

Classes, timetables and favorite subjects

French 1 (high school) · Lesson

Quick answer: French school subjects take a definite article: le français, la musique, les maths. To give an opinion, use j'aime, je déteste or je préfère followed by the subject. A timetable (emploi du temps) lists classes by day and hour, written on a 24-hour clock.

Level: French 1 (high school, ACTFL Novice) · **Standards:** ACTFL Novice Mid, WL 1.1 Interpersonal, WL 1.2 Interpretive, WL 1.3 Presentational, WL 2.1 Cultural Practices

How do you name school subjects in French?

Definition

A school subject is a matière. Most subject names take a definite article: le (masculine), la (feminine), l' (before a vowel) or les (plural).

French	English
le français	French class
l'anglais	English
les maths	math
l'histoire-géo	history and geography
la physique-chimie	physics and chemistry
les SVT	biology and earth science
l'EPS	physical education
les arts plastiques	visual arts

	lundi	mardi	jeudi
8 h	maths	SVT	EPS
9 h	français	maths	physique-chimie
10 h 15	anglais	histoire-géo	maths
11 h 10	EPS	musique	espagnol

An emploi du temps for a week at the collège (three days shown).

How do you say what you like, hate or prefer?

Rule: opinion verbs keep the article

aimer, adorer, détester and préférer are followed by the subject *with* its article: J'adore la musique. — I love music.

préférer (to prefer)	
je préfère	nous préférons
tu préfères	vous préférez
il/elle/on préfère	ils/elles préfèrent

To compare two subjects, use préférer ... à ...: Je préfère l'histoire-géo à la physique-chimie. — I prefer history-geography to physics-chemistry. Remember à + le = au and à + les = aux: Il préfère le sport aux maths.

Examples

- Awa adore les SVT, mais elle déteste le lundi matin. — Awa loves biology, but she hates Monday mornings.
- Nous préférons l'espagnol à l'allemand. — We prefer Spanish to German.

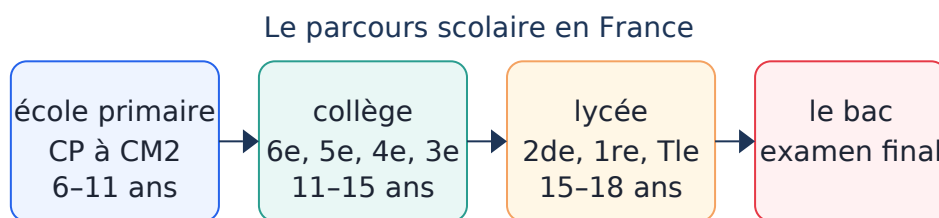
How do you read a French timetable?

A timetable is an emploi du temps. A day alone means one particular day, and le + day means every week: Le mardi, j'ai cours de musique. — On Tuesdays, I have music class. Times use h: de 8 h à 8 h 55, à 13 h 30.

Common mistake

English drops the article ("I like math"), but French needs it: J'aime les maths. Never say J'aime maths. Also, nous préférez is wrong: the ending must match, nous préférons.

How does a French school path compare with a US one?



The numbers count down in the collège: sixth grade is la sixième, ninth is la troisième.

Culture note

In France, students pick up school around 8 a.m. and often eat in a school canteen (la cantine) with a long lunch break. The lycée ends with the baccalauréat, a national exam.

Zoé's tip

Say the subject with its article out loud five times: les maths, la musique, l'anglais. The article becomes part of the word, like a little hat.

Key points to remember

- Subjects keep their article after opinion verbs: J'aime les maths.
- Préférer changes é to è in je, tu, il and ils forms only.
- Compare with préférer ... à ...; à + le = au, à + les = aux.
- Write times as 8 h or 10 h 15; a class lasts about 55 minutes.
- French middle school is the collège; high school is the lycée.

Classes, Timetables and Favorite Subjects: frequently asked questions

How do you say "I like math" in French?

Say J'aime les maths. French needs the article les after verbs of opinion, even when English leaves it out.

Why does the accent change in préférer?

The stem vowel is written é in the infinitive and in nous and vous. Before silent endings (je, tu, il, ils) it becomes è, as in je préfère.

How do you say "I prefer A to B"?

Use préférer A à B: Je préfère le sport à la musique. Contract the preposition when needed: au for à le and aux for à les.

What does EPS stand for?

EPS is éducation physique et sportive, which means physical education. It is feminine, so students say l'EPS.

What are the main stages of French secondary school?

The collège covers sixième to troisième (ages 11 to 15). The lycée covers seconde, première and terminale and leads to the baccalauréat.