

Appendix F: French Vowels, Nasal Vowels, and Consonants

French Vowels

French Letter

Phonetic Symbol

Examples

a, à, â

[a]

papa, ça va, ma, à, la, Canada, âme

e

[ə]

[in 1-syllable words]

le, je, ce, ne, de

[in middle of a word followed by a single consonant] demander, regarder

é, [final -er, -ez]

[e]

bébé, parler, allez, chez

[ai, et]

j'ai, et toi?

[-es in some 1-syllable words]

des, mes, les

è, ê

[ɛ]

mère, père, très, achète // tête, être, même

e [followed by 2 consonants or a final consonant]

sept, est, concert

et [as final syllable in multi-syllable word]

complet, cabinet

ai [followed by a consonant]

aider, mais, chaise, jamais

i, î, y, ui

[i]

il, ici, dîner, île, Sylvie, lycée, huit, qui

o [before se]

[o]

chose

o [last pronounced sound of a word]

stylo, vélo

ô

hôtel, allô

au

aussi, jaune

eau

beau, cadeau

French Letter**Phonetic Symbol****Examples*****o*****[ɔ]**

octobre, notre, donner

[when followed by a pronounced consonant other than *s*]***ou, où, ôû*****[u]**

toujours, où, douze, goût

oy, oi**[wa]**

voyage, toi, trois

u, û**[y]**

tu, une, sur, du, sûr

French Nasal Vowels

[Mouth and nose needed!]

[Nasal vowels are produced by “closing off” the nose so that the vowel sound goes entirely through the mouth. Think about how you can do that without plugging your nose! ☺]

French Letters

Phonetic Symbol

Examples

an (am),

[ã]

dans, grand, ambiance,

en (em)

encore, souvent, temps, décembre

in (im),

[ɛ̃]

cinq, Martin, important

ain (aim)

demain, américain, faim

oin

[wɛ̃]

loin, moins

ien

[jɛ̃]

bien, vient, italien

on (om)

[ɔ̃]

bon, non, combien

un (um)

[œ̃]

un, lundi, parfum

French Consonants

Most final consonants are not pronounced except for final *c, r, f, l* [c a r e f u l]. These are pronounced.
(Exception: infinitives that end in *-er*.) Do not give in to the temptation to pronounce a final *s*.

Marc <u>c</u>	Luc <u>c</u>	avec <u>c</u>	par <u>c</u>
bonjour <u>r</u>	amour <u>r</u>	tour <u>r</u>	au revoir <u>r</u>
chef <u>f</u>	neuf <u>f</u>	actif <u>f</u>	sauf <u>f</u>
il <u>l</u>	mal <u>l</u>	espagnol <u>l</u>	Michel <u>l</u>

Examples of words where **final** consonants are **not** pronounced:

nous salut beaucoup croissants chanter

<u>French Letter</u>	<u>Phonetic Symbol</u>	<u>Examples</u>
b	[b]	bébé, Bonjour, habiter
d	[d]	dentiste, salade, danser
f	[f]	fumer, frites, fantasie
k	[k]	kir, kilo, karaté
l	[l] (very light!)	lettre, mal, hôtel
m	[m]	Madame, manger, fumer
n	[n]	nager, non, neuf
p	[p] (very light)	papa, parler, petit
s	[s]	Salut, suisse, secrétaire
t	[t] (very light)	télé, tête, ta
v	[v]	Ça va, visiter, vous
z	[z]	zèbre, zest, zénith

French Letter**Phonetic Symbol****Examples**

c (hard sound before a, o, u , or consonant)	[k]	carte, court, document, classe
qu		qui, quoi, quatre
final q		cinq

c (soft sound before e, i, y)	[s]	cent, cinéma, cycliste
ç, s at beginning of word		ça, sac
s next to a consonant		science, stylo
s sound in -tion		nation, attention
x (only in the words given)		dix, six soixante

ch	[ʃ]	chanter, toucher
In words of <u>Greek origin</u> the “ch” is pronounced with a [k] sound. e.g. orchestre, Chrétien, echo, Christian(e)		

g (hard sound before a, o, u , or consonant)	[g]	garçon, goûter, légume, glace
gu (before i, e, y)		guide, fatigué, Guy

g (soft sound before e, i, y)	[ʒ]	âge, girafe, Egypte
ge (soft before a, o)		mangeable, mangeons
j		je, jour, jaune

NOTE : gorge vs. George

gn	[ɲ]	montagne, espagnol
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h (is always silent!)	[]	heure, h ôtel, h omme, h éros
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There are a few “tricks” here though! Although the “h” is always silent, it sometimes acts like a consonant, rather than a vowel – and is called an “**aspirate h**” – which means there is no elision.

e.g. *le héros, le haricot*

Usually the *le* become *l’* when the word that follows it begins with a vowel sound:

e.g. *l’heure, l’hôtel, l’homme*

This is not true with an “aspirate h.” Usually the dictionary will indicate the “aspirate h” with an asterisk *.

r	[r]	rouge, R obert, parler
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This sound is articulated at the back of your throat, sort of like you’re getting ready to spit. ☺ Just practice it by over-exaggerating. You’ll get the hang of it!

s (between vowels)	[z]	musée, cousin
-sion		télévision

th	[t]	théâtre, sympathique
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x (in middle of a word)	[ks]	mixte, excellent
x (at start of a word)	[gz]	Xavier