

Writing and saying a review

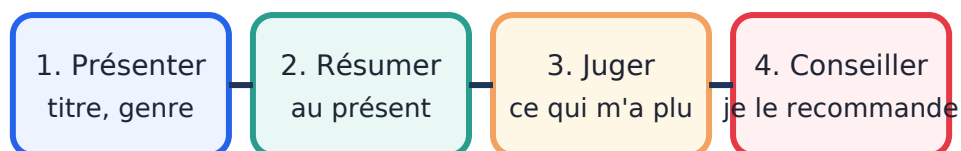
French B1 (intermediate) · Lesson

Quick answer: To review a film or book in French, introduce the title, summarize the plot in the present tense (Le film raconte l'histoire de...), describe the characters, say what you liked with *ce qui m'a plu* and *ce que j'ai aimé*, then recommend it with *Je vous le recommande* or *Ça vaut le coup*.

Level: French B1 (CEFR intermediate) · **Standards:** CEFR B1, Writing

How do you structure a film or book review in French?

A good review follows four steps: introduce the work, summarize the story without spoiling it, say what you thought, and tell the reader whether to go. Each step has its own phrases and its own tense.



The four steps of a review.

Step	Useful French	Tense
Introduce	« L'Horloger de Lausanne » est un film policier de...	present
Summarize	Le film raconte l'histoire de... / L'action se passe à... / Au début... puis... à la fin...	present
Judge	J'ai adoré / J'ai trouvé ça émouvant / J'ai été déçue	passé composé
Recommend	Je vous le recommande. / Ça vaut le coup. / À éviter.	present

How do you describe the plot and the characters?

Use the present tense for the story, even if the film is old. Name the main character, then one or two details: age, job, problem.

Plot and characters

Le roman raconte l'histoire d'une boulangère de Liège qui perd sa recette secrète. — The novel tells the story of a baker from Liège who loses her secret recipe.

Le héros est attachant, mais le méchant est trop caricatural. — The hero is endearing, but the villain is too much of a caricature.

How do you say what you liked and what you did not?

Ce qui replaces the subject, ce que replaces the object. Both mean "what", and both start the sentence before c'est.

Ce qui / ce que

Ce qui m'a plu, c'est le décor. (the decor pleased me: subject) · Ce que j'ai adoré, c'est la musique. (I loved the music: object)

L'Horloger de Lausanne

 4 sur 5

+ Ce qui m'a plu : les décors

- Ce que j'ai moins aimé : le rythme

A review card with one positive and one negative point.

To recommend: Je le conseille à ceux qui aiment les histoires calmes. — I recommend it to those who like quiet stories. To warn: Je ne le recommande pas. Add a reason: Il est trop long.

Common mistake

A *character* in a story is un personnage, never un caractère, which means a person's temperament. Likewise, une librairie is a bookstore and une bibliothèque is a library.

Literary season

Each autumn, the Prix Goncourt is one of the French literary prizes that gets bookstores talking. Reviews written in autumn often mention the prize lists.

Zoé's tip

Give one reason for each opinion: J'ai adoré le film parce que.... A review with reasons is far more convincing than stars alone.

Key points to remember

- Summarize the story in the present tense.

- Ce qui is a subject, ce que is an object: Ce qui m'a plu, c'est... / Ce que j'ai aimé, c'est...
- Personal opinion uses the passé composé: J'ai adoré, j'ai été déçu.
- Recommend with je vous le recommande, ça vaut le coup, à éviter.
- Un personnage is a story character; un caractère is a temperament.

Writing and Saying a Review: frequently asked questions

Which tense do you use to summarize a plot in French?

Use the present tense: Le film raconte, elle quitte, il découvre. This is true even for old books or films. Reserve the passé composé for your own experience: J'ai vu le film hier.

What is the difference between ce qui and ce que?

Ce qui is the subject of the next verb: Ce qui m'a plu, c'est le décor. Ce que is the object: Ce que j'ai adoré, c'est la musique. If a noun or pronoun with its own verb follows, choose ce que.

How do you say 'I recommend it' politely in French?

Say Je vous le recommande to one person you address as vous, or Je te le recommande to a friend. For a group, say Je le recommande à tout le monde or Je le conseille à ceux qui aiment...

How do you criticize without being rude?

Use Ce qui m'a moins plu, c'est... or Ce que j'ai moins aimé, c'est... and add a reason. J'ai été déçu(e) par... is also polite and common in written reviews.

Is 'librairie' the same as 'library'?

No. Une librairie is a bookstore where you buy books, while une bibliothèque is a library where you borrow them. This false friend appears constantly in book reviews and conversations.