

Talking about likes with -er verbs

French 1 (high school) · Lesson

Quick answer: Regular -er verbs form the present by dropping -er and adding -e, -es, -e, -ons, -ez, -ent: je parle, nous parlons, ils parlent. Before a vowel or silent h, je becomes j'. After aimer, adorer or détester, keep a second verb in the infinitive: J'aime nager.

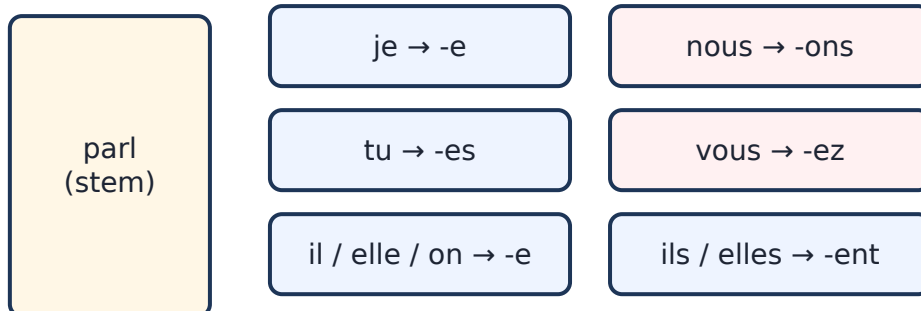
Level: French 1 (high school, ACTFL Novice) · **Standards:** ACTFL Novice Mid, WL 1.1 Interpersonal, WL 1.2 Interpretive, WL 1.3 Presentational

How do you conjugate a regular -er verb?

Rule: stem + ending

Most French verbs end in **-er**. Remove -er to find the stem, then add the ending that matches the subject: **-e, -es, -e, -ons, -ez, -ent**.

Subject	parler — to speak
je	parl e
tu	parl es
il / elle / on	parl e
nous	parl ons
vous	parl ez
ils / elles	parl ent



Same stem, six endings. The red boxes are the two endings you can hear.

The French present covers three English forms: Je chante means "I sing", "I am singing" and "I do sing".

When does je become j'?

Before a vowel sound or a silent h, je drops its e and joins the verb: j'aime, j'adore, j'écoute, j'habite. Other subjects do not change: je chante, je joue, je danse.

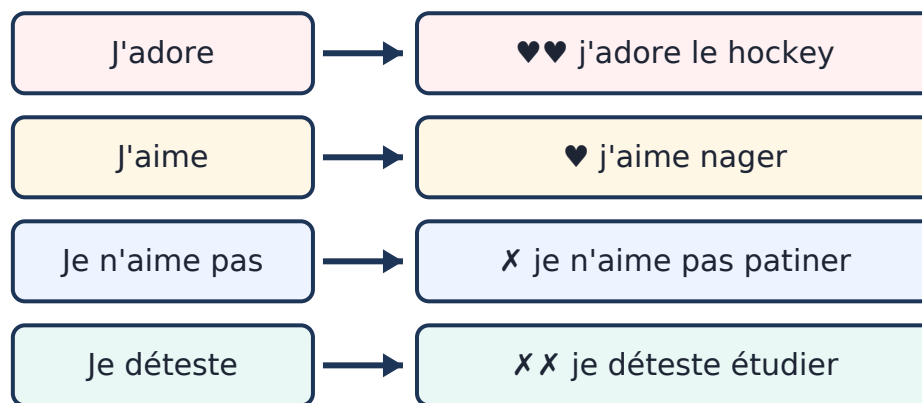
How do you say what you like and dislike?

Aimer, adorer, détester

These three verbs take a noun with its article (le, la, les) or an infinitive. Only the first verb is conjugated; the second one stays in the infinitive.

Examples

- J'adore le hockey. — I love hockey.
- Nous aimons chanter. — We like to sing.
- Elle déteste étudier le dimanche. — She hates studying on Sundays.
- Ils habitent à Liège et ils parlent français. — They live in Liège and speak French.



From love to hate: the verbs are followed by a noun or an infinitive.

With jouer, use à for sports and games and de for instruments: Je joue au basket. — I play basketball. Elle joue de la guitare. — She plays the guitar. More -er verbs to learn first: danser (to dance), nager (to swim), regarder (to watch), écouter (to listen), travailler (to work), étudier (to study).

Common mistakes

Do not conjugate both verbs: say J'aime nager, not J'aime nage. Do not add "to" or a helper word as English does: J'écoute la radio means "I listen to the radio". And remember the article after aimer: J'aime la musique (English says just "music").

Zoé's tip

Four of the six forms sound exactly alike: parle, parles, parle, parlent. Only nous parlons and vous parlez sound different. Write the silent endings carefully, because your ear will not help you.

Culture note

In Québec, hockey is a passion for many families, and many teenagers join a team: Tu joues au hockey ? is a common question.

Key points to remember

- Stem = infinitive minus -er; endings are -e, -es, -e, -ons, -ez, -ent.
- Je becomes j' before a vowel sound or silent h.
- After aimer, adorer, détester use an infinitive or a noun with an article.
- Jouer à goes with sports and games; jouer de with instruments.
- The present tense translates "I sing", "I am singing" and "I do sing".

Talking About Likes With -ER Verbs: frequently asked questions

What are the present-tense endings of -er verbs?

Add -e, -es, -e, -ons, -ez, -ent to the stem. For chanter, the stem is chant-: je chante, tu chantes, nous chantons.

When do I write j' instead of je?

Use j' before a vowel sound or a silent h: j'aime, j'écoute, j'habite. Before a consonant, keep je.

How do I say that I like to do something?

Conjugate aimer and keep the second verb in the infinitive: J'aime danser. The same pattern works with adorer and détester.

Does jouer take à or de?

Use à for sports and games (jouer au basket) and de for instruments (jouer de la guitare).

Which forms of -er verbs sound the same?

The forms for je, tu, il and ils sound identical. Only nous and vous are different, so check the written ending.