THE QUICK START GUIDE TO
FRENCH GENDER

Gender in French

- A noun is a "naming word" - a word for a "thing", such as boy, table, London, or happiness

- All nouns in French have a gender - either masculine or feminine

- The gender of a noun sometimes affects the spelling of words around the noun, such as articles (le/la) and adjectives (blanc/blanche)

- There's no black and white rule about how to tell if a noun is masculine or feminine but there are some things that can help:

  - Most feminine nouns end in 'e'

  - The ending '-ion' is also a common feminine noun ending

  - Of course, there are some exceptions. For example, nouns ending in '-age', '-ege', '-isme' and '-é' are normally masculine nouns despite all ending with 'e'

- Knowing this helps you to use French correctly and speak better French quicker, but it's not the end of the world if you make a mistake with grammar in French

GETTING STARTED

The table below shows a few common noun endings and tells you whether they are masculine or feminine. Use this to help you with the exercises on the following page.

MASCULINE	FEMININE
-AGE	-IÈRE
-ÈGE	-ÉE
-ISME	-TÉ
-É	-URE
-MENT	-UDE
-IL	-ADE
-OIR	-ANCE
-ING	-EUSE
-ARD	-TION, -SION, -SON
-ER	-ELLE, -ESSE, -ETTE

If a noun ending isn't in this table and it ends in 'e', you can probably guess right that it's feminine. If it ends in any other letter, it's probably masculine. Don't worry about the 'probablys' - there are always exceptions!

GOING FURTHER

The table below shows a few rules and exceptions to help you master noun gender in French.

MASCULINE	FEMININE
Nouns referring to males	Nouns referring to females
Places: le Cambodge, le Mexique, le Zimbabwe	Places: all towns masculine unless they end in '-e'
Nouns ending in -'eur': ordinateur, aspirateur	Nouns ending in -'eur': horreur, rougeur, rumeur, couleur
Look feminine but are masculine: stade, lycée, episode, espace, musée, magazine, mille, monde	Look masculine but are feminine: eau, plage, peau, cage, image, page

GETTING STARTED

Write an 'm' or 'f' next to the following French nouns to guess their gender.

maison	chien	peau
racisme	orange	ordinateur
eau	pomme	vitesse
couloir	soleil	nation
shampooing	voyage	pays
garage	jogging	jour
chambre	femme	année
cuisine	homme	argent
lycée	appartement	problème
canard	poulet	nuit
voiture	poison	monde
chat	horreur	plage

GOING FURTHER

Find a French text online - a news article, a poem, a chapter of a story - whatever it is, it doesn't matter how much you can understand. This is about becoming familiar with the language. Look for nouns and guess the gender. If it's printed, underline the masculine and feminine nouns in different colours.

As well as using the clues of the endings of the nouns, here are a few other things to look out for...

• the word 'le' or 'un' before a noun = masculine
• the word 'la' or 'une' before a noun = feminine
• adjectives ending in 'e', 'euse' or 'elle' to name a few are feminine

When you've finished, keep the text somewhere safe and make a note in your calendar to revisit it at some point in the future to check how much you recognise then and see how much you've improved!