

Going green at home and work

French A2 (elementary) · Lesson

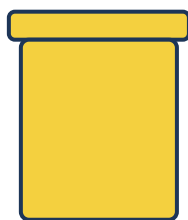
Quick answer: To talk about eco-friendly habits in French, use *trier*, *recycler* and *gaspiller* with the right bin: *le bac jaune*, *le conteneur à verre*, *le composteur*. Say you no longer or never do something with *ne ... plus* and *ne ... jamais*, and give advice with the imperative, *il faut* or *tu devrais*.

Level: French A2 (CEFR elementary) · **Standards:** CEFR A2, Spoken production

What do you sort, and where does it go?

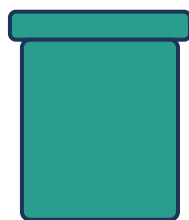
When you move into a French building, you quickly meet the bins. In most towns the rules are the same, but check your city's guide.

Waste	Where it goes
les emballages, le papier, les canettes	le bac jaune
les bouteilles and les bocaux in glass	le conteneur à verre
les épluchures (peelings)	le composteur
the rest: les ordures ménagères	la poubelle grise
large objects, old appliances	la déchetterie



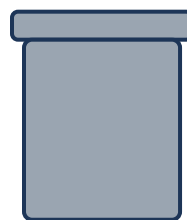
bac jaune

emballages, papier



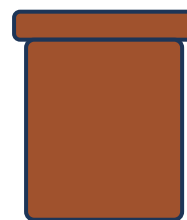
conteneur

à verre



poubelle grise

ordures



composteur

épluchures

Where each type of waste goes.

Culture note

Since 2023, nearly all plastic packaging can go in the yellow bin in France, not only bottles. Disposable plastic bags at supermarket checkouts have been banned since 2016, which is why many people carry *un sac en tissu*.

How do you say you no longer do something?

Rule: ne ... plus and ne ... jamais

Put ne before the verb and plus (no longer) or jamais (never) after it: Je n'achète plus d'eau en bouteille. — I no longer buy bottled water. Il ne gaspille jamais le pain. — He never wastes bread. In the passé composé, the two words surround the auxiliary: Nous n'avons plus pris la voiture. After a negation, du / de la / des become de: plus de sacs.

Watch out

Never add pas: Je ne trie jamais pas is wrong. English needs a single negative word, so "no longer" and "never" feel complete, but French still needs ne in writing. Also keep gaspiller (to waste) apart from jeter (to throw away).

How do you give advice about eco-friendly habits?

Structure	Pattern	Example
a command	imperative	Éteins la lumière ! / Triez vos déchets !
a general rule	il faut + infinitive	Il faut fermer le robinet.
a polite suggestion	tu devrais / vous devriez + infinitive	Tu devrais prendre le vélo.
a ban	ne ... pas + imperative	Ne gaspille pas l'eau !

The imperative of an -er verb drops the -s in the tu form: tu tries becomes Trie !, while the vous form keeps its ending: Triez !

Cinq éco-gestes à la maison

- ☒ Éteignez les lumières en sortant.
- ☒ Fermez le robinet pendant le brossage.
- ☒ Apportez vos sacs en tissu.
- ☒ Triez les emballages.
- ☒ Réparez avant de jeter.

A checklist of everyday eco-friendly habits.

Zoé's tip

Say your resolutions with a time marker: Depuis janvier, je ne prends plus la voiture le dimanche. A real date makes ne ... plus stick, and it works in a conversation with a new neighbor.

Key points to remember

- Bins: le bac jaune (packaging, paper), le conteneur à verre, le composteur, la poubelle grise.
- Ne ... plus means no longer; ne ... jamais means never; no pas is added.
- After a negation, du / de la / des become de: plus de sacs.
- Advice: imperative (Trie !), il faut + infinitive, tu devrais + infinitive.
- The tu imperative of -er verbs drops the -s: Trie ! Recycle !

Going Green at Home and Work: frequently asked questions

What goes in the yellow bin in France?

The bac jaune takes packaging and paper: cardboard, cans, and in most towns now all plastic packaging. Glass usually goes to a separate conteneur à verre, so check your town's guide.

How do you say "I no longer use plastic bags"?

Say Je n'utilise plus de sacs en plastique. Ne goes before the verb, plus after it, and des becomes de after the negation.

What is the difference between ne ... plus and ne ... jamais?

Ne ... plus means no longer, a habit that has stopped. Ne ... jamais means never, at no time. Both replace pas and surround the conjugated verb.

How do you tell a friend to switch off the light?

Say Éteins la lumière ! with the tu imperative. To a colleague or to several people, say Éteignez la lumière !

How do you give gentle advice in French?

Use tu devrais or vous devriez + infinitive, as in Vous devriez trier le carton. Il faut + infinitive states a general rule, such as Il faut fermer le robinet.