compared with** for things that are similar or when you want to establish similarity; **compared to** for quite dissimilar objects or for distancing. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?—Shakespeare (Sonnet 18)

compose, comprise and **consist**

to be composed of applies to concrete objects: Fondue is composed of / is made of / consists of cheese. **to consist in** (+-ing) and **to comprise** relate to activities: The driving test comprises / includes two parts, one theoretical and the other practical. | Obtaining a driving licence consists in / entails / involves taking a theoretical test followed by a drive on the road with an examiner. cf. ***impliquer***

CONCRETE and **ABSTRACT**

French loves abstract nouns and expressions; English prefers concrete ones, along with verbs and verbal forms. A classic example: the French road sign *Absence de signalisation horizontale* is just NO ROAD MARKINGS in Britian.

✷ English frequently has two nouns, one concrete and the other abstract, that correspond to a single French word. Be sure to use the right one, otherwise the effect can be quite comic. Contrast axe (concrete) and axis (abstract); base vs basis; gender vs genre; prize vs price; and statute vs status. See also **freedom** vs **liberty**

conscience vs **consciousness**

- The **conscience** is that inner moral sense that tells us whether what we are doing is right or wrong. My conscience wouldn't allow me to …
- To be **conscious** is to be in the normal state of wakefulness, aware of oneself and one's surroundings. The blow on the head caused him to lose consciousness. Thus there is also the state of **semi-consciousness.**
- Prefer **aware(ness)** for knowledge of situations or facts. Emma suddenly became aware that she really loved Mr Knightley.
- For the French *inconscient*, meaning *irréfléchi*, use **thoughtless** (behaviour) - *T'es une inconsciente*! How thoughtless of you! - or **reckless** (person or behaviour). The accident was caused by reckless driving / a reckless driver.

CONTRACTED FORMS in final position

A characteristic of contemporary English is the use of contracted forms of auxiliary verbs when speaking and, increasingly, in writing. There are some important exceptions to observe when they occur *in final position*:

- auxiliaries are never contracted in *affirmative* statements; you have to say Yes, **I am** | Yes, **you have** | That's where **the book is;** and Yes, **I/you/it** (etc) **will.** So *Yes, I'm, or *Yes, you've, are not possible.

- In *negative statements*, either the verb or the *not* may be contracted: he's not or he isn't; you've not or you haven't, etc. NB 'shall not' becomes **shan't.** ('Shan't!' is the favourite cry of rebellious children: *'Veux pas!'*)

☞ In *negative questions*, **am** becomes **are** when contracted, even when not in final position. So **am I not?** (which is possible, but rather formal) becomes **aren't I?** Aren't I being clear enough? I'm trying very hard, aren't I.

control (FA)

In English, you have full power over s.t. that you control. In French, *contrôler* means simply to check or verify s.t., or **monitor** a situation.

Un contrôleur de train is just a ticket inspector. In a *contrôle de police*, at a police checkpoint, you will have to prove your identity, or show your driver's licence, for instance. In Switzerland, *le contrôle des habitants* keeps the register of residents, with their current address.

- In wartime, this difference has sometimes given rise to costly misunderstandings. When the French declared, *'nous contrôlons la ville,'* the English thought they had captured it, whereas the French meant only that they were monitoring all movement, in and out of the town.

COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE

- A count(able) noun is 'a noun such as "bird", "chair", or "year" which has a singular and a plural form.' In the singular, it must have a determiner, such as **a**, **the** or **her**, in front of it (COBUILD, adapted).
- An uncount(able) noun is 'a noun such as "gold", "information", or "furniture" which has only one form and can be used without a determiner' (COBUILD). Gold is a precious metal. Of course, as soon as it is qualified by a following clause (the gold you have in your safe), it takes an article, just like a count noun.
- Some nouns belong to both categories. Present participles used as nouns are uncountable when they are concepts (misspelling) or an activity (writing), and countable, often plural, when they designate specific instances (misspellings) or concrete objects (writings).
- Countables used as concepts or collective nouns remain countable, taking the definite article in the singular: as performed on the stage / in theatres | as heard on the radio, BUT not **television:** as shown on tv.
- Beware of French plural nouns whose equivalents in English are uncountable: *les avions* = aircraft; *les informations* = information or news; *prévisions* (for weather) = forecast; *conseils* = advice; *preuves* = proof or evidence.
- An uncountable noun may have a countable counterpart with a very different meaning in the plural. For example, **hair** grows on our heads. Ugh, I found a hair in my soup. ✷ **Hairs** *(les poils)*, on the other hand, grow elsewhere

on the body. So if you say, 'I am just going to wash my hairs,' you will get some very strange looks (see **regarder** > **look**)

Determiners before countable /uncountable nouns

- Unlike French, which uses *beaucoup de* before a plural countable *(beaucoup de jours)* just as it does before an uncountable noun *(beaucoup d'argent)*, English requires **many** before countables and **much** before uncountable nouns: many coins vs much money.
- For the restrictive, you can use **not many** (or **a few** q.v.) + plural countable noun, and **not much** (or **a little**) + uncountable.
- We also use **a large (or small) number of** + a countable, and **a large (or small) amount of** + uncountable.

  In the 21st century, **amount of** is increasingly being used before countables. *Do not imitate this*.

  See also **CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS**; **critic(ism)**; **experience**; and **language**

country vs **county**

The difference in pronunciation between **country** [ˈkʌntrɪ] and **county** [ˈkaʊntɪ] comes from their origins.

- **country** derives from Old French. It's a political entity like *un pays,* or *la campagne* as opposed to *la ville.* 'Which do you prefer, town or country?' Concretely, the thing that we admire is the **countryside**.
- **county** is a mid-14th century term for 'a shire, a definite division of a country or state for political and administrative purposes' (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). cf. the Swiss *canton* and the French *département*.

criterion [kraɪˈtɪərɪən] (*le critère*) has a Latin-type plural: **criteria** [kraɪˈtɪərɪə].

critic, **criticism**, and **to criticize**

The verb is **to criticize**, the persons who perform it are **critics**, and the product of their activity is **criticism** (which is uncountable when applied to the arts, music or literature, and countable when applied to a person).

The noun **critique** [krɪˈtiːk], in the sense of an assessment or an evaluation, has entered academic jargon. In AmE it is now frequently a verb too.

DASHES

Distinguish between the **HYPHEN**, which joins two words, or parts of words – so there is no space before or after it – and the **en dash** (or **en rule**) which does have a space on either side (as in the line above). In modern English, the dash is never combined with any other punctuation mark.

In some word processors, you can type two hyphens for a dash.

- Use the dash *without spaces* for **spans:** lines 25–32 | pages 399–425.
- The long **em dash** or **em rule** (three hyphens when typing) serves to set off the source of quotations (example below), or to indicate an interrupted

statement (in which case it generally ends a paragraph; for an example see Rule 2 of **as or like?**). It is printed without spaces and without punctuation (except for closing quotation marks when required). In early fiction, it replaced proper names (or letters omitted from them). 'There's Mayor ——,' says she, 'he was an eminent pickpocket; there's Justice Ba—r, who was a shoplifter.'—Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders* ('In Virginia').

- Some American presses and word-processors use em dashes insead of en dashes. I find this inaesthetic and misleading because it breaks the long-established rules of typography.

DATES

- Years: when speaking, separate the hundreds and thousands from the tens and units, saying four seventy-six (476) | ten sixty-six (1066) | nineteen o four (1904) (see **NUMBERS** for the zero, pronounced 'oh'). For the current millennium, say two thousand and x (for 200x) up to 2009 (two thousand and nine), then revert to pairs as usual: the twenty-twelve Olympics in London. See also **nought** under **NUMBERS**
- For BC (before Christ) and AD (*anno Domini*), you can now write BCE (= before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) after the year (with a space before and no space between the letters; no punctuation either). When speaking, just name the letters: 55 BC(E) = fifty-five bee see (ee).
- The Middle Ages (*le moyen âge*) are plural and take the article + caps. Of course a middle-aged man *(d'âge moyen)* takes no caps. See **HYPHENS**
- In writing, spell out the centuries: a seventeenth-century comedy. See **NUMBERS** for the use of arabic (and not roman) figures for centuries.
- Days and months: in BrE *say* the twenty-first of May, and *write* only 21 May. AmE says May twenty-one (only rarely May twenty-first), and writes May 21.

déduire

Use **to deduce** for logic, **to deduct** for arithmetic, and **deduction** for both.

défini-tif

Note the very different meanings of **definite** (firm and clear) and **definitive** (final, after changes). See also **ADJECTIVES** and **PAST PARTICIPLES**

DEFINITE ARTICLE

Omit the definite article in front of nouns like **chapter, page, verse, line,** etc., when they are followed by a number. In line four of stanza ten | On page 123 | At the beginning of chapter six | In the last paragraph of Part II
See also **at, in** and **on; COUNTABLE** vs **UNCOUNTABLE; next;** and **NUMBERS**

- The names of tenses take the definite article (the simple past, the present, and the future), whereas literary technical terms (being uncountable) do not: free indirect speech | dramatic irony | verbal humour, etc.

- Use the definite article in **on the one hand** and **on the other hand**.

☞ BrE says **in the light of ....** Bizarrely, AmE omits the article.

depend on it!

To count on, **to depend on**, and **to rely on s.t.** or **s.o.** all take an indirect object. You can also say It depends and That counts (with no complement), but you cannot say *It relies: it requires an indirect object: You can rely on that.

dernier

The **last** designates the end of a series, whereas the **latest** is simply the most recent. The last novel by Jane Austen | The latest news. See also **THIS** vs **THAT**

dès

When *dès* means **with effect from**, you can use **as of**, but only with a *date* or an expression that implies *a known date* in the recent past, the present, or the immediate future, not with an *event*. As of today | As of 1st May, 2020. So you can't say, *as of her arrival. Say rather, from the moment she arrived.

devant

Use **in front of** only when you are referring to the strictly literal spatial organization of concrete objects. The tree in front of the house. (The same applies to **opposite** for *face à* and *en face de*.) **Before** can also be used for this in more formal texts; it is standard for *devant Dieu*: before God.

For figurative and abstract senses, use (**when**) **faced with**, **in the face of** (especially for threatening, dangerous objects or situations) or simply **when:** *Devant tant de misère* – When I see so much poverty ...

Keep **to be confronted by** or **with** for instances of *true* confrontation.

différent (FA)

Used before a noun, *différent* means **discrete**, **diverse**, **separate**, **various**, or just **several**. Keep **different** for cases where *différent* follows the noun.

digne corresponds to two different notions in English:

- **dignified** qualifies a composed and serious manner, or behaviour that commands (or merits) respect, whereas
- **worthy** means having qualities or abilities that merit recognition in some special way. Has there ever been a worthy successor to Sean Connery as James Bond? As in the French *digne de,* **worthy** is often used with **of:** She's a novelist worthy of the name. See also **worth**

worthy combines with nouns: **newsworthy**, **noteworthy**, **roadworthy**, **seaworthy** (*apte à prendre la route / la mer*), and **trustworthy** (*digne de confiance; fiable*). It forms neologisms like **quote-worthy.**

dispenser

- With a personal subject, *dispenser* can mean to **give** or **provide** (a course, or care for the needy).
- When the subject is an institution, use to **offer** (or **provide**): The university offers courses in English. See ***offrir***
- With a person as the complement (as in *je vous dispense de quelque chose*), use to **dispense** or **excuse** or **exempt** s.o. **from** s.t. As you have a cold, I'll excuse you from sports today. Also used passively: I was exempted (from) sports today. *Une dispense de cours* is an **exemption** from (following or attending) a course; a **tax exemption** is what one hopes for (and probably never gets).
- Used caustically: *Je te dispense de tes commentaires* = I'll thank you not to make any more remarks / I could do without your remarks, or (less bitterly), Spare me your comments!
- *Se dispenser de:* **to dispense with** or **to do without** s.o. or s.t. The council decided to dispense with his services. | Let's dispense with the formalities. | I am now recovering well and can do without my crutches. **to get rid of** or **do away with** s.t. adds a sense of 'good riddance' (*bon débarras*), while **to forgo** s.t. or s.o. brings a sense of self-sacrifice. Hence the irony in: 'Do you want to meet him?' 'I'll forgo that pleasure.' (See **for-** & **fore-**)
- In English, **justice**, **charity**, and **patronage** are **dispensed**, and a **dispensing chemist** (*une pharmacie*) will supply you with **medicine** on presentation of a doctor's prescription (*une ordonnance*).
- **Dispensing machines** supply goods or services in small quantities. Where's the nearest **cash dispenser**? (Also a **cash machine** in the UK; it's an **ATM** in AmE.)

  This handbook aims to dispense information briefly, accurately and effectively.

disposer (de) is a ✷ FA. Translate it by **to have at one's disposal** (He had a whole team of researchers at his disposal); or simply **to have** (I don't have much time – but bear in mind I can't spare you much time); or **to use:** you can use my car while I'm away. Finally, *Merci, vous pouvez disposer* = Thank you, you may go.

- *disposer de la vie / du sort de quelqu'un* is to **hold their life / fate in one's hands.**
- *Le droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes* is **the right to self-determination.**

✷ The primary meaning of **to dispose of** is **to get rid of** s.t. (*s'en débarrasser*). **Disposable** objects (or simply **disposables**) are *jetables*.

distances, weights, and measures in Britain and America

In 1965, Britain began to replace its old imperial units for distances, weights and measures with the **metric system.** All goods are now labelled with metric weights and measures (although **avoirdupois** values – **pounds** (*livres* 453.592 gr) and **ounces** (*onces* 28.3495 gr) – are sometimes added for customer convenience, rounded off to the nearest whole number).

So petrol (*l'essence*) is sold by the litre; children learn temperatures in degrees Celsius and express their height and weight in centimeters and kilogram(me)s. (The old spelling in brackets is steadily disappearing.)

However, the enormous cost of changing everything and popular resistance to the metric system in everyday life are such that, more than fifty years later, milk and beer are still sold in **pints** (568.261 cc), distances on road signs are still displayed in **miles**, and speed limits are still expressed in miles per hour (**mph**).

☞ Despite repeated promises to come into line with the rest of the world since as far back as the 1930s, North America still sticks to its own customary units: the **inch** (2.54 cm), the **foot** (12 inches), the **yard** (3 feet, 36 inches) and the **mile** (1760 yards, 1609.34 m), with the **acre** (4046.8564 m²) for square measure, the **pint** (473.176 cc – *not the same as in Britain*) the **quart** (2 pints) and the **gallon** (3785.41 cc – *not the same as in Britain*) for liquids, and the Fahrenheit scale for temperature, in which water freezes at 32° and boils at 212°. In North America, the normal temperature of the human body is 98.6°.

For some strange reason, Americans do not use the **ton**. All weights are expressed in **pounds**, even when they run into hundreds of thousands!

To complicate matters still further, the **American football field**, which has a playing area 100 yards long (91.4 m) by 160 feet wide (48.8 m) – notice the different units for length and width! – is often used as both a **unit of length** and a **unit of area** (57,600 square feet (sq ft) or 5,350 m²). Even a serious journal will happily inform you that a passing asteroid is six football fields long, for instance. (In Europe, the UEFA Champions League football pitch is longer and wider: 105 × 68 m. Of course, American football and European football, known as **soccer** in the US and Canada, are quite different games, played with different shapes of ball: it is oval in America.)

- In 1998, the Americans lost a 330-million-dollar spacecraft because, when it was just about to go into orbit around Mars, they sent it instructions expressed in American customary units instead of the international units (SI) it was built to understand.
- When you submit an article to an American journal, they will ask for it to be double-spaced, with one-inch margins all round – without bothering to mention that their paper size is 8.5 × 11 inches (215.9 × 279.4 mm), known as **letter paper**. The DIN norms are unknown in North America.

DOLLARS and **CENTS**

The **dollar** ($), adopted as the monetary unit of the United States in 1792 at the suggestion of Thomas Jefferson, is divided into 100 **cents** (¢). Dollars are familiarly called **bucks** after the buckskins used for commercial exchange

by the early settlers. The dollar coin was made of silver until 1935. It derived from the Spanish peso, which was made to be broken (when required) into quarters, and for this reason the 25-cent piece is still known as a **quarter**. The other coins are the **dime** (10¢), the **nickel** (5¢) and the **penny** (1¢). (See **penny** for the British coin.) Paper money (often called **bills**, and known familiarly as **greenbacks** because they are printed in green on the back) was introduced during the Civil War of 1860–65.

Many other countries now call their currency **dollars**, too.

See **POUNDS, SHILLINGS** and **PENCE.**

editor (FA)

An **editor** is a person responsible for selecting and preparing texts for publication, often with an introduction and notes. A **publisher**, on the other hand, is a firm or company whose business it is to produce and market books and periodicals. In bibliographies, editors are mentioned only when they figure on the title page of the book, whereas the publisher and the place of publication should always be specified.

effectivement (FA) is best rendered by **indeed:** It is indeed true. **Effective(ly)** means **having** or **producing a result** and therefore **efficient(ly).** The aim of this handbook is to enable (cf. ***permettre***) you to write more effectively.

ELLIPSES

French commonly uses an ellipsis (*les points de suspension*) at the end of a sentence to mean **and so on, etc.** English does not generally do this.

- When quoting in English, use ellipses (*without* square brackets and *with* three spaced points: . . .) to signal omission in the *middle* of a quotation. They are not required at the beginning or end of quotations integrated into your own sentence structure (i.e. 'run in').

empêcher, éviter, s'empêcher

- We **cannot avoid s.t.** or **s.o.** when we are unable to prevent an undesirable meeting, a collision, or an accident.
- We **cannot avoid s.o., avoid doing** (or **get out of doing**) **s.t.** for *external* reasons, often out of social obligation. Elizabeth could not avoid (speaking to) Mr Darcy, much though she might have wished to get out of it.
- We **cannot help doing s.t.** for *internal* reasons. (Her feelings were so strong that) she could not help telling him how much she despised him. Also used with an *it* for the undesirable behaviour: Don't blame him. He can't help it.
- We **cannot prevent**, or **stop** (q.v.), **s.t.** external to ourselves **from** happening. She could not stop her sister from running off with Mr Wickham.

- As a general rule use **unavoidable** for concrete, physical events, and **inevitable** for more abstract ones. Because the accident was unavoidable, their death was inevitable.

en + present participle (e.g. *en faisant quelque chose*) covers several notions. Render them with

- **by** for change in the *object* (By making promises, he induced her to marry him) but **in** or **through** when the *subject* is affected: One acquires knowledge through reading. (Some structures may require other prepositions.)
- **on** for 'immediately after', not 'during'. She shut the door on leaving.
- **while** or **when** for simultaneity. Don't speak while eating. | MIND YOUR HEAD WHEN LEAVING YOUR SEAT. [A notice found in public transport with overhead luggage racks.]

☞ but with *verbs of locomotion* you can
(a) use just the present participle, as in he went out laughing, or
(b) render the *manner* with a *verb*, and the *direction* with a *preposition*: *descendre la rivière en nageant* = to swim down the river | *entrer dans la pièce en dansant* = to dance into the room | *quitter la pièce en boitant* = to limp out of the room | *traverser la route en courant* = to run across the road.
This also applies to lifestyles: *détruire sa vie en buvant* = to drink one's life away | *se ruiner en jouant* = to gamble one's money away.

end(ing)

The **end** of a story refers to *when* it stops, whereas the **ending** refers rather to *how* it concludes. Only **end** is opposed to **means**, as in 'ends and means' (*les fins et les moyens*).
'*Le happy-end*' is a French expression. When it is used in English – Does the story have a happy end? – it is never hyphenated. (See **HYPHENS**)

enfin corresponds to several different notions:

- **at last** (the positive *Ouf!* at the end of a wait);
- **in the end** or **finally** (≈ *à la longue*, *finalement*); and
- **last** or **lastly** (or **finally**) which are used before the final item in a series.
See also **at** and **in** with **the beginning** and **the end**

ever

First of all, **ever** is used like *jamais* in French. I think I'm skiing better than ever. (Have you ever heard that one before?) | Never more! In English it also means:

- **increasingly**, or **more all the time:** computers get ever more complex and ever more powerful; it's an ever-changing world. See also **toujours** (and **HYPHENS**).
- **always** or **eternally:** ever more; ever open; ever present; ever ready. Some common instances have become a single word: everlasting and forever. (See **for ever** contrasted with **forever.**) An evergreen is a plant or tree that keeps its leaves throughout the year, unlike a deciduous one.

- **Ever** combines with question words for emphasis: **however** (However you do it = *de quelque manière que tu le fasses* | However tall he may be = *si grand qu'il soit*); **whenever** (*chaque fois que*); **what(so)ever** (Bring whatever you can. Whatsoever you bring, I'll find a use for it.), and **who(so)ever** (*quiconque*), the 'so' adding an absolute dimension (rarely used in *however* or *whenever*).

  On the other hand, in questions that express strong feeling, they are written as two separate words; here **ever** corresponds to something like *diable* in French: Why ever did you do it? What ever were you thinking of? Who ever are you going to ask for help? How (or when) ever will I see you again?
- In familiar, spoken English, **ever** also serves for emphasis in **ever since**, **ever so**, and **ever such.** 'Do I *like* him? Oh ever so! (= *énormément*). He's ever such a good dancer, so I come here ever so often. Ever since I met him in fact.'

The prefix 'ex-' is generally not stressed. It is pronounced /ɪgz/ when it is followed by a vowel (for ɪg'zɑːmpl) and /eks/ when followed by a consonant.

- When it *is* stressed (as in words like excel(lent), expert, excerpt and extract – see next entry), then it is pronounced /eks/ (as is the letter **x**).
- It is stressed and pronounced /eks/ when it has the specific meaning of 'former' (as in ex-president). It is commonly abbreviated to simply 'ex' when referring to a former spouse. 'That's my third ex over there,' (s)he said.

excerpt vs **extract**

Any passage, from a line or so to a whole chapter, extracted (or excerpted) from a text and presented separately, is an extract (or an excerpt) *from* the original text. You illustrate an essay with *quotations*; you will find *extracts* (which are longer) in an anthology.

On the other hand, the extract *of* s.t. is a natural or industrial product: Extract of coffee and extract of vanilla are used for flavouring foods. It used to figure in the names of patent remedies. Pond's extract | Liebig's extract.

- A similar distinction can be made with **solution:** the solution *to* a problem but (in chemistry) a solution *of* salt in water.

See also **PREPOSITIONS**, and the **ANGLO-SAXON GENITIVE**

experiments are what scientists perform; (countable) **experiences** are events in our lives, which result in (uncountable) **experience.** Thus, an experiment may prove to be a memorable experience. The same distinction applies to the corresponding verbs, **to experiment** and **to experience.**

farther vs **further**

Use **farther** for measurable space and time (farther down the road), and **further** for more abstract notions (further reading provided the proof she needed).

few

Like *peu*, **few** without an article emphasizes the smallness of the following quantity; **a few** means simply a small number. Contrast He has few friends (so he feels lonely) with He has a few friends (and he's perfectly satisfied). The same applies to **little** (+ uncountable) – but beware, *le peu de* can also mean **the lack** (or **absence**) **of.** See also **COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS**

FICTION

All imaginary, invented narratives in prose are **fiction**, i.e. not fact. The term **fiction** is often used as though it were synonymous with **the novel.** Jane Austen was a great fiction writer / a great novelist. *Length* is the criterion (q.v.) used to distinguish between basic types of fiction: the **short story** (no more than a few pages); the **novella** (which may be just long enough, say 30,000 words, to be sold as a separate work, but is usually bundled with other stories); and the **novel** (which may run to several volumes). Fictionalized documentary is **docu-fiction.**

first

English distinguishes between the first two (for instance) and the two first. Take ten different poems: the first line of each poem will make a total of ten first lines, whereas if we take just one poem, we can refer to its first ten lines. This applies to any number as well as to **last.**

☞ With **next** (q.v.), only the form, **the next four lines**, is possible.

- **It's the first time** is followed by the present perfect where French uses the present. Well, it's the first time I've heard *that* rule!

See also **at first; at, in** and **on; NUMBERS**; and **one**

for ever means **definitive(ly)** or **for all time** – and **forever** means **repeatedly.** Diamonds are for ever. | James Bond is forever making love with beautiful girl spies.
This distinction is semantically significant; only the ignorant ignore it.
See also **ever**

for- and **fore-**

The prefix **for-** suggests **going without s.t.** (to forbid, forget, forgo, forsake), whereas **fore-** implies precedence in time (think of *before*) and space (i.e. coming first): forearm, forecast, forehead, foresee; unforeseen. Contrast **to forbear** (to refrain (q.v.) from doing s.t.) and **a forebear** (ancestor). Also I'll forgo comment *(je me passe de commentaire)* vs the foregoing comment.

freedom vs **liberty**

As a general rule, use **freedom** for the philosophical concept, and **liberty** for countable concrete examples, including symbolic figures (the Statue of Liberty). Contrast the **liberty to move** (physical) with **freedom of movement** (the principle; no article). Use **freedom** in contexts like the captive struggled

to reach freedom or a freedom fighter, because it is the ideal of being free that motivates these people. Think of **freedom of information**.

Liberty combines easily with other nouns, as in liberty bell / day / man / ship, and civil liberties; it takes prepositions – I am not at liberty to answer your question. It also forms phrases like to take liberties (i.e. to be unduly or improperly familiar), and to take the liberty to do or say s.t.

See also **CONCRETE** and **ABSTRACT NOUNS**

give and **gift**

When you give s.t. to s.o., it's called a **present**. If you donate s.t. more formally (e.g. by a bequest in your Will) to an institution like a library or a museum, it is called a **gift**. Someone with a natural talent or facility (like perfect pitch) is said to have a **gift**. French makes the same distinction in all these cases: *cadeau* vs *don*.

For some odd reason, both the verb **to give** *and* **a present** are currently being replaced by **gift**, in both speech and writing. This makes no more sense than replacing *cadeau* with *don* in French. Do not imitate this.

habiter is rendered by **to inhabit** (or, of course, **to live in**). **Habitation** has much the same meaning in both French and English – i.e. the concept (signs of human habitation) as well as 'a place or building in which to live' – but ✷ *habitants* are **inhabitants**, *habitable* is **inhabitable**, and so for *inhabitable* (meaning 'not suitable to live in'), English uses **uninhabitable**.

☞ English **habits** are *des habitudes*; French *habits* are **clothes** [kləʊðz].

hardly means *à peine*, **scarcely**. The adverb of **hard** is **hard:** Tess worked hard.

See also ***presque***

to have in negative (and interrogative) sentences

The verb *to have* is used in many different ways, just as *avoir* is in French. e.g. 'You've been had' = *'Tu t'es fait avoir.'* When it comes to *negative* statements, on the other hand, English differs from French by employing different structures as a function of the meaning:

- for **possession of a physical object**, use **to get.** I haven't got a car. 'I have no car' is also possible; it is much more formal, used especially after *if*: 'If you have no car...' NB AmE does not generally use 'to get' in this way, preferring 'to do': 'Do you have a car?'
- for **internal states:** for the *current state* use **to get** ('Have you got a headache?' – 'No, but I've got toothache.') and for the *habitual state* use **to do** ('I don't often have headaches. Do you?').
- for the **consumption of meals**, use **to do** in every case. 'When do you have lunch?' – 'I don't usually have it until one o'clock.'

- for **causatives:** use **to have.** 'Have you had your hair cut? It looks different.' — 'No, I haven't had it cut for weeks, but I have just washed it.' (See **countable** vs **uncountable** for **hair** in the singular.)

here, there and **where** all have old forms with a 'sense of direction':

to here	**: hither**	from here	**: hence**
to there	**: thither**	from there	**: thence**
to where	**: whither**	from where	**: whence**

They are mainly found in poetry and Biblical phrases. Whither goest thou (q.v.)? Some are still used in academic discourse – hence this list.
See also **ORIENTATION IN SPACE**

homographs (i.e. words with the same spelling but different meaning)
There are two sorts of homographs: **homophones**, which have the same pronunciation, and **heteronyms**, which do not.

- Gender helps French speakers with their homophones – *le mousse qui enlevait la mousse* – and there are not many of them. No French heteronyms share the same grammatical function, so we don't notice them until they are juxtaposed. *Le vent est à l'est.* | *Laver un jet au jet.* | *Tu as un as en main.*
- Among English homographs, the **homophones** rarely share the same grammatical function. So the verb to bear and a bear (the wild animal) are unlikely to be confused. In the case of two nouns having the same spelling and the same pronunciation, the context and common sense will supply the answer.
  A person with **hives** [haɪvz] may have *de l'urticaire* or *des ruches (d'abeilles).*
  A **quarry** ['kwɔrɪ] may be *une carrière* or *la proie (d'une chasse)*. So hunters might corner their quarry in a quarry.
  If you are walking with s.o. who has a dog, and they say, 'You take the **lead** [liːd],' they *could* mean that you should go first (and they will follow you), or that you should hold *la laisse du chien* (also commonly called the **leash**).
- There are many **heteronyms** in English, and French speakers should be aware of them. Common ones are:
  bass: [bæs] *le bar* (seafish) vs [beɪs] *une basse* (both instrument and singer)
  bow: A girl may shoot arrows with a **bow** [bəʊ], but the girl in the **bow** [baʊ] with her **beau** [bəʊ] is *à la proue* with her boyfriend. The girl may wear a **bow** [bəʊ] in her hair, and the man a **bow** tie ['bəʊ 'taɪ] *(un noeud papillon)*.
  lead: [led] *le plomb* vs [liːd] *la laisse* or the verb *prendre la tête, mener*. It gives **leader**, *le chef* or *le meneur.* NB The simple past and the past participle of **to lead** is **led.**
  read: the infinitive form [rɪːd] of *lire*, or the simple past, [red].
  a **row** [rəʊ] is a line of objects or people and a [raʊ] when is a terrible noise, *un boucan, un fracas,* or a noisy (even violent) argument, *une dispute.*

a **tear:** [tɪə] *une larme* vs [tɛə] *une déchirure* (generally in clothing)

wind [wɪnd] is *le vent* and [waɪnd] is the verb for *enrouler, rembobiner*. To wind one's watch: *remonter sa montre.*

wound [wuːnd] is *une blessure* whereas [waʊnd] is the simple past and past participle of **to wind** (above). She wound a bandage round his wound.

HONORIFICS and forms of address in BrE (see also **names**)

Dame is an honorary title for a woman (corresponding to **Sir**); it is followed by a first name, or a first name and family name, but never with just a family name. Dame Judi Dench. (Never refer to women as *dames*.)

Esq. Until about 1970, **Esquire** [ɪsˈkwaɪə] was placed, in its abbreviated form, *after* the full name on any letter addressed to an otherwise untitled man. It is now replaced by **Mr**, which is placed *before* the name. **Esq.** lives on in AmE where it designates a lawyer (male or female).

Lady is followed by a place name, a family name, or a first name, depending on whether the bearer is a peeress, a female relative of a peer, or the wife or widow of a knight (see **Sir**), respectively. Used alone and without a **CAPITAL LETTER** only in uneducated speech. Give us a penny, lady!

Lord is followed by a place name or a family name when the bearer is a marquis [ˈmɑːkwɪs], earl, viscount [ˈvaɪkaʊnt] or baron, and by a first name when he is the younger son of a duke or marquis. Requires **my** when used without a name: Yes, my lord, pronounced [məˈlɔːd] or [mɪˈlɔːd].

madam is the formal and polite term of address for a woman whose name is not known, used especially in shops, restaurants, and hotels. Can I help you, madam? Use Dear Madam in letters when you do not know the name of the woman you are writing to; cf. **Sir.** ✷ **A madam** keeps a brothel.

Miss is the traditional honorific for an unmarried woman, used both in front of the name (with or without the first name) and alone. Schoolchildren often call their teacher **Miss**, whatever her marital status, and in the past all young women were addressed in this way, especially by their social inferiors. Today, use the first name and family name when speaking; when writing, use **Ms.** See also **ABBREVIATIONS**

Mr is used for every otherwise untitled man (e.g. not a professor or a doctor). It should never be spelled out in front of a name *unless* you wish to be facetious, mocking, or insulting. (Begin a letter with Dear Mr A.) On the other hand, it is spelled out in popular titles. Mister Switzerland. Used without a name to represent uneducated speech, it is spelled out. Hey, mister! Where d'you think you're goin'? See also **ABBREVIATIONS**

Mrs [ˈmɪsɪz] is the traditional honorific for a married woman. Mrs Gaskell. It is never written out, except to represent uneducated speech, spelled **missis** or **missus.** Now generally replaced by **Ms.** (Begin a letter with Dear Ms A.)

Ms [məz] is the politically correct written honorific for all women, used in front of the family name only (i.e. without the first name): Ms Greer. As it is unpronounceable, say: 'Yes, madam' (which is very formal; fine if you're working in a hotel); 'Yes, Miss' (and risk causing offence); or play safe with 'Yes' plus 'I will' / 'you do' / 'it is', etc., as applicable – unlike French, it is standard English to omit the honorific in direct conversation.

Sir (with a **CAPITAL LETTER**) is the title of a knight or baronet and is followed by a first name, or a first name and family name, but never with just a family name. So Sir Peter Teazle is addressed as 'Sir Peter'.

It is also used (with a capital) in letters when you do not know the name of the man you are writing to. Dear Sir, Please find enclosed my application for the job you advertised in today's newspaper. Use the plural when writing to firms and institutions. Dear Sirs. If you do not know the gender of the person you are addressing, use Dear Sir or Madam.

- **sir** without a name (and no capital) is used as a polite way of addressing an unknown man, especially in shops, restaurants, and hotels. It is pronounced simply [sə], with no stress. What can I do for you, sir? Schoolchildren use it for their male teachers; cf. **Miss.** Please sir, I know the answer!

HONORIFICS and the DEFINITE ARTICLE

In BrE, only two honorifics are preceded by a definite article, the **Reverend** and the **Honourable**, because they are adjectives. Write the Reverend (or Rev., or Revd) Chasuble, and the Honourable (or Hon.) Algernon Moncrieff. Otherwise it's General de Gaulle, Queen Elizabeth, and President Putin.

☞ For this reason it is not possible to address or refer to a clergyman as plain **Reverend** in BrE. You have to call him by his clerical status: Tell me, Vicar, how close is your house to Rosings Park? AmE ignores this rule.

humain

In essays, call people **human beings** unless you are contrasting them with **animals,** in which case use **humans.** A perfect human figure (*Gulliver's Travels,* Bk IV, Ch.2).

- As a rule, keep **humane** for human behaviour that respects other species and spares them pain. Laboratory animals must be treated humanely.

HYPHENS

Compound adjectives need hyphenating in English. A man-eating tiger is very different from a man eating tiger. Contrast also to be well known (adverb + past participle, never hyphenated), and a well-known person or work.

See also **DASHES; TIME & SPACE;** and **WORD-BREAKS**

to **ignore** is a FA. It means to deliberately not pay attention to s.t. or s.o. A: 'He keeps on looking at me.' B: 'Just ignore him.' So: *'Vraiment? J'ignorais cela'* has to be, 'Really? I did not know that.'

ill

In BrE, **ill** traditionally meant to be or to feel **unwell**, whereas **sick** implied that the sufferer was **nauseous** and might **vomit.**

✷ The meanings have long been reversed in AmE. In *Society in America* (1837), Harriet Martineau refers to 'the well-known use of the word "sick" instead of "ill" by Americans' (vol.3, p.83).

Because BrE usage is increasingly influenced by AmE, 'I was sick this morning' can now mean 'I did not feel well' rather than 'I vomited'. To avoid ambiguity, use **well** and **unwell** as appropriate.

The expression 'he called in sick' means that he telephoned his employer to announce that, not feeling well, he would not be coming to work. There is a familiar expression for this: **to pull (or throw) a sickie.**

British mothers also use **poorly** to mean **unwell.** 'Are you feeling poorly?' she asked her daughter.

- Until very recently, when **ill** qualified a state of health, it had to be used predicatively, like the **A- WORDS:** The child is ill = The child is unwell = It is a sick child. (See **PRONOUNS**) Beware: this seems to be no longer the case.
- Meaning **unfavourable** it is used pronominally (ill health | ill omen | ill use [ju:s] – see **z/s –** ill will), and with a verb form (often the past participle) it forms a compound with a similarly negative connotation: to ill-treat | ill-advised | ill-feeling | ill-formed, etc. (See **HYPHENS** for compound adjectives.)

impliquer covers several different meanings:

- **to implicate s.o.** is to show that the person has participated in s.t. bad.
- **to imply s.t.** is to communicate in a manner that leaves the addressee to deduce what you mean. 'Is that so?' 'Are you implying that I'm wrong?'
- **to involve s.o.** is to include them in an activity or process. Compared with **to implicate**, it is morally neutral. When the complement is a verb, use the –ing form: activity x involves doing action y. Also used passively. Elizabeth did not expect Darcy to be involved in her sister's wedding.

important (FA) has only a qualitative meaning in English, not a quantitative one, so when it precedes the noun in French, as in *une importante somme d'argent,* use an adjective denoting size, e.g. a large sum / amount of money.

injury is a FA; it means *blessure (physique)*; *injures* are **insults.**

in to vs **into**

In may combine with **to** when the two prepositions fulfil similar functions in the sentence. He put his hand into his pocket. When **in** is part of a verb (e.g. to give s.t. in), it does not combine with the **to** that introduces the indirect complement: She handed her essay in to her teacher. Contrast this with *He

handed his essay into his teacher: somehow, the essay goes by hand 'into' the teacher – stuffed down his throat perhaps?

- If in doubt, check whether the verb + **in** can stand without a complement. If it can, then the **to** will be separate.
- The same rule applies to **on.** Compare to hold on with to hold *on to* one's money and to place s.t. *onto* the table. This distinction is important. After visiting Vienna, she travelled *onto Rome makes no sense at all.

INVERSION of subject and verb is less frequent in English than in French. As a general rule, invert only

- for questions (Is that so?), or hypotheses (replacing *if*): 'Had we but world enough, and time …'—Andrew Marvell. NB 'Had we but' means 'if only we had'.
- when a negative or restrictive term or phrase, like **seldom** (but not **perhaps**), heads the sentence: Not until the third chapter does the narrator reveal his identity. | Never before had she written so long a novel. | At no point is the movement perceptible. | Rarely does the author allow her presence to be felt. | Only in the final scene is the villain unmasked. See also **only**
- when an adjective or adverb heads the sentence, as often found in poetry: 'Much have I travelled in the realms of gold'—Keats; and
- in exclamations beginning with **how**: How green was my valley!
- After quoted direct speech, inversion is optional, a stylistic effect that belongs to fiction-writing rather than the critical essay. 'Sheer magnetism, darling,' said Bond. When the subject is a pronoun, invert *only* with the verbs **say** and **ask.** 'The things I do for England,' said he with a sigh.
- No inversion is required in statements that may seem like indirect questions. Exactly where the story takes place is not made clear. | I don't know how the story ends. Unlike in French, inversion is not an option here.

See also ***non plus***, and **what & which**

it

French structures like *Comme je l'ai dit plus haut … Comme nous l'avons vu … Ainsi que vous pouvez le constater …* must be rendered without an **it** in English: As we have already seen. As you may have noticed, this occurs particularly in sentences beginning with *as*.

- Conversely, an idiomatic, anticipatory **it** is required after verbs of deliberation like **consider, find, judge, think** and **to give it as one's opinion that….** I thought it useful to bring this to your attention. The same applies to structures like: I take it that you agree with me *(Je pars de l'idée que vous êtes d'accord).* | Stop proposing solutions! You're making it hard for me to choose.

See also **to leave s.o. to do s.t.**; **so**; and also **worth**

jusqu'à

Use **until** (**'til** or even **till**) only for *time*; for *movement* use **to** or **as far as.** Lady Catherine offered to take Elizabeth with her as far as London, in her barouche.

In writing, an old form, **hitherto**, meaning **until now** *(jusqu'alors)*, is still used for time; see **here, there** and **where.**

For 'space' in texts use **down to** or **up to.** Down to the end | Up to p.123.

JUXTAPOSITION vs COORDINATION

French tends to juxtapose ideas, whether as nouns, phrases, or whole sentences. English does not, preferring to show the relationship between them. So put **and** between two items, and before the last item in a list. X, y, and z (or **or**, depending on the context: X, y, or z.)

- In English, two grammatically independent sentences must be separated by at least a semi-colon, not just a comma (as in French). The French practice is deplored in English as a **run-on sentence** or **comma splice.**
- For the same reason, verbless sentences are unacceptable in expository prose (as found in essays and articles).

language

English, French, and German are each **a** (countable) **language. Language** is uncountable when it means **a style of speech** – metaphorical language, for example – and in this case it takes no article. Contrast What a language! Is it Hindustani? with What language! Stop swearing, please!

See also **CAPITAL LETTERS**, and **COUNTABLE** vs **UNCOUNTABLE**

laugh, laughing and **laughter**

All three correspond to *le rire*: **laugh** is countable and punctual (a short laugh | his fooling raised a few laughs); **laughing** (uncountable) is durative (There is generally no laughing at a funeral) and more directed towards the action, whereas **laughter** (also uncountable) may be concrete, evoking the sound (their laughter echoed down the corridor) or abstract, as in: Bergson's 1900 book, *Le Rire*, is a study of laughter. (For *punctual* and *durative* see **ASPECT**)

leave vs **let**

Both translate *laisser,* and the difference in usage is as much a question of structure as of meaning. First of all, **let** is an auxiliary that requires an infinitive without **to** and means **to allow.** On the other hand, **leave** can stand without a following infinitive (cf. *quitter*); if it has one, it will be with **to**; and it means either **to permit** or **to go away** *(s'en aller; partir)*.

☞ **Let go** and **leave go** both mean *lâche!* – but with a direct complement, only **let** is possible. Let him go! *(Laisse-le partir)* and Let him go alone! *(Qu'il aille seul!)*

- With *alone*, **to let s.o. alone** means to stop bothering them: Let him alone! *(Laisse-le tranquille!),* whereas **to leave s.o. alone** means to leave them in soli-

tude, by themselves (see ***seul***). These are the traditional uses; it is becoming increasingly common to use **leave me alone** for both meanings.

- **let** cannot be used in a passive structure; use **allow:** They would not let me speak = I was not allowed to speak.
- Verbs of movement, such as **go** and **come**, may be omitted after **let**, the direction being expressed by a preposition. 'Let me in - let me in!' cried Catherine at the window. | Estella approached with the keys to let me out.
- Both **to let s.o. do s.t.** and **to leave s.o. to do s.t.** convey the idea that the subject does not intervene, **let** inclining more to the idea of *permission*, and **leave** to the notion of *desertion* or leaving the object *alone*. So Let me do it by myself means I want you to allow me to do it without your help, and Leave me to do it by myself means I want you to go away while I do it without another person, including you, being present. Contrast Let him speak! You're hindering him, and Leave him to speak (while we go for a beer).
- **to leave s.o. to do s.t.** may include the notion of entrusting the person with the (possibly unwelcome) responsibility of performing a task. I'll leave you to do that while I'm away. The same idea may be expressed with an idiomatic *it:* I'll leave it to you to put in the corrections. See also **it**

less vs **fewer**

French likes sentences that run along the lines of *«Moins les gens venaient et moins ils dépensaient, plus le village dépérissait.»* This seems to go very well into English: The less people came and the less they spent, the more the village declined – except that *the less people came* means that they came *less often*. The comparative of **less** being **fewer** (q.v.), English requires the fewer people came when it is a question of *the number of people* involved rather than *the frequency of the visits*. This becomes obvious when the sentence runs, when fewer people came, fewer rooms were required.

- This problem does not occur with **more**.

loose vs **lose**

- **loose** [luːs] means **not tight** (loose clothes); **not attached or not firmly fixed** (a loose end | a loose tooth | to break loose); or **not assembled into a compact unit** (loose hair | loose change). It is also a noun: on the loose = *en liberté*.
- **to lose** [luːz] is the verb corresponding to *perdre*. Compared with **loose** it has *lost* an *o*, which makes the spelling easy to remember.

✷ Contrast **looser** [luːsə] = *moins serré* with **a loser** [luːzə] = *un perdant, un(e) raté(e)*. See also **z/s**

Ltd

Placed after the name of a company, **Ltd** indicates that the financial responsibility of the shareholders is limited (cf. the French *Sàrl*). When speaking,

say [ˈlɪmɪtɪd]. Like **Inc.** (short for *incorporated*; say [ɪŋk]), it is an abbreviation, not an acronym, so it does not need to be spelled out. Not written in **CAPITAL LETTERS**. For the punctuation, see **ABBREVIATIONS**

make vs **do**

Both **make** and **do** translate *faire*. As a general rule, **make** is punctual, used for constructive, creative activities (love | an effort | a fortune) or ones involving personal responsibility (a promise | a mistake | a mess | war), whereas **do** is durative, used for routine, habitual activities (the shopping | the washing | one's teeth), including studies (I'm doing English at school), jobs and – in questions – professions: What does he do? He's a lawyer but he also does odd jobs at the weekend. (For *punctual* and *durative* see **ASPECT**)

Thus we can contrast to make a crossword (i.e. create one) with to do a crossword (i.e. resolve one); and to do time (in prison as a punishment) with to make time (create or find the time to do s.t.).

- In passive constructions, the contrast is clear: You're made! (i.e. your future is assured) vs You've been done (i.e. swindled; cf. *se faire avoir*).
- Note also: That's a nice new car! What speed does it do? | She does for the Hadley-Smiths (i.e. does the housework for them). | He did (i.e. enquired at) all the food shops in search of a cucumber for the sandwiches, without success.
- **to make do** means to manage with limited or inadequate means or resources; to improvise; *se débrouiller*.

MARKED vs **UNMARKED FORMS**

The marked form of a pair of words carries more distinguishing features than the unmarked. Compared with animal, words like cow, horse, mouse, and pig are all marked forms; compared with horse, words like foal, gelding, mare, and stallion are marked forms. This distinction can be applied to syntactic structures: I know is unmarked whereas I do know is marked (or emphatic).

marriage & matrimony vs **wedding**

Use **marriage** for the state and the relationship; **matrimony** for the institution; and **wedding** for the ceremony. Their wedding lasted two days and their marriage only three - matrimony obviously didn't agree with them. An old-fashioned word for the institution of marriage, **wedlock**, would be possible here (wedlock obviously didn't agree with them), but it might sound pompous. It is still used in the phrase 'born out of wedlock,' meaning 'born on the wrong side of the blanket', i.e. **illegitimate**.

MEMORY: NOUNS

- **a memoir** is a short personal account of past events; usually plural when used in the title of an autobiography: *Memoirs of a Cavalier.*

- **a memory** is a trace in the mind of a past event. Treasure happy memories!
- **remembrance** is generally used only in the sense of honouring the memory of s.o. or s.t. I summon up remembrance of things past —Shakespeare (Sonnet 30). Remembrance Day honours the dead of two world wars.
- **a recollection** is a memory that you bring to consciousness, often used negatively, e.g. He had no recollection of what happened after he drank the bottle of vodka. As an uncountable, it emphasizes the act of remembering, most often used in the set phrase, **to the best of my recollection.**
- **a reminder** is anything that causes s.o. to remember s.t.
- **a reminiscence** is an account of one or several memories. Old men love reminiscing about the exploits of their youth.
- **a souvenir** (FA) is an object, often of little use or value, that is sold to tourists, or something kept as a reminder of a past event or person. Don Juan kept souvenirs (a hairpin, for example) of all the women he had seduced (q.v.).

MEMORY: VERBS

- **to memorize** is to deliberately and consciously commit s.t. to memory; to learn by heart. The actress was memorizing her lines (see ***réplique***).
- **to recall s.t.** – a deliberate act of remembering; cannot be intransitive. Can you recall what you were doing at this time last week? Also used when an object has similarities with s.t. else. This story recalls the early work of James Joyce. No indirect complement can be added; cf. **to remind s.o. of s.t.**
- **to recollect s.t.** emphasizes the ability to remember s.t. A formal verb, it is often used interrogatively, negatively, or with **if.** 'Do you recollect what you were doing on the night of November 5?' enquired the judge.
- **to remember (to do) s.t.** – a spontaneous or a deliberate act; can be either transitive or intransitive; must have an animate subject. I remember, I remember / The house where I was born —Thomas Hood. You can tell s.o. to remember to do s.t.: Remember to hand in your essay on time!
- **to remind s.o. of s.t.** or **to do s.t.** – an interpersonal transaction; cannot be intransitive. Bulstrode reminded the doctor of his promise (= that he had promised) to give his services free of charge. | Remind me to hand in my essay!
- **to remind s.o. of s.t.** – a subjective experience: a characteristic of s.o. or s.t. makes s.o. think of s.o. or s.t. else; cf. *tu me fais penser à.* Always with both direct and indirect complements. This story reminds me of the early work of James Joyce.

mépris(er)

- **to despise** s.o. or s.t. is a verb only. The noun is **scorn** (or **contempt**).
- **to scorn** is generally used with things rather than people, with the meaning of **to refuse s.t. with disdain.** Jane scorned his assistance in descending from the carriage at Thornfield. | Scorn not the sonnet —Wordsworth.

milieu

Use **middle** (e.g. in the middle of the novel) unless the idea of **surrounded by** *(au milieu de la foule)* is implied, in which case use **in the midst** (of the crowd).
NB You can say **by** or **in** the middle, but not **at.**

- Use **milieu** for the social circle or class in which a person moves.

moment and ***moment*** cover much the same semantic fields, but *à tout moment* can be tricky: **at any moment** works when the actual time is *unknown*, while for an event which you *know* is soon to occur, and therefore *expect*, it has to be **any time now** (or, of course, **shortly** (q.v.)): Her baby is due any time now, so her partner may arrive at any moment.

moral, morals, morale, and **morality**

- The **moral** [ˈmɔrəl] (countable) of a story is the lesson that can be drawn from it; it may be explicitly expressed by the writer or left for the reader to deduce. La Fontaine's *Fables* often end with a moral. The moral of the story is that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones.
- **Morals** (always plural) are the principles and values (q.v.) which underlie the acceptable ways of behaving, for an individual or a society. Uriah Heap's lack of morals makes him one of Dickens's most detestable villains.
- The **morale** (uncountable; stress the second syllable [məˈrɑːl]) of a person or group is the level of optimism and confidence they feel, particularly in adverse situations. The morale of the soldiers that we glimpse in Jane Austen's novels is consistently high, despite the war with France. See also **stressing**
- **Morality** (uncountable) is the principle or belief that some ways of behaving are right, proper, and acceptable, and that others are wrong. Does Hardy question the morality of Tess's murder of Alec D'Urberville?

NAMES

Always use the customary names of famous people (such as writers). This is usually the form found on the title page of their works, but may differ. Thus we speak of the poet Keats, for example, as 'Keats' or 'John Keats'. If you suddenly refer to 'J. Keats' in an essay, the reader may well think that this is another Keats, since you are not using the customary form. Beware of local traditions: Anglo-Saxons speak of 'Poe' or 'Edgar Allan Poe' but never 'Edgar Poe' (as the French do).

- Do not call writers by their first name alone, as though they were old friends of yours, except to distinguish between members of the same family. When it came to writing poetry, Emily far surpassed her sisters.
- When amongst speakers of English, wherever you may be, always give your own name in the order: first name + family (or last) name. Of course you may say, My name is Bond. Jane Bond, but never say *Bond Jane.
  See also **CIRCUMLOCUTIONS**, and **HONORIFICS**

next with and without the definite article

Without the definite article, **next week / year** means *la semaine / l'année prochaine.* With the article, **the next week / year** (like **the following week / year**) means *la semaine / l'année suivante.* **The next day** is *le lendemain.*

- **The next door** is merely *la porte suivante,* whereas **next door** is the house or flat adjacent to the speaker's, or the people who live there, *les voisins.* Next door wants us to turn down the volume. **Next door** (inv.) can take either a singular *or* a plural verb (see **COLLECTIVE NOUNS**).
- With **next time**, notice how the article is required if there is a complement: Remember this next time. | Remember this the next time you write.

no meaning *pas de* or *aucun*

Use **no** before nouns and comparatives. No man is an island —John Donne. | No way! | No hope! | no fewer than before | no greater love | no less a man

no longer vs **no more**

Prefer **no longer** for time, and **no more** for other quantities. When Silas looked round, she was no longer there. There was no more gold either.

☞ When the **no longer** or **no more** *precedes* the verb, no auxiliary is required, because the **no** qualifies the **longer** or **more** and not the verb. At this point in the novel, she no longer wishes to marry him. See **not only** for a similar case. See also **no**, and **INVERSION**

- Remember that **any more** is always written as two separate words.

non plus

To express this notion, negate the main verb(s), and place **either** at the end of the second statement. She wasn't there. He wasn't either. (The first statement may be implicit, or made earlier in the text.) In this structure only **either** is possible.

Alternatively, you can use **neither** or **nor** as the first word of the second phrase + **INVERSION.** She wasn't there. Neither was he. In this structure there is no semantic difference between **neither** and **nor.** Let euphony and rhythm dictate your choice.

Otherwise use **nor** only after **neither** or with an **INVERSION** after a negation. Neither she nor I find this difficult. Nor do our friends.

- **Nonplussed** means to be surprised, confused or bewildered, so that the person is not sure how to react. The question left me nonplussed.

☞ A new meaning – more or less opposite to this traditional meaning – has recently appeared in AmE, as in he was clearly trying to appear nonplussed. This probably originated from the mistaken belief that *non-* was a negative prefix. ✷ Avoid this usage.

not only

In sentences where **not only** precedes the verb, no auxiliary is required because the **not** governs the **only** and not the verb. Tess not only christens her child but buries it as well. See **no longer** for a similar case. For sentences *beginning* with **not only**, see **INVERSION**. See also **only**

NOUNS ending **–IC(S)**

Of the more common abstract uncountable **-ic** nouns, only **arithmetic, logic, magic, music** and **rhetoric** do not have an 's' at the end; they are *always* treated as singular. All the others (e.g. linguistics, mathematics, pragmatics, and semantics) are treated as *singular* until they are qualified in some way, when they become *plural*. Acoustics is the science of sound. | The acoustics of the concert hall were near perfect. | Their politics are dubious.

☞ In BrE, **mathematics** is abbreviated to **maths**; in AmE it is **math**.

- As a general rule, prefer the more concrete form of abstract **-ic** nouns. **Symbolism** rather than the symbolic, **theme** rather than the thematic, and **problem** rather than the problematic. These abstract forms have specialized meanings which may be thought of as the state produced by the corresponding verb: the problematic is what is produced by problematizing something; the symbolic is produced by symbolizing.
- As a rule, countable nouns never end with the 's' in the singular. For the exceptions see **NOUNS** ending **-S**.

  See also **ADJECTIVES** in **-ic** and **-ical**

NOUNS ending **–S**

A few countable nouns end with **s** in the singular. The common ones are: a barracks, a crossroads, a means, and a series ['sɪəriːz]. Their plural form being exactly the same as the singular, only the verb will indicate the number. The means employed is/are as important as the desired end.

- **news** *(les nouvelles)* is always singular; the news is not good this morning. Infections like **measles**, **mumps** and **shingles** are singular uncountables.
- **the Middle Ages** (see **DATES**), **headquarters, remains** (q.v.), **shorts** (i.e. short **trousers**), **stays** (a corset), **surroundings**, and **thanks** are always plural.
- For **maths** see **NOUNS ENDING –ic(s)**

nouns ending -ware are uncountable. They designate either the material out of which objects are made – chinaware, earthenware, glassware, ironware, silverware, etc. – or their purpose: cookware, kitchenware, ovenware, tableware, etc. Recent additions include **hardware** – the physical components of electronic devices – and **software**, the programs that make them work. Now we have **spyware** and **ransomware** too. They are *all* uncountable.

✷ French-speaking journalists tend to ignore this rule and add a final *s*.

nous sommes

Journalistic French commonly introduces the time and/or place of a scene or action with '*Nous sommes*' (*en France en 1914 et la guerre vient d'éclater,* for example). This is not done in written English. In fact, using 'we are' like this might give the impression that the writer is thoroughly confused. Write something like, The novel opens in France at the outbreak of the first world war. See **we can notice**

NUMBERS

When a number, however large or small, is the first word of a sentence, it should always be spelled out. Twenty years later … | *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is by far the most famous of George Orwell's novels. See also **DATES**

<100 All numbers up to one hundred should be spelled out in literary prose (the first sixty chapters of *Bleak House*), except in page references (see '>101' (i.e. numbers after one hundred), below).

- When speaking, pronounce numbers as you do when counting (I'm quoting line twelve of stanza twenty-seven), except for digits after the decimal point; name them one by one: 3.142 = three point one four two.
- In everyday speech, the zero is pronounced 'oh' [əʊ], represented in writing by the lower-case letter **o**. Agent double-o-seven (007). In maths and the sciences it is **nought** [nɔ:t]. Nought point one (= 0.1). (In Britain, the years 2000 to 2009 are punningly referred to as 'the noughties'.)

  Use **zero** to name the number in isolation (The progression tends towards zero) and for counting down. Three. Two. One. Zero. We have lift-off!

  Beside **nought** there is the archaic word **naught**, also pronounced [nɔ:t], meaning **nothing**; it is used in set phrases such as it was for naught *(cela ne servait à rien)*, bring to naught (= to ruin), and he's naught but a fool.
- Stress **thir'teen** clearly on the second syllable, and **'thirty** on the first. The same applies to all the numbers from 14 to 19 versus 40 to 90.

>101 After one hundred, we use figures when writing, unless we are being approximate: Barbara Cartland wrote more than seven hundred books.

- When speaking, we have two options. A number used *as a means of reference* is usually 'named' digit by digit: 'Look at page one two three four (= p.1234) in your *Norton Anthology*.' This also applies to telephone numbers, post codes, car number plates, etc. When we feel we are *counting*, on the other hand, we name the hundreds and thousands: 'I've written two thousand, six hundred and thirty-seven words today!' Remember to say the 'and' after the hundreds in BrE, and after the thousands when no hundred is mentioned. 2018: two thousand and eighteen.
- Use roman numerals for monarchs, e.g. Henry VIII. We *say* 'Henry the Eighth' but *do not write* the article. Where the printed source does so, use roman

numerals for acts and scenes in plays and parts of novels. When not spelled out, centuries are always written in arabic numerals. In no case should you write the st, nd, rd, or th that we pronounce; cf. **DATES.**
See also **DATES**, and **DEFINITE ARTICLE**

offrir is a FA when used to mean **to give (a present):** *ses parents lui ont offert une voiture pour ses vingt ans.* Translate this using **offer** and an English speaker would expect the statement to continue with something like, and (s)he declined at once, saying (s)he would prefer a trip round the world. **to offer** means to propose s.t. *that the other may refuse*, hence **an offer of marriage.**

one(s) substitutes for a noun that has just been mentioned. This poem is a difficult one. | It was not really an issue of black or white but one of perceived notions of right and wrong. It is *not* required after a colour (I prefer the blue), an ordinal number, a genitive, a comparative or a superlative, including **first** and **last.** This book was his third. It was his best and last. | Charlotte's view of marriage was not the same as Elizabeth's.

- **Ones** cannot be used after quantifiers like **a few, many, several,** etc.

only governs the word that follows immediately after it, so place it carefully. Only she could love him for what he had said. | She could only love him for what he had said. | She could love only him for what he had said. | She could love him only for what he had said (and therefore not for what he had *done*) | She could love him for what he had only said (and *not done*).
See also **INVERSION** of **SUBJECT** and **VERB**

or

To render the French conjunction *or*, you have to choose between **although**, **and**, **but**, **however**, and **yet**, or various phrases. To introduce:

- conflicting evidence (and mean *et pourtant*), use **although**, **but** or (**and**) **yet:** His diary records that he sent the poem off at once, but / (and) yet the editor claims he never received it. **However** requires a fresh sentence: However, the editor claims he never received it. A milder form uses just **and:** *Tu m'as dit que tu serais là, or tu n'y étais pas* = You told me you'd be there and you weren't.
- clinching evidence (*le coup de grâce*), use a phrase like Now the fact (of the matter) is that | It just so happens that | What actually happened was that ...

ORIENTATION IN SPACE and the sense of direction

English has a more developed sense of spatial orientation than French. Consider King Dagobert who put his trousers on *à l'envers*: were they **upside down**, **inside out**, **back-to-front**, **the wrong way round**, or just on **backwards**? Each term has a slightly different meaning. Another example: *Je suis là!* means 'I am here!' In English, only a schizophrenic could say, 'I am there'!

- Many English verbs imply direction with respect to the speaker, as in **borrow** vs **lend** (see ***prêter***), **bring** vs **take** or **send**, **come** vs **go**, **drive** vs **lead** (*mener*). When you pay to live in a house or flat that belongs to some other party, you **rent** it; the owner **lets** it.
- Beware of French words in which the *re–* prefix does not imply repetition, as in *se retourner* for to **turn round**, and *réunir* for **bring together** or **unite.** *Rendre:* students **hand in** their work; teachers **hand it back.**
  See also **here, there** and **where**, and **this** vs **that**

où

French habitually uses **où** with reference to time (*le jour où*); English generally does not. When the period of time (day, week, month, etc.) is specified, use **when.** Elizabeth would never forget the day when she first saw Pemberley. You can also use **on which** for days, and **in which** or **during which** for longer (and less definite) periods of time. That was the year in which / the summer in which / the holiday during which / she first saw Pemberley.

- For conditions, states and situations use **in which** or **which … in** – or of course nothing: 'given the situation I'm in …' (*la situation où je suis*).
- For *d'où* in argumentation use **hence** or **whence** – see **here, there** and **where.**

own (adj.) must be preceded by a possessive article: my / her / our / their own book, for example. *An own book is impossible.

PASSIVE VOICE

In literary analysis, avoid impersonal statements like 'it is said'. The passive voice deletes the agent, whereas one of the major components of close reading consists in determining *who* (particularly between narrator and character, poet and persona) says *what.*

pendant

When something happens *in the course of* an (implied) period of time, use **during.** During the night | During those two days. During the story is possible *only* when 'story' means the telling of it or the lapse of time that it covers. In the latter case, **in the course of the story** would be preferable.

- To express **a period of** or **a duration of**, use **for:** She stayed for the night / for two days / for the rest of her life.
  For *pendant tout(e)* (*la nuit*, for example) see **throughout**

penny

In the past, the British **penny** (see **POUNDS, SHILLINGS** and **PENCE**) had two plural forms: **pennies** for the coins, and **pence** for their value; so s.t. worth twopence (pronounced and sometimes spelled **'tuppence**) could be purchased with two pennies. Since decimalization in 1971, people say [piː] for both: It's only worth 3p. | Have you got a 2p piece? [ə ˈtuː ˈpiː ˈpiːs]

people is either singular, corresponding to *peuple,* or the standard plural of **person** (q.v.). Some people began to say, 'Let's consult the people.'

permettre covers a much wider semantic field than **to permit**, which is generally used only for the act of giving s.o. permission to do s.t., often passively. Visitors are often permitted to view stately homes. In negative and passive sentences, **to allow** is frequently employed: Unauthorized persons (q.v.) not allowed beyond this point. See also **leave**, and **let**

Other ways of expressing *permettre* depend on the complement:

- When the object is a person, use **to enable** or **to make it possible for s.o. to do s.t.** This approach enables the novelist to …
- When the object is a thing, use **to make s.t. possible**, or **to make it possible to do s.t.** That's what makes the tragedy possible.
- for *permettre* + an infinitive, use **to enable** and add a direct complement: *Le couplet final permet de résoudre la situation.* The closing couplet enables the speaker to resolve the situation.
- **permit**, **allow** and **enable** all require a direct object. In other words, you cannot say *This allows to draw the following conclusion.

person has two plurals:

persons, which is generally used in formal and legal contexts (This table seats four persons | Several missing persons have recently been found), and **people** (q.v.) corresponding to *les gens.* People think I'm mad.

See also **PRONOUNS**

persuader

As a general rule, use **to persuade** for the *process* of making s.o. change their mind (see **POINTS OF VIEW**), and **to be convinced** for the *state* of having been persuaded or having a fixed opinion or prejudice about s.t. Thus *j'en suis persuadé* is I'm convinced (of it). | Are you convinced? Have I succeeded in persuading you to use these verbs like this?

POINTS OF VIEW

Your **views and opinions** express your own thoughts and ideas. Note the preposition: you have an **opinion** *of* a person, and *about* or *on* a topic. With **views**, only *on* is possible: What are your views on gay marriage?

- **Point of view** contains an implicit spatial metaphor of being situated in a certain spot. You express your ideas *about* s.t., or opinion *of* s.t., from 'where you stand'; you cannot have a point of view *about* s.t.

  Point of view is synonymous with **perspective:** a mountain seen from a high-flying aeroplane may appear a mere pimple, while from the riverbed at its foot it towers to heaven. Thus we can share the same opinion (It's a mountain!), even though our points of view (or **standpoints**) are quite dif-

ferent. Elizabeth had a low opinion of Mr Darcy. From her point of view he was proud and snobbish (q.v.), and Wickham offered her a similar perspective. From Darcy's standpoint, of course, the matter was quite otherwise.

- Where opinions are polarized into *for* or *against*, another metaphor, **position**, is sometimes used: What is your position on state intervention?
- For *un changement d'avis*, English uses **a change of mind**; the verb is **to change one's (or s.o. else's) mind** – *not* opinion – as in **to make up one's mind.** NB No other verbs collocate with **mind** to express this.
- Do not use **vision** for opinion; it refers to future possibilities.

POUNDS, SHILLINGS and **PENCE**

Until it was decimalized in 1971, the British system of currency was based on the **penny** (q.v., abbreviated **d**), the **shilling** (**s**), and the **pound** (**£**). There were twelve pennies in a shilling, and twenty shillings in a pound (familiarly **quid** (inv.); thus £2 is two quid). The coins included the **farthing** ['fɑːðɪŋ] (¼d), the **ha'penny** ['heɪpnɪ] (½d), the penny, the **threepenny bit** ['θrɪpnɪ 'bɪt] (3d), the **sixpence** ['sɪkspəns] (the smallest of the silver coins, familiarly called a **tanner**), the shilling (familiarly **bob** (inv.); thus 10s was ten bob), the **florin** or two-shilling piece (2s), the **half-crown** (2s–6d or 2/6), and the **crown** (5s; from 1850 onwards, minted only in small quantities for commemorative purposes).

These coins were often referred to collectively by the name of the principal metal they contained: pennies were **coppers**, and the sixpence upwards **silver** (inv.). They begged for coppers and were astonished to receive a shower of silver.

- The £1 coin, made of gold and called a **sovereign** ['sɔvrɪn], was withdrawn in 1914 after 450 years and replaced with a paper note, which in turn gave way to a round £1 coin in 1971 – superseded by a 12-sided coin in 2017.
- Another old gold piece, the **guinea** ['gɪnɪ], worth 21s (£1–1s–0d) was not minted after 1813, but some prices, particularly of luxury goods, were still quoted in guineas right up until decimalization in 1971.

préciser has no single, precise(!), equivalent verb in English. You can use **to clarify** or **to specify** or phrases like **to make it clear that**, **to be quite clear about s.t.**, **to be** (or **more**) **specific about s.t.**, **to spell s.t. out**, etc.

Il faut préciser que may be rendered by it must (or should) be **pointed out** that … Alternatively, use I should (like to) add / mention that …

- **precision** is uncountable and refers to the fact or condition of being accurate or precise, like Swiss watches. What detailed precision in this short story!
- To render the French notion of additional facts, use **further** (q.v.) **details**, or **more information**. *Une précision!* introducing an intervention at a meeting or debate, would be On a point of information, I should like to add that ….

- In an essay, *plus précisément* is best rendered by **more specifically.**

PREPOSITIONS

English is rich in prepositions, each with specific uses and collocations; French has fewer, making *de* work extremely hard. Depending on what precedes it, *de* may correspond to any preposition in English from *about* to *with* – or none at all (my father's house | a money matter). And when *de* means *en tant que* (*son rôle d'écrivain*) you need **as** (q.v.).

The best thing is to learn the way native speakers do, through attentive listening and reading. Then you'll know instinctively which prepositions go with each noun, verb, or adjective, and in what context, e.g. careful about / of / to / with; absent from; close to; far from; synonymous with; the reason for s.t.; the story about / of | a story by; and to suffer from, etc.

The situation is complicated by differences between BrE and AmE, and the enduring tendency of BrE to ape AmE usage. For example, until very recently, speakers of BrE filled *in* documents that have spaces for answers; AmE said fill *out*. I recently had an email over the signature of the President of the Society of Authors, who is as English as you can get, inviting me to fill *out* a questionnaire.

In addition, AmE speakers attempt to compensate for their lack confidence in the 'correctness' of their English by doubling up the prepositions, saying, for instance, 'to jump *from off* a bridge', whereas BrE makes a semantic difference between to jump *from* a chosen point of departure with an implied 'destination' (jumping from rock to rock) and 'to jump *off* s.t.' (having been *on* it) with the landing place left unclear. He broke the world free-fall record by jumping from a balloon on the edge of space. ('*Off* a balloon' would imply that he was initially standing on the top of it!)

Other examples: in AmE, *outside of* s.t. replaces *outside* s.t.; instead of *based on*, AmE has *based of off*. Go figure! *(Allez comprendre!)*

See also **depend on it!**, and **excerpt** vs **extract**

PRESENT vs **FUTURE**

In English, the simple present often fulfils functions that correspond to the future in French. When discussing events in a work of fiction (q.v.) and the reader's experience of that work, use the present rather than the future (which tends to sound like a prediction). Ultimately, the reader discovers that Emma marries Mr Knightley.

PRESENT vs **PAST**

Use the present to recount fictional events – In the end Elizabeth marries Mr Darcy – and the simple past for historical events. Charles meets Sarah in the spring of 1867, the year the first volume of *Das Kapital* was published.

See also ***nous sommes***

presque

In *affirmative* statements, reserve **nearly** for concrete (We're nearly there), rather than abstract, contexts or situations; **almost** and **practically** can be used in any context. (**virtually** does not mean quite the same thing.)

- As **very nearly** belongs rather to the spoken language, when writing use **all but** (the poem was all but finished) or **well-nigh**, a literary word which adds a tinge of regret. Such a marriage was well-nigh impossible for Romeo.
- Use **almost** to qualify an adverb: Darcy turned to go almost immediately.
- Where *presque* can be replaced by *quasi*, prefer **practically.** Elizabeth was practically certain that she would never see him again.

In *negative* statements (i.e. *presque pas*), use **hardly**, or **barely.**

- For *presque plus,* you can say **almost no** (q.v.) in addition to **barely, hardly** and **scarcely** + any: She felt there was almost no hope left (= barely / hardly / scarcely any hope left).
- For *presque rien* think of **virtually nothing** as well as **almost nothing** and **barely anything.**
- In short answers *(Non, presque pas.)*, **almost** collocates with **never** and **none**, and **hardly** with **any** and **ever.** 'Is there any wine left?' 'No, hardly any / almost none.' 'In any case, do you drink?' 'Hardly ever / almost never.'

prétendre (FA)

to pretend means *faire semblant.* For *prétendre (que)* use **to claim** (that), except in the very specific noun form: the pretender to the throne.

prêter

to lend is the usual verb. Would you lend me your book? If you **borrow** £10 from a friend, they **lend** you £10. (See **ORIENTATION IN SPACE**) You could write 'IOU £10' (the names of the letters sound like 'I **owe** you') on a slip of paper; this would be informal, almost facetious, yet a formal acknowledgement of a debt *(une reconnaissance de dette)* is called an IOU (written like this).

to loan is more formal, generally requiring a written agreement; Banks loan money. The corresponding noun is a **loan.** Beware of loan sharks *(les usuriers).*

- For the French idiom, *prêter une opinion à qqn*, use **to attribute** an opinion to s.o., or to **believe** one knows, or to **claim** to know, another person's opinion. *On m'a prêté des mauvaises intentions*: people believe(d) I had evil (or bad) intentions. ✷ Neither **lend** nor **loan** is used for this.
- *prêter attention à qqn* or *qqch* is to **pay** attention to s.o. or s.t.

priceless is used (pronominally) for something that is so precious or rare that its value cannot easily be determined (a priceless work of art). Used infor-

mally, and usually as a predicate, it means **extremely funny, hilarious.** Her comment was priceless; it had us all in fits (i.e. endlessly laughing).

prix

For the French *prix* English uses: **prize** (something that you win, as in a competition, or are awarded, for merit, etc.) and **price** or **cost:** what you have to pay, not necessarily money, to obtain something.

to procure is a ✷ FA! While basically meaning to obtain s.t., especially with care or effort (she procured the drugs that he depended on), it is often used with the meaning of obtaining a prostitute for another person (so **a procurer / procuress** is a *proxénète*) or causing s.o. to do s.t., often illegal or illicit. Safer verbs are **to obtain, to provide**, or with sensations, **to arouse.**

PRONOUNS

English possessive pronouns 'agree' with the gender of the human owner of an object, thus *Le livre de la femme dans la main de l'homme* is simply her book in his hand. Other species and things like machines take personal pronouns *only* when we attribute human qualities to them.

- English lacks an impersonal pronoun for **a person, someone, no one, COLLECTIVE NOUNS**, and adjectives and past participles used as nouns (see **ADJECTIVES**). Ever since the 14th century, **they** and **their** have been used instead (despite shrieks from impractical purists): Someone has left their coat here.
- In the case of **baby** and **child**, however, we feel we cannot use the plural, so we fall back on *it*. This avoids the unpronounceable '(s)he' and 'her or his' etc., not to mention the embarrassment of getting the gender wrong.
- Beware of inadvertently changing pronoun in mid sentence (or mid paragraph). If you start with **one**, carry on with **one.**

See also **thou, thee** and **thy/thine**

The **pronunciation** of English is indisputably tricky. Here are a few simple rules:

- A stressed vowel is short and pure (i.e. not a diphthong) in front of a double consonant or a single consonant ending a word, and a diphthong when followed by a single consonant+*e*. In monosyllabic words, there are hundreds of minimal pairs: hat vs hate, sit vs site, hop vs hope, cut vs cute, etc. NB In monosyllabic words, the double ell combination turns the letter **a** into a long sound: cat [kæt] but call [kɔːl]

☞ The single exception here is the verb **to have** [hæv] / ['hævɪŋ].
This rule also applies to adjectives and adverbs: wit > witty (both with /ɪ/), but white > whiter and whitest (all three are /aɪ/).

- In words ending with a pure vowel followed by a single consonant, the consonant has to double (to preserve the vowel sound) when followed by

a suffix like **-ed** and **-ing**, **-y**, etc. So hop gives hopping, whereas hope gives hoping; sit becomes sitting, whereas write becomes writing.

Knowing this enables you to make reverse deductions. If you come across an unfamiliar present participle, such as **beguiling**, you can guess that the infinitive must be **to beguile** (both are /aɪ/). Similarly, **swilling** must come from **to swill** (both are /ɪ/).

provoquer is a FA when it means to **cause s.t. to happen** or to **bring s.t. about.**

To provoke s.o. is to (deliberately) make them angry. The corresponding noun is **provocation.** The present participle is often used adjectively in this sense when correcting a child whose behaviour is annoying: Don't be so provoking! ✷ Beware: the primary meaning of **provocative** is 'tending to arouse sexual desire' (NODE).

QUOTING from **POETRY**

When you make a quotation that includes the break between lines of verse, use a slash ('/') to show where the line end falls. Full many a glorious morning have I seen / Flatter the mountain-tops —Shakespeare (Sonnet 33).

- Poetry (or 'verse' when it is rhymed) comes in **lines**; as a countable, **verse** is a familiar word for **stanza**, so it is a FA. See also **DEFINITE ARTICLE**

rather

Be careful of **rather**, first because it often evokes the spoken rather than the written language; then because its effect varies according to the adjective it qualifies; and finally because of differences in word order between French and English.

- Meaning: **rather** enhances a positive adjective (This is rather interesting); gives a negative connotation to a neutral one (She came rather early); and makes a negative adjective a little more positive (The film was rather boring). Not recommended for use in essays.
- Word order: the French *plûtot x que y* can go directly into English when it forms a complete optative statement, with adjectives or verbs: Rather dead than red. | Rather starve than surrender. But when *plûtot x que y* is a factual complement, we say, for clear-cut cases, His face was white rather than pink or They preferred to starve rather than surrender. For less affirmative statements, use **rather more:** His face was rather more red than pink.

receipt

As an uncountable, **receipt** is the act of receiving something - I acknowledge receipt of your letter - and as a countable it is a document acknowledging a payment (*un reçu*). In the past (in novels by Jane Austen, for example), it could also mean the same as *recipe* ['resɪpɪ] (*une recette*).

✷ Pronunciation: [rɪ'si:t]. See **P** under 'See but not Say'

REDUPLICATION

English loves playing with sound, not just in poetry but in everyday speech as well. A common form, in which the *consonants* change, is

- **Rhyming reduplication**: argy-bargy, hanky-panky, ragtag, raggle-taggle, razzle-dazzle, scallywag, walkie-talkie, and Pall Mall; the bee's knees, easy-peasy, squeaky clean, teenie-weenie, helter-skelter, and pell-mell (which is interesting because it comes from the French *pèle-mèle*, suggesting that, at some point in the past, French enjoyed the same game); higgledy-piggledy, Incy-Wincy, itsy-bitsy, nitty-gritty, silly-billy, willy-nilly (from 'will ye, nill ye', i.e. whether you want to or not; *volens nolens*), wingding; bow-wow, hocus-pocus, hoity-toity, hokey-pokey, honky-tonky, lovey-dovey; boogie-woogie; Humpty Dumpty, fuddy-duddy, mumbo-jumbo, super-duper, and hurdy-gurdy.
- In what is known as **ablaut reduplication**, the *vowel* changes but not the consonants. The most common pattern is /ɪ/ to /æ/: dilly-dally, jibber-jabber, flimflam, Kit-Kat and kitty-cat; mish-mash, pitter-patter, spick-and-span (i.e. clean, neat and tidy), splish-splash, tit-for-tat (comes from 'this for that': *un coup pour un coup*); wigwam, and zig-zag. Words formed like this tend to have a somewhat pejorative or demeaning connotation: **chit-chat** is lighthearted, often disrespectful, conversation; **knick-knacks** are small worthless ornaments; **riff-raff** are disreputable or undesirable people; and to **shilly-shally** is to fail to act resolutely or decisively. Exceptions: **ship-shape** ('in good order; trim and neat' —NODE), a rare instance of this pattern with the letter **a** as a diphthong; a **see-saw** with two long vowels ['si:so:].
- Then there is the letter **i** to **o** sequence: criss-cross, ding-dong, flip-flop, hip-hop, ping-pong. Many instances relate to sound: **tick-tock** is a clock ticking, and **clip-clop** (or **trit-trot**) a horse trotting; with **clippety-clop** it is walking. (A child may go **hoppity-skip** or **hoppity hop**; the reversed order of the vowels suggests how unlike walking it is.)

✷ It is imperative to get the order right in established pairs: *zag-zig is impossible, and *Kong King ridiculous.

- English loves triplets too, especially for children, with variations on /ɪ/>/æ/>/ɔ/ as in the Big Bad Wolf (which breaks the rule of the order of **ADJECTIVES**), ding-dang-dong, and Milly Molly Mandy went splish-splash-splosh!

refer vs **reference**

There is a clear semantic distinction between to **refer** to s.o. or s.t., meaning 'to mention in passing' or 'allude to' s.o. or s.t., and to **reference**, meaning 'to provide details of a source of information.' Literary books and articles use either the MLA or the Chicago format for their references.

✷ In 2020, popular speech and writing are using 'to reference' for 'to refer'. Do not imitate this: it is imprecise and misleading.

refrain vs **restrain**

to **refrain from doing s.t.** is simply to **abstain** from an action, whereas to **restrain oneself** or another person (without an indirect object) means to **hold oneself** (or the other person) **back.**

To refrain is never reflexive. Elizabeth could not restrain herself: 'Would you kindly refrain from making derogatory comments about my family?'

regard as a verb (active and passive) commonly means **to esteem** (she is highly regarded by her boss); it also means **to consider:** they regarded him as a hero.

- the *singular* noun in **with regard to s.t.** (***in* regard to s.t.** in AmE) means **concerning, in respect of,** or simply **about. Without regard for/to** is negative: *sans égard pour, sans se soucier de.* He was talking on his mobile phone without regard for the other people in the library. In the *plural,*
- **regards** express friendly respectful greetings. You can end a letter with regards (quite simply) or (my) warm regards, and safely send your compliments to s.o.'s partner with my (best) regards to [name].

regarder covers two notions that are separate in English:

- **to look (at / in / through** etc.) is simply to direct one's gaze in a specific direction, whereas
- **to watch** is reserved for looking at something dynamic that is *happening*. Contrast: to look at the mountains | to watch the sun set | She looked at the tv; it was dusty. | He was watching an exciting match on tv.
- **look** as a noun is first of all the act of casting one's gaze upon s.t. in particular – take a long look! – and then, by extension, the emotion or message conveyed by that act (assisted by facial expression). She gave him a serious look. It's also the (superficial) appearance of s.t. or s.o. She liked the look of him but not the look he gave her. The present participle is often used to form compound adjectives: an evil-looking villain.
- **look** is also a synonym for a style or a fashion (the latest look from Paris) but only in a *general* and not a *personal* sense. So for *Elle soigne son look* you have to use **appearance**, or a phrase like she always tries to look smart / attractive / dress fashionably.
- The plural noun **looks** is used approvingly for a person's facial appearance: to have good looks is to be **good-looking** or **handsome.**

remain vs **stay**

Although both verbs mean *rester*, they are not interchangeable. **to remain** is durative (see **ASPECT**), so it is rarely found conjugated in the progressive form, whereas **to stay** is inchoative – 'Stay!' he said to his dog. To invite s.o. for a visit, you would say 'Come and stay.' So the difference between 'How long are you planning to stay?' and 'How long are you planning to

remain?' is that the first implies that the visit has not yet begun, whereas the second implies that the visit already started some time before.

- **to remain** is used in impersonal phrases like It remains true that / It remains to be said that...
- The noun **remains** (always plural) of s.t. are what is left after most of it has been removed or destroyed: the remains of a meal | Roman remains. The **remainder** is used in arithmetic. The remains of the day is poetic.
- As both verb and noun, **stay** is a visit that lasts long enough to include at least one night. They came to stay over Christmas.
- Phrasal verbs are formed with **stay**, not **remain:** Stay away! *(Gardez vos distances! N'intervenez pas!)* | to stay awake | to stay in / on / out / up. A stay-at-home.

REPETITION

English practises *minimal repetition* of prepositions, (relative) pronouns, and function words such as *this* and *that* (and not *such as *this* and such as *that*). So to his mother and father rather than *to his mother and to his father.

réplique

In a play, an uninterrupted statement by one character to another, irrespective of length, is a **speech.** Use **answer** and **reply** for responses to questions or remarks. When an actress learns her speeches, she says she is learning her **lines.**

In English, there is no exact equivalent to *donner la réplique.* Use to **reply**, to **answer**, to **respond**, etc., as appropriate.

rien à faire may mean

- 'Sorry, **there is nothing I can do about it**,' or else
- there is (objectively) no remedy. For this, use a passive construction: **there is nothing to be done** (about s.t.).
- It may also mean: '(I am bored because) **I have nothing to do.**'
- The second and third structures are used to express *rien à dire:* '**there is nothing to be said**' and '**I have nothing to say (to that)**'.

rien d'autre by itself is **nothing else.** *Rien d'autre que* is either **nothing other than** or **nothing (else) but.**

risquer should be rendered by **to risk** only when it means **to endanger** (Maggie risked her life to save her brother from the flood). In less dramatic situations, use **to venture.** Elizabeth ventured only one glance at Darcy.

- When ***risquer*** expresses *possibility*, use a modal: Don't eat that; it may be poisonous. | Don't climb up there: you might fall.
- When it expresses *probability,* use **to run the risk of being** + past participle for *passive* situations (Oliver ran the risk of being arrested), and **likely** or **sure to** for

active ones. David knew that Mr Murdstone was likely to beat him if he did not learn his lesson properly. (would surely beat him … is old-fashioned.)

- To add a habitual aspect, use **liable to.** At any moment (q.v.) Betsy Trotwood was liable to jump up and chase the donkeys away from her garden.
- In legal contexts, use **to face.** Fagin faced at least twenty-five years in prison.

scarce [skɛəs] (i.e. insufficient in quantity for the need or demand) is best used as a predicate: strawberries are scarce this year. Pronominal use is rare; in this position it means 'less than wished or hoped for'. She made use of the scarce opportunity to comment on the lecture. More neutral terms for this use would be **infrequent** (+ plural noun), **rare**, or possibly **exceptional.**

scepticism and **skepticism**, like *sceptic(al)* and *skeptic(al)*, mean the same thing: doubt as to the truth of something. Both are pronounced /sk/. AmE changed the spelling to reflect the pronunciation. See also **C.**

seduce, seduction, and **seductiveness**

- ✷ **to seduce** s.o. is **to induce s.o. to have sexual relations**, especially for the first time. Arthur seduced Hetty in the orchard. Consequently her **seduction** was an event that she experienced (q.v.). Her **seductiveness**, on the other hand, refers to her sexual attractiveness.
- **to be seduced**, usually with an inanimate agent, means that a person (q.v.) is drawn into doing s.t. (not only sexual) against their better judgment. Seduced by the prospect of making an instant fortune, he …

selon may be **according to** (a source of information; like *d'après*) or **depending on** (a condition; like *suivant*). The Gospel according to St John. | Depending on the Gospel you read, you get a slightly different story.

seul can mean **solitary**, **unique**, **unaided**, and **unaccompanied**; plus an idiomatic sense, meaning 'without any problems'.

- meaning *objectively* solitary: use **solitary; by itself; alone** (**see A– WORDS**).
  In a solitary tree on the hilltop, there are probably no other trees around.
  In a tree standing by itself on the hill, there are probably other trees not far away. (See below for **by itself**) **Alone** can be used here too.
- meaning *subjectively* solitary: use **lonely** – which implies 'and I wish I wasn't.' NB **Lonely** is often used anthropomorphically: a lonely house. **Lonesome** implies 'alone *and I don't mind (much).*' 'I'm a lonesome cowboy.'
- **unique** adds a sense of value; *pronominally* it subjectively intensifies: a unique opportunity; as a *predicate* it is more objective: No other diamond is cut like this; it is unique.

  Also possible are: **only, one, sole, single** (often negative), **alone**, and (with objects) **very.** I went to the sole shop in the village. | There was not a single person around.

He began to sing, 'If you were the only girl in the world, and I was the only boy…'
She stopped him. 'That's the *one* (or *the very*) thing you *shouldn't* have sung.'
NB With **only** there are no others (in that class) at all; **one** implies that there are others (in the class) but they are different in some way; hence it is often coupled with a negative statement: The one thing I don't like about … But not exclusively: with one accord, like one man, they all sat down.
sole and **single** occur in *formes figées* (which are now clichés): He was the sole survivor (= He alone survived). | There was not a single sound to be heard.

- **unaided**: **by –self; for –self; of –self**
  by –self is neutral, the unmarked form. I wrote this by myself. Intensifier: **all.** Proud parent showing child's drawing: 'She did it all by herself!'
  by -self can have the added implication of **solitary:** I like walking by myself.
  NB French uses *tout seul* for both instances of **by -self.**
  for –self is the marked form, underlining the absence of intervention by any other person: Let him find out for himself.
  of –self suggests spontaneous action, especially of inanimate objects, and corresponds to the French *de lui-même*: the miracle occurred of itself.
- **unaccompanied: alone; on one's own; single; single-handed** and **solo; unaccompanied** (and other formations like **unchaperoned**); **by oneself**
  She went away and [sob] left me all on my own. | Are you single? (i.e. not married)
  single-handed is the marked form for **alone**: After his navigator fell overboard, he completed the race single-handed. That was when he got the idea of sailing alone round the world; then he wrote a book titled *Sailing Solo.*
  solo is used primarily in music, both for compositions and for performance: concerto for solo violin. | Can you sing solo? Here, **unaccompanied** is the marked form. When I sing unaccompanied, I find it hard to stay in pitch.
  Like **by –self, unaccompanied** emphasizes that some form of protection or assistance is absent: They believed that girls should not travel unaccompanied / unescorted / without an escort / unchaperoned. | (Proud patient:) 'It's the first time since I broke both legs that I've been outside unaccompanied.'
- For the idiom, *aller tout seul,* you can say it went **swimmingly;** it was **plain sailing;** it went off **without a hitch** *(=sans accroc),* etc. In short, **'No problem!'**

shortly may relate to time, meaning **soon** (I'll be with you shortly) or it may qualify a manner of speaking, implying **bad temper** or **impatience.** In He answered me shortly, context will determine which sense is intended. For **brevity** (shortness of expression, especially in writing) use **briefly.**

si

In French, it is common to begin sentences with ***si*** to express a logical relationship: *S'il a réussi, c'est grâce à ….* As a rule English does not use **if** like this when the statement is a matter of *fact,* rather than a *hypothesis.* We would

say Thanks to ..., he succeeded in ... or He succeeded because .... When there's a change of subject, use **whereas** (x does this, whereas y does that).

- The same applies to ***même si***: use **even though**, or even **even when**, for matters of fact. The mood of the following verb reflects this: even if it *were* true and even though it *is* true. In short, reserve **if** for hypotheses.
- When the structure suggests the idea '… or not,' use **whether.** She was not sure whether she should accept him.

SINCE vs **FROM** (meaning *à partir de*)

Use **since** for past time, and **from** for future time and space: Since last month | From next October | From line twenty-four | From the beginning of the book.

Use **since** with parts of books only when you are referring to *the temporal experience of reading*, e.g. we have been in doubt as to the fate of the hero since the beginning of this chapter.

☞ **Since** requires a past tense and cannot be used with the present.

snob is a noun; the adjective is **snobbish** – and the behaviour **snobbery** or **snobbishness.** There is no corresponding verb. The French *snober quelqu'un* is **to cut**, or **to cold shoulder s.o.**

SO

Use **so** rather than **it** (q.v.) in short answers after verbs like expect, hope, say, suppose, and tell. Had you forgotten? I'm afraid so. Will you now remember? I think so. Also when there is no verb: How so? Just so! Note this usage: There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so —Shakespeare.

☞ Remember the particular **WORD ORDER** when **so** is used to emphasize an adjective: so long a story, for instance. This is equivalent to saying 'such a long story.' The same word order occurs with **that:** it's not that big a problem, really = it's not such a big problem = it's not so big a problem. And also with **as:** 'as small a space as possible'; 'I did it in as short a time as I could manage.'

some time vs **sometime**

It is easy for French speakers to distinguish between **some time** *(du temps; un certain laps de temps)* and **sometime** *(une fois ou l'autre)*. In *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth spends some time with her friend Charlotte, and some with her aunt and uncle. | 'Why don't you come up sometime 'n' see me?'—Mae West.

- **any time** corresponds to **some time** in negative and interrogative sentences, (Do you have any time to spare?) whereas **anytime** is *n'importe quand.*
- **sometime** may be used pronominally with the meaning of **former** *(ancien* – q.v.): Barack Obama, sometime president of the United States ...

sorry about *vs* **sorry for**

You commiserate with s.o. *about* an experience they have had by saying 'I'm sorry *about* your loss | your accident'. You feel sorry *for* s.o. (or any other liv-

ing creature) and you apologize *for* s.t. that you have done by saying, 'I'm sorry for offending you | hurting your feelings | treading on your toe'. This is equivalent to 'I'm sorry I offended you | hurt your feelings | trod on your toe.'

soumis

To render *soumis* you must first identify the notion you wish to convey, and then find a suitable verb or phrase. For example, when people do not stand up for themselves, use **submissive** or **dependent on.** He was a submissive partner. | Tess was entirely dependent on her husband. In more gendered cases, along the lines of *la femme était soumise à l'homme,* think of: Women were ruled by men. | They had to obey men. | They were treated as inferior to men. | They had no independence, being legally subservient to men.

When a person has been ill-treated (q.v.), use **subjected to.** The prisoners had been subjected to extreme humiliation. For active repression, there are many verbs: The natives, dominated / downtrodden / oppressed / subdued / subjugated / by the colonists …

For more neutral and passive meanings, use phrases like the stock market is **liable to** violent fluctuation. | He was **subject to** fits of coughing.

NB The English have a sneaking sympathy for the **underdog.**

For *soumis à la condition de* use **conditional on.**

Use **submitted** only for things that are **put forward** or **proposed** for discussion or approval. The draft project was submitted to the commission.

stop

Contrast **to stop to do s.t.** (in order *to do*) with **to stop doing s.t.** (Clearly, you have to be *doing* it before you can *stop doing* it.)

See also ***empêcher***

Stressing words correctly when speaking is just as important as spelling them correctly while writing. When you learn a new word, make sure you remember where the stress falls in it. (It is crucial for English poetry.)

Here are some very simple rules for word stress: it falls on

- the first syllable in most 2-syllable *adjectives*, and
- the first syllable in most 2-syllable *nouns*, but
- the second syllable of 2-syllable *verbs*. (For the effect of this on pronunciation, see below.)
- In longer words, it tends to fall on the third syllable from the end. NB You have to count *-ion* and *-ic* as *two* syllables, so all the /-ʃn/ words (ending -sion, -tion, and even *ocean*) are stressed on the syllable immediately preceding the /-ʃn/.

In words that are clearly formed by combining two other words, stress

- the first part in *nouns*. This enables us to distinguish between a ˊblackbird (*une merle*) and a ˊblack ˊbird (*un oiseau noir*), which has equal stresses;

- the second part in *verbs* and *adjectives*: to under′stand; good-′tempered.
- NB There is a long-term tendency for stress to move backwards. The latest instances are con′*trov*ersy which is becoming ′*con*tro,versy (with a secondary stress on 'ver'), and tele′*vis*ion which has become ′*tel*evision.
- Incorrect stress can be just as misleading as incorrect vowel sounds – in fact, incorrect stress often leads to wrong vowels. Notice, for instance, how the first vowel changes from strong to weak as the stress changes in *record* as a noun, [′rɛkɔːd], vs [rɪ′kɔːd] as a verb; or *moral* vs *morale* (q.v.).
  A notorious instance of incorrect stressing occurred when Madame de Gaulle was questioned by a British reporter after the General had finally announced he was going to stand down. 'What are you looking forward to in retirement?' she was asked. 'Appiness,' she replied, dropping the **h** in true French style; she got the stress wrong and everyone heard 'a penis'.

suffer-ing

When a person suffers (from s.t.), they experience **suffering.**

As a general rule, the only use of **sufferance** [′sʌfrəns] is in the idiom **on sufferance.** 'If you are allowed to do s.t. on sufferance, you can do it although you know that the person who gave you permission would prefer that you did not do it' (COBUILD).

susceptible (FA)

Of a person, **susceptible** means *vulnerable* (*to* a disease or illness); *sensitive, easily hurt* or *offended.* The French notion, as in *La police est à la recherche de toute personne susceptible de les aider,* is best rendered with **might:** the police would like to hear from anyone who might be able to help with their investigation.

- Of things, **susceptible** (with *of*) can be used as in French: Do you think this handbook is susceptible of improvement?

tell takes a direct object (or two, as in to tell s.o. a story, a tale, or a lie). Thus you cannot say *He told that he had some problems. For this, you must add a direct object or use another verb like admit, confess, confirm, reveal, say, etc.

thing is used affectionately of *people* in English: You lucky thing! (You've won the lottery.) | You poor thing! (You've cut yourself.) | Your grandmother is a dear old thing. There's no explaining an idiomatic usage like this. If it shocks you, remember Alphonse Daudet's novel *Le Petit Chose,* and think of the French endearment, *mon chou.* (To an English speaker, that's like calling s.o. a vegetable! Try **honeybunny** instead.)

this vs **that**

As demonstrative articles, **this** and **these** are for things that are close, such as something just mentioned, and **that** and **those** for things farther away in time and space, like s.o. else's argument. The latter are best reserved for

creating contrast or opposition. Beware: the distance of **that** may also be emotive, conveying rejection, humour, irony, etc. Take that smile off your face!

☞ Use **this** for both the immediate past and the immediate future (this morning, this afternoon, this evening) except for **last night** (*cette nuit*), **today**, and **tonight** (*ce soir*), which require no demonstrative.

- As a pronoun and the subject of a sentence, **this** announces what is to follow (This is what Shakespeare wrote: 'This above all: to thine own self be true'), whereas **that** refers back to what immediately precedes: 'To be or not to be; that is the question'—Shakespeare | That's a simple enough rule, isn't it?

  cf. **what** and **which**. See also **MARKED** vs **UNMARKED FORMS, ORIENTATION IN SPACE,** and **so**

thou, thee and thy/thine are archaic forms for the second person singular. You will find them in poems, prayers, and dialects. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?—Shakespeare (Sonnet 18) | Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name | Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

throughout is a most useful preposition (rhyming with 'threw out') that means **all (the way) through**, **during all**, and **from start to finish.** This is a technique that Jane Austen uses throughout *Emma.* For emphasis add **whole** before the noun: Emma observed Frank throughout the whole evening.

TIME and **SPACE** in adjectives

There are two adjectival structures in English for expressing time and space.

- In the first, the unit of measure is hyphenated and invariable (See **ADJECTIVES**); a singular noun requires a determiner. She took a two-week holiday.
- The second structure contains an **ANGLO-SAXON GENITIVE.** No determiner is required in addition to the number; 'a' may be used to mean 'one': at a moment's notice | a fortnight's sick leave (i.e. sick leave lasting for two weeks) | She took two weeks' holiday | Cancellation requires three months' notice (i.e. three months in advance) | last season's fashions. See also **worth**
- The difference between the two is sometimes subtle: in Five hours' climbing brought her to the summit, the implied point of view is the climber's. A five-hour climb brought him to the summit is more objective. Between Her three-week holiday was pure heaven and The three weeks' holiday did him a world of good, on the other hand, the difference lies in the emphasis: in the first, it's the *holiday* that was heaven; in the second, it's the *duration*, as much as the holiday itself, that's important.

toujours covers two different meanings:

- **always** is for something that has happened (often frequently) in the past, happens now and is likely to continue happening in the future. Water has always been wet and always will be.
- **still** suggests that something was the case in the past and has not yet changed, although we expect it to, or know that it will change soon. Is it still raining? | I still haven't finished my essay.
- *Depuis toujours* is typically rendered by **since the beginning of time.**
- For *pour toujours* see **for ever.** See also **ever**

trouble is a troublesome word, often a FA.

- Use the *uncountable* noun for
  (a) **difficulties** corresponding to *de la peine* (With all this traffic I had trouble getting here on time) and to *ennuis*: He's got money trouble again.
  (b) the state in which s.o. **deserves** (or **is liable**) **to be punished** (You'll get into trouble if you do that | He's in trouble again); and for
  (c) the **care** that s.o. takes to do s.t., as in *prendre la peine de* and *se donner de la peine*. He took the trouble to check the word before using it. | She went to a lot of trouble to find the information.
- As a *plural countable* noun, usually with a possessive article, it means **personal worries.** She shared all her troubles with her best friend. But with a **CAPITAL LETTER**, it refers to Ireland's violent struggle for independence in the early twentieth century. He was killed in the Troubles.
- The noun gives us **troublesome**, meaning *vexing* or *annoying*, and compound nouns like a **troublemaker** (*fauteur de troubles*) and a **troubleshooter** (a person who traces and corrects malfunctions in machines and systems of all kinds).
- The verb denotes a perturbed emotional state. His reluctance troubled her. | She was deeply troubled (or **upset**) by his change of attitude.
- The verb is used with a modal for polite requests: Could I trouble you to open the door for me? *(Auriez-vous la gentillesse de …)*. Beware of irony: if someone says to you, Would it trouble you to stop smoking? with a level or threatening tone of voice, you are either in a non-smoking area or you have ignored a previous polite request.
- The verb is also used for apologies prefaced with 'I'm sorry' – I'm sorry to trouble you *(Je suis navré de vous déranger)* – although (as in French) the initial 'I am' is frequently omitted: Sorry to trouble you: there's no other way out.

urgence

Something that is **urgent** needs to be attended to (q.v.) as soon as possible (an urgent message), but *une urgence* is an **emergency.** In a British hospital, A&E handles Accidents and Emergencies; in the US, it's the Emergency Room

(ER). In a crisis, a government may apply *emergency measures*, or request *emergency powers*, etc.

used to has two different pronunciations – see **z/s** – with different meanings:

- In passive constructions, **used** [juːzd] + infinitive means that the subject is utilized to do s.t. *Vacherin* and *gruyère* are used to make fondue.
- Pronounced [juːst], **used** expresses familiarity in the present or habit in the past. For the present, the structure is with **-ing.** I'm used to making fondue. For the past, signifying that the action is no longer performed or is no longer the case, the structure is with the infinitive. Heidi used to make fondue, but she stopped because her grandfather could no longer digest it.

  In spoken English, **used** is commonly reduced to just **use** [juːs] in negative sentences: You didn't use to make fondue out of a packet!

✷ If you say [juːzd] instead of [juːst], your statement may become absurd: imagine saying, 'Heidi used [juːzd] to make fondue.' It sounds as though she was put into the *caquelon*! That would make a fondue for cannibals.

valid vs **valuable** and **values**

Something that is **valid** has operative effect, like a contract that has been drawn up in accordance with the law, or the right railway ticket for you and the journey you are making at that moment, or (in an essay) an argument that is well founded on the text. It may be applied to a period of time: This ticket is valid 30 days from the date of issue. Noun: **validity.** The validity of this special offer expires at midnight on 31 December.

Antonym: **invalid**, stressed [ɪn'vælɪd]. I'm sorry, sir: this ticket is invalid. – NB an ['ɪnvəlɪd] is a disabled or sick person. See **stressing**

- Something that is **valuable**, on the other hand, has monetary value. Antonym: **worthless.** Noun: **valuables** (plural only). Keep your valuables safe!
- **Values** (always plural) are personal standards and principles of behaviour; See **morals.** ✷ To avoid inciting customers to debauchery or licentiousness, the hotel notice, *Prière de laisser vos valeurs à la réception,* must be translated: Please leave your valuables at reception.
- BrE. This computer is good value = it is well worth (q.v.) what it cost.

✷ Against all expectation, **invaluable** means **precious** in a non-monetary sense. One day this information may be invaluable to you! | Invaluable advice.

(se) venger

The usual verb is **to take revenge** (on s.o. **for** s.t., or **for** s.t. **on** s.o.). More literary: **to avenge** (s.t. like a crime or an insult) for the *principle*, whereas **to wreak vengeance** (**on** s.o. **for** s.t.) is *concrete*. Use the noun **revenge** for a specific instance, and **vengeance** for the concept. 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord.

verbs vs **nouns**

French loves nouns, especially abstract ones; English prefers verbs and verbal forms. So if you are tempted to write of the problems of the interpretation and translation of these texts, think rather of the problems of interpreting and translating them. See also **ANIMATION**, and **CONCRETE** and **ABSTRACT**

want of s.t. means **a lack of s.t.** Want of foresight can lead to disaster.

for want of means **for lack of** (*faute de*, or *à défaut de*): I'll call him simply 'the speaker', for want of a better term.

'**We can notice** x' (e.g. the regular form of this poem) is best avoided in literary analysis. While it is possible to use the imperative – Notice the regular form of this poem – it is preferable to make 'x' the subject of your statement: The regular form of this poem suggests that …

'It is interesting to notice' s.t. is superfluous, for if it was not interesting, you would not draw your reader's attention to it. See ***nous sommes***

what and **which** translate both *ce que* and *ce qui*

What refers to what is to follow, **which** to that which precedes. What makes this novel so convincing is its realism. | This novel is very realistic, which makes it particularly convincing. See also **all what?**

- As a relative pronoun, **what** signals a choice among an unlimited number of alternatives, whereas **which** implies a limited number (which may or may not be specified). Which day is the party – and what are you going to wear?
- There is no inversion (q.v.) in a clause introduced by **what**: We do not know what the source of his inspiration was.

when

Use the present or past perfect after **when** (and **as soon as**) to express anteriority compared with the rest of the sentence, exactly as you would with **after**: When they have got to know each other, they discover … The same applies to future events: I'll tell you as soon as (or when) I have finished (or I finish) my essay *(dès que je l'aurai fini)* | When I'm dead and gone … See also ***en faisant***

while

The primary meaning of **while** indicates that an event occurs at the same time as some other (often longer lasting) event: Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Corresponds to *pendant que*. It may also correspond to a present participle if the subject remains the same: *Ne pas parler en mangeant.* Don't speak while (you are) eating. Sometimes it is reinforced with 'at the same time' at the end of the sentence: Don't try to sing while you are eating at the same time.

- Then **while** can be **contrastive**, like *tandis que:* I like cats, while my partner prefers dogs. The contrast may be stronger: While I do not approve, I shall not object to it. *Quoi que je n'approuve pas, je ne m'y opposerai pas.*

- And it may also be **concessive**, like *bien que*: While we will miss your company, we know that you will be giving great pleasure to others.
- **while** is also a noun, meaning a short period of time. She was silent for a while.

✷ **awhile** is an adverb meaning '*for* some amount of time': She hesitated awhile.

WORD-BREAKS

✷ Do not use the French hyphenation routine of your word processor to break English words at the end of the lines: it will make nonsense of them, e.g. *thin-king for think-ing. Change the language option to English. When hyphenating manually, insert the hyphen (q.v.) *between syllables*, especially prefixes and suffixes. If in doubt, don't hyphenate.

WORD ORDER

As a general rule, avoid putting adverbial clauses or phrases between subject and verb, or between verb and direct object. Adverbs and phrases of time go best first (or last) in the sentence.

See also **ADJECTIVES**; **INVERSION**; ***non plus***; **not only**; **only**; **rather**; **so** (including **as**, **such**, and **that**); **what & which**

words ending **-f**, and **-fe**

Monosyllabic nouns ending with a single **-f** generally add an **s** for the plural: chef/s, coif/s, oaf/s, reef/s, roof/s. Any verbs derived from them do the same.

Exceptions: **proof/s**, but **to prove**; and **loaf/loaves**. There is a familiar verb **to loaf**, which means 'to avoid activity, especially work'. 'Stop loafing about and get on with on with your essay!' **to loaf around** has a similar meaning.

☞ Only two **-f** nouns have the plural in **-ves:** sheaf/sheaves *(gerbe de blé)* – there is no corresponding verb; and **leaf** / **leaves**, but the verb, meaning **to bear** or **take on leaves**, is **to leaf.** (NB **to leaf out** is purely AmE.)

- A few monosyllabic nouns ending in a single **-f** have two plurals with equal meanings and use: dwarf: dwarfs or dwarves; hoof: hoofs or hooves; scarf: scarfs or scarves; wharf: wharfs or wharves. If there is a corresponding verb, it ends in **-f** in all its forms: This skyscraper dwarfs all its neighbours.
- Monosyllabic nouns ending **-fe** change to **-ves** in the plural, and verbs derived from these nouns follow suit: life/lives and to live; shelf/shelves and to shelve; wife/wives and to wive (i.e. to marry; it is now archaic).

☞ The noun **safe** (*un coffre-fort*) becomes **safes** in the plural, but the corresponding verb is **to save** (*épargner, sauver*). NB The initialism SOS stands for 'Save our souls!' meaning 'Please come and rescue us'.

words ending **–ief**

- A few nouns in **–ief** remain unchanged in the plural: brief/s and chief/s (no verb) – but the verb for **belief/s** is **to believe**, and **thief** goes to the **–ve** form for *both* the plural *and* the verb: **thieves** and **to thieve.** 'The Thieving Magpie'.

  Unlike the monosyllabic **chief**, the compound noun **handkerchief** has two plurals: **handkerchiefs** and **handkerchieves**, but **kerchief/s** and **neckerchief/s** have only one.

- **grief** [grɪːf] deserves an entry to itself because it is an uncountable FA (the French *griefs (doléances)* are **grievances**): it means the intense sorrow caused by s.o.'s death; *deuil* lacks the intensity of feeling of **grief.** The corresponding verb is **to grieve** [grɪːv] *(pleurer la mort de qqn; faire son deuil)*.

  The obsolete plural **griefs**, meaning 'hurt', 'harm', or 'injury' (q.v.), is used only in a few sayings like 'time heals griefs and quarrels' (Blaise Pascal).

  grief appears in idioms like 'to bring / to come to grief', meaning 'to cause / meet disaster'. It is also used familiarly in phrases like, 'I don't want to give you any grief,' meaning 'I don't want to cause you any bother' *(dérangement, embêtement,* or *vexation)* or trouble (q.v.). Please don't give me any grief over this example!

  Finally, there's the exclamation of surprise and/or alarm, 'Good grief!'

- **relief** *(le soulagement)* is uncountable, except when it means the remission of (income) tax: many poor people depend on reliefs to survive. The corresponding verb is **to relieve.** It is regular. What a relief! | I am so relieved.

words ending **–ff**

Mono- and poly-syllabic nouns and verbs (whether they are derived from a noun or not) ending **–ff** generally add just an **s** in the plural or when conjugated: bailiff/s, bluff/s, buff/s, cliff/s, cuff/s, huff/s, muff/s, plaintiff/s, pontiff/s, puff/s, ruff/s, scuff/s, sheriff/s, sniff/s, stuff/s, whiff/s, etc.

☞ A few nouns, like chaff *(l'ivraie)*, fluff, guff (i.e. foolish talk or ideas), and tuff (a light, porous rock formed by consolidation of volcanic ash) are **UNCOUNTABLE.**

- **staff** – in the sense of a group of people who work for an organization (cf **COLLECTIVE NOUNS**) – gives **staffs**; but –

☞ when **staff** means 'a long straight stick used as a support when walking or climbing, or as a weapon' (NODE) it becomes **staves** in the plural. As **staff** is pronounced with a long /ɑː/ in BrE, the plural **staves** goes to [steɪvz], observing the pattern for words ending **–ave.** The villagers armed themselves with staves and pitchforks to repel the attack.

A **staff** (i.e. a long straight stick) also serves as a strong symbol of authority. Gandalf is rarely seen without his staff.

words ending **-lf**

Nouns ending **-lf** change to **-lves** for the plural: half/halves; elf/elves (and elven for the adjective); self/selves; shelf/shelves; wolf/wolves. **Calf/calves** gives the verb **to calve** (see also **L**), which is said of a cow that is giving birth to a calf.
'Call the vet – she's calving already!'

☞ Exception: **gulf/s** and **to engulf.**
NB **golf** is an **UNCOUNTABLE** noun and there is no corresponding verb.

- Polysyllabic nouns and verbs tend to be regular, simply taking **–s** in the plural or when conjugated.

worth often corresponds to *valoir la peine.* Is it worth watching this film? / Is this film worth watching? *(Est-ce que ça vaut la peine de regarder ce film?)*
Note the idiomatic *it* (q.v.) in sentences like Was the concert worth it? and Don't bother, it isn't worth it.
Combine **worth** with **while** (I think it would be worth your while doing that) to suggest that it would be advantageous or useful to do s.t., despite the effort that may be required, i.e. that it would be **worthwhile.**

- The other common use of **worth** is for monetary value: What's it worth? *(Qu'est-ce que ça vaut?)* When combined with amounts of money or time, it corresponds to *pour*: He bought her a hundred francs' worth of chocolate. | They stocked the chalet with a whole month's worth of food. Notice the use of the genitive; see **TIME** & **SPACE** in adjectives. See also **valid**
- Traditionally, 'the fortune of a **man of worth** (i.e. rich) commands respect'. His language (q.v.) distinguishes the man of spirit from the man of worth.
- When you do something **for all your worth**, you do it with great energy and determination. Maggie was rowing for all her worth against the current.

See also ***digne***, and **penny**

z/s

To distinguish between certain words that look alike but have different grammatical functions, English uses a phonemic opposition: /z/ in verbs and their participles (plus nouns ending **-er** derived from them), and /s/ in nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Thus we find **to (ab)use** [juːz] and **the (ab)user** [juːzə] versus **the (ab)use** [juːs], and adjectives like **useful** and **useless** [ˈjuːsləs], along with **to excuse** [ɪˈksjuːz] vs **the excuse** [ɪˈksjuːs]. Similarly, **to close** [kləʊz] and **a closer** (derived from the verb, hence [kləʊzə]) contrast with the adjective **close** [kləʊs] and its comparative **closer** [kləʊsə]. We have **to house** [haʊz] (*héberger*) and **housing** [ˈhaʊzɪŋ], as both noun and adjective, e.g. a housing estate, opposed to the familiar **house** [haʊs].
This contrast is also found in words whose stress changes with their grammatical function, e.g. **to refuse** [rɪˈfjuːz] vs the uncountable noun

refuse [ˈrefjuːs] (= rubbish; *détritus* or *ordures*). It is sometimes reflected in the spelling too, as in to **advise** [ədˈvaɪz] vs the **advice** [ədˈvaɪs]. See **stressing**

☞ Both **to practise** and the noun **practice** are pronounced [ˈpræktɪs]; AmE tries to make the spelling reflect the pronunciation by writing **practice** in both cases. Applying the same principle, it introduces **analyze** for the verb, whereas BrE writes **analyse**; both are pronounced [ˈænəlaɪz]. In both BrE and AmE the noun is spelled **analysis** [əˈnælɪsɪs].

- Both AmE and often BrE (see Oxford's English dictionaries) use the spelling **-ize** rather than **-ise** for verbs and (when they exist) the corresponding nouns: organize and organization | realize and realization.
- See the separate entries for **used**, and **lose** vs **loose**.

See but not Say

Silent Consonants in (British) English

NB *These guidelines do not generally apply to proper names.*

B Always silent before a final **t** (debt, doubt, redoubt - think of *le réduit national*) and before *-tle* (subtle rhymes with scuttle) and in words formed on them (doubtful, redoubtable, subtlety), so *debtor* rhymes with *better*, for instance.

- It is always silent in final position after the letter **m**: bomb, climb, comb, crumb, dumb, lamb, succumb, thumb, tomb, etc. It remains silent in all words formed on them (except for *crumble*), so for instance *dumber* rhymes with *summer*, *bomber* with *comma*, and *climbing* rhymes with … *rhyming*.
  NB Neither *bombard* nor *bombast* is derived from *bomb*, so both **b**s are pronounced in them. Similarly, the noun *number* [ˈnʌmbə] has nothing to do with *numb*, so the **b** is pronounced there too.

C Silent after **s** (science) but /sk/ in *sceptic(al)* and when followed by **h** in initial position: *scheme*, *scherzo*, *scholar*, and *school*. The **sc** in *corpuscle* and *muscle* (which rhyme with *mussel*) becomes /sk/ in *corpuscular*, *muscular*.

☞ There is *one* verb in which the **c** is silent before **t**: *indict* [ɪnˈdaɪt], meaning 'to formally accuse s.o. of a serious crime' (NODE). This also applies to the corresponding noun, indictment [ɪnˈdaɪtmənt].

- **c** before **h** makes [tʃ] except in words beginning *chiro-* when it is /k/.
- The *ch* pair in *yacht* [jɔt], *yachting* and *yachtsman*, is quite silent.

D Silent in a few common words when followed by a consonant, e.g. *grandfather, -mother, -son; grandstand; handkerchief, handsome,* and Wednesday.

G Silent when followed by **n** (gnaw – rhymes with *nor* – gnash, gnat, gnome, gnostic). Even the African *gnu* [nuː], a kind of antelope, follows this rule.

- It is silent when followed by **n** in final position (align, arraign, assign, design, malign, sign) both in their verb forms (designed, signing) and in words in **-er** and **-ment** formed on them (designer, signer; alignment, assignment), BUT pronounced in all others: designation, malignant, signature. In these the /aɪ/ becomes /ɪ/ and the syllabication is *ma-ˈlig-nant*, for example.
- **g** is silent when followed by **h** or **ht** in final position, and in words formed on them, irrespective of whether the **gh** group is pronounced /f/ (as in cough, enough, and tough) or is silent (as in (al)though, thought [θɔːt], and through, which rhymes with *threw*). More examples: fight, might, right; sigh; laugh and laughter; also daughter, slaughter. *Weigh* rhymes with *way*, and *weight* with *wait*. A pun:

A: 'Tell me how heavy you are.'

B: 'No way/weigh!' (i.e. both 'certainly not' and 'I haven't weighed myself.')

- **g** is silent in words ending **-gm**, as in diaphragm, paradigm, and phlegm but not in words formed on them (paradigmatic, phlegmatic).
- It is silent in **-eign** words (feign, foreign, reign, and sovereign) and words formed on them (feigning, foreigner). Another awful pun: Why do the English always carry an umbrella? Because the Queen is still reigning.
- It is also silent in words from French like champagne (rhymes with *sham pain*); followed by a syllable, it becomes /nj/ as in cognac ['kɔnjæk].
- It is *not* silent in words beginning **gh**– (ghastly, ghost).

H Silent in initial position in just four words: *heir, honest, honour,* and *hour*. The same applies to words formed on them, like *honesty* ['ɒnɪstɪ].

✷ In AmE, the word *herb* is pronounced without the **h**, which can puzzle speakers of BrE, since the American 'herbs' sounds like the Latin *urbs*.

- It is silent in **gh**–, **rh**– and **wh**– words. Exceptionally, to distinguish between homophones such as *whale / wail* (Did I hear a whale wail?), *where / wear*, *which / witch* (Which witch is she?), the presence of the **h** may be indicated by blowing through the rounded lips before the **w**. See also **w**

☞ Two exceptional silent aitches: Anthony, and the river Thames [temz].

- In final position, the **h** is never aspirated (so always silent). Hurrah!

K Silent in initial position when followed by **n** (knack, knee, knight, knob, knock, knot, know) and in words formed on them (knacker, knocker, knobbly, knotted, knowledge), including *acknowledge-ment* [ək'nɔlɪdʒ] – here it's the **c** that sounds /k/.

L For the silent ell, learn this rhyme:

After **o** and **a** (Say: After oh and ay
Before **m** and **k** Before em and kay
No ell. – Christmas!)

A few examples: chalk, stalk, talk, and walk (NB a mobile phone used to be called a *walkie-talkie* ['wɔːkɪ'tɔːkɪ]); the Falkland Islands (see also **s**); folk, yolk *(le jaune d'oeuf)*; almond, alms (*aumône*), balm, calm, palm (both the tree and the part of your hand), psalm (note the silent **p**), and salmon (rhymes with *gammon*); Sherlock Holmes, and the holm oak *(le chêne vert)*.

Americans are confused about this rule, so you will sometimes hear them pronouncing the ell in common words like palm and calm.

This rule does not apply to **–aulk** words (baulk, caulk) or to words formed by combining two other words, like almost ['ɔːlməʊst], or foreign words like polka (the dance).

- The ell is also silent in words ending **-alf** like calf and half, and in words formed on them, even when the **f** becomes a **v** as in calving (said of a cow giving birth to a calf; unfortunately, in BrE it rhymes with carving).
- Then of course there is a silent ell in could, should, and would (but *not* in any other apparently similar words like boulder and shoulder).

☞ Two exceptional cases: no ell in (Abraham) *Lincoln* [ˈlɪŋkən], nor in the military rank of *colonel*, which rhymes perfectly with *kernel* [kɜːˈnəl].

M Silent in initial position before **n:** mnemonic(s) [niːˈmɔnɪk], *mnemosyne.*

N Silent after **m** in final position (autumn, column, condemn, damn, hymn, solemn) and in their verb forms (so condemning rhymes with lemming) but *not* in nouns or adjectives formed on them (autumnal, condemnation, solemnity) – the syllabication is *au-tum-nal* and *sol-em-ni-ty,* for example.

P Silent in initial position in words of Greek origin beginning **pneu**– (pneumatic, pneumonia), **ps**– (psalm (see **L**), pseudo-, Psyche, psychi-, and psycho-), and **pt**– (pterodactyl, ptomaine, Ptolemy). Also in final position in coup [kuː]

- Mid-word, it is silent before **b** in cupboard and raspberry, and before **t** in just *one* word: *receipt* [rɪˈsiːt] (q.v.), which rhymes with deceit.

☞ The silent **p** and **s** in *corps* [kɔː] (a group of ballet dancers, diplomats, or soldiers) significantly distinguish it from corpse [kɔːps] (a cadaver).

R In BrE, not pronounced before a consonant. In monosyllabic words, it lengthens the vowel: contrast am with arm, had with hard, bid with bird, head with heard, pot with port, hut with hurt, etc. If the vowel is already long, it becomes a diphthong: bead [biːd] > beard [bɪəd].

- In BrE it is also silent in final position; it lengthens a single vowel (contrast fit with fir, hen with her, not with nor), and turns **-er** and **-our** (spelled **-or** in AmE) – *monosyllabic words excepted* – into a schwa /ə/**:** ardour, armour, clamour (rhymes with hammer), endeavour, favour, flavour, glamour, harbour, honour (see **H**), humour, labour, odour, rancour, rigour, rumour, saviour, savour, succour – so it rhymes with *sucker*! – valour, vigour, and vapour, etc.

☞ Only in the word *iron* (meaning both the metal (*le fer*) and the object (*le fer à repasser*)), and in words formed on it, is the **r** silent between two vowels. In BrE *iron* sounds just the same as *ion* [aɪən].
Do you do your own ironing? [ˈaɪənɪŋ]? I ask the question without *irony* (in which the **r** is pronounced as usual: [ˈaɪrənɪ]).

S Silent in *aisle*, *island*, and *isle*. This enabled Janet Frame to play with multiple meanings in the title of her remarkable autobiography, *To the Is-land: Vers le Pays de l'être* and *J'Atterris* as well as the obvious *À l'Île* or *Vers l'Île.* Also in *corps* [kɔː] (see **P**), and *tsetse* [ˈtetsɪ] (see **T**).

T Silent in words ending –**ften** and –**sten** like chasten, christen, fasten, glisten, hasten, listen, moisten, often, and soften. Also in words formed on them like christening [ˈkrɪsnɪŋ] (*le baptême*), listener [ˈlɪsnə], and softener [ˈsofnə].

NB Some people pronounce the **t** in *often*, and some use both forms, depending on the formality of the context.

- Also silent in words ending –**stle** like castle; trestle (*le tréteau*), and wrestle; bristle, mistle > mistletoe (*le gui*) and mistle thrush (*la draine,* a kind of *grive*), thistle, and whistle; apostle, jostle; hustle & bustle, rustle – but *not pestle.*
- Also silent in boatswain [bəʊsn], chestnut (*châtain* and *châtaigne*), Christmas, mortgage [ˈmɔːgɪdʒ] (*l'hypothèque*), and in the name *Matthew(s)* [ˈmæθjuːz].

☞ In AmE, words of foreign origin beginning **ts**– like tsar, tsetse, and tsunami, are generally pronounced without the initial **t**. BrE maintains the **t** and, what is more, says [ˈtetsɪ] for *tsetse* (see the silent **s**).

W In initial position, it is silent in front of **h** in just six words: who, whole, whom, whose, whooping-cough (*la coqueluche*) and whore (meaning *prostitute*), and in words formed on them (whosoever, wholesale, wholesome, whoreson, etc.). In all other **wh**– words (what, when, where, whistle, whoop, why) the **w** is pronounced and the **h** is not (see also **H**).

- Also silent in initial position in front of **r** as in: wrap, wreck, wriggle, wright, wrist, write, writhe, wrong, wrought, wry (and therefore *awry* [əˈraɪ]: **A- WORDS**).
- It is silent in words ending (vowel)+**w:** claw [klɔː], law, raw, straw; few, new, knew, view; below, fellow, follow, know; cow, how, now; and in words formed on them (even in *nowadays* [ˈnaʊədeɪz]), so *knowing* rhymes with *going*.

☞ Some BrE speakers pronounce an intervocalic /r/ in *drawing:* [ˈdrɔːrɪŋ].

- It is silent in the sequence (vowel)+**w**+(consonant) in initial, medial and final positions: awkward, awl, awning; hawk, squawk; bawl, brawl; dawn, yawn; newt *(le triton)*; strewn; howl, down, town. Also in words ending (vowel)+**w**+**e:** awe, ewe (a mother sheep; it sounds just like you – not you personally, of course), and owe; and in words formed on them: awful.
- NB the -**ow** sequence is pronounced either /aʊ/ (as in now) or /əʊ/ (as in know); in **heteronyms** (q.v.) both are possible, depending on the meaning: a deep bow [baʊ] *(une révérence profonde)* | a bow [bəʊ] and arrows. The pronunciation is generally /aʊ/ when **ow** is followed by a consonant: brown, owl (NB owls don't *howl* (*hurler*), they *hoot*); but not in *bowl* or *own* /əʊn/.

☞ It is silent in the middle of *two* (rhymes with *too*), and in *answer* /ɑːnsə/.

- It is pronounced in common nouns like sandwich and candlewick, BUT is elided in many proper names: Greenwich [ˈgrenɪtʃ], Southwark [ˈsʌðək] and Warwick [ˈwɔrɪk] (and therefore Warwickshire [ˈwɔrɪkʃə]).

✷ Only the silent **w** in *sword* [sɔːd] (*l'épée*) distinguishes it from *une pelouse,* a *lawn*: *(green)sward.* Get it right if you say, 'He fell on the sword'!

References

Most of the entries in this handbook are entirely of my own composition; a few have been adapted from books and websites; some were suggested by colleagues. When in doubt I have checked them in

Barrie, W. B. *Which and How.* 2 vols. Paris: Didier, 1968.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 16th ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010.

Collins COBUILD English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. 3rd ed. London and Glasgow: Collins, 2001.

Debrett's *Etiquette and Modern Manners.* Ed. Elsie Burch Donald. London: Pan, 1982.

Fowler, H. W. *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1929). Oxford: OUP, 1959.

Jones, Daniel. *English Pronouncing Dictionary.* 16th ed. Cambridge: CUP, 2003.

Lambotte, Paul. *Aspects of Modern English Usage.* Brussels: De Boeck, 1998.

Swan, Michael. *Practical English Usage.* Oxford: OUP, 2017.

The New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors. Rev. ed. Oxford: OUP, 2014.

The New Oxford Dictionary of English. Oxford: OUP, 1998.*

The Oxford-Hachette French Dictionary. French–English, English–French. Ed. Corréard & Grundy. Oxford: OUP, 1994.

The Oxford Writer's Dictionary. Oxford: OUP, 1990.

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language. 2nd ed. New York: Random House, 1987.

For further comparisons between French and English see:

Chuquet, Hélène, et Michel Paillard. *Approches linguistiques des problèmes de traduction anglais-français.* 2e éd. Paris: Ophrys, 1989.

Grellet, Françoise. *Initiation au thème anglais. The Mirrored Image.* Paris: Hachette, 1992.

Guillemin-Flescher, Jacqueline. *Syntaxe comparée du français et de l'anglais. Problèmes de traduction.* Paris: Ophrys, 1981.

Vinay, J.-P., et J. Darbelnet. *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais.* 2e éd. Paris: Didier, 1977.

* This handbook follows the spelling of NODE.

Are you looking for the Index?

In previous editions of PPG, there were indexes in English and French at the end, but not *every* word was indexed. Now that PPG is in pdf format and no longer printed, it is easy to search for any word or symbol, using your standard pdf viewer. So I have removed the indexes.

Remember: every headword is bookmarked.

If this inconveniences you, please let me know. I appreciate feedback.

My email address is: gpeter.winnington@gmail.com