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French alphabet pronunciation guide

Most French pronunciation guides are really just about the rules of pronunciation for the language. They tend not to teach you to hear and pronounce the sounds you say. Here at the Mimic Method, our mission is to help reduce the trans-cultural gap between people and inspire real human connection. If you're the kind of person who wants to make real long-term relationships in another language, this is the place for you. We do this by teaching the unique method of pronunciation by mimicry. By the end of this pronunciation guide, you should be familiar with most of the sounds associated with the different combinations of the French alphabet. You'll even discover a few tricks to overcome things would be feared throaty R sounds. Although there are many rules and spellings, French is quite a regular language. However, often the letters and combinations of letters will sound different from how they are written. Fortunately, except for a few words here and there, almost all French words will follow certain patterns and rules. Read on to learn more. French alphabet vs. Sounds There are 26 letters written in the modern French alphabet. But there are at least 38 phonetic sounds in modern French discourse. Although English and French have almost identical alphabets, the same characters do not always represent the same sound in both languages. The challenge will be to reconnect the brain so you can produce sounds for letters that sound different from what you are used to. The reason there are more sounds than letters is that these sounds are used for the same combination of letters – or syllables – when written in different places in words. It's really a matter of hearing these patterns and incorporating them into your own speech. The other reason has to do with regional dialects, which introduce new sounds into spoken speech. For example, there is the Quebecian vs. Parisian French accent. And this pattern continues for other words written similarly in dialect. French Alphabet Chart Alphabet Name of LetterIn Words Aamais, dance Bbebien, bon Csectte, comment Ddinit, deux Euhles, te Feffaire, fout Gjaygens, grande Hashhomme, chez Iesi, ils Jgeejuste, always K*kakilo, kiosque Lella, aller Mmmoi, mon None, nous Oonon, pour Ppayplus, par Qkyquand, quoi Rairêtre, rien Sses, sont Tetout, te Uylui, veux Vvayavez, vai W*double vaywasp, won Xeksmieux, peuxYekpays cro , yzeyais Zzedvoulez , assez * These letters appear only in foreign words. Note that the list of letters in the chart above is not indicative of all the sounds that go with them. So said earlier, most guides just teach you things would be the alphabet and miss off the nuances of sounds that really give you better pronunciation. This traditional approach is a learns approach with the eyes. At the Mimic Method, we like to use learn by ear of language learning. But to make things easier for you, for the rest of this guide we will talk about the French alphabet as well as the sounds behind the models of the alphabet starting with the most important group - vocal sounds. Pronunciation of the French alphabet French Vocal Letters What is a vowel? Voices are created by the complete opening of the vocal tract and allowing the air to flow unobstructed. What determines the sound of a vowel is the position of the tongue in the mouth. To help in this process, you will first develop a physical awareness of the location of the tongue in your mouth. The chart here is a voice chart. A voice chart represents the location of a vocal sound in the mouth. The three vocal sounds on this page are the extremes of Voice Height and Backness. In other words, the other vocal sounds for a particular language will appear at some point between these three extremes. You will rely mostly on your ear to do this. But it can help you a lot starting with the nearest English vowel and going in the right direction from there. Make that speaker in the audio file and alternately back and forth out loud for you: EE! -> UUUU! -> AAA! -> UUUU! -> EE! -> UUUU! Etc. Look at the chart and try to create a mental connection between the visual directions on the chart and the movement of the tongue in the mouth. There are two unique features that make the vowel sound distinctly in French. Language positions are more extreme Voices sound clearer, shorter in length Compared to other Latin languages, such as Spanish or Italian, French has a rich menu of vocal sounds. In French, there are actually more combinations of vocal letters than there are sounds - different combinations of letters and placement in a world will cause a unique sound. Since we all speak our native languages without thinking about the movements in our mouth, you probably can't feel what direction your tongue moves when you speak. Therefore, the first step is to develop awareness and control over the movement of the language. Let's start by examining the French vowels in more detail. French oral vowels have two types of vocal sounds; Oral and nasal. For now, we'll start with the oral vowels. A Sounds – chat, moi, là, pate This sound is similar to A-sound we would use in English words, would be cat, bed, that. There is also a Parisian version of this, which is between this sound and the back of the mouth (think somewhere between the words hut and shock). This sound is always written with one or more. Note: The serious accent (à) does not change the pronunciation. There's a secondary A-sound we'd make in pot American words, caught, poppa. An example in French is the word pate. These A sounds are towards the bottom-back of our mouth. To do this, our language must come lower and further than in English. It is common for people to have a tendency to close this vowel (after in the next section). So be sure to always exaggerate its opening by lowering the jaw as much possible when saying this sound. Try to exaggerate even lower jaw as much as possible when creating voice sounds A. E Sounds - les, passé, tuer, grande These sounds are lighter (lower tongue in mouth) than vocal sound in English words hey, bay, say, sets. Usually, the vowel E in the words hey, bay, say, put sliding up next to the vowel I. This does not happen in French (after explaining in the next section). The second e sound is the same sound as in the American fair, Mary, pears, dare and French words père, mère. / ai / diphthong in French usually has this sound as well. The third E sound is the vocal sound in the American duck, puck, putt, good luck. French examples include brebis, gredin. There is another example of E sound, which is silent because it tends to disappear at the end of words or inside words. Usually it is heard when dropping would make words difficult to pronounce. Instead, the previous consonant is pronounced (for example, grande is gran-duh). Imitating my E pronunciation, so you can feel the difference. Remember to keep your vowels short and clear. I Sounds – il, qui, and This sound has exactly the same position of the tongue as the sound of the vowel in the English words see, knee, he, her. It is usually shorter in length than in English. Remember to keep the vowel I short and clear. It helps to smile widewhen creating this vowel I. O Sounds – eau, word The primary sound O is lighter (lower tongue in the mouth) than vocal sound in English words no, so go, toe. When this sound appears in English, it slides towards the U vowel forming a diphthong. This does not happen in French. The English version is also rounded, which means it will loop your lips at the end of the sound. Rounding does not take place in French. The secondary sound O appears in English words, would be dog, walking, small. Remember to keep your vowels a short and relax your lips (don't round them too much). U Sounds – dew, feu, choeur Vocala U has exactly the same position of the tongue as the sound of the vowel in the English words that, shoe, two, Sue. When native speakers make this sound, it is shorter in length than in English. This sound is usually rounded in English, which means it will loop your lips at the end of the sound. Rounding DOES NOT take place in French. /∅/ is a more rounded version of the U sound and close to the uh sound heard in American fur. Try pronouncing this and then dropping r (it can help to mimic a Boston accent). Words French would be feu, nerve. /œ/ is similar to the American sound euh in the front, furl. You can learn this sound by starting to pronounce furl, but not adding the rl part. You'll need to hear some real French pronunciation to adjust the sound however. Typical French words would be penur, pen, lure, /y/ is a rounded version of vowel I in French. To do this, try to say ee and then keep that sound while rounding your lips. Remember to keep these sounds short and clear and keep your lips relaxed to avoid vocal rounding (unless it says / y / , / ∅ / , / /) Note: Vocala u is silent in cases of Q (qu). So to review, here are five primary vowel characters of French: nasal vocal vowels in French pronunciation generally sound unnatural for English speakers because sounds do not naturally appear in any English words. The closest I come is when we say isn't it? These French sounds appear in an incredible variety of spellings, so it is important to become aware of them. You can find out where to make nasal vowels based on an oral pair. This means that the sound pair is in exactly the same place, but the difference is that you nasalize it. If you make the oral vowel /s/ (dog, caught) and lower the velum to allow a certain air to pass through the nasal passage without changing anything else in the speech organ, you will get the nasal counterpart - / / / . In the audio files below, I show this by alternating between the nasal vowels and their oral counterparts. Listen and try to adjust your ear to the difference. You can try to imitate the sounds yourself, but don't worry if you can't get them perfectly. The key to the nasal vocal joint is relaxation. The challenge will be alternating between the oral and nasal vowels with speed, precision and ease. Once again, not to get frustrated if these French sound vs. English pronunciation differences are not 100% obvious to you yet. Motor and perceptional skills take the time and practice to develop. Like everything else in this primer, you should return to this page as often as you gain more practical experience with French pronunciation and sounds. French Nasal Sounds Chart SpellingPronunciationExamples man, onpronounce as ong in song'nom, non um, unpronunciation as ung in 'sung'un, brown am, an, em, enpronounce ca 'ahng'champ, an, temps, en im, in, purpose, ain, einpronounce like ang in 'sang'simple, wine, fame, bain, plein ienpronounce like 'ee-ang'bien Common French Pronunciation Errors As an English speaker you developed hearing and speaking patterns that clash with the French sound system. Fortunately, these trends are predictable and fixable once you become aware of them. With vowels, these five trends will account for 80% of so it is important to review them in advance. By understanding the things you're inclined to do wrong, you can begin to understand these differences. Below, I classify and explain all major English voice trends mispronunciation. Wrong. Vocal in English, diphthongizing is a fanciful word meaning we add an additional vowel at the end of the words as we close our mouths. For O we will slip close to U as in the good word! (He-lo->u). For E we'll slip close to me like in the word Hey! (He->i). This does not happen in French. These sounds are short and sweet, with no additional vowels added at the end. Audio below demonstrates. Round Voices When English speakers say vowel U or O, they tend to bend their lips in at the end that alters the sound. In French, there is rounding, so your lips should not curve like this. To avoid this, you'll want to keep these vowels short and clear. Imitate audio and try to build an awareness of this lip movement. R-Colored Voices you will review later in this post, there is a French sound consonant known as the Uvular Consonant. In French writing, this sound is represented by the letter r. Very often in French, this sound appears at the end of a syllable, after the vowel (for example, AR, IR, UR, ER, and OR). This is called R-colored vowels, and does not exist in French. R-colored greatly alters the sound of a vowel. The main reason an English speaker would pronounce this way in the first place is because it starts with a visual concept of spelling. As a French student, you may have a strong tendency as an English speaker to replace French Uvular Consonant with English/sound. Even more importantly, it is also one of the most common sounds of consonant speech in the language. For now, just listen to the difference between a vowel that is followed by a fearsome uvular and a vowel that is r-colored. Replacing the nasal vowels w/nasal consonants To review, create the nasal vowels so that the air passes through both mouth and nose. The resonance of air in the nasal cavity is what makes the unique acoustic quality that we perceive as nasal sound. We also have nasal consonants, which you create by completely blocking the oral passage with the tongue or lips, so that the air passes only through the nose. For example, you make the sound of consonant /m/ when you close your lips completely and let the air escape through your nose. Similarly, you do /n/ consonant when you put your tongue on the back of your gums and let the air escape only through your nose. In English, we do not often produce French nasal vowels, but we produce nasal consonants such as /m/ and /n/ quite often. As a result, when we hear nasalization in general, we tend to perceive it as either a n or a sound m. So tend to create a /n / or / m / sound when trying to mimic the nasal vowels. Always remember - the tongue and lips should be completely relaxed when making a French nasal vowel, and and mouth must always be open. You will tend to replace a nasal vowel with a combination of oral vowel + nasal consonant (for example, you will turn n into n. The piece below demonstrates the difference. After I said, these five trends will represent 80% of the pronunciation errors. Develop an awareness of them now and you can drop them from speech patterns quickly. Be sure to return this page regularly to improve your pronunciation. English in French Pronunciation Chart English PhonemeExamplesFrench PhonemeDistinctionExamples [i]me, see[i]oraroil, epi, lyre [e]hey, says, lay[e]alalblé, aller, chez, et, j'ai, tes [?] well, get, yes[?] orallait, merci, fête, Noël, forêts [?] the, it was, about[]oral [a]guy, eyes, reach[a]oralami, patti [a]hot, on, do you want[?] oralpas, pate, trois [s]all, sorry, talk[s]oralfort, donner, sol [o]go, don't, those[o]oralmot, dôme, eau, saule [uw]you, do, who[u]oralgenou, roue [y]roundit [i] [ø]rounded [e]peu, deux, creuse [œ]rotuned [?] peur, meuble, ceuile [?] nasal [and]brin, plein, bain [õ]nasal [o]ton, ombre, bonté [~]nasal [?] sans, vent, man French Consonant Letters What is a consonant? Unlike vocal sounds, you create consonant sounds by blocking the air from coming out of your mouth. French spelling is very unique in that it uses a lot of consonant letters where there are actually no consonant sounds. French silent letters In the French pronunciation (not in writing), the final consonants are usually silent. As in English, in plural most French words add an S, but the last S in a word does not pronounce. (e.g. enfant and its plural form enfants sound the same). Review the list of consonants below to find out what sounds are actually silent in spoken French. In this section, we will review some important differences between the English and French consonants. LetterConsonantSoundFrench WordsIPA bb or bb at the beginning or middle of words[b]beau, abbesse[bo], [a.b.s]] end of wordsforilentplom[plõ] followed by sor or t[p]absolute[ap.s.ly] cc before, i or y[s]ciel[sjs] cc before a frontal vowel (-e, -i, or -y)[ks]accent[ak.s~] -c or -cc before a rear vowel (-a, -o, -u) or a counter. [k]encore[t.k-k-k-]final[k]park[park] final after -nsilentblanc[bl] -ct final[kt], silentdirect, respect[di.r-kt], [r-sp]-ç with çédille[s]garçon[gar.sõ] -ch[?] blanche[bl~.?] -ch in words of Greek origin[k]Christ[krist] -cqu[k]acquisition[a.ki.zi.sjõ] d-dor -dd initial or medial[d]doux, plus[du], [a.di.sjõ] finalsilentpied[pje] in connection[t]grand , arbre[gr~.tar.br]f or -ff initial or -ff effort[t.f~], the final [f]comparat[kõ.pa.ra.tif] in connection[v]neuf, heures[nœ. vœ.re] g-g before a frontal vowel (-e, -i, or -gg before a frontal vowel (-e, -i, or -y)[g]suggestion[syg.s.tjõ] -g or -gg before a rear vowel (-o, -u) or a cons.[g]serious[gra.v]cons.[g]serious[gra.v] related[k]sang, et, eau[s~~. ke o] -ge before a rear vowel (-a, -o, -u) or a consonant[pi.sõ] -guh before a frontal vowel (-e, -i, or -y)[g]gigue[i.g]-gn[-]compagnon [kõ.pa.-õõ] -gtsilentdoigt[dwa] hInitial -h is classified as mute and aspirated - both are always silent, but ,h initial mute allows the link or elisionsilentdouze_heure[du. zœ.r] -h aspirated initial allows no bindingsilenttres *hideeuse[i.dœ.z] -h medialsilentsohaiter[su.? you] j-j[?] garden[?] d'] kfound in words of foreign origin only[k]kilo[ki.lo] final[k]kodak[k].dak] l or -ll initial or medial[l]large, ballet[lar.?] final[l]ideal[i.de.al] -il, -ill, and -ille (but not final -ile)[j]soleil, papillons j, famille[s.l]J] In these words and their derivatives[l]mille, tranquile, ville[mi.la], [tr~.ki.la], [vi.la] m-m or -mm initial or medial[m]mardi , flamme[mar.di], [fla.m]after a nasal vowelsilentparfum[par.fœ~] in connection with nom_à tirors[nõ. ma ti.rwar] n-n or -nn initial or medial[n]n]n]nige, année[n]s] after a nasal vowelsilentensemble[a~.s~.bl] in connection with the en_aimant[n.n.m.] p-p or -pp initial or medial[p]captive,[kap.ti.va], [sy.p]final trop_en[tro], [tro. p~~] -mptsilentcompter[kõ.te] -ph[f]philosophe[fi.1.0.0.f -) q-qu initial or medial[k]liquor[li.kœr] final[k]cinq[s~k] in liaisoncinq_enfants[s~. makes use uvulary, which is suitable for dialogue and cabaret songs. -r or -rr initial,[r]rapid[rara.pi.da] -r or -rr medial or final[r]garage, terrible, hiver[ga.ra.?], [t.ri.bl], [i.vrs] -er, -ier, or -yer final in some nouns and adjectivessilentfoyer (noun)[fwa.je] -er in the form of the infinitive verb[e]par.le] s and -ss initial or medial[s]s]sance, Debus[se.? ~ .sa], [da.by.si] -s medial between vowels[z]maison[m-.zõ] -s finalsilenttojours[tu.jour] -s final in exceptions[s]hélas , lis, fils[e.las], [lis], [fis] in connection[z]mes_yeux[m.zjØ] -sc before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)[s]descender[d.].da.la] -sc before a back vowel (-a, -o, -u) or a consonant[sk]scandal[sk~.da.la] -sc initial or medial(?] initial or medial-tt[m.ma] t-t or -tt, glotte[t.tal], [gl-t] -t finalsilenttuot[t] -t in connection[t]tout_un[t] tœ~] -th[t]Thomas[t.ma] -t in the endings -tion and -tience[sj]attention[a.t~.sjõ] -knows when you finally.?] sorte[sr.ti.a] v-v initial or medial[v]souvenir[su.va.nir] w-w found in words of foreign origin[v]Wagon[va.gõ] xbefore consonants[ks]text[tsk.sta] before vocal or -h[gj]gurople[d.z~.pla] in initial or medial numbers[Ø deux_enfants z]z]zèle, twelve[z-l], the final silentchez[a] final as an exception[z]Berlioz[b-s.l]z] Consonant list B (bé) – beurre , bon, brebis As in English word bear. It is essentially the same as French B in beurre, bon, brebis. Note that in French words like bombs, both b are pronounced because of the vowel E afterwards. C (cé) - leçon, what, bis There is a soft C that sounds like S in the palace of the English word. In French, this soft C appears before I, E or Y. Anywhere else, it will have a loud sound like K. Note that the ç symbol is always pronounced as S in garçon, leçon, façon. D (dé) – drap, dehors, du D is very close to American D in the dog, but the tongue pushes a little harder against the teeth (using the tongue blade) when D is used in French. F (effe) – forêt, feu, falle F is identical to English F in father. G (gé) – gare, guerre, gourou, digue There are a few different sounds behind G's spelling in French. American G usually has two sounds like in the garage. The second sound does not normally appear in French. For foreign words with this sound, they use DJs to fake sound (jinn = genie). In short, [] (vision] before I, E or Y, but [g] elsewhere. H (pain) – hein, ho, hui In general, H is silent in French. J (ji) – geai, garant, juge, never J is the sound of ZH in English pleasure, vision. French has two spellings for this sound. Simpler is the use of J as in Jean-Jacques. Messier one is with G. Whenever G is followed by an E, use this sound. K (ka) – pique, horse, cou K is the same as the K sound in English khaki, lak. Like English, French has several spellings for the sound of K. The rules are the same as in English: C before A, O, U is pronounced K. Very few French words use the letter K because they are from foreign words. L (elle) – prom, foil, ville L is similar to English L in the lake, link. But the language is a little further in French (they don't swallow it as much as we do). English actually has two L sounds: Dark L and True L. In French, there is only True L. A common trend for English speakers is to use both as if they were speaking English. The difference is very subtle, but this nuance is definitely useful in sounding more like a native speaker. A few tips for this consonant: Exaggerate by having the jaw as low as possible Give more love to the consonant, live on L sound M (emme) - mère, môme, mener, nom M is pronounced just like from the English word mother. French always spells this sound with M, although nasalised Ms have a different sound. M is silent at the end of words, and the preceding vowels are nasalized. N (enne) - neuf, parking, agneau, besoin N is like the new English words, another. Double up N is always pronounced this way (not nasalised). Single N following a consonant is usually nasalized. NG is like English ing in smoking, parking. This is not a normal sound in French and appears only in borrowed words would be smoking, parking. GN is not a common sound in English. It's the NYA's sound in the word onion. It's always GN written. N is silenced at the ends of words, and precedents are nasalized. P (pé) – point, père, papier P is similar to American P in spit, sputter, but different from American P in pit or putter. Americans put a puff of air (aspirated) with their Ps when they start a word. French Do that. The difference is not critical for French (although it is for some other languages). Q (qu) – quel, question, caque Q is pronounced as K in the crown of English words, karma, fast. Q usually reduces the U vowel if it follows after: thus, the French word question (ke-styon) will differ from the English (kwe-stion). R (erre) – refrigérateur, boire, pair French R sounds are very unique and do not exist in English. The pronunciation varies from place to place, even in France. In the south it is trilled more like a Spanish R sound, but in the north/Paris it is produced with tongue against the soft palate. This is such an important sound, I dedicated a special part of this guide if you scroll down below. At the end of the words, R is silent, unless the next word begins with a vowel. S (esse) – çe, cela, cinéma, cache, peasson In French this is always the sound when a cedilla (ç) is used in spelling. It is also sound when either E or I follow a C. It is also used for an S beginning of a word or when S is doubled (fosse, peasson). When S is followed by an H is like the American sound in the show, fish, you must. Although this sound is always written with CH in French, sometimes CH spelling is pronounced as a K sound. Such words are usually of Greek origin (psychiatre, archangel), but you really just have to learn the correct pronunciation. At the end of the words, S is silent, unless the next word begins with a vowel. T (te) – ta, trope, just For this t sound, the French push the tongue harder against the teeth (using the tongue blade) when pronouncing this consonant. Practice with the word trente. Don't swallow the last T, make it very clear. At the end of the words, T is silent, unless the next word begins with a vowel. V (ve) – avez, votre, avant V is no different from English V. W (double ve) – voir, quoi, toi, oui, hout W is pronounced as in American water, willow. After being mentioned above, foreign words with W are usually pronounced so I do, but the sound is usually written in French with OU followed by a vowel or OI preceded by a consonant. There is a similar sound denoted to the [u] symbol and is not found in English. You could start with the word wheat and try to round your lips for oo sound while saying the wheat part ee. This will take you close to the French heuit. X (ixe) – two, veux, penux At the end of words, X is silent, unless the next word begins with a vowel. Y (i greek) - yeux, yaourt, file, famille This is the sound of Y in American yellow. In French, this is usually found as Y plus a vowel. Sometimes it is written LL. Y is mainly used in loanwords, but also in the names of places. Z (zède) – poses, zoo, vous êtes French uses Z for spelling, but S can also take this Z sound if surrounded by vowels. At the end of the words, Z is silent, unless the next word begins with a vowel. English PhonemeExamplesFrench PhonemeExamples [b]bat, book[b]bon, robe [d]dance, doll[d] (blade)dance, help [d͡ʒ]judge, jam jam photo[f]feu, neuf, photo [g]gap, green[g]gar, bague, gui [k]class, tapt[k]cou, qui, bag, képi [ks]explain, axe[ks] [all]all, tile, cool [l]link, lat[l]lent, soil [m]mom, map[m]mot, flamme [n]no, tonal[n] (blade)nous, ton, animal [-]onion,agneau, vigne [ng]parking, going[p]pat, peel[p]père, soup[-]rue, income, grand [-]porte, part, parle [?] frère, trick, contre [0]red, armor [s]sell, school[s] (blade)sale, cel, ça, desous []should, cash[?] chat, tacheschema [s]garage, vision[s]je, gilet, geôle [t]toy, tap[t] (blade)terre, cattle [v]voila, arrive[v]vous, rêve [u]huile, his [w]wow, wing[w]oui , fouet, joua, joie [j]yellow, yarn[j]yet, paille, pied [z]zero, rose, his[z] (blade)zéro, maison, rose Rhotic Consonsss The most difficult movements to master are the Rhotic (French R) consonants. This sound does exist in some Dialects of English, but with limited use. As a French student, you might have a strong tendency as an English speaker to replace the French/0/sound. Even more importantly, they are also one of the most common speech sounds in the language. After seeing in the voice section, English speakers already tend to R-Color between vocal sounds as well. Doing this wrong is probably the biggest giveaway if you have a bad accent. Acoustically, the sound in English is completely different from r/0/. However, this is still the most common error of pronunciation that English speakers make. Persist in saying English r in French, and you will not achieve French fluency. To make French R Sounds Like a French student, you may have a strong tendency as an English speaker to replace the French uvulary consonants with English //sound. These uvulary sounds are not only nonexistent in English, they are also the most common sound of speech in the language. With French pronunciation, doing so is probably the biggest giveaway if you have a bad accent. Acoustically, the English sound is completely different from the French uvulary consonants. However, this is still the most common error of pronunciation that English speakers make. Awareness The first step to mastering a new motor movement is to develop a physical awareness of it. The two things you want to focus on are the location and movement of your mouth. Uvula is thingy dangly at the back of the mouth (no need to get technical here). You were probably fascinated by her as a child, and asked if she served any purpose other than to shake whenever the adults snored. You articulated French r sounds at Uvula. You make these sounds by lifting the back-most of the tongue up to the uvula to restrict the flow of air. Even if the sound is called uvulary, your tongue is actually the only active agent. Your real goal in achieving The French pronunciation is to build a back-up awareness-most of the language and learn to adapt it so that it comes into contact with the uvula. In the audio file below I have the two velar sounds in English – /k/ and /g/. To create these sounds, first lift the back of the tongue up to the velum and lock the air to accumulate pressure. Then lower your tongue and release the pressure in an air explosion. The difference between /k/ and /g/ is that for one you also vibrate the vocal cords. Now that you have a basic idea of where the uvulary lives, you just have to spend some time fooling around until you can point into your own speech. In the audio files below, We articulate all three uvulary sounds relevant to the French language. Listen carefully and try your best to imitate. Don't worry about getting the sound for now. While feeling these sounds out, be sure to: Keep the front/middle of the tongue (what you can see in a mirror) completely relaxed at the bottom of your mouth. Keep the tip of the resting tongue on the back of the lower teeth/gumline. DO NOT pull your tongue back. DO NOT make excess movements with your lips or tongue (make a uvular consonant in one motion). Differentiation In French, there are several versions of the uvulary consonant, even if they are all represented by the same letter r. You will most likely hear this in combination with one of the other voiceless consonants. Listen carefully to the audio file below and try to mimic me as I articulate the following syllables: f-a.... t-a.... k-a.... p-a. Like his voiceless brother, the vocal uvulary fricative / - always appears in combination with other vocal consonants. You may have a tendency to make a voice // in these combos. Listen to the audio and try to imitate so I articulate: v-a... d-a... g-a... b-a. The third sound is the vocal uvulary approximation. Get/w/sound from the word why. This is a rough sound because it brings your lips together, but not all the way. A little further and you would have a /b / or / p / sound. So an approximate uvular/--*-is when the back of the tongue moves pretty close to the uvula, but doesn't touch it. The resulting sound is a softer version of the previous consonant. The distinction you will struggle most is between the fricative sounds expressed and voiceless. In the audio below, I alternate between these two sounds in isolation and in real French words. Listen and try to notice the differences. Hopefully now a basic sense for the uvulary consonant. Don't worry if you failed to do it on your first attempt. I said, your motor skills are exposed. Exposed. practice to develop. Just be sure to refer to this page whenever you're stuck. As you become familiar with French sounds and uvulary consonants grow, you will eventually find that it becomes automatic to reproduce these sounds when you speak French! This covers all consonant letters in the French alphabet. So I mentioned at the beginning of this post, we need to finally look behind the letters on the paper and realize the real sound that they represent. Use the diagram below to see these sounds appear in both English and French. The French intonation the intonation works The intonation in the French pronunciation has to do with the emphasis or stress of some syllables or words on others. If we keep the rhythm and phonemes the same for a phrase, a change in intonation will lead to a change of meaning. In the English phrase, Great, we are having steak for dinner again It seems to express an authentic sense of emotion, but with a different tone it seems sarcastic and perhaps suggestive of the exact opposite meaning. Most language programs focus exclusively on vocabulary and grammar and completely overlook the problem of intonation. As a result, most language learners maintain their native intonation patterns when speaking a foreign language. Intonation is the most characteristic element of an accent. That's why when people laugh at accents, they tend to exaggerate intonation more than anything else. I know many adults are embarrassed to talk to a foreign intonation. Our personalities are closely related to the intonation patterns of our voice, so changing them completely requires the exit of our comfort zone. You might feel silly step by step by our comfort zone and sounding like someone else, but trust that you'll look even sillier if not. Models of French intonation The basic unit of the French rhythm is by sill. Compared to English, French has a more distinct sound and a flat intonation. Stress is mostly, even except for the last sill, which is given a little more of an accent. In general, the syllables in any sentence or phrase run together in an unaccented continuous stream until they reach the end and the final syllable is underlined because it is followed by a pause. In any case, you should try to produce a smooth stream of syllables when pronouncing French, and not to over-emphasize any words in the middle of a phrase. Notice the difference in stress between these two words: In English: im-POR-tant, while in French: ang-por-tahng. French pronunciation: Becoming aware of the nuances of how to sound more like a native speaker is the first step towards fluency and flawless French pronunciation. And that's what we're getting to: Why do you want to learn French? At the Mimic Method, we learn that the purpose of learning languages is to connect with people and cultures. That's why we take the first step to learn a language about learning Actually, it sounds like so you can sound like them, too. Too.

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