

Pointing out which one with celui

French 3 (high school) · Lesson

Quick answer: The demonstrative pronouns celui, celle, ceux, celles mean “the one(s)” and agree with the noun they replace. They never stand alone: add -ci or -là (this one, that one), a phrase with de, or a clause with qui or que: celle de Lina, ceux qui jouent.

Level: French 3 (high school, ACTFL Intermediate Low) · **Standards:** ACTFL Intermediate Low, WL 1.1 Interpersonal, WL 1.2 Interpretive, WL 1.3 Presentational

What do celui, celle, ceux and celles mean?

Definition

A demonstrative pronoun replaces a noun that has already been mentioned and points to it: “the one”, “the ones”. It takes the gender and number of that noun and cannot be used alone.



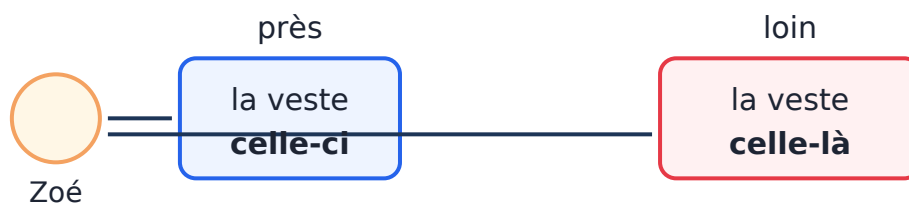
The pronoun matches the noun it replaces.

Three ways to complete the pronoun

- + de + noun — possession: Mon vélo est vieux, celui de Karim est neuf. — Mine is old, Karim's is new.
- + -ci / -là — pointing: Je prends celle-ci. — I'll take this one.
- + qui / que — a clause: Ceux qui jouent s'entraînent le mardi. — Those who play train on Tuesdays.

When do I use -ci and -là?

Use -ci for what is close to you and -là for what is farther away. Shoppers in a boutique often compare: Celle-ci est jolie, mais celle-là est moins chère. — This one is pretty, but that one is cheaper.



-ci is near, -là is far.

How do qui, que and de work?

Pattern	Example	Meaning
celui de ...	Ma chambre et celle de Nadia.	My room and Nadia's.
celui qui + verb	Celle qui chante s'appelle Fatou.	The one who sings is called Fatou.
celui que + subject	Ceux que j'ai invités sont arrivés.	The ones I invited have arrived.
-ci / -là	Celles-ci sont neuves, celles-là sont vieilles.	These are new, those are old.

With que, the past participle agrees with the pronoun when it comes first: Les photos que j'ai prises sont floues, mais celles que Lina a prises sont superbes.

Common mistake

English says "the red one", so learners write celle rouge. This is wrong. French uses la rouge, or celle qui est rouge. Also, English adds 's (Léa's), but French needs celui de Léa, never celui à Léa in careful French.

At the bakery

In a French boulangerie, customers often point and say Celui-ci, s'il vous plaît. It is polite and perfectly normal.

One scene, four pronouns

Au marché de Fort-de-France, Awa choisit ses fruits : celles-ci sont mûres, ceux de gauche sont verts, celui que le vendeur conseille est énorme et celle qui sent bon vient de Tahiti. — Notice how each pronoun agrees with a different fruit.

Zoé's tip

When you hear "the one", ask yourself two questions: which noun is it, and what completes it? Gender and number choose the pronoun; de, -ci/-là, qui or que finishes the job.

Key points to remember

- Four forms: celui (masculine singular), celle (feminine singular), ceux (masculine plural), celles (feminine plural).
- A bare celui is incomplete: it needs -ci/-là, de + noun, or qui/que + clause.
- -ci points to what is near (this one); -là points to what is far (that one).
- Celui qui is the subject (the one who); celui que is the object (the one that).

Pointing Out Which One With Celui: frequently asked questions**What is the difference between celui and celle?**

Celui replaces a masculine singular noun and celle a feminine singular noun. The plurals are ceux (masculine) and celles (feminine). Example: Mon sac est lourd, celui de Tom est léger.

Why can I not say celui alone?

Celui, celle, ceux and celles are incomplete pronouns. They need -ci or -là, a phrase with de, or a clause with qui or que to say which one is meant.

When do I use celui-ci and celui-là?

Celui-ci means “this one” and refers to something near. Celui-là means “that one” and refers to something far. You can contrast them: Celui-ci est neuf, celui-là est vieux.

What is the difference between celui qui and celui que?

Celui qui is followed by a verb because qui is the subject: celui qui gagne. Celui que is followed by a subject because que is the object: celui que tu aimes.

How do I say “the red one” in French?

Use the definite article plus the adjective: la rouge, le bleu. Do not put the adjective directly after celle or celui.