

Les 22 fautes de vocabulaire les plus fréquentes

Experience shows that many mistakes made by students in their writing are repeated, and reflect an inaccurate understanding of some small but recurring points of spelling and grammar.

Learn these items and eliminate more than half of the common errors in your French writing.

1. *le problème* -- masculine gender!
Quand vous écrivez ce mot au féminin, c'est un problème!
2. *le militaire* -- means "military person". The English meaning of "the military" is conveyed by the expression "*les forces armées*" or, more specifically, "*l'armée*" (the army) "*l'armée de l'air*" (air force) and "*la marine*" (navy). Clearly the statement "*mon frère est dans le militaire*" has unintended connotations, and could be grounds for his dishonorable discharge from the armed forces.
3. *la personne, les personnes* -- feminine, even when referring to males. Use pronoun *elle/s* when referring to *les personnes*. *Mon grand-père est une personne très intéressante.*
Ces personnes sont arrivées hier de France. Elles ne parlent pas anglais.
4. *Français, français; Américain, américain...* Words of nationality are capitalized when used as nouns. but lower-case when used as adjectives.
Les Américains sont fiers de leur pays. Les Français ont l'espérance de vie la plus élevée.
Les étudiants américains ne voyagent pas assez en France! J'aime le pain français.
5. most -ion words are feminine -- *la division, la religion, la session, la région, etc...*
exceptions are *l'avion, le camion, le lion, le pion, le morpion.*
6. note that the words *religion, religieux* and related forms do **not** have an accent on the first **e**!
7. all **-tion** are feminine -- (with only one exception - *le bastion*): *la portion, la notion, la suggestion...*
8. All **-ité**, and most **-té** words are feminine. *La réalité. La bonté. La cité. La dangerosité.*
La beauté. La masculinité. (exception: *le député*)
9. All **-isme** words are masculine.
Le capitalisme, le classicisme, le féminisme.
10. Nearly all **-age** words are masculine.
Le voyage, le fromage, le mage, le sage, le stage, le courage, l'âge, l'aréopage, etc...
(exceptions: *la cage, la nage, la rage, la page, la plage*)
11. *la relation, la religion* have **NO ACCENT** on the **e**! (yes, this is the second mention of this point...you can imagine how often this misspelling arises to warrant such attention!)
12. Spelling of *le médecin, la médecine* : The second **e** is mute but must be written!

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13. Slight differences in spelling between English and French:
le courrier (two "r"s in French) *l'adresse* (one "d" in French)
l'appartement (two "p"s in French) *le mariage* (one "r" in French)
la réflexion (reflection in English)
14. Spelling: don't forget the second **u** of "*plusieurs*". A surprisingly common mistake.
As is the misspelling of "*beaucoup*", which also has two occurrences of the letter "**u**".
15. GENERAL RULE: do not put an accent of any kind on an **e** that is followed by two or more consonants: *effectif*, *extrême*, *effleurer*, *emmener*, *escompter*, *lettre*, etc...
EXCEPTIONS: Before the consonants **ch**, an accent is common: *échange*, *échelle*, etc...
The word "*le réflexe*" is another (but fairly uncommon) exception.
16. Before the consonant **x** there is NEVER an accent : *examen*, *excuser*, *exiger*, *lexique*, etc...
17. **Most** verbs that start with *re-* (meaning to do again) do not have an accent on the **e** of *re*:
repartir, *retrouver*, *rebondir*, *recuire*, *ressortir*, *ressembler*, etc...
18. *Réaliser* means to realize, make real, as in "He realized a handsome profit in that transaction."
To realize, in the sense of *comprehend*, is said either as *se rendre compte* or *comprendre*.
19. Related to the above verb, note that *English -ize* and *-ization* words are spelled with **s** in French, since a single "s" placed between two vowels is pronounced like a "z" :
organiser, *organisation*, *analyser*, *réalisation*, etc...
20. The verb *créer* can look odd because its past participle may have as many as three **e**s in it:
les organisations *créées* par... the stem is **cré-**
the past participle ending of -er verbs is **-é**, hence *créé*
agreement of the feminine adds yet another **e**, and perhaps an **s** as in the example **créées**.
21. In comparisons of numbers, use **de** instead of **que**: *j'ai plus de 5000 Euros*.
Le coût des soins a augmenté de plus de 30% en trois ans...
22. In the constructions *more and more* or *less and less*, start with **de**:
J'ai de plus en plus d'amis mais de moins en moins de temps.

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