

# Cooking instructions and kitchen measures

## French A2 (elementary) · Lesson

**Quick answer:** French recipes use the imperative, the present-tense form without the subject: Coupez les oignons, Ajoutez du sel, Faites cuire. After a quantity, use de with no article: 200 g de farine, une pincée de sel. Learn the cooking verbs in the order of the steps, from éplucher to faire cuire.

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

## How do you give instructions in a French recipe?

French recipes use the imperative: the present-tense form without the subject. Say Coupe (to a friend), Coupez (to several people or politely) or Coupons (let us cut). Printed recipes often use the infinitive instead: Mélanger les œufs.

| Verb     | tu      | nous       | vous     |
|----------|---------|------------|----------|
| couper   | Coupe   | Coupons    | Coupez   |
| mélanger | Mélange | Mélangeons | Mélangez |
| faire    | Fais    | Faisons    | Faites   |
| mettre   | Mets    | Mettons    | Mettez   |

### Rule: forming the imperative

Take the present tense of {tu}, {nous} or {vous} and drop the pronoun. For {-er} verbs, the {tu} form loses its {-s}: {tu coupes} becomes {Coupe}. For the negative, wrap {ne ... pas} around the verb: {Ne mets pas trop de sel.}

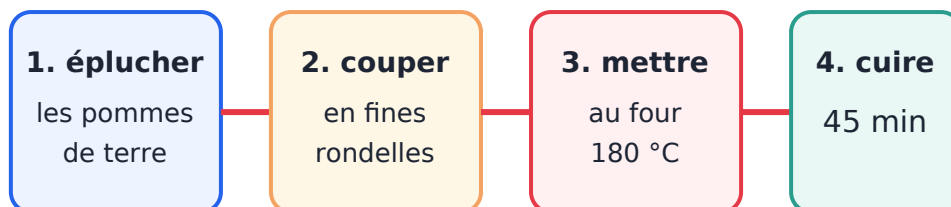
### Watch out

The verb {faire} is irregular in the {vous} form: {Faites cuire}, never {faissez cuire}. And in {faire cuire} only {faire} changes; {cuire} stays in the infinitive.

## Which verbs do you need in the kitchen?

| French   | English |
|----------|---------|
| éplucher | to peel |

| French          | English           |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| couper          | to cut            |
| mélanger        | to mix            |
| verser          | to pour           |
| faire cuire     | to cook           |
| faire revenir   | to brown in a pan |
| laisser reposer | to let rest       |
| égoutter        | to drain          |



*The steps of a potato gratin.*

### Example: a short recipe

{Épluchez les pommes de terre. Coupez-les en rondelles. Mettez-les dans un plat. Ajoutez la crème et faites cuire 45 minutes à 180 °C.}

Peel the potatoes. Cut them into slices. Put them in a dish. Add the cream and cook for 45 minutes at 180 °C.

## How do you say how much of something?

After a quantity, French uses de (or d' before a vowel) with no article: 200 g de beurre, un peu de sel, beaucoup d'huile. Exact numbers need un, deux, trois with the noun: trois œufs.

| Quantity                | Example                       |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| une cuillère à soupe de | une cuillère à soupe de sucre |
| une pincée de           | une pincée de sel             |
| 25 cl de                | 25 cl de lait                 |
| un peu de               | un peu de poivre              |

**Crêpes — pour 4 personnes**

250 g de farine

3 œufs

50 cl de lait

1 pincée de sel

1 c. à s. d'huile

**Repos : 30 minutes**c. à s. =  
cuillère à soupec. à c. =  
cuillère à café*A recipe card with quantities.***Culture note**

Crêpes are the traditional dish of La Chandeleur, on February 2. Many families flip the first crêpe with a coin in the other hand. Ratatouille comes from Provence, and gratin dauphinois from the Dauphiné region around Grenoble.

**Zoé's tip**

Read the whole recipe once before you start. The verbs come in the order you will do the steps, so the list of verbs is also your timer: first {éplucher}, last {faire cuire}.

**Key points to remember**

- The imperative has three forms: tu, nous and vous, with no subject pronoun.
- The tu form of an -er verb drops the final -s: Coupe.
- Faire gives Faites in the vous imperative.
- After a quantity, use de or d' without an article: un peu de sel.

## Cooking Instructions and Kitchen Measures: frequently asked questions

**How do you form the imperative in French?**

Use the present tense of tu, nous or vous without the pronoun. With -er verbs, drop the -s of the tu form: Mélange. Irregular examples are Fais, Faites and Prends.

**Do French recipes use tu or vous?**

Cookbooks and websites mostly use vous or the infinitive. Friends and family use tu when they share a recipe by message.

**How do you say "a pinch of salt" in French?**

Say une pincée de sel. After a quantity word, de or d' replaces the article, so you never say une pincée du sel.

**What does faire revenir mean?**

It means to brown food in a pan with a little fat, for example onions in oil. Only faire is conjugated: Faites revenir les oignons.

**How do you say "do not add salt" in a recipe?**

Use ne ... pas around the imperative: N'ajoutez pas de sel. After a negative, de replaces du.