

Letters, emails and phone numbers out loud

French A1 (beginner) · Lesson

Quick answer: To spell your name in French, say each letter with its French name (A, bé, cé, dé...), name accents aloud (é = e accent aigu), and read phone numbers in pairs: 06 12 34 56 78 is zéro six, douze, trente-quatre, cinquante-six, soixante-dix-huit. Ask *Comment ça s'écrit ?* when you do not understand.

Level: French A1 (CEFR beginner) · **Standards:** CEFR A1, Spoken interaction

How do you spell your name in French?

At a pharmacy counter in Nantes, at a hotel desk in Liège or on the phone with the town hall, someone will ask you to spell your name. You need the letter names, because the English ones will not be understood.

Letters	French names
A B C D E F G	a, bé, cé, dé, e, effe, gé
H I J K L M N	ache, i, ji, ka, elle, emme, enne
O P Q R S T U	o, pé, ku, erre, esse, té, u
V W X Y Z	vé, double vé, iks, i grec, zède

T R A O R É
té erre a o erre e accent aigu

Traoré

Spelling a name, one letter at a time.

Useful phrases

- Comment ça s'écrit ? — How do you spell that?
- Pouvez-vous épeler votre nom ? — Can you spell your name?
- Pouvez-vous répéter, s'il vous plaît ? — Can you repeat, please?
- Ça s'écrit avec un ç. — It is written with a ç.

How do you read numbers and phone numbers?

0-10	11-20	Tens
zéro, un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq	onze, douze, treize, quatorze, quinze	trente (30), quarante (40)
six, sept, huit, neuf, dix	seize, dix-sept, dix-huit, dix-neuf, vingt	cinquante (50), soixante (60)

Numbers from 21 to 69 follow a pattern: vingt et un (21), vingt-deux (22), trente et un (31), quarante-cinq (45). Then soixante-dix is 70 and quatre-vingts is 80.

06

48

27

15

93

zéro six

quarante-huit

vingt-sept

quinze

quatre-vingt-treize

A French phone number is read in pairs.

Addresses and emails

J'habite au 35, rue des Lilas. — I live at 35 Lilac Street. The number comes first: trente-cinq. Email: zoe.martin@exemple.fr is zoé point martin arobase exemple point f r. A hyphen is tiret and an underscore is tiret bas.

Watch out

Do not read 06 48 27 one digit at a time or as one big number. In French, you say pairs, and a zero stays: zéro six. Also, E is pronounced like the vowel in "uh", not "ee"; I is the one that sounds like English "ee".

Why pairs?

French mobile numbers start with 06 or 07. Reading in pairs is the habit in shops, offices and on the phone, so a clerk writing down your number will wait for the pairs.

Zoé's tip

Rehearse your own phone number every morning, out loud, in pairs. In two weeks you will say it without thinking.

Key points to remember

- The French letter names differ from English: G is gé, J is ji, W is double vé.
- Accents are named: accent aigu (é), grave (è), circumflexe (ê), cédille (ç).
- French phone numbers have ten digits and are read in five pairs.
- In an email address, @ is arobase and the dot is point.

Letters, Emails and Phone Numbers Out Loud: frequently asked questions

How do you say the French alphabet?

Letters are called a, bé, cé, dé, e, effe, gé, ache, i, ji, ka, elle, emme, enne, o, pé, ku, erre, esse, té, u, vé, double vé, iks, i grec, zède. Learn the ones that differ most from English: E, G, I, J and W.

How do I ask someone to spell a word in French?

Say Comment ça s'écrit ? or, more politely, Pouvez-vous épeler, s'il vous plaît ? The second is the better choice at an office or a counter.

How are French phone numbers read?

A French number has ten digits and is read in five pairs. For 01 45 67 89 12, say zéro un, quarante-cinq, soixante-sept, quatre-vingt-neuf, douze.

How do I say @ and a dot in an email address?

@ is arobase and a dot is point. So info@cafe.fr becomes info arobase café point f r.

How do I say accents in French?

Say the letter, then the accent: e accent aigu (é), e accent grave (è), e accent circumflexe (ê), c cédille (ç), i tréma (ï).