

**Lesson  
One****Who's at Home?****Aims**

By the end of this lesson you should be able to:

- swap information about your name, yourself, your family, friends and pets
- refer to people's gender and civil status
- understand and use possessive adjectives\*: **mon, ma, mes** etc
- understand and use present tense irregular verbs\*: **avoir, être**
- understand the present tense reflexive verb\*: **s'appeler**

\* If these technical terms seem a bit daunting at first, don't worry!

**Context**

Each lesson is linked to one or more of the Edexcel Topic Areas. This one is most relevant to Topic Area C: Self, Family and Friends.



Oxford Open Learning

## On parle de la famille      *Talking about our families*

### Lisez les dialogues suivants et répondez aux questions en français.

Read the following dialogues and answer the questions in French.

#### Dialogue 1: Vocabulaire

parlez-moi	talk to me
votre / vos	your ( <i>this is explained in Lesson 1 below</i> )
je suis	I am ( <i>from être - to be</i> )
marié(e)	married
mon, ma, mes	my ( <i>this is explained in Lesson 1 below</i> )
la femme	wife / woman
s'appelle	is called
avez-vous	have you ( <i>from avoir - to have</i> )
un(e) enfant	a child (male or female)
le fils	the son
la fille	the daughter

<i>Janine</i>	Parlez-moi de votre famille, Étienne.
<i>Étienne</i>	Je suis marié, et ma femme s'appelle Marie-Claude.
<i>Janine</i>	Avez-vous des enfants?
<i>Étienne</i>	Oui, j'ai un fils et une fille.

### Répondez aux questions

Answer the questions

1. Étienne, est-il marié?
2. Donnez 2 détails concernant la famille d'Étienne.

#### Rappel      *Reminder*

le/la	the ( <u>MASCULINE</u> and <u>FEMININE</u> forms)
un/une	a /an ( <u>MASCULINE</u> and <u>FEMININE</u> forms)
des	some ( <u>PLURAL</u> of <u>un /une</u> )

All NOUNS (names of things, animals, people *etc*), and various types of word connected with them, are divided between two groups known as GENDERS: Masculine and Feminine. Male nouns are obviously masculine (man, bull, prince) and female ones feminine (queen, sister, hen); anything else, while not obviously of either such kind, must still belong to one group or the other. Some of these groupings are historical; it's just the way the language developed.

There's no obvious logic to butter, paper or fog being masculine (grammatically 'he'-things, so to speak) while a chair, table or town are feminine and behave like 'she'. But we'll show you various ways you can help yourself deal with this!

The first way is *always* to note and learn a new word with a 'gender clue'. Usually this will mean putting **le** or **la** in front of it (or **un / une**, or some other telltale reminder).

## Dialogue 2: Vocabulaire

<b>tu es / nous sommes / ils sont</b>	you are / we are / they are ( <i>from être - to be</i> )
<b>ne + VERB + pas</b>	not
<b>célibataire</b>	single
<b>nous avons / tu as</b>	we have / you have ( <i>from avoir - to have</i> )
<b>un frère</b>	a brother
<b>une soeur</b>	a sister
<b>moi</b>	me ( <u>EMPHATIC form</u> )
<b>enfant unique</b>	only child
<b>ton, ta, tes</b>	your
<b>le père</b>	the father
<b>à la retraite</b>	retired

*Gilbert* Tu es mariée, Elizabeth?

*Elizabeth* Non, je ne suis pas mariée, je suis célibataire. Et toi?

*Gilbert* Je suis marié avec Sophie. Nous avons deux filles, Marie-Louise et Hélène. Tu as des frères et des soeurs?

*Elizabeth* Oui, nous sommes nombreux! J'ai trois soeurs et un frère.

*Gilbert* Moi je suis enfant unique.

*Elizabeth* Et tes parents?

*Gilbert* Ils sont à la retraite.

**Répondez aux questions** Answer the questions

**Quel ?** What ?  
**Comment ?** How / What's it like ?

1. Quel est l'état civil (*marital status*) de Gilbert et d'Elizabeth?
2. Comment est la famille de Gilbert? Donnez 3 détails.
3. Comment est la famille d'Elizabeth? Donnez 1 détail.



**Livre de Vocabulaire** La famille The family

**Livre de vocabulaire** means 'word book'. When you see this title, copy the list that follows into a vocabulary book and try to learn it. It is best to have two columns; one French, one English, so that you can cover each one up and test yourself.

<b>le père</b>	father	<b>la mère</b>	mother
<b>le mari</b>	husband	<b>la femme</b>	wife
<b>le grand-père</b>	grandfather	<b>la grand-mère</b>	grandmother
<b>le petit-fils</b>	grandson*	<b>la petite-fille</b>	granddaughter*
<b>un oncle</b>	uncle	<b>une tante</b>	aunt
<b>le beau-fils</b>	son-in-law, also stepson	<b>la belle-fille</b>	daughter-in-law, also stepdaughter
<b>le beau-frère</b>	brother-in-law, stepbrother	<b>la belle-soeur</b>	sister-in-law, stepsister

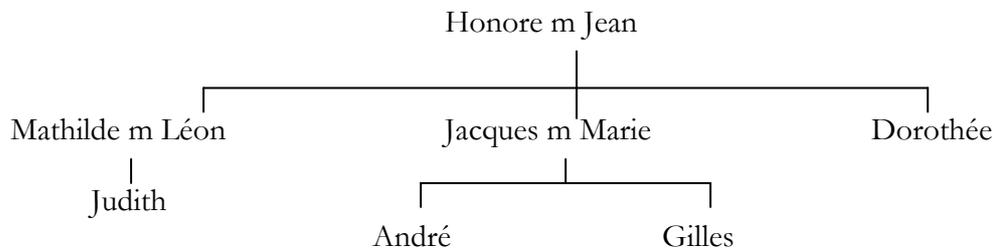
<b>le demi-frère</b>	half-brother	<b>la demie-soeur</b>	half-sister
<b>un(e) enfant</b>	child (male/female)	<b>les grands-parents</b>	grandparents
<b>le chien</b>	dog	<b>les petits-enfants</b>	grandchildren
<b>le chat</b>	cat		

\* It's worth noticing, even at this early stage, the alternative French logic at work. English uses the 'grand-' prefix whether you are going *up or down* the family tree; but, for the French, if the grandparent generation is *grand* (= 'big!'), their children's children must be *petit* ('small'). This makes its own tidy sense; it's just different, and even rather sweet!

## Un arbre généalogique *A family tree*

### Lisez le passage et répondez aux questions

Read the passage and answer the questions



Honore est ma femme.

Nous avons trois enfants: Léon, Jacques et Dorothee.

Ma belle-fille Mathilde est la femme de Léon. Ils ont une enfant. Mon fils Jacques est le mari de Marie. Ils ont deux enfants. Notre fille Dorothee n'est pas mariée.

Nous sommes grands-parents. Honore est la grand-mère et je suis le grand-père. Notre petite-fille s'appelle Judith, et nos petits-fils s'appellent Andre et Gilles. Dorothee est leur tante. Elle les adore!

**Questions**

<b>Qui...?</b>	Who...?
<b>Comment s'appelle(nt)...</b>	What is/are ... called?
<b>Quel...?</b>	Which...?
<b>Combien de/d'...</b>	How many...?

1. Qui parle?
2. Comment s'appelle la grand-mère?
3. Qui est la petite-fille de Honore?
4. Comment s'appellent les petits-fils de Jean?
5. Honore et Jean ont combien d'enfants?
6. Quel enfant n'est pas marié?
7. Comment s'appellent les tantes d'André?
8. Qui est l'oncle de Gilles?
9. Qui est le mari de Marie?
10. Comment s'appellent les parents de Judith?

**Grammar : Possessive Adjectives**

An ADJECTIVE is a word used with a noun, to add more description or detail of it (*eg* **old** cars, a **French** loaf, **loud** applause). POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES identify something by telling who owns or 'possesses' it (*eg* **my** house, **their** clothing). They work a bit differently in French, but once you 'go with the grain' they are entirely logical.

Here are the Possessive Adjectives in a table :

		<i>Single thing owned</i>		<i>More than 1 thing</i>
		<i>If the thing is masculine ...</i>	<i>If the thing is feminine ...</i>	
<i>One 'owner'</i>	my	<b>mon</b>	<b>ma</b>	<b>mes</b>
	your *	<b>ton</b>	<b>ta</b>	<b>tes</b>
	his / her / its	<b>son</b>	<b>sa</b>	<b>ses</b>
<i>More than one 'owner'</i>	our	<b>notre</b>		<b>nos</b>
	your *	<b>votre</b>		<b>vos</b>
	their	<b>leur</b>		<b>leurs</b>

Down the left side you will see who the 'owner' could be. This list, and others like it, will crop up a lot as you study how French works. The first three rows of the table, proper, deal with 'my', 'your' and 'someone else's' things: these are known as SINGULAR forms, each referring to one individual owner. We always start with the 'I / my' form because anyone talking will, themselves, automatically be the first PERSON in their own conversation. (Happily, 'I' in English also looks pretty like the figure 1!)

They will then call the 'second person' (or listener), 'you'; any one other person (or thing) is the 'third person'. For instance, in English:

'I need to talk to you about this car'

(I am the First Person, the source of the conversation, for now; **you** are who I'm talking to, the direct target of what I'm saying; the car is neither 1<sup>st</sup> nor 2<sup>nd</sup> person, so it goes in an 'anything else' category)

There is then a matching PLURAL set of three Persons (the word 'plural' is related to 'plus', suggesting more than one of anything: in this case, how many owners) ~

1. 'we / us / our' (First Person plural, *i.e.* the speaker & others with them *e.g.* family);
2. \* 'you' (when there's more than one other individual; French, like many languages, also uses this as a polite/formal way to address an unfamiliar adult, *e.g.* a shopkeeper);
3. 'they' for any other group. In French, 'they' come(s) in two forms, masculine and feminine ~ but we'll meet that later.

Having sliced these words crosswise into two groups of three, French also splits each line 'left-to-right' (in our table) between singular and plural forms, according to how many things are being owned (one, or many). The Possessive Adjective, just a few letters long, precisely links the owner/s with the thing/s they own. Matching the back end of the Possessive Adjective with the gender and quantity of its actual 'thing/s' is called AGREEMENT or 'making it agree'. It's a bit like having matching cups and saucers.

**Possessive adjectives agree with the word that follows (*not* the gender of who's speaking).**

**ma femme** = my wife (obviously female, even though a man is telling us so)  
**son mari** = her husband

*(This is often the trickiest one for English learners of French; we're so used to thinking 'her husband' ~ because the 'owner' is a woman ~ that son in French feels odd here. But it has its own logic. Likewise sa femme = 'his wife')*

**tes enfants** = your children (one of you, but lots of them; plural!)

You'll see that we *only* need to think about masculine/feminine forms if both the owner and the 'thing' are singular; the only parts of the table with alternative forms are **mon/ma**, **ton/ta** and **son/sa** (one owner, one thing in each instance).

If the owners are plural, or the things, or both, there's no further choice to make. The title of **Notre Dame** (Paris' famous cathedral) means 'Our Lady' ~ but **notre** hasn't had to change at all, because, as it were, Mary is a lady for everyone (*ie* plural ownership). 'My papers' will be **mes papiers** ~ a whole plural bundle of them ~ so there's no need to change **mes** any further.

**Son, sa, ses** all mean his/her/its, and agree with the word they describe (the word that follows) :

<b>son frère</b>	his/her brother (depending on who's speaking)
<b>sa grand-mère</b>	his/her grandmother
<b>ses enfants</b>	his/her children
<b>Paris et ses environs</b>	Paris and its surroundings

The word ‘your’ can be:

**ton/ta/tes** if you say **tu** to the person (see Lesson 3 for more on the difference between **tu** and **vous**)  
**votre/vos** if you say **vous** to the person

One more little twist that seems ‘wrong’, but makes things easier to say ...

French uses **mon**, **ton** and **son** in front of *feminine* nouns that start with a vowel or an ‘h’. (The initial letter **h** usually isn’t sounded at all in French, so, effectively, it doesn’t count as a ‘proper consonant’. For practical purposes, a word like **hôtel** begins with the **o**!)

**son amie** his/her (female) friend  
**ton école** (f) your school

It may seem odd to set up a language ‘rule’ and then promptly start breaking it! The catch here is that French doesn’t like one word to end with a vowel if the next word also starts with one (any more than English would say ‘a apple’ or ‘a umbrella’). So they use the already-available alternative form (e.g. *mon* rather than *ma*) which just makes the phrase smoother to say.

<b>Activity 1</b>	<p><u>Mettez l’adjectif possessif qui convient dans le blanc</u>                  Put a suitable possessive adjective in the gap</p> <p><b>Modèle</b></p> <p>_____ mère (my)                  Answer : ma mère (<b>mère</b> is feminine so <b>ma</b> is feminine)</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. _____ père (my) _____ amis (their)</li> <li>2. _____ enfant f (your – tu) _____ petit-fils (our)</li> <li>3. _____ oncle (her) _____ belle-fille (your – vous)</li> <li>4. _____ frère (his) _____ chiens (your – vous)</li> <li>5. _____ grands-parents (my) _____ fils (their)</li> </ol>

	<p><b>Verb Book</b></p> <p><b>Using a Verb Book</b></p> <p>A verb book is an exercise book where you write down the main verbs in your IGCSE syllabus. Every verb has <u>a page of its own</u>. Divide each page into four rectangles, one for each <u>TENSE (PRESENT, PERFECT, IMPERFECT AND FUTURE/ CONDITIONAL)</u>. Number the pages and use the first page as an index.</p>
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Here are the first three verbs we are going to learn.

Two of them, **avoir** and **être**, are the most important verbs in the French language!

- **Avoir** - to have
- **Être** - to be
- **S'appeler** – to be called

Verbs change their endings in French according to who or what is doing the action ~ the SUBJECT. There are six forms, corresponding to the six 'owners' we met earlier.

<i>Singular subjects</i>	<b>je</b>	I
	<b>tu</b>	you
	<b>il /elle/on</b>	he(it)/she(it)/one ( <i>all three take the same verb-ending</i> )
<i>Plural subjects</i>	<b>nous</b>	we
	<b>vous</b>	you
	<b>ils/elles</b>	they (masculine or mixed / feminine)

The difference between **tu** and **vous** is explained further in Lesson Three.

All the verbs in the first Module are PRESENT TENSE, which means the action is happening 'now' ~ at the same time as we're being told about it, rather than in the past or the future.

### **Avoir** - to have      Présent

<b>j'ai</b>	I have	<b>nous avons</b>	we have
<b>tu as</b>	you have	<b>vous avez</b>	you have
<b>il/elle/on a</b>	he/she/one has	<b>ils/elles ont</b>	they (m/f) have

### **Être** - to be      Présent

<b>je suis</b>	I am	<b>nous sommes</b>	we are
<b>tu es</b>	you are	<b>vous êtes</b>	you are
<b>il/elle/on est</b>	he/she/one is	<b>ils/elles sont</b>	they (m/f) are

### **S'appeler** – to be called

This is a REFLEXIVE VERB: each of its six forms contains a little extra word to 'reflect' the action back onto the same person who's doing it (like your bent elbow in the bathroom mirror while you're brushing your own teeth!).

English is less fussy about this than French is. Besides saying 'I wash the dog'; we can also simply say 'I wash', which is taken to mean 'I wash myself' ~ without clearly explaining so. But French insists that we tell who is being washed, even if it's the same individual doing the action and also on the receiving end, so a little word is slipped in to make that clear.

These little words are **me**, **te** and **se** in the singular (you'll notice they are a matching set like **mon**, **ton**, **son**); the plural ones are **nous**, **vous** and then **se** again.

In front of any verb that starts with a vowel or silent **h** (and **s'appeler** is such a verb), these shorten even further to **m'**, **t'**, **s'** ... but **nous** and **vous** remain the same.

If you've seen the film or show *The Sound of Music*, you'll know the famous phrase, 'Me: a name I call myself'. Start from that link, and **s'appeler** won't seem quite so mysterious ... !

<b>je m'appelle</b>	I am called	<b>nous nous appelons</b>	we are called
<b>tu t'appelles</b>	you are called	<b>vous vous appelez</b>	you are called
<b>il/elle/on s'appelle</b>	he/she/one is called	<b>ils/elles s'appellent</b>	they are called

### Verb endings with noun and proper noun subjects

Sometimes you have a sentence in which the subject is not **je/tu/il/elle/on/nous/vous/ils/elles**. You have a noun, or a PROPER NOUN (an actual name) instead.

Which verb ending do you use with nouns and proper nouns?

Look at the following:

- **Les filles sont très gentilles.**  
The girls are very kind.  
*The verb used after **les filles** is the same as for **elles** ('feminine they').*
- **Jean est très drôle.**  
Jean is very funny.  
*The verb used with **Jean** is **a**, the same form as for **il** ('he').*
- **Mon ami s'appelle Paul.**  
My friend is called Paul  
*The verb used with **mon ami** here is **s'appelle**, the same for as for **il** ('he').*

## Pratiques écrites: Avoir et être

## Activity 2

## Avoir: Present tense

Mettez la bonne forme du verbe **avoir** au présent dans le blanc.  
Put the right part of the present tense of the verb **avoir** in the gap.



1. Nous \_\_\_\_\_ deux frères.
2. J' \_\_\_\_\_ une belle-soeur.
3. Elles \_\_\_\_\_ deux petits-fils.
4. Les filles \_\_\_\_\_ un frère, Jacques.
5. Mon ami \_\_\_\_\_ une soeur.

## Activity 3

## Être: Present tense

Mettez la bonne forme du verbe **être** au présent dans le blanc.  
Put the right part of the present tense of the verb **être** in the gap.



1. Nous \_\_\_\_\_ frères.
2. Elle \_\_\_\_\_ la femme de Maurice.
3. Zohra et Fadia \_\_\_\_\_ soeurs.
4. Est-ce que tu \_\_\_\_\_ le mari d'Hélène?
5. Notre belle-soeur \_\_\_\_\_ très gentille.

## Activity 4

Write a paragraph to describe your family, house and pets.

Use the verbs: **avoir, être, s'appeler.**

Use the possessive adjectives **mon, ma, mes etc**

*e.g.* **Je m'appelle Nadia et ma famille est très grande ...**



## Investigate!



## Pratique Internet

We offer the links below in good faith, but such sites may come and go while our own course is current, and so we cannot promise you will find all of them still running. Sensible use of a search engine may turn up other good and relevant sites; we would be glad to hear any recommendations!

**Être** and **avoir** - do the exercises on the following website until you are sure you can remember them.

<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/rgshiwyc/school/curric/HotPotatoes/index.htm>

Family vocabulary

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/talk/family/>

Possessive adjectives

<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/tex/gr/det6.html>

## Tips for Typists

If you are writing French on an English-rigged computer using WORD (and perhaps aiming to send TMA or other documents electronically eventually), you'll need to know how to key-in accented characters. Don't worry, for now, about *why* the accents are there in French (we'll come to that in due course); but, as integral parts of the spelling & working of the language, they can't just be ignored, dropped off or scattered wherever you happen feel they might look pretty.

A proper French 'AZERTY' keyboard (rather than our QWERTY) will include some ready-made accents. For the rest of us, they're quite easy to learn. In principle you first 'prepare' the accent, often by adapting the nearest-looking existing squiggle, then drop the letter onto it.

The *acute* accent (as in **éclair**) only ever comes over an **e**, and is made by keying the CTRL and apostrophe together, followed by the **e**. ('Apostrophe' should be two to the right of your 'L'.)

The *grave* accent (going 'down' the other way, as in **père**) involves CTRL again plus your topmost left key (probably) with this same accent marked on it, followed then by the vowel.

The *circumflex* accent (as in the 'roof' of **hôtel**, **hôpital** and **château**) calls for CTRL and SHIFT plus the '6', all together (you probably have the ^ accent flying above the 6 on your actual keytop), followed by the vowel.

The *diaeresis* accent (two dots, looking much like a German Umlaut, appearing over **Noël** and **naïve etc**) is done with CTRL + SHIFT + the colon key (*ie* ':', with the Shift already on) and then the vowel.

The *cedilla* is CTRL + a normal comma, followed by the **c**. This is French's only accent sitting below its letter, rather than above; the only one on a consonant (in fact, only ever with **c**; and then, only and in certain circumstances, if that **c** is followed by **a**, **o** or **u**). Don't worry yet about when or why it does this, although **une leçon de Français** contains two of them!

While most French people don't bother accenting initial capital letters, you can try it if you like (*eg* on **la Place de l'Étoile**, which is where the Arc de Triomphe stands in Paris).

## Skills Checklist

Put a tick or a cross in the box according to whether you feel confident you have mastered the skill or whether you feel further work is needed.

Having studied this lesson, I can ...	YES (✓)	NO (X)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identify people by name, using forms of s'appeler</li> <li>- describe my own family and civil status</li> <li>- explain relationships using <i>mon, ma, mes etc</i></li> <li>- ask about, and describe, other people's families</li> <li>- use forms of <i>avoir</i> and <i>être</i> confidently when I need them</li> </ul>		

## Suggested Answers to Activities

### One

Left column: **mon, ton, son, son, mes** ; right column: **leurs, nos, votre, vos, leur** (or **leurs** ~ because **ils** could be either singular or plural, depending on context ; rather like *sheep* or *fish* in English. It isn't only French that's odd sometimes!)

### Two

1. **avons**, 2. **ai**, 3. **ont**, 4. **ont**, 5. **a**

### Three

1. **sommes**, 2. **est**, 3. **sont**, 4. **es**, 5. **est**

### Four

Obviously this will vary according to your circumstances but it may look similar to the example given earlier. As this may be your very first shot at writing 'running' French, you may wish to share it with your tutor, just to check you're on the right lines. If doing this electronically, please get into the habit of including any necessary accents correctly (see above).