

Glossary of grammatical terms

adjective

A word which describes something or someone, e.g. *grand, vieux*. Agrees with the noun. Adjectives can also be comparative (e.g. *plus grand que*), or superlative (e.g. *le plus grand*).

agreement

The change of spelling (usually just the last letter or two) that some words undergo to show whether they are masculine or feminine, singular or plural. In French words like adjectives 'agree' with the noun they are describing. In certain cases, past participles 'agree' with the subject, too.

article

The words for 'the', 'a/an', 'some' or 'any'. There are three sorts of article: the definite article: *le, la* and *les* the indefinite article: *un* and *une* the partitive article: *du, de la* and *des*. Articles are masculine, feminine or plural to match the nouns they accompany.

future tense

The form of the verb used to talk about things that will happen in the future, e.g. *J'irai en Italie*.

gender

The fact of all nouns in French being either masculine or feminine.

imperative

The part of a verb you use to tell someone to do something, e.g. *Range ta chambre!* or *Venez ici!*

imperfect tense

The form of the verb used to talk about things that were happening or used to happen, e.g. *Je travaillais à Paris*.

infinitive

The part of a verb which means 'to do', 'to go', etc. This is how verbs are normally listed in dictionaries. In French the infinitive is just one word, e.g. *arriver, partir*. The infinitive is usually the starting point for forming different tenses.

noun

The name for a person, place or thing, e.g. *père, professeur, parc, eau*. All nouns in French are either masculine or feminine.

object

The person or thing at the receiving end of a verb, e.g. 'a castle' in the sentence: 'We visited **a castle**'. The object of a verb may be a pronoun or a name rather than a noun, e.g. 'him' in the sentence: 'My friends invited **him**'.

past participle

Part of the verb used to form the second part of the perfect tense, e.g. *mangé, fini, vendu*. Used after part of *avoir* or *être* (e.g. *j'ai*, etc.).

perfect tense

The form of the verb used to talk about things that have happened and things that are in the past, e.g. *J'ai mangé un gâteau*.

person

The parts of a verb. There are six – three singular, three plural. First 'person' singular is 'I', second 'person' singular is 'you', etc.

plural

Means 'more than one'. Most nouns in French, as in English, add an extra 's' to show they are plural, e.g. *chien – chiens; fille – filles*.

possessive adjective

A word which tells you to whom something belongs: 'my', 'your', 'his', etc. In French: *mon, ma, mes, ton, ta, tes*, etc. These agree with the noun.

preposition

Words like 'near', 'with', 'opposite', etc. Often describe the position of something or someone.

pronoun

A small word that stands in place of a noun, e.g.: *il* instead of *le facteur*, *elles* instead of *Sophie et sa sœur*.

singular

Means 'only one'. So *vélo* is singular because it means 'bike'. More than one and the word becomes plural: *vélos*.

subject

The person or thing that is 'doing' the verb, e.g. 'rain' in the sentence: '**Rain** is spreading from the West.' Or 'We' in the sentence: 'Every Sunday **we** play football'.

tense

Verbs take different forms depending on whether we are talking about something in the past, the present or the future. Each of these forms is called a tense. Thus, in English, 'I have seen' and 'I saw' are different past tenses of the verb 'to see'.

verb

Usually described as 'doing words', verbs also include words such as 'was', 'have', 'knew', etc. In other words, anything that makes sense when you put a subject such as 'I', 'you' or 'he' in front of it.