

Proposals, conditions and compromise in French

French B2 (upper intermediate) · Lesson

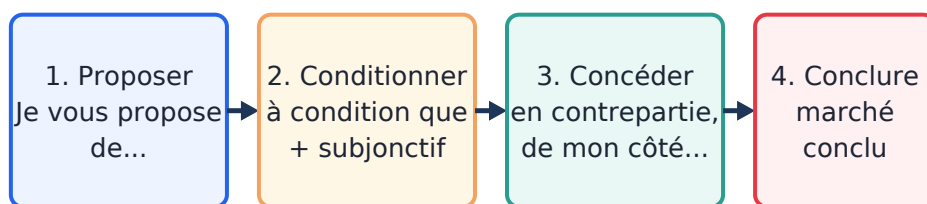
Quick answer: To negotiate in French, open with a soft proposal such as *Je vous propose de...* or *Que diriez-vous de...*, attach conditions with *à condition que* plus the subjunctive or *à condition de* plus an infinitive, and close with a compromise marked by *en contrepartie* or *marché conclu*.

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

How do you make a proposal in a negotiation in French?

A skilled negotiator rarely says "I want". Instead, a suggestion keeps the other side comfortable while the offer stays firm. Four frames cover most meetings.

Frame	Followed by	Example
Je vous propose de	infinitive	Je vous propose de décaler la livraison au 12 mars. — I suggest moving the delivery to March 12.
Que diriez-vous de	noun or infinitive	Que diriez-vous d'un acompte de 30 % ? — How about a 30% deposit?
Et si nous	imperfect	Et si nous partagions les frais de transport ? — What if we split the shipping costs?
On pourrait	infinitive	On pourrait se revoir jeudi. — We could meet again Thursday.



Chaque étape adoucit la demande avant la suivante

The four stages of a polite negotiation.

How do you attach a condition to an offer?

Conditions and their moods

- *à condition que* + subjunctive when the two subjects differ.
- *à condition de* + infinitive when the subject stays the same.

- si + present, then the future in the main clause.
- au cas où + conditional (a possible event to prepare for).
- à moins que + subjunctive, but sauf si + indicative (unless).

In a meeting

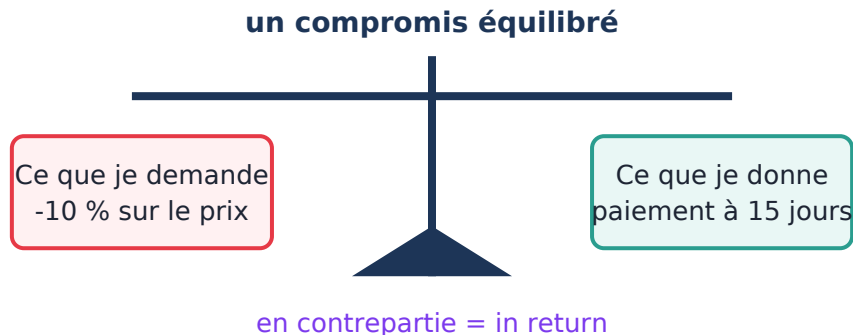
Nous acceptons votre prix à condition que vous livriez avant le 5 juin. — We accept your price provided that you deliver before June 5.

Je signe aujourd'hui à condition de recevoir la garantie par écrit. — I sign today as long as I receive the guarantee in writing.

Nous commanderons davantage si vous baissez le tarif. — We will order more if you lower the rate.

How do you reach a compromise?

Name the concession and what it buys: Nous baissions notre prix de 4 %, en contrepartie d'un paiement à trente jours. Useful phrases are faire un compromis, céder sur un point, se rencontrer à mi-chemin, de mon côté and, to seal the deal, marché conclu.



A compromise balances a request against a concession.

Common mistake

English "provided that you deliver" takes the plain present, but à condition que always triggers the subjunctive: à condition que vous **livriez**, never à condition que vous livrez. Also, compromettre means to jeopardize, not to compromise: use faire un compromis.

Culture note

In French business culture, partners often sign an accord de principe (agreement in principle) before the final contract, and the formal vous stays in place even when the talks become friendly.

Zoé's tip

When a sentence contains à condition que, pause and think "subjunctive": the ending -iez after vous saves most verbs, as in que vous livriez or que vous signiez.

Key points to remember

- À condition que takes the subjunctive; à condition de takes an infinitive.
- Au cas où is followed by the conditional.
- Sauf si takes the indicative, à moins que the subjunctive.
- Faire un compromis means to reach a middle ground.

Proposals, conditions and compromise in French: frequently asked questions

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

Both mean "provided that". À condition que introduces a new subject and takes the subjunctive, while à condition de is used when the subject does not change and takes an infinitive.

How do you politely refuse an offer in French?

Soften the refusal with the conditional or a regret: Je crains que ce ne soit pas possible. or Nous ne pouvons pas aller au-delà de ce montant. Then add a counter-proposal.

Which mood follows au cas où?

The conditional. Au cas où le fournisseur serait en retard, nous annulerions. It never takes the future or the subjunctive.

What does en contrepartie mean?

It means "in return" and links a concession to what it earns: Nous baissions le prix, en contrepartie d'une commande plus importante.

Is on pourrait polite enough for a business meeting?

Yes. On pourrait is a soft conditional proposal and fits meetings among colleagues. With a client, prefer Je vous propose de or Que diriez-vous de.