

## NOUNS AND ARTICLES

### WORDS WITH DIFFERENT MEANINGS IN MASCULINE AND FEMININE FORMS

The following pairs of words have different meanings for masculine and feminine forms.

<i>Masculine</i>		<i>Feminine</i>	
<b>l'aide</b>	<i>helper</i>	<b>l'aide</b>	<i>help</i>
<b>le critique</b>	<i>critic</i>	<b>la critique</b>	<i>criticism</i>
<b>le guide</b>	<i>guide</i>	<b>la guide</b>	<i>reins (of a horse)</i>
<b>le livre</b>	<i>book</i>	<b>la livre</b>	<i>pound</i>
<b>le manche</b>	<i>handle</i>	<b>la manche</b>	<i>sleeve</i>
<b>le mode</b>	<i>method, mode</i>	<b>la mode</b>	<i>fashion</i>
<b>l'office</b>	<i>office, duty</i>	<b>l'office</b>	<i>pantry</i>
<b>le pendule</b>	<i>pendulum</i>	<b>la pendule</b>	<i>clock</i>
<b>le poêle</b>	<i>stove</i>	<b>la poêle</b>	<i>frying pan</i>
<b>le poste</b>	<i>job</i>	<b>la poste</b>	<i>post office</i>
<b>le somme</b>	<i>nap</i>	<b>la somme</b>	<i>sum</i>
<b>le tour</b>	<i>turn, walk around</i>	<b>la tour</b>	<i>tower</i>
<b>le vase</b>	<i>vase</i>	<b>la vase</b>	<i>mud</i>
<b>le voile</b>	<i>veil</i>	<b>la voile</b>	<i>sail</i>

### SPECIAL USES OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

With General or Abstract Nouns

Unlike English usage, in French the definite article must be used with all abstract nouns nouns used in a general sense. Compare the French and English in the following examples.

**L'homme est mortel.** *Man is mortal.*  
**Il aime les bananes.** *He likes bananas.*  
**La biologie est une science.** *Biology is a science.*  
**L'amour est divin.** *Love is divine.*  
**Les cigarettes ne sont pas bonnes pour la santé.**  
*Cigarettes are not good for the health.*

### NOUNS AND ARTICLES

With Titles

When talking about someone, the definite article must be used with titles. however, in direct address. The article is omitted,  
**Le docteur Martin est dentiste.** *Doctor Martin is a dentist.*

*But:*

**Bonjour, docteur Martin.** *Hello, Doctor Martin.*

**Le général Pierron est arrivé.** *General Pierron has arrived.*

*But:*

**Comment allez-vous, général Pierron?** *How are you, General Pierron?*

The article is never used with **monsieur, madame** and **mademoiselle**.

**Monsieur Le Blanc vient.** *Mister Le Blanc is coming.*

**Comment allez-vous, Madame Le Blanc?** *How are you, Mrs. Le Blanc?*

In formal address, the article is used before the title.

**Bonjour, madame la présidente.**

With Days of the Week, Seasons and Dates

The definite article is used with days of the weeks to indicate habitual occurrence. The definite article has the meaning of *every* or *on*. The definite article accompanying the days of the week is masculine.

**J'ai ma classe de français le lundi.**

*I have my French class on Mondays (every Monday). Le dimanche, je ne travaille pas.*  
*On Sunday(s) I don't work.*

The definite article is omitted when talking about a particular day.

**Je suis allé au cinéma lundi.**

*I went to the movies (on) Monday.*

**Je viendrai vous voir samedi.**

*I will come to see you (on) Saturday.*

**Dimanche est le dernier jour de la semaine.**

*Sunday is the last day of the week.*

The definite article is used with seasons when discussing the season in a general sense.

**L'été est une saison agréable.** *Summer is a nice season.*

**L'hiver est une saison froide.** *Winter is a cold season.*

*But:*

**Je vais à la plage en été.**

*I go to the beach in summer. Je fais du ski en hiver.*

*I ski in winter. les robes d'hiver* *winter dresses*

The definite article is used with dates.

**Le 15 septembre, les classes recommencent.**

*On the 15th of September (September 15) classes resume.*

**Il sera ici le 10 août.**

*He will be here on the 10th of August (August 10).*

With Names of Continents, Countries, Provinces, Regions, Islands, Mountains and Rivers

The definite article is used with names of continents, countries, provinces, regions, islands, mountains and rivers.

**La France n'est pas un grand pays.** *France is not a large country.*

**La Bretagne est pittoresque.** *Brittany is picturesque.*

**L'Amérique du Nord est un vaste continent.** *North America is a vast continent.*

**La Corse est une île méditerranéenne.** *Corsica is a Mediterranean island.*

**Les Pyrénées sont entre la France et l'Espagne.** *The Pyrenees are between France and Spain.*

*But:*

**Je vais en France.**

*I am going to France.*

**l'histoire de France** *the history of France*

## With Weights and Measures

The definite article is used with expressions of quantity when used in conjunction with a price to indicate per.

**Les tomates coûtent deux francs le kilo.**

*Tomatoes cost two francs a (per) kilogram.*

**Les oeufs coûtent quatre francs la douzaine.** *Eggs cost four francs a dozen.*

## With Parts of the Body or Clothing

The definite article is used instead of the possessive adjective with parts of the body or clothing, in order to avoid ambiguity.

**Il se lave les mains.** *He washes his hands.*

**Il s'en va les mains dans les poches.**

*He goes away with his hands in his pockets.*

The definite article contracts with *à* (to, at) and *de* (from, about, of) in the following way:

**à + le = au**

**à + les = aux**

**à + la** do not contract

**à + l'** do not contract

Je vais **au musée.**

Je parle **aux garçons.**

Je parle **aux élèves.**

Je vais **à la pharmacie.**

Je parle **à l'étudiant.**

J'arrive **à l'hôpital.**

**de + le = du**

**de + les = des**

**de + la** do not contract

**de + l'** do not contract

Je parle **du garçon.**

Je parle **des garçons.**

Je parle **des étudiants.**

Je parle **de la fille.**

Je parle **de l'élève.**

## OMISSION OF THE INDEFINITE ARTICLE

After the Verb *être*

Unlike English, the indefinite article is omitted after the verb **être** (to be) when the verb is followed by an unmodified noun indicating nationality, religion or profession.

**Elle est médecin.** *She is a doctor.*

**Il est catholique.** *He is a Catholic.*

**Elle est canadienne.** *She is a Canadian.*

When **c'est** is used instead of **il est**, the indefinite article is used.

**C'est un Français.** *He is a Frenchman.* **C'est un avocat.** *He's a lawyer.*

The indefinite article is also used when the noun that follows the verb **être** is modified.

**Victor Hugo est un auteur célèbre.** *Victor Hugo is a famous author.*

**Victor Hugo est un auteur que tous les Français connaissent.**

*Victor Hugo is an author whom all Frenchmen know.*

The indefinite article is not used:

1. after **quel** (*What a*).

**Quelle belle vue!** *What a beautiful view!*

2. before nouns in apposition.

**Paris, capitale de la France, est une grande ville.** *Paris, the capital of France, is a big city.*

3. after a noun that is a complement of another noun.

**une robe de soie** *a silk dress*

**un professeur d'histoire** *a history professor*

4. after the preposition **sans**.

**Il travaille sans argent.** *He works without money.*

5. after **avec** when used with abstract nouns.

**Travaillez avec soin.** *Work with care.*

*But:*

**Travaillez avec des amis.** *Work with some friends.*

after **ni ... ni**.

**Il n'a ni argent ni pain.**

*He has neither money nor bread.*

## THE PARTITIVE

In English we use the words *some* or *any* or no article with nouns that cannot be counted, such as milk, coffee and tea. In French the partitive is used with these nouns and the partitive article cannot be omitted. The partitive is expressed by **de plus le = du** and **de plus les = des**. The partitive articles are:

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>Feminine</i>	<b>de la</b>	<b>des</b>
<i>Masculine</i>	<b>du</b>	<b>des</b>
<i>Masculine or feminine before a vowel</i>	<b>de l'</b>	<b>des</b>

Study the following:

J'ai **de la soupe**. *I have some soup.*

Elle veut **du sucre**. *She wants some sugar.*

Il boit **de l'eau**. *He is drinking (some) water.*

Voulez-vous **des oranges**? *Do you want any oranges?*

Nous avons **des livres**. *We have some books.*

## THE PARTITIVE VERSUS THE DEFINITE AND INDEFINITE ARTICLES

The definite article is used with nouns in a general sense. The partitive is used with an undetermined quantity of a noncountable item.

Il aime **le café**. (*all coffee*) *He likes coffee.*

Il boit **du café**. (*some coffee*) *He drinks (some) coffee.*

With nouns that can be counted, such as bananas (one banana), or items used in the plural (some bananas), the indefinite article is used.

Je voudrais **une poire**.

Je voudrais acheter **des tomates** et **des bananes**.

Certain nouns can be count or noncount nouns depending on the way in which they are used. The definite, indefinite or partitive article can be used depending on the meaning.

Voici **le gâteau**. *Here is the cake. (the cake I bought yesterday)*

Voici **un gâteau**. *Here is a cake. (a whole cake).*

Voici **du gâteau**. *Here is some cake. (part of the cake, a piece of cake)*

#### EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE FOR USING THE PARTITIVE

When the Sentence Is Negative

Normally, in negative sentences, the partitive article is replaced. Note that **de** becomes **d'** before a word beginning with a vowel.  
by **de**. Study the following.

*Affirmative*

**J'ai du pain.**

*I have some bread.*

**J'ai une robe.**

*I have a dress.*

**J'ai des livres.**

*I have some books.*

**J'ai des amies.**

*I have some friends.*

*Negative*

**Je n'ai pas de pain.**

*I don't have any bread.*

**Je n'ai pas de robe.**

*I don't have a dress.*

**Je n'ai pas de livres.**

*I don't have any books.*

**Je n'ai pas d'amies.**

*I have no friends.*

If the sentence implies an affirmative idea or if you want to emphasize the noun, you may use the partitive forms in negative sentences.

**N'avez-vous pas de la famille ici?** *Don't you have any family here?*

**Je n'ai pas du respect pour lui, mais du mépris.** *I don't have any respect for him, rather scorn.*

When an Adjective Precedes a Noun in the Plural

When an adjective precedes a noun in the plural, the partitive becomes **de**.

*Singular*

**J'ai un bon livre.**

*But:*

**J'ai un livre intéressant.**

*Plural*

**J'ai de bons livres.**

**J'ai des livres intéressants.**

When an adjective is an integral part of the idea, the partitive is used.

**des jeunes filles**

*girls*

**des jeunes gens**

*young people*

**des petits pains**

*rolls*

**des petits pois**

*peas*

After Expressions of Quantity and Expressions with **de**

The partitive becomes **de** after expressions of quantity such as the following:

<b>assez</b>	<i>enough</i>	<b>une boîte</b>	<i>a box</i>
<b>beaucoup</b>	<i>a lot</i>	<b>une bouteille</b>	<i>a bottle</i>
<b>peu</b>	<i>a little</i>	<b>un verre</b>	<i>a glass</i>
<b>trop</b>	<i>too much</i>	<b>une tasse</b>	<i>a cup</i>
<b>tant</b>	<i>so many</i>	<b>un kilo</b>	<i>a kilogram</i>
<b>autant</b>	<i>as much</i>	<b>un litre</b>	<i>a liter</i>
<b>moins</b>	<i>less</i>	<b>une livre</b>	<i>a pound</i>
		<b>une douzaine</b>	<i>a dozen</i>
		<b>une tranche</b>	<i>a slice</i>

Elle veut <b>de</b> l'eau. <i>She wants some water.</i>	<i>But:</i>	Elle veut <b>un peu d'</b> eau. <i>She wants a little water.</i>
Il a <b>des</b> livres. <i>He has some books.</i>	<i>But:</i>	Il a <b>beaucoup de</b> livres. <i>He has many books.</i>
Je bois <b>du</b> vin. <i>I am drinking some wine.</i>	<i>But:</i>	Je bois <b>un verre de</b> vin. <i>I am drinking a glass of wine.</i>

**La plupart** (most) and **bien** (many) are exceptions to this rule.

**La plupart du** temps, je travaille. *Most of the time, I work.*

**Bien des** fois, il fait des fautes. *Many times, he makes mistakes.*

After expressions using **de**, such as **avoir besoin de** (to need), **se passer de** (to get along out), there is no partitive.

J'ai <b>de</b> l'argent. <i>I have some money.</i>	<i>But:</i>	J'ai <b>besoin d'</b> argent. <i>I need some money.</i>
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**Plusieurs** (several) and **quelques** (a few) do not require the partitive. Study the following:

J'ai <b>beaucoup de</b> livres. <i>I have many books.</i>	<i>But:</i>	J'ai <b>plusieurs</b> livres. <i>I have several books.</i>
J'ai <b>assez de</b> livres. <i>I have enough books.</i>	<i>But:</i>	J'ai <b>quelques</b> livres. <i>I have some books.</i>

In expressions of quantity **de** cannot be used before a pronoun. **D'entre** is usually used.

Plusieurs **d'entre eux** *Several of them*

Quelques-uns **d'entre nous** *Some of us*