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FRENCH LESSON

# Basic Conversation 1 · Chapter 3 · Numbers & Age

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# French Basic Conversation 1

Chapter 3 · Numbers, Age & Contact Details

## 1234 Numbers, Age & Contact Details — Les nombres, l'âge et les coordonnées

This chapter has three short parts so the numbers stay manageable: **Part 1** counts from 0 to 20; **Part 2** builds the tens (including French's famous "four-twenties") and lets you say your age; **Part 3** covers phone numbers and email addresses. Read the French aloud with the pronunciation line each time.

### Part 1 · Numbers 0–20 — Les nombres de zéro à vingt

**0** zéro  
zay-ROH

**1** un / une  
ẽ / ün

**2** deux  
duh

**3** trois  
trwah

**4** quatre  
KAH-truh

**5** cinq  
sẽk

**6** six  
sees

**7** sept  
set

**8** huit  
weet

**9** neuf  
nuf

**10** dix  
dees

**11** onze  
õz

**12** douze  
dooz

**13** treize  
trez

**14** quatorze  
kah-TORZ

**15** quinze  
kẽz

**16** seize  
sez

**17** dix-sept  
dee-SET

**18** dix-huit  
dee-ZWEET

**19** dix-neuf  
deez-NUF

**20** vingt  
vẽ

#### Number Patterns to Notice

From 17 to 19 French simply says "ten-seven, ten-eight, ten-nine" (*dix-sept, dix-huit, dix-neuf*); 11 to 16 are separate words, each ending in *-ze*. *Un* is "one" for masculine things (*un ami*) and *une* for feminine ones (*une amie*). Finally, watch the final consonants of *cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf, dix*: said alone, you hear the last sound (*sees, set, weet, nuf, dees*), but before a word starting with a

consonant it often disappears (*six personnes* is "see pair-SON"). Before a vowel sound it links on: *dix ans* is "dee-ZÃ". Follow the pronunciation lines and your ear will pick this up.

### ① Counting Together — Comptons !

**A:**

Comptons jusqu'à dix !

*kõ-TÕ zhüs-kah DEES*

Let's count to ten!

**B:**

Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf, dix !

*ẽ, duh, trwah, KAH-truh, sêk, sees, set, weet, nuf, dees*

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten!

**A:**

Et après dix ?

*ay ah-PRAY DEES*

And after ten?

**B:**

Onze, douze, treize, quatorze, quinze, seize !

*õz, dooz, trez, kah-TORZ, kêz, sez*

Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen!

### ② Which Number? — Quel numéro ?

**A:**

Excusez-moi, quel bus va au centre-ville ?

*ek-skü-zay-MWAH, kel BÛS vah oh sã-truh-VEEL*

Excuse me, which bus goes to the town centre?

**B:**

Le numéro quinze.

*luh nü-may-ROH KÊZ*

Number fifteen.

**A:**

Le quinze ou le cinquante ?

*luh KÊZ oo luh sê-KÃT*

Fifteen or fifty?

**B:**

Le quinze, Madame. Quinze, un-cinq.

*luh KÊZ, mah-DAHM. kêz, ẽ-SÊK*

Fifteen, madam. Fifteen: one-five.

## Part 2 · The Tens & Your Age — Les dizaines et l'âge

| NUMBER | FRENCH | SAY IT      | NOTE                                    |
|--------|--------|-------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 20     | vingt  | <i>vẽ</i>   | <i>the t is silent, except in 21–29</i> |
| 30     | trente | <i>trãt</i> |                                         |

| NUMBER | FRENCH           | SAY IT                  | NOTE                     |
|--------|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 40     | quarante         | <i>kah-RĀT</i>          |                          |
| 50     | cinquante        | <i>sē-KĀT</i>           |                          |
| 60     | soixante         | <i>swah-SĀT</i>         | <i>the x says "s"</i>    |
| 70     | soixante-dix     | <i>swah-sāt-DEES</i>    | <i>"sixty-ten"</i>       |
| 80     | quatre-vingts    | <i>kah-truh-VĚ</i>      | <i>"four-twenties"</i>   |
| 90     | quatre-vingt-dix | <i>kah-truh-vě-DEES</i> | <i>"four-twenty-ten"</i> |
| 100    | cent             | <i>sā</i>               |                          |
| 1,000  | mille            | <i>meel</i>             | <i>never takes an -s</i> |

## Numbers 21–99 — the "building blocks"

| NUMBER | FRENCH                | SAY IT                      | HOW IT'S BUILT                                                    |
|--------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 21     | vingt et un           | <i>vě-tay-ĚN</i>            | <i>20 et 1 (the "and" appears with 21, 31, 41, 51, 61 and 71)</i> |
| 22     | vingt-deux            | <i>vět-DUH</i>              | <i>20 + 2, joined by a hyphen</i>                                 |
| 35     | trente-cinq           | <i>trāt-SĚK</i>             | <i>30 + 5</i>                                                     |
| 47     | quarante-sept         | <i>kah-rāt-SET</i>          | <i>40 + 7</i>                                                     |
| 68     | soixante-huit         | <i>swah-sāt-WEET</i>        | <i>60 + 8</i>                                                     |
| 71     | soixante et onze      | <i>swah-sāt-ay-ŌZ</i>       | <i>60 + 11</i>                                                    |
| 77     | soixante-dix-sept     | <i>swah-sāt-dee-SET</i>     | <i>60 + 17</i>                                                    |
| 81     | quatre-vingt-un       | <i>kah-truh-vě-ĚN</i>       | <i>4 × 20 + 1 (no et here, and vingt loses its -s)</i>            |
| 92     | quatre-vingt-douze    | <i>kah-truh-vě-DOOZ</i>     | <i>4 × 20 + 12</i>                                                |
| 99     | quatre-vingt-dix-neuf | <i>kah-truh-vě-deez-NUF</i> | <i>4 × 20 + 19</i>                                                |

### Four-Twenties and Sixty-Tens — It Is Logical, Really

Up to 69 French counts just as English does. From 70 it switches to a base-20 style that survives from older French: 70 is "sixty-ten" (*soixante-dix*), 80 is "four twenties" (*quatre-vingts*), and 90 is "four-twenty-ten". It sounds like a puzzle at first, but once you do the sum it always works, and every French child learns it, so you're in good company. Belgians and many Swiss speakers have a tidier system with *septante* (70) and *nonante* (90), and you'll be understood in France if you use them, though people may smile at the accent.

#### ③ Asking a Friend's Age — Tu as quel âge ?

**A:**

Tu as quel âge, Léa ?

*tü ah kel AHZH, lay-AH*

How old are you, Léa?

**B:**

Devine !

*duh-VEEN*

Guess!

**A:**

Vingt-cinq ans ?

*vêť-sẽ-KÃ*

Twenty-five?

**B:**

Presque ! J'ai vingt-sept ans. Et toi ?

*PRES-kuh! zhay vêť-SET-ã. ay TWAH*

Almost! I'm twenty-seven. And you?

**A:**

J'ai trente et un ans.

*zhay trãť-ay-ẽ-NÃ*

I'm thirty-one.

#### ④ A Registration Form (formal) — Quel âge avez-vous ?

**A:**

Votre nom, s'il vous plaît ?

*VOH-truh NÕ, seel voo PLAY*

Your surname, please?

**B:**

Moreau. Paul Moreau.

*moh-ROH. POHL moh-ROH*

Moreau. Paul Moreau.

**A:**

Quel âge avez-vous, Monsieur Moreau ?

*kel AHZH ah-vay-VOO, muh-SYUH moh-ROH*

How old are you, Mr Moreau?

**B:**

J'ai quarante-six ans.

*zhay kah-rãť-see-ZÃ*

I'm forty-six.

**A:**

Merci, c'est noté.

*mair-SEE, say noh-TAY*

Thank you, noted.

### The verb "avoir" (to have) — French people *have* an age

| WHO            | AVOIR (TO HAVE)  | SAY IT                        | EXAMPLE                 |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| je             | j'ai             | <i>zhay</i>                   | J'ai vingt ans.         |
| tu             | tu as            | <i>tü ah</i>                  | Tu as quel âge ?        |
| il / elle / on | il / elle / on a | <i>eel ah / el ah / õ-NAH</i> | Elle a trente ans.      |
| nous           | nous avons       | <i>noo-zah-VÕ</i>             | Nous avons le même âge. |
| vous           | vous avez        | <i>voo-zah-VAY</i>            | Vous avez quel âge ?    |
| ils / elles    | ils / elles ont  | <i>eel-ZÕ</i>                 | Ils ont dix ans.        |

### Real French Tip — Age Uses "Avoir", Not "Être"

In English you *are* thirty; in French you *have* thirty years: **J'ai trente ans**, never *Je suis trente ans*. Always say *ans* ("years"), even though English drops it. A second tip: with a friend, asking the age is easy, but with an adult you've just met it can feel nosy, especially if you're asking a woman. Wait until you know someone, or let them bring it up. Between young people, *Tu as quel âge ?* is fine.

### Linking Numbers to "ans"

The final consonant of a number often appears before *ans*: *deux ans* "duh-ZÃ", *trois ans* "trwah-ZÃ", *six ans* "see-ZÃ", *dix ans* "dee-ZÃ", *vingt ans* "vê-TÃ". It happens automatically if you run the number straight into *ans* without a pause.

## Part 3 · Phone Numbers & Email — Le téléphone et l'adresse e-mail

French phone numbers have ten digits, written and spoken in **pairs**. A mobile number starts with **06** or **07**; landlines start with **01** to **05**.

| WRITTEN           | SPOKEN, PAIR BY PAIR                                                   | SAY IT                                                                         |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 06 12 34 56<br>78 | zéro six, douze, trente-quatre,<br>cinquante-six, soixante-dix-huit    | <i>zay-roh SEES, dooz, trät-KAH-truh, sê-kât-SEES, swah-sât-dee-ZWEET</i>      |
| 01 45 67 89<br>00 | zéro un, quarante-cinq, soixante-sept,<br>quatre-vingt-neuf, zéro zéro | <i>zay-roh-ËN, kah-rât-SËK, swah-sât-SET, kah-truh-vě-NUF, zay-roh-zay-ROH</i> |

### How the French Read Out a Phone Number

The French say a phone number in five pairs, as above, with a tiny pause between pairs. Reading digit by digit sounds odd. If you need to hear a number again, ask *Pouvez-vous répéter, s'il vous plaît ?* or *Encore une fois, s'il vous plaît*. Calling from abroad? France's country code is **+33**, and you drop the first 0: 06 12 34 56 78 becomes +33 6 12 34 56 78.

## Saying an email address — l'adresse e-mail

| SYMBOL         | FRENCH                | SAY IT                       |
|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| @              | arobase               | <i>ah-roh-BAHZ</i>           |
| . (dot)        | point                 | <i>pwě</i>                   |
| - (hyphen)     | tiret                 | <i>tee-RAY</i>               |
| _ (underscore) | tiret du bas          | <i>tee-ray dü BAH</i>        |
| .com / .fr     | point com / point f-r | <i>pwě KOM / pwě eff-AIR</i> |

So **sophie.lambert@gmail.com** is read: *sophie point lambert arobase gmail point com* ("so-FEE pwě lă-BAIR ah-roh-BAHZ gee-MAYL pwě KOM"). If the name isn't a common word, spell it with the letters from Chapter 2.

### ⑤ Swapping Numbers — Ton numéro de téléphone

**A:**

Tu as un portable ? C'est quoi, ton numéro ?

### ⑥ Giving an Email (formal) — Votre adresse e-mail

**A:**

Quelle est votre adresse e-mail, Madame ?

tü ah ē por-TAH-bluh? say KWAH, tō nü-may-ROH

Do you have a mobile? What's your number?

**B:**

Zéro six, douze, trente-quatre,  
cinquante-six, soixante-dix-huit.

zay-roh SEES, dooz, trāt-KAH-truh, sê-kât-SEES, swah-sât-dee-ZWEET

06 12 34 56 78.

**A:**

Je répète : zéro six, douze, trente-  
quatre...

zhuh ray-PET: zay-roh SEES, dooz, trāt-KAH-truh

I'll repeat: 06 12 34 ...

**B:**

C'est ça ! Appelle-moi demain.

say SAH! ah-pel-MWAH duh-MÊ

That's right! Call me tomorrow.

kel ay VOH-trah-DRES ee-MEL, mah-DAHM

What is your email address, madam?

**B:**

Sophie point Lambert arobase  
gmail point com.

so-FEE pwê lä-BAIR ah-roh-BAHZ gee-MAYL  
pwê KOM

sophie.lambert@gmail.com

**A:**

Pouvez-vous épeler « Lambert »,  
s'il vous plaît ?

poo-vay-voo ay-puh-LAY lä-BAIR, seel voo  
PLAY

Could you spell "Lambert", please?

**B:**

L-A-M-B-E-R-T.

ell – ah – emm – bay – uh – air – tay

L-A-M-B-E-R-T.

**A:**

Merci beaucoup.

mair-SEE boh-KOO

Thank you very much.

## Vocabulary — Vocabulaire

20 key words and phrases from this chapter. Nouns are shown with le (masculine) or la (feminine); before a vowel both become l', so the gender is marked in the Note column.

| # | FRENCH     | SAY IT     | ENGLISH             | TYPE     | NOTE                |
|---|------------|------------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|
| 1 | le chiffre | SHEE-fruh  | digit, figure       | noun, m. | 0–9                 |
| 2 | le nombre  | NŌ-bruh    | number (amount)     | noun, m. | "a large number of" |
| 3 | le numéro  | nü-may-ROH | number (identifier) | noun, m. | phone, bus, house   |

| #  | FRENCH           | SAY IT         | ENGLISH            | TYPE     | NOTE                             |
|----|------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------|----------------------------------|
| 4  | compter          | kō-TAY         | to count           | verb     | the p is silent                  |
| 5  | avoir            | ah-VWAHR       | to have            | verb     | j'ai, tu as, il a                |
| 6  | l'âge            | AHZH           | age                | noun, m. | Quel âge ?                       |
| 7  | un an            | ẽ-NÃ           | a year             | noun, m. | plural: ans, always used for age |
| 8  | le téléphone     | tay-lay-FON    | telephone          | noun, m. | le numéro de téléphone           |
| 9  | le portable      | por-TAH-bluh   | mobile phone       | noun, m. | also an adjective, "portable"    |
| 10 | l'adresse e-mail | ah-DRES ee-MEL | email address      | noun, f. | often just "le mail"             |
| 11 | l'arobase        | ah-roh-BAHZ    | the @ sign         | noun, f. | "arobase"                        |
| 12 | le point         | pwẽ            | dot, full stop     | noun, m. | in an email address              |
| 13 | le tiret         | tee-RAY        | hyphen, dash       | noun, m. | Jean-Pierre: "tîret"             |
| 14 | répéter          | ray-pay-TAY    | to repeat          | verb     | Pouvez-vous répéter ?            |
| 15 | appeler          | ah-play-LAY    | to call, to phone  | verb     | s'appeler = to be called         |
| 16 | deviner          | duh-vee-NAY    | to guess           | verb     | Devine ! / Devinez !             |
| 17 | combien          | kō-BYË         | how much, how many | word     | Combien ça coûte ? (Ch. 9)       |
| 18 | quel / quelle    | kel            | which, what        | word     | m. / f.; same sound              |
| 19 | presque          | PRES-kuh       | almost             | adv      | "Presque !"                      |
| 20 | encore           | ã-KOR          | again, still, more | adv      | encore une fois = once more      |

### Nombre vs. Numéro — Two Words for "Number"

*Un nombre* is a number as a quantity or in maths (*un grand nombre de personnes*, "a large number of people"). *Un numéro* is a number that identifies something: a phone number, a bus number, a house number. When you want a phone number, always ask for the *numéro de téléphone*.

### Quick Grammar Note — "Quel" Changes Its Spelling

*Quel* ("which, what") agrees with the noun that follows: *quel âge* (m.), *quelle adresse* (f.), *quels numéros* (m. pl.), *quelles lettres* (f. pl.). All four sound the same, "kel", so it only matters when you write.

## Try It Yourself — Exercices

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

1. Say how old you are (use your own age, for example 25).

▼ Show answer

J'ai vingt-cinq ans. (Use *avoir*, not *être*.)

2. Say 71 and 94 in French.

▼ Show answer

71 = soixante et onze (60 + 11). 94 = quatre-vingt-quatorze (4 × 20 + 14).

3. Read out this mobile number: 07 45 82 19 60.

▼ Show answer

Zéro sept, quarante-cinq, quatre-vingt-deux, dix-neuf, soixante.

4. Ask a friend how old they are, then ask a colleague you don't know well (formally).

▼ Show answer

Friend: Tu as quel âge ? Formal: Quel âge avez-vous ? (or, more tactfully, don't ask at all unless you need to!)

5. Read aloud the email address *ben.roux@mail.fr*.

▼ Show answer

Ben point roux arobase mail point f-r. (Pronounced: ben pwẽ ROO ah-roh-BAHZ mayl pwẽ eff-AIR.)

6. What is wrong with *Je suis trente ans*, and how do you fix it?

▼ Show answer

French uses *avoir* (to have) for age, not *être*. Correct: **J'ai trente ans.**

### Coming Up in Chapter 4

You can now count, give your age, and share your phone number and email. Next up: **where you're from**: countries, nationalities, and saying *Je viens de...* and *Je suis...* with the right masculine or feminine form.