

Debating bioethics and artificial intelligence in French

French B2 (upper intermediate) · Lesson

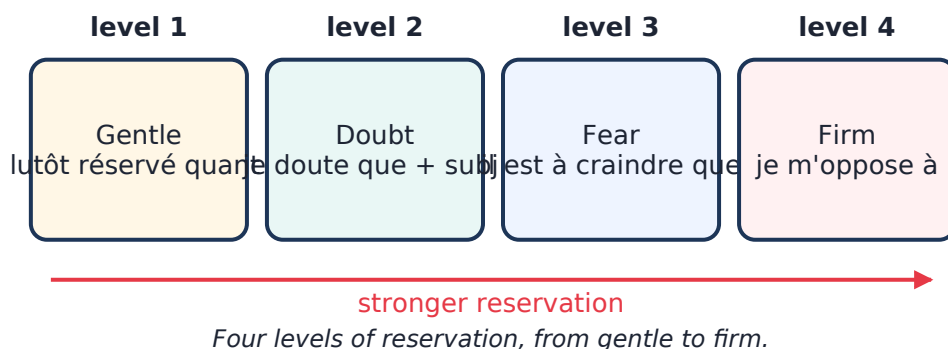
Quick answer: To express reservations in French at B2 level, combine a doubt or fear expression (je doute que, il est à craindre que) with the subjunctive, then add a condition (à condition que). This lets you accept scientific progress while still setting clear ethical limits.

Level: French B2 (CEFR upper intermediate) · **Standards:** CEFR B2, Spoken production

How do you express reservations about science and technology in French?

At B2 level, a debate about ethics rewards **nuance**: you rarely say yes or no, you say oui, mais à quelles conditions ?. French offers a ladder of expressions, and each rung triggers a specific mood.

Strength	Expression	Mood
Gentle	Je suis plutôt réservé(e) quant à l'édition du génome.	noun after <i>quant à</i>
Doubt	Je doute que cette méthode soit sans risque.	subjunctive
Fear	Il est à craindre que les données ne soient mal protégées.	subjunctive
Firm	Il est inacceptable que des firmes vendent nos dossiers médicaux.	subjunctive



Which vocabulary do you need for bioethics and artificial

intelligence?

French	English
la bioéthique	bioethics
le consentement éclairé	informed consent
le don d'organes	organ donation
le dépistage	screening
la thérapie génique	gene therapy
un algorithme, un biais	algorithm, bias
les données personnelles	personal data
le principe de précaution	precautionary principle
une dérive	a dangerous drift, abuse

How do you accept progress while setting limits?

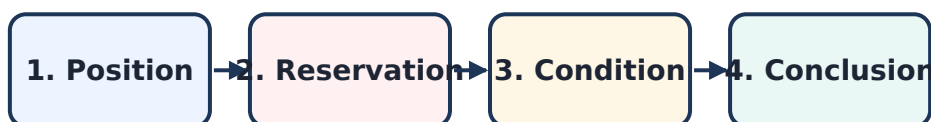
Conditions and concessions

à condition que + subjunctive (two subjects) · à condition de + infinitive (same subject) · sous réserve de + noun · pourvu que + subjunctive · certes... mais... to concede.

In context

Je soutiens cette recherche, à condition que le patient donne son consentement. — I support this research, provided the patient gives consent.

Certes, l'algorithme gagne du temps, mais il faut en contrôler les biais. — Admittedly, the algorithm saves time, but its biases must be monitored.



Each step is one sentence in a 1-minute answer
The four-step structure of a short spoken answer.

Common mistake

English speakers keep the indicative after doubt: Je doute que c'est sûr is wrong. Write Je doute que ce soit sûr. The mood flips with the speaker's certainty: Je suis sûr que c'est sûr,

but Je ne suis pas sûr que ce soit sûr. Also, je pense que takes the indicative; je ne pense pas que takes the subjunctive.

Culture note

France passed its first bioethics laws in 1994, and Parliament has revised them several times since, most recently in 2021. The national ethics committee (CCNE), created in 1983, publishes opinions on questions raised by the life sciences, and the CNIL, founded in 1978, supervises personal data.

Zoé's tip

In an oral exam, never stop at je suis contre. Give a reservation, then a condition: Je reste prudente, mais je pourrais l'accepter à condition que... . That sounds balanced and gives you time to think.

Key points to remember

- Doubt and fear expressions such as je doute que take the subjunctive.
- Je pense que takes the indicative; je ne pense pas que often takes the subjunctive.
- À condition que takes the subjunctive; à condition de takes an infinitive.
- Certes... mais... concedes a point before objecting.
- Bioethics vocabulary: consentement éclairé, dépistage, biais, principe de précaution.

Debating bioethics and artificial intelligence in French: frequently asked questions

How do you say "I doubt that" in French?

Use je doute que followed by the subjunctive: Je doute que cette technique soit fiable. The doubt, not the verb itself, triggers the subjunctive.

Which mood follows "je pense que"?

The indicative: Je pense que le débat est nécessaire. In the negative or in a question the subjunctive is common: Je ne pense pas que ce soit suffisant.

What is the difference between à condition que and à condition de?

À condition que needs a new subject and the subjunctive. À condition de is followed by an infinitive when both clauses share one subject.

What does le principe de précaution mean?

It is the idea that a technology should not be launched while a serious risk remains unexcluded,

even without scientific proof of harm. French debates cite it constantly.

Is it rude to disagree with an examiner in the DELF?

No. Polite disagreement is expected: Je comprends votre point de vue, mais je ne suis pas convaincu que.... Concede first, then object.