Your notes

GCSE French: revision notes

Sounds and spelling

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Vowel sounds

- ou sounds like the "oo" in food: vous, rouge, jour. u is tighter, with rounded lips: tu, rue, vu. The difference matters: vous (you) and vu (seen).
- oi sounds like "wa": moi, trois, voiture. au and eau sound like "oh": chaud, beau, gâteau.
- é, -er and -ez sound like "ay": été, manger, parlez. è and ê sound like the e in bed: mère, fête.
- ai usually sounds like the e in bed (lait, français), but j'ai sounds like "jay". eu sounds like "uh" with rounded lips: deux, bleu, peu.

Nasal sounds

- Before n or m, a vowel becomes nasal (said partly through the nose) and the n or m isn't fully said: an / en (dans, enfant, temps), on (bon, maison, nom), in / ain / ein (vin, pain, plein), un (lundi, brun).
- If the n or m is followed by a vowel, or doubled, the sound isn't nasal: bonne, année, une, fine.

Consonants

- Most final consonants are silent: petit, grand, trois, vous. The -ent ending of ils/elles verbs is silent: ils parlent.
- c, r, f and l are often said at the end (think of "careful"): sac, bonjour, neuf, avril.
- h is always silent: l'hôtel, l'homme, heureux. ch sounds like "sh": chat, chocolat. qu sounds like k: qui, quatre.
- ç always sounds like s: ça, garçon, français. c sounds like s before e or i (ce, cinéma) and like k before a, o or u (café, comme).
- g before e or i, and j, sound like the s in "pleasure": manger, girafe, je, jour. gn sounds like the "ny" in canyon: montagne, gagner.

- ille usually sounds like "ee-y": fille, famille (but ville, mille and tranquille say "eel"). The French r is made at the back of the throat.

Liaison and reading aloud

- Liaison: a silent final consonant is said when the next word starts with a vowel or silent h: vous_avez, les_enfants, un_homme. An s or x in liaison sounds like z.
- There is never a liaison after et: et | il.
- French gives each syllable nearly equal weight, with slightly more on the last one. Don't stress the first syllable as English does.
- Endings can sound the same: parle, parles and parlent sound identical, while parlez and parler both end in "ay".

Key terms

les voyelles nasales	nasal vowels: an, en, on, in, un
la liaison	saying a silent final consonant before a vowel
la cédille	cedilla: the mark under ç, which makes it sound like s
l'accent aigu	acute accent: é, which sounds like "ay"
l'accent grave	grave accent: è, which sounds like the e in bed
l'accent circonflexe	circumflex accent: ê, â, î, ô, û
le tréma	diaeresis: ë or ï, which means the vowel is said separately (Noël)
une lettre muette	a silent letter

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. How is "oi" pronounced in "moi" and "trois"?
2. Which letter is always silent in French?
3. How does "ç" sound, as in "garçon"?
4. Which of these words has a nasal sound?
5. In "ils parlent", how is the "-ent" ending pronounced?
6. How does "gn" sound in "montagne"?
7. How does "ou" sound, as in "rouge"?
8. Which final consonant is usually pronounced?

Answers

1. like "wa"
2. h
3. like s
4. pain
5. It is silent

Your notes

6. like the "ny" in canyon
7. like the "oo" in food
8. the c in sac

What to do next

Practise 14 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

Free revision for GCSE and KS3 at lycolearn.co.uk. Some notes are for one exam board only, and say so in brackets.

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