

FR

FRENCH LESSON

Basic Conversation 1 • Chapter 5 • Your Family

French Basic Conversation 1

Chapter 5 · Talking About Your Family



Talking About Your Family — Parler de sa famille

Name your relatives, say how many brothers, sisters or children you have, and say whose they are with *mon, ma, mes* and *friends*. Along the way you'll learn the rule that trips up most beginners: in French, "my / your / his / her" agrees with **the thing owned**, not with the owner.

① Brothers and Sisters — Tu as des frères et sœurs ?

A:

Tu as des frères et sœurs ?

tü ah day FRAIR ay SUR

Do you have any brothers and sisters?

B:

Oui, j'ai un frère et une sœur.

WEE, zhay ë FRAIR ay ün SUR

Yes, I have one brother and one sister.

A:

Ils ont quel âge ?

eel-zô kel AHZH

How old are they?

B:

Mon frère a vingt-deux ans et ma sœur a dix-huit ans.

mô FRAIR ah vêt-DUH-zâ ay mah SUR ah dee-zwee-TÃ

My brother is twenty-two and my sister is eighteen.

② Only Child or Big Family — Fils unique

A:

Tu as des frères et sœurs, Camille ?

tü ah day FRAIR ay SUR, kah-MEEY

Do you have brothers and sisters, Camille?

B:

Non, je suis fille unique. Et toi ?

NÕ, zhuh swee FEEY ü-NEEK. ay TWAH

No, I'm an only child. And you?

A:

Moi, j'ai trois frères !

MWAH, zhay trwah FRAIR

I have three brothers!

B:

Trois ! Chez vous, ce n'est jamais calme !

TRWAH! shay VOO, suh nay zhah-may KALM

Three! It's never quiet at your place!

③ A Photo — C'est qui sur la photo ?

A:

④ Children (formal) — Vous avez des enfants ?

C'est qui sur la photo ?

say KEE sūr lah foh-TOH

Who is that in the photo?

B:

C'est ma mère, mon père et ma sœur.

say mah MAIR, mō PAIR ay mah SUR

That's my mother, my father and my sister.

A:

Ta mère est très jeune !

tah MAIR ay tray ZHUN

Your mother looks very young!

B:

Elle a quarante-neuf ans. Mon père a cinquante-deux ans.

el ah kah-rāt-nuh-VÃ. mō PAIR ah sē-kāt-DUH-zã

She's forty-nine. My father is fifty-two.

A:

Vous avez des enfants, Madame ?

voo-zah-vay day-zã-FÃ, mah-DAHM

Do you have children, madam?

B:

Oui, j'ai deux enfants : un fils et une fille.

WEE, zhay duh-zã-FÃ: ē FEES ay ün FEEY

Yes, I have two children: a son and a daughter.

A:

Ils habitent ici ?

eel-zah-BEET ee-SEE

Do they live here?

B:

Mon fils habite à Paris et ma fille habite en Belgique.

mō FEES ah-BEET ah pah-REE ay mah FEEY ah-BEET ã bel-ZHEEK

My son lives in Paris and my daughter lives in Belgium.

⑤ Grandparents — Tes grands-parents

A:

Tes grands-parents habitent où ?

tay grã-pah-rã ah-BEET OO

Where do your grandparents live?

B:

Mes grands-parents habitent en Écosse.

may grã-pah-rã ah-BEET ã-nay-KOS

My grandparents live in Scotland.

A:

Ils ont quel âge ?

⑥ Husband, Wife & Child — Mon mari, ma femme

A:

Vous êtes marié, Monsieur Girard ?

voo-ZET mah-ree-AY, muh-SYUH zhee-RAHR

Are you married, Mr Girard?

B:

Oui. Ma femme s'appelle Claire.

WEE. mah FAHM sah-PEL KLAIR

Yes. My wife's name is Claire.

A:

Vous avez des enfants ?

eel-zō kel AHZH

How old are they?

B:

Ma grand-mère a quatre-vingt-cinq ans et mon grand-père a quatre-vingt-sept ans.

mah grā-MAIR ah kah-truh-vē-sē-KÃ ay mō

grā-PAIR ah kah-truh-vē-SET-ã

My grandmother is eighty-five and my grandfather is eighty-seven.

voo-zah-vay day-zā-FÃ

Do you have children?

B:

Nous avons un fils. Il a six ans.

noo-zah-vō ē FEES. eel-ah see-ZÃ

We have a son. He's six.

Key Phrases at a Glance — Phrases clés

SITUATION	FORMAL	INFORMAL
Do you have siblings?	Vous avez des frères et sœurs ?	Tu as des frères et sœurs ?
How many?	Combien de frères et sœurs avez-vous ?	Tu as combien de frères et sœurs ?
I have...	J'ai un frère et deux sœurs.	J'ai un frère et deux sœurs.
I'm an only child	Je suis fils unique / fille unique.	Je suis fils unique / fille unique.
Do you have children?	Vous avez des enfants ?	Tu as des enfants ?
I have no children	Je n'ai pas d'enfants.	J'ai pas d'enfants.

The Family — La famille

FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH
le père	luh PAIR	father	la mère	lah MAIR	mother
le frère	luh FRAIR	brother	la sœur	lah SUR	sister

FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH
le fils	<i>luh FEES</i>	son	la fille	<i>lah FEEY</i>	daughter; girl
le mari	<i>luh mah-REE</i>	husband	la femme	<i>lah FAHM</i>	wife; woman
le grand-père	<i>luh gră-PAIR</i>	grandfather	la grand-mère	<i>lah gră-MAIR</i>	grandmother
l'oncle	<i>Ō-kluh</i>	uncle	la tante	<i>lah TĀT</i>	aunt
le cousin	<i>luh koo-ZĚ</i>	cousin (m.)	la cousine	<i>lah koo-ZEEN</i>	cousin (f.)
le neveu	<i>luh nuh-VUH</i>	nephew	la nièce	<i>lah NYES</i>	niece
les parents	<i>lay pah-RĀ</i>	parents	les grands-parents	<i>lay gră-pah-RĀ</i>	grandparents
l'enfant	<i>lă-FĀ</i>	child (m. or f.)	le bébé	<i>luh bay-BAY</i>	baby

False Friend — "Les Parents" Means Mum and Dad

Les parents means **mother and father**, not "relatives". For relatives in general, say *la famille* or *les proches* ("close family and friends"). Also note the sounds: *le fils* (son) is "FEES", with the s pronounced, while *la fille* (daughter) is "FEEY", with a "y" sound at the end. They look alike and sound quite different.

"My, Your, His, Her" — Les possessifs

French has no separate "his" and "her". A possessive agrees with the **noun it goes with** (masculine, feminine or plural), never with the owner. So *sa mère* can mean "his mother" or "her mother", and context tells you which.

OWNER	MASCULINE (LE)	FEMININE (LA)	PLURAL (LES)	SAY IT (M. / F. / PL.)
my	mon père	ma mère	mes parents	<i>mõ / mah / may</i>
your (tu)	ton père	ta mère	tes parents	<i>tõ / tah / tay</i>
his / her	son père	sa mère	ses parents	<i>sõ / sah / say</i>
our	notre père / notre mère		nos parents	<i>NOH-truh / noh</i>
your (vous)	votre père / votre mère		vos parents	<i>VOH-truh / voh</i>
their	leur père / leur mère		leurs parents	<i>LUHR / LUHR</i>

Mon Before a Vowel — Even for Feminine Nouns

A feminine noun that begins with a vowel sound takes *mon / ton / son* instead of *ma / ta / sa*, because "ma amie" would clash: *mon amie* (my friend, f.), *ton école* (your school), *son enfant*. Plural forms are simple: *mes, tes, ses, nos, vos, leurs*, and the *s* links onto a vowel: *mes amis* is "may-zah-MEE".

Three Verbs You Just Used — Trois verbes

Avoir ("to have", from Chapter 3) is how you list relatives, *aimer* means "to like / to love", and *travailler* ("to work") gives you a way to talk about what family members do (more in Chapter 6). The last two are regular -er verbs.

WHO	AVOIR (TO HAVE)	SAY IT	AIMER (TO LIKE, LOVE)	SAY IT	TRAVAILLER (TO WORK)	SAY IT
je	j'ai	<i>zhay</i>	j'aime	<i>zhem</i>	je travaille	<i>zhuh trah-VAHY</i>
tu	tu as	<i>tü ah</i>	tu aimes	<i>tü-EM</i>	tu travailles	<i>tü trah-VAHY</i>
il / elle / on	il a	<i>eel ah</i>	il aime	<i>eel-EM</i>	il travaille	<i>eel trah-VAHY</i>

WHO	AVOIR (TO HAVE)	SAY IT	AIMER (TO LIKE, LOVE)	SAY IT	TRAVAILLER (TO WORK)	SAY IT
nous	nous avons	<i>noo-zah-VÕ</i>	nous aimons	<i>noo-zay-MÕ</i>	nous travaillons	<i>noo trah-vah-YÕ</i>
vous	vous avez	<i>voo-zah-VAY</i>	vous aimez	<i>voo-zay-MAY</i>	vous travaillez	<i>voo trah-vah-YAY</i>
ils / elles	ils ont	<i>eel-ZÕ</i>	ils aiment	<i>eel-ZEM</i>	ils travaillent	<i>eel trah-VAHY</i>

"Pas de" — Saying You Don't Have Any

After a negative, *un / une / des* change to **de** (or **d'** before a vowel): *J'ai un frère* → *Je n'ai pas de frère*; *J'ai des enfants* → *Je n'ai pas d'enfants*. And *combien* ("how many") is followed by *de* as well: *Combien de frères as-tu ?* The nice summary is: if you're counting nothing, use *de*.

Vocabulary — Vocabulaire

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

#	FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE	NOTE
1	la famille	<i>fah-MEEY</i>	family	noun, f.	"ill" says "eey" here
2	les parents	<i>pah-RÃ</i>	parents	noun, m. pl.	not "relatives"
3	le père	<i>PAIR</i>	father	noun, m.	<i>mon père, ton père</i>
4	la mère	<i>MAIR</i>	mother	noun, f.	<i>ma mère, ta mère</i>
5	le frère	<i>FRAIR</i>	brother	noun, m.	plural: <i>frères</i>
6	la sœur	<i>SUR</i>	sister	noun, f.	<i>œ</i> is "uh" (lips rounded)
7	le fils	<i>FEES</i>	son	noun, m.	same spelling singular and plural

#	FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE	NOTE
8	la fille	FEEY	daughter; girl	noun, f.	ma fille = my daughter
9	l'enfant	lă-FĂ	child	noun, m./f.	same word for a boy or a girl
10	le mari	mah-REE	husband	noun, m.	mon mari
11	la femme	FAHM	wife; woman	noun, f.	ma femme = my wife
12	le grand-père	gră-PAIR	grandfather	noun, m.	les grands-parents
13	la grand-mère	gră-MAIR	grandmother	noun, f.	often "mamie" / "papi" at home
14	l'oncle	Ō-kluh	uncle	noun, m.	mon oncle
15	la tante	TĂT	aunt	noun, f.	ma tante
16	le cousin / la cousine	koo-ZĚ / koo-ZEEN	cousin (m. / f.)	noun	the n shows up in the feminine
17	marié / mariée	mah-ree-AY	married	adj	same sound for m. and f.
18	célibataire	say-lee-bah-TAIR	single	adj	same form for m. and f.
19	unique	ü-NEEK	only, unique	adj	fil unique / fille unique
20	aimer	ay-MAY	to like, to love	verb	j'aime = I like/love

Real French Tip — Mon Copain, Mon Compagnon, Ma Femme

Chapter 2 mentioned that *mon copain* / *ma copine* usually means boyfriend or girlfriend. For a longer-term partner you'll also hear **mon compagnon** / **ma compagne** ("my partner"), which doesn't say whether you're married. Many couples in France are in a *PACS* (*pacsé(e)*, a civil partnership), so *mari* / *femme* is only right if you're actually married. At home, grandparents are often *mamie* and *papi* (or *mémé* and *pépé*), and parents *maman* and *papa*.

Quick Grammar Note — "J'aime" Means Two Things

J'aime is both "I like" and "I love", and the context decides. With things it is the milder one: *J'aime le café* is "I like coffee", while *J'adore le café* is "I love coffee". With people it is stronger: *Je t'aime* means "I love you" and is used for a partner or close family, so use *J'aime bien Paul* ("I like Paul") for a friend. Notice too that *je + aime = j'aime* with the elision from Chapter 2.

Try It Yourself — Exercices

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

1. Say "I have a brother and two sisters."

▼ Show answer

J'ai un frère et deux sœurs.

2. Say "I'm an only child" (as a man, then as a woman).

▼ Show answer

Je suis fils unique. / Je suis fille unique.

3. Fill the gaps with the right possessive: ____ mère (my) · ____ père (your, informal) · ____ parents (their) · ____ amie (my, a female friend).

▼ Show answer

ma mère · ton père · leurs parents · mon amie (a feminine word starting with a vowel takes *mon*).

4. Ask someone if they have brothers and sisters: informally, then formally.

▼ Show answer

Tu as des frères et sœurs ? / Vous avez des frères et sœurs ?

5. Say "I don't have any children."

▼ Show answer

Je n'ai pas d'enfants. (After a negative: *de / d'*, not *des*.)

6. Say "My grandmother lives in Wales" and "Her father works in Paris."

▼ Show answer

Ma grand-mère habite au pays de Galles. · Son père travaille à Paris.

Coming Up in Chapter 6

You can now talk about your family. Next up: **talking about your job**: professions, workplaces, *Je travaille comme...*, and the little trick French uses for masculine and feminine job titles.