

Building -ment adverbs and placing them

French 2 (high school) · Lesson

Quick answer: Most French adverbs of manner end in -ment, the equivalent of English -ly. Add -ment to the feminine adjective (lente, lentement) or to a masculine adjective ending in a vowel (vrai, vraiment). Adjectives in -ant and -ent give -amment and -emment. Short adverbs go between auxiliary and participle.

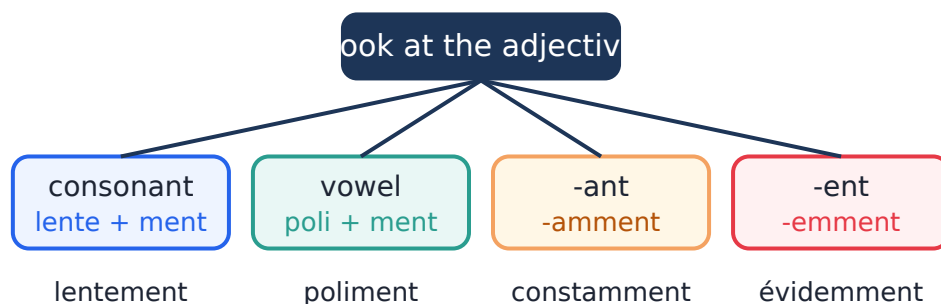
Level: French 2 (high school, ACTFL Novice High) · **Standards:** ACTFL Novice High, WL 1.1 Interpersonal, WL 1.2 Interpretive, WL 1.3 Presentational

What is an adverb, and how do you build one with -ment?

Definition

An adverb tells how, when or how much. It modifies a verb, an adjective or another adverb and *never changes* its form. Many French adverbs of manner end in -ment, like English "-ly".

Adjective ends in	Rule	Example
a consonant	feminine + -ment	doux, douce → doucement
a consonant	feminine + -ment	heureux, heureuse → heureusement
-é, -i, -u	masculine + -ment	poli → poliment, absolu → absolument
-e	same word + -ment	rapide → rapidement
-ant	-amment	constant → constamment
-ent	-emment	évident → évidemment



-amment and -emment sound the same

Four paths to a -ment adverb.

Examples

- Khadija parle **doucement** à son petit frère. — Khadija talks softly to her little brother.
- Il répond **patiemment** à toutes les questions. — He answers all the questions patiently.
- **Malheureusement**, le match est annulé. — Unfortunately, the game is canceled.

Which adverbs are irregular?

Some common adverbs do not end in -ment: bien (good, well), mal (badly), mieux (better), peu (little), vite (fast), beaucoup, trop, assez, souvent, déjà. A few -ment adverbs take an accent: énormément, précisément; and gentil gives gentiment.

Where does the adverb go?

Rule: placement

With a simple tense, put the adverb right after the verb. In the passé composé, short common adverbs sit between the auxiliary and the participle; longer -ment adverbs usually follow the participle.



Two slots for an adverb in the passé composé.

Examples

- Nous mangeons **souvent** à la cantine. — We often eat at the cafeteria.
- Théo a **déjà** fini son devoir. — Théo has already finished his homework.
- Inès a répondu **poliment**. — Inès answered politely.

Can an adverb also describe an adjective?

Yes. Adverbs of degree such as très, trop, assez and vraiment stand just before the adjective or the adverb they modify: Ce sac est vraiment lourd. — This bag is really heavy. Il parle très vite. — He talks very fast. With a negation, the adverb stays inside the pair: Je n'ai pas bien dormi. — I didn't sleep well. Elle n'a jamais trop mangé. — She has never eaten too much.

Common mistake

Do not use an adjective after a verb: Il parle rapide is wrong; say Il parle rapidement. And heureusement means "fortunately", not "happily".

Zoé's tip

For -ment, think "feminine first": make the feminine, then add -ment. For -ant and -ent, swap the ending for -amm or -emm and add -ent.

Key points to remember

- Feminine adjective + -ment: doux, douce, doucement.
- Masculine ending in a vowel + -ment: poli, poliment.
- -ant becomes -amment and -ent becomes -emment, both pronounced alike.
- Irregular adverbs: bon gives bien, mauvais gives mal, meilleur gives mieux.
- In the passé composé, short adverbs go before the participle: j'ai bien dormi.

Building -ment Adverbs and Placing Them: frequently asked questions

How do you form an adverb in French?

Add -ment to the feminine form of the adjective: lent, lente, lentement. If the masculine ends in a vowel, add -ment directly: vrai, vraiment. Adjectives in -ant and -ent give -amment and -emment.

Is it constamment or constammentement?

It is constamment. Adjectives ending in -ant change to -amment, so constant gives constamment and brillant gives brillamment. Adjectives in -ent change to -emment, so évident gives évidemment.

Where does the adverb go in the passé composé?

Short, common adverbs such as bien, déjà, trop and souvent go between the auxiliary and the participle: j'ai bien dormi. Longer -ment adverbs usually follow the participle: elle a répondu poliment.

What are the adverbs of bon and mauvais?

The adverb of bon is bien and the adverb of mauvais is mal. Use them after verbs: elle chante bien, il joue mal. Do not say il chante bon or il joue mauvais.

Do French adverbs agree with the noun?

No. An adverb never changes for gender or number. You say elle parle lentement and ils parlent

lentement, with the same form.