

Rhythm and Accents

1/ Rhythm in French

French is a **musical** language because in French there are **no stress** parts on words: all syllables are pronounced with the same intensity, helping the speech to flow smoothly like music.

In addition to no-stress parts on words, many final consonants are linked (**liaison**) onto the next word. This is only an oral issue, it does not change the spelling. For ex.: *vous avez* is pronounced **vous avez** or **vu za vay** (phonetically). The last consonant "s" in **vous** is linked to the first vowel of **avez** (**vous avez**).

The lack of stress parts combined with **liaisons**, are what give French its **rhythm**: all of the words flow together like music.

2/ Accents

There are four types of accents in French for the vowels and another type for a consonant. Their job is to modify the sound of the letter they go with.

a/ **accent aigu** ´ (acute accent): only used on the letter e as in échapper (to escape) or étudiant (student).

b/ **accent grave** ` (grave accent): is used on the letters a, e and u. This accent is sometimes used to distinguish between words that sound the same, but have different meanings (called homographs) as in **a** (conjugated verb **avoir**-- **il a**) and **à** (at) or with **ou** (or) and **où** (where). In those cases, the written accent does not affect the pronunciation.

c/ **accent circonflexe** ^ (circumflex): is found on the letters a, e, i, o and u. It usually means that a long time ago, an "s" used to follow the letter, as in **î**le (isle) or **h**ôpital (hospital). It can also help distinguish between homographs like **du** (de + le) and **dû** (past participle of the verb **devoir**).

d/ **tréma** ¨ (umlaut): is found on e, i and u. This accent is used when two vowels follow each other but say their own sound like in **Moïse** (Moses), **Noël** (Christmas).

e/ **cétille** ç (cedilla): is only used under the letter c (ç) as in **français**. Its role is to change the harsh "c" sound to a soft "s" sound. It is only used on a "c" placed before an a, u or o, as in **garçon** and **François**, **never** before an **e** or an **i** as in **mince** or **France**, because the "c" already makes the soft "s" sound in front of these letters (same as in English).

*Note: keep in mind that those accents are essential to the language.

**Note: Capital letters do not require accents.

3/ Typing French accents and special characters using a PC:

Use the ALT key and your numeric pad: hold down the ALT key then type the 3 or 4 digit code numbers as seen below, release the ALT key, the wanted character will appear. This only works using the numeric pad, not the numbers on top of the keyboard.

Here is a list of the French ALT codes and what you will get when you use them. **You may want to copy this list and keep it near your computer.**

ALT + code numbers:

à alt + 133	œ alt + 145	ê alt + 136	ô alt + 147	û alt + 150
À alt + 0192	Æ alt + 146	Ê alt + 0202	Ô alt + 0212	Û alt + 0219
â alt + 131	ç alt + 135	ë alt + 137	œ alt + 0156	ü alt + 129
Â alt + 0194	Ç alt + 128	Ë alt + 0203	Œ alt + 0140	Ü alt + 154
ä alt + 132	é alt + 130	î alt + 140	ù alt + 151	« alt + 174
Ä alt + 142	É alt + 144	Î alt + 0206	Ù alt + 0217	» alt + 175
	è alt + 138	ï alt + 139		€ alt + 0128
	È alt + 0200	Ï alt + 0207		(euro symbol)

4/ Typing accents on a MAC computer:

You can type the characters in purple by holding down the **option** key and type the keys in red from the list below.

***Note:** In the third column, "and" means to keep holding the option key and the first key listed while typing the second. "Then" means to release the option key and the first key before typing the second.

Hold option and	
for é	e then e
for à, ò, ù	` then a, o, u
for ç	c
for â, ê, î, ô, û	i then a, e, i, o, u
for ë, ï, ü	u then e, i, u
for œ	q
for «	\
for »	shift and \
for €	shift and 2

With Word, you can also go to "insert" on the toolbar, then go to "symbol", you can pick the symbol, character or accented letter you want and insert it.