

Answering and making phone calls

French A1 (beginner) · Lesson

Quick answer: To make a basic call in French, answer with Allô ?, introduce yourself with C'est plus your name, and ask Je voudrais parler à Mme Lemaire. The receptionist may reply C'est de la part de qui ? and Ne quittez pas. If nobody is there, say Je rappelle plus tard.

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

How do you answer the phone and ask for someone?

A French call follows a fixed order: greet, say who you are, ask for the person, wait. Each step has a ready-made phrase.

Phrase	Meaning
Allô ?	Hello? (answering a private call)
C'est Samir Haddad.	This is Samir Haddad.
Je voudrais parler à Mme Lemaire.	I'd like to speak to Mrs. Lemaire.
C'est de la part de qui ?	Who shall I say is calling?
Ne quittez pas.	Please hold.
Je vous la passe. / Je vous le passe.	I'm putting you through (to her / to him).

Allô, bonjour. C'est Samir Haddad.

Bonjour. Vous désirez ?

Je voudrais parler à Mme Lemaire.

Ne quittez pas. Je vous la passe.

A call: name, request, hold.

Saying who you are

On the phone, French uses C'est + name, never Je suis: C'est Samir. To ask who is there, say Qui est à l'appareil ? (literally, who is at the device?). The polite request is Je voudrais parler à + person.

What do you say when the person is not available?

Phrase	Meaning
Il n'est pas là. / Elle n'est pas là.	He / she is not in.
Il est en réunion.	He is in a meeting.
Je rappelle plus tard.	I'll call back later.
Voulez-vous laisser un message ?	Would you like to leave a message?
Pouvez-vous lui dire que j'ai appelé ?	Can you tell him I called?

The sentence Pouvez-vous lui dire que j'ai appelé ? is a set phrase here: learn it as a block, even before you study the past tense.

How do you give a phone number or fix a bad line?

French speakers read numbers in pairs. A mobile number has ten digits and starts with 06 or 07.

Un numéro de portable

06 12 34 56 78

zéro six, douze, trente-quatre,
cinquante-six, soixante-dix-huit

A phone number is read in five pairs.

- Pouvez-vous répéter, s'il vous plaît ? — Can you repeat, please?
- Pouvez-vous parler plus lentement ? — Can you speak more slowly?
- Je vous entends mal. — I can hardly hear you.
- Vous vous êtes trompé de numéro. — You have the wrong number.

Watch out

English "Hello, it's Ben speaking" is not Je suis Ben. Say C'est Ben. Also, parler à (never avec) is the usual choice when you ask for someone. And rappeler means to call again, not to remember: Je rappelle = I'll call back.

Culture note

In France, landline numbers begin with 01 to 05, and mobile numbers with 06 or 07. In an emergency, 15 reaches the medical emergency service, 17 the police, 18 the firefighters, and

112 works across Europe.

Zoé's tip

Before a call, write your name, the person you want and your number on a sticky note. A calm Bonjour, c'est... is easier to say when the note is under your eyes!

Key points to remember

- On the phone, say C'est + name, never Je suis.
- Je voudrais parler à + person is the polite request.
- C'est de la part de qui ? asks who is calling.
- Phone numbers are read in pairs: 06 12 34 = zéro six, douze, trente-quatre.
- Je rappelle plus tard means I'll call back later.

Answering and Making Phone Calls: frequently asked questions

How do you say who is calling in French?

Use C'est followed by your name: C'est Ben Carter. Do not translate "I am" with Je suis. To ask the other person, say Qui est à l'appareil ?

What does C'est de la part de qui mean?

It means who shall I say is calling? A receptionist uses it before putting a call through. Answer with C'est de la part de and your name.

How do you ask to speak to someone?

Say Je voudrais parler à and the name, for example Je voudrais parler à M. Keita, s'il vous plaît. The word voudrais makes the request polite.

How do you say a French phone number?

Read the ten digits in five pairs. The number 06 12 34 56 78 becomes zéro six, douze, trente-quatre, cinquante-six, soixante-dix-huit. Mobile numbers start with 06 or 07.

What can you say when the line is bad?

Say Je vous entends mal. and then Pouvez-vous répéter, s'il vous plaît ? You may also ask Pouvez-vous parler plus lentement ?