

FR

FRENCH LESSON

Basic Conversation 1 • Chapter 12 • Getting Around

French Basic Conversation 1

Chapter 12 · Getting Around: Trains, Buses & Tickets



Getting Around — Se déplacer

Buy a train ticket, find your platform, ask about delays, take a bus or the metro, and say how you travel. You'll use *je voudrais* (Chapter 8), the 24-hour clock (Chapter 7), commands (Chapter 10) and plenty of numbers. A small but important grammar point: French says *en train* but *à pied*.

① Buying a Ticket — Un aller-retour pour Lyon

A:

Bonjour, je voudrais un billet pour Lyon, s'il vous plaît.

bō-ZHOOR, zhuh voo-DRAY ē bee-YAY poor lee-Ô, seel voo PLAY

Hello, I'd like a ticket to Lyon, please.

B:

Aller simple ou aller-retour ?

ah-lay SĔ-pluh oo ah-lay-ruh-TOOR

Single or return?

A:

Aller-retour, en deuxième classe.

Pour demain matin.

ah-lay-ruh-TOOR, ā duh-ZYEM KLAS. poor duh-MĔ mah-TĔ

Return, second class. For tomorrow morning.

B:

Il y a un train à neuf heures vingt.

eel-ee-AH ē TRĔ ah nuh-VUR VĔ

There's a train at nine twenty.

A:

Parfait. C'est combien ?

par-FAY. say kō-BYĔ

② Which Platform? — De quelle voie ?

A:

Excusez-moi, de quelle voie part le train pour Lyon ?

ek-skü-zay-MWAH, duh kel VWAH par luh TRĔ poor lee-Ô

Excuse me, which platform does the Lyon train leave from?

B:

Voie quatre.

VWAH KAH-truh

Platform four.

A:

Il part à quelle heure ?

eel PAR ah kel UR

What time does it leave?

B:

À neuf heures vingt. Il est déjà là.

ah nuh-VUR VĔ. eel-ay day-zhah LAH

At nine twenty. It's already here.

Perfect. How much is it?

B:

Quatre-vingt-quatre euros.

kah-truh-vê-KAH-truh uh-ROH

Eighty-four euros.

③ A Delay — Le train a du retard

A:

Pardon, le train pour Paris est en retard ?

par-DÔ, luh TRÊ poor pah-REE ay-tâ ruh-TAR

Excuse me, is the Paris train late?

B:

Oui, il a vingt minutes de retard.

WEE, eel-ah vê mee-NÛT duh ruh-TAR

Yes, it's twenty minutes late.

A:

Il arrive à quelle heure ?

eel ah-REEV ah kel UR

What time does it arrive?

B:

À quatorze heures quarante. Je suis désolé.

ah kah-tor-ZUR kah-RÃT. zhuh swee day-zoh-LAY

At 14:40. I'm sorry.

④ The Bus — Le bus numéro douze

A:

Pardon, le bus numéro douze va à la gare ?

par-DÔ, luh BÛS nü-may-ROH DOOZ vah ah lah GAR

Excuse me, does the number twelve bus go to the station?

B:

Oui. Il y a un bus toutes les dix minutes.

WEE. eel-ee-AH ê BÛS toot lay dee mee-NÛT

Yes. There's a bus every ten minutes.

A:

Je prends le ticket où ?

zhuh PRÃ luh tee-KAY OO

Where do I get the ticket?

B:

Vous achetez le ticket dans le bus. C'est deux euros.

voo-zahsh-TAY luh tee-KAY dÃ luh BÛS. say duh-zuh-ROH

You buy the ticket on the bus. It's two euros.

⑤ The Metro — Ligne quatre, direction...

A:

⑥ Meeting a Friend — Tu arrives à quelle heure ?

A:

Pour aller à la gare du Nord, s'il vous plaît ?

poor ah-LAY ah lah GAR dü NOR, seel voo PLAY

How do I get to the Gare du Nord, please?

B:

Prenez la ligne quatre, direction Porte de Clignancourt.

pruh-NAY lah LEEN-yuh KAH-truh, dee-rek-SYÖ PORT duh kleen-yân-KOOR

Take line four, in the direction of Porte de Clignancourt.

A:

C'est direct ?

say dee-REKT

Is it direct?

B:

Oui, c'est direct. Descendez à Gare du Nord.

WEE, say dee-REKT. day-sä-DAY ah GAR dü NOR

Yes, it's direct. Get off at Gare du Nord.

Tu arrives à quelle heure demain ?

tü ah-REEV ah kel UR duh-MÊ

What time do you arrive tomorrow?

B:

Mon train arrive à dix-huit heures dix.

mō TRÊ ah-REEV ah dee-zwee-TUR DEES

My train arrives at 18:10.

A:

Super ! Je viens te chercher à la gare.

sü-PAIR! zhuh VYÊ tuh sher-SHAY ah lah GAR

Great! I'll come and pick you up at the station.

B:

Merci ! À demain !

mair-SEE! ah duh-MÊ

Thanks! See you tomorrow!



Key Phrases at a Glance — Phrases clés

SITUATION	FRENCH	ENGLISH
Buying a ticket	Un billet pour Lyon, s'il vous plaît.	A ticket to Lyon, please.
Type of ticket	Un aller simple / un aller-retour, en deuxième classe.	A single / a return, second class.
Next train	Le prochain train pour Paris part à quelle heure ?	When does the next train to Paris leave?

SITUATION	FRENCH	ENGLISH
Platform	De quelle voie part le train ?	Which platform does the train leave from?
Delay	Le train a vingt minutes de retard.	The train is twenty minutes late.
Direct?	C'est direct ? / On change où ?	Is it direct? / Where do we change?
Getting off	Descendez à ... / Je descends à ...	Get off at ... / I'm getting off at ...



Ways to Travel — Les moyens de transport

FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	"BY ..."
le train	<i>luh TRĚ</i>	train	en train
le bus	<i>luh BÛS</i>	bus	en bus
le car	<i>luh KAR</i>	coach (long-distance)	en car
le tramway	<i>luh trah-MWAY</i>	tram	en tramway
le métro	<i>luh may-TROH</i>	metro, underground	en métro
le taxi	<i>luh tak-SEE</i>	taxi	en taxi
la voiture	<i>lah vwah-TÜR</i>	car	en voiture
l'avion (m.)	<i>lah-vyô</i>	plane	en avion
le vélo	<i>luh vay-LOH</i>	bicycle	à vélo
(on foot)	<i>ah PYAY</i>	on foot	à pied

"En" for Vehicles You Sit In, "À" for Bike and Foot

For most transport you say **en** (*en train, en bus, en voiture, en avion*), but for things you ride or walk on, you say **à**: *à vélo, à pied*. So: *Je vais au travail en train. Il va à l'école à pied. Elle va à la gare à vélo*. For public transport you can also use *le*: *Je prends le train / le bus* ("I take the train").

Tickets and Timetables — Billets et horaires

FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH
un billet	<i>ẽ bee-YAY</i>	a ticket (train, plane)
un aller simple	<i>ẽ-nah-lay SĚ-pluh</i>	a single (one-way) ticket
un aller-retour	<i>ẽ-nah-lay-ruh-TOOR</i>	a return ticket
première / deuxième classe	<i>pruh-MYAIR / duh-ZYEM KLAS</i>	first / second class
la voie / le quai	<i>lah VWAH / luh KAY</i>	track number / platform
l'horaire (m.)	<i>loh-RAIR</i>	timetable, schedule
le prochain / le dernier train	<i>luh pro-SHĚ / luh dair-NYAY TRĚ</i>	the next / the last train
à l'heure / en retard / annulé	<i>ah LUR / ă ruh-TAR / ah-nü-LAY</i>	on time / late / cancelled

Timetables Use the 24-Hour Clock

Station announcements and timetables use the 24-hour clock from Chapter 7: *quatorze heures quarante* (14:40), *dix-huit heures dix* (18:10). For regular services, French uses *toutes les* + number + *minutes* ("every ... minutes"): *toutes les dix minutes*. And *le prochain train* is the next one, *le dernier train* the last, so *Le dernier bus part à minuit* is a useful sentence to know.

Three Verbs You Just Used — Trois verbes

Arriver ("to arrive") and *changer* ("to change") are regular -er verbs (*changer* keeps its soft *g* with *nous changeons*). *Descendre* ("to get off, to go down") belongs to the third regular group, the **-re verbs**: the endings are -s, -s, —, -ons, -ez, -ent, and the *d* is pronounced in the plural only.

WHO	ARRIVER (TO ARRIVE)	SAY IT	CHANGER (TO CHANGE)	SAY IT	DESCENDRE (TO GET OFF)	SAY IT
je	j'arrive	<i>zhah-REEV</i>	je change	<i>zhuh SHĀZH</i>	je descends	<i>zhuh day-SĀ</i>

WHO	ARRIVER (TO ARRIVE)	SAY IT	CHANGER (TO CHANGE)	SAY IT	DESCENDRE (TO GET OFF)	SAY IT
tu	tu arrives	tü ah- REEV	tu changes	tü SHÄZH	tu descends	tü day- SÄ
il / elle / on	il arrive	eel ah- REEV	il change	eel SHÄZH	il descend	eel day- SÄ
nous	nous arrivons	noo- zah-ree- VÖ	nous changeons	noo shä- ZHÖ	nous descendons	noo day-sä- DÖ
vous	vous arrivez	voo-zah- ree-VAY	vous changez	voo shä- ZHAY	vous descendez	voo day-sä- DAY
ils / elles	ils arrivent	eel-zah- REEV	ils changent	eel SHÄZH	ils descendent	eel day- SÄD

Three Verb Families — A Summary

You have now met all three regular verb groups in French: **-er** verbs (*parler, habiter, aimer, arriver*), **-ir** verbs (*finir*, with *-iss-* in the plural), and **-re** verbs (*descendre, prendre*). Alongside them sit the irregular verbs you've used all course: *être, avoir, aller, faire, venir, vouloir, boire, partir*. Practise the present tense of each and you can say most everyday things.

Vocabulary — Vocabulaire

20 key words and phrases from this chapter. Nouns are listed with their article.

#	FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE	NOTE
1	le train	TRĚ	train	noun, m.	en train
2	le billet	bee-YAY	ticket	noun, m.	for train and plane; "ticket" for bus/metro
3	l'aller simple	ah-lay SĚ- pluh	single ticket	noun, m.	"one-way go"

#	FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE	NOTE
4	l'aller-retour	<i>ah-lay-ruh-TOOR</i>	return ticket	noun, m.	"go-and-back"
5	la classe	<i>KLAS</i>	class	noun, f.	<i>en deuxième classe</i>
6	la voie	<i>VWAH</i>	track, platform number	noun, f.	<i>voie quatre</i>
7	le quai	<i>KAY</i>	platform, quay	noun, m.	<i>sur le quai</i>
8	l'horaire	<i>oh-RAIR</i>	timetable	noun, m.	<i>les horaires = opening / running times</i>
9	le retard	<i>ruh-TAR</i>	delay	noun, m.	<i>vingt minutes de retard</i>
10	la ligne	<i>LEEN-yuh</i>	line (metro, bus)	noun, f.	<i>la ligne quatre</i>
11	la direction	<i>dee-rek-SYŌ</i>	direction; management	noun, f.	<i>direction + end station</i>
12	le taxi	<i>tak-SEE</i>	taxi	noun, m.	<i>en taxi</i>
13	prochain	<i>pro-SHĚ</i>	next	adj	<i>le prochain train</i>
14	dernier	<i>dair-NYAY</i>	last	adj	<i>le dernier bus</i>
15	direct	<i>dee-REKT</i>	direct, non-stop	adj	<i>un train direct</i>
16	annulé	<i>ah-nü-LAY</i>	cancelled	adj	<i>annulée in the f.</i>
17	arriver	<i>ah-ree-VAY</i>	to arrive	verb	<i>regular -er</i>
18	changer	<i>shă-ZHAY</i>	to change	verb	<i>nous changeons</i>
19	descendre	<i>day-SĂ-druh</i>	to get off; to go down	verb	<i>first -re verb: je descends</i>
20	à l'heure / en retard	<i>ah LUR / ā ruh-TAR</i>	on time / late	phrase	<i>Le train est à l'heure.</i>

Real French Tip — Validate Your Ticket, Check for Strikes

On French trains, some paper tickets (especially for regional trains) have to be validated before you board, using a small machine on the platform. This is called *composter* ("kō-pos-TAY"). Tickets bought online or on an app with a barcode usually don't need it, so read the instructions printed on your ticket, because travelling without a validated ticket can mean a fine. Platform numbers (*la voie*) at big stations are often announced only shortly before the train leaves, so keep an eye on the departure board (*le tableau des départs*). Occasionally there's a *grève* ("GREV", strike) on the railways or metro. It's a fact of life that locals take in their stride, so check the news before an important journey.

Try It Yourself — Exercices

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Ask for a return ticket to Lyon, second class.

▼ Show answer

Je voudrais un aller-retour pour Lyon, en deuxième classe, s'il vous plaît.

2. Ask what time the next train to Paris leaves, and from which platform.

▼ Show answer

Le prochain train pour Paris part à quelle heure ? Il part de quelle voie ?

3. Say "The train is twenty minutes late."

▼ Show answer

Le train a vingt minutes de retard. (Or: Le train est en retard.)

4. Choose *en* or *à*: Je vais au travail ____ train · ____ pied · ____ vélo · ____ bus.

▼ Show answer

en train · à pied · à vélo · en bus.

5. Say "I arrive at 18:10" using the 24-hour clock.

▼ Show answer

J'arrive à dix-huit heures dix.

6. Tell a stranger to get off at Gare du Nord.

▼ Show answer

Descendez à Gare du Nord. (*Vous command, from Chapter 10.*)

Course Complete — Ce que vous savez maintenant

You've finished French Basic Conversation 1. Here's what you can now do:

CHAPTER	YOU CAN NOW...
1 · Greetings & Goodbyes	Say hello and goodbye, ask how someone is, use <i>tu</i> and <i>vous</i> , and read the sounds of French.
2 · Introducing Yourself	Say your name, say "nice to meet you", introduce others, spell a name aloud.
3 · Numbers, Age & Contact Details	Count to 100, say your age with <i>avoir</i> , give a phone number and email address.
4 · Where You're From	Say where you're from and live (<i>en / au / aux</i>), and name nationalities and languages.
5 · Talking About Your Family	Name family members, use <i>mon / ma / mes</i> , and say what you have.
6 · Talking About Your Job	Say and ask what you do, where you work, and use feminine job titles.
7 · Days, Dates & Telling the Time	Give days, dates and birthdays; tell the time, including the 24-hour clock.
8 · Ordering at a Café	Order politely with <i>je voudrais</i> , use <i>du / de la / des</i> , and ask for the bill.
9 · Shopping & Prices	Ask prices, say euros, describe colours and sizes, and pay.
10 · Asking for Directions	Ask where things are, follow simple directions, say you're lost.

CHAPTER**YOU CAN NOW...**

11 · Booking a Hotel

Book a room, check in and out, and report a problem.

12 · Getting Around

Buy tickets, find platforms, use buses and the metro, and understand delays.

In total that's around 240 vocabulary items, a bank of everyday verbs (*être, avoir, aller, venir, faire, vouloir, prendre, boire, partir, parler, habiter, travailler, arriver* and more), and the confidence to hold short real conversations. Well done: *Bravo !* ("brah-VOH").

What Comes Next — Basic Conversation 2

The natural next step is **French Basic Conversation 2**, which builds on these situations with new ones: your daily routine, hobbies and free time, making plans and invitations, and describing people and things. Many things you've copied as ready-made phrases (*au / du, du / de la, je voudrais, il y a*) will be explained properly later. Keep practising out loud, and revisit the vocabulary tables: *bonne continuation !* ("good luck with what comes next!").