

Leases, inspections and notice letters

French B1 (intermediate) · Lesson

Quick answer: Renting in France revolves around the bail (lease), the état des lieux (entry and exit inspection), the dépôt de garantie and the préavis (notice). Contracts use set phrases like est tenu de and the future tense, and the CAF can pay housing aid.

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

Which documents does a French rental involve?

Renting in France means paperwork at every stage. Three documents matter most: the bail (the lease), the état des lieux (a written inspection of the home) and the quittance de loyer (the rent receipt). Learn their vocabulary before you sign anything.

BAIL D'HABITATION – logement non meublé
 Loyer mensuel hors charges : 640 €
 Provision pour charges : 75 €
 Dépôt de garantie : 640 € (un mois de loyer)
 Durée : trois ans, à compter du 1er octobre
 Préavis du locataire : trois mois

A simplified lease excerpt: find the five key figures first.

French	English
le bailleur / le propriétaire	landlord
le locataire	tenant
le loyer, les charges	rent, utilities and building costs
hors charges (HC) / charges comprises (CC)	excluding / including charges
le dépôt de garantie	security deposit
le garant, la caution	guarantor
le préavis, le congé	notice period, notice to leave
l'assurance habitation	home insurance (required for tenants)

Watch out, English speakers

Louer means both "to rent" and "to rent out". In everyday speech, la caution often means the deposit, but it also means the person who guarantees your rent. Une location is a rental, not a place.

What happens from the first day to the last?



Deposit back: 1 month if no damage, 2 months if there are differences

The life of an unfurnished tenancy in six steps.

Key rules to remember

- Unfurnished lease: three years minimum; furnished lease: one year (nine months for a student).
- Deposit: one month of rent excluding charges if unfurnished, two months if furnished.
- Notice by the tenant: three months if unfurnished, one month if furnished. Send it by registered letter.

How do you read the language of a contract?

Contracts use set phrases and the future tense. Le locataire s'engage à payer le loyer le 5 de chaque mois. — The tenant agrees to pay the rent on the 5th of each month. Le dépôt sera restitué dans un délai d'un mois. — The deposit will be returned within one month.

Phrase	Meaning
est tenu de + infinitive	is obliged to
à compter du 1er mars	starting on March 1
au plus tard le 10	by the 10th at the latest
sous peine de + noun	or else, with the risk of
faute de paiement	failing payment

What is the CAF and how does it help?

The CAF (Caisse d'allocations familiales) pays housing aid, the APL (aide personnalisée au logement), to many tenants. You apply online with your lease, your address and your income. The amount depends on your rent, your resources and your household.

Good to know in France

At the end, the landlord must return the deposit within one month if the exit inspection matches the entry inspection, and within two months if there are differences. Keep your quittances de loyer: administrations often ask for them as proof of address.

Zoé's tip

Take dated photos of every room on moving day and attach them to the état des lieux d'entrée. Photos settle arguments about the deposit later.

Key points to remember

- An unfurnished lease lasts three years at least, a furnished one year.
- The deposit is one month of rent excluding charges if unfurnished, two months if furnished.
- Tenant notice is three months unfurnished and one month furnished, sent by registered letter.
- HC means excluding charges and CC means charges included.
- The CAF pays the APL housing aid according to rent, income and household.

Leases, Inspections and Notice Letters: frequently asked questions

What is a bail in France?

A bail is the written lease between the bailleur and the locataire. It states the rent, the charges, the deposit, the duration and the notice period.

What is an état des lieux?

It is a written inspection of the home done at move-in and at move-out. The landlord compares the two documents to decide whether to keep part of the deposit.

How long is the notice period for a tenant?

In an unfurnished home it is normally three months, and in a furnished home one month. The tenant should send the congé by registered letter with proof of receipt.

What is the difference between loyer HC and CC?

Loyer HC excludes the charges, while CC includes them. Always check which figure an ad shows before comparing prices.

What does the CAF do for tenants?

The CAF pays the APL, a housing aid based on rent, income and household. Tenants apply online with their lease and proof of income.