

20th ed.

Peter's
Pragmatic
Guide

to Idiomatic English

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Rapid solutions
for French-speaking students
to common difficulties in
speaking and writing English

Signs and abbreviations used in this handbook

- * an asterisk in front of an example indicates, as in linguistics, that it is not acceptable English. Examples are printed in light sans serif.
- ✱ the ‘explosion’ flags a linguistic situation that may lead to serious misunderstanding. It means ‘Handle with care!’
- ☞ The manicule (a pointing hand) flags an exception.
- | the vertical bar separates different examples, and
- / the slash separates alternatives *within* an example.
- AmE American English
- BrE British English
- cf. confer, meaning ‘compare with’.
- FA signals *faux amis* (‘false friends’).
- inv. invariable; qualifies a noun that has the same form in the plural as in the singular.
- q.v. (*quod vide*) is a cross-reference meaning ‘see the entry for this word’.
- s.o. someone
- s.t. something
- vs (*versus*) means ‘as opposed to’ or ‘contrasted with’.

Definitions

A **transitive** verb takes a direct object.

An **intransitive** verb does not take an object.

A **pronominal** adjective goes in front of a noun.

A **predicate** adjective cannot be used in front of a noun.

Feedback

Comments and suggestions for improving this handbook are always welcome. Contact me by email: gpeter.winnington@gmail.com

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20th edition, November 2015

ISBN 978-2-9700654-1-8

@ Long before it was adopted for email addresses, the ‘at’ symbol (*l’arobase*) expressed the idea of ‘at the price (or rate) of’: 3 books @ £4 each.

A- WORDS

Adjectives and adverbs formed with the prefix **a-** are predicate, that is, they must follow the group they qualify. A man alone | They think alike. They include **aback**, **aboard** (but not as a preposition of course, as in **to climb aboard** a yacht), **abroad**, **ablaze**, **adrift**, **afire**, **ahoy** (as in the call, ‘Ship ahoy!’), **ajar**, **alive**, **amiss**, **aside** (q.v.), **askew**, **asleep**, **awake**, **aware** (and **unaware**), **awry**, etc.

☞ **A- WORDS** cannot generally be used as nouns. See **ADJECTIVES**

- Adding the prefix **a-** to certain verbs makes them less concrete and more metaphorical. **rise** (stand or get up) > **arise** (e.g. the symbolic act of rising from a kneeling position); **rouse** (wake up) > **arouse** (for emotions); **wake** (from sleep) > **awaken** (memories).

ABBREVIATIONS

BrE usage omits the full stop when abbreviations end with the final letter of the complete word they represent. So **Mr** and **Dr** do not need stops as both the words and the abbreviations end with ‘r’, whereas **Prof.** (Professor), **etc.** (*et cetera*), **i.e.** (*id est*, ‘that is to say’), and **e.g.** (*exempli gratia*, ‘for example’) do need them.

Under the influence of AmE practice, however, many editors (q.v.) now use stops after all abbreviations that include lower-case letters (see **CAPITAL LETTERS**).

☞ The honorific **Miss** is not treated as an abbreviation. See **HONORIFICS**

ability

- **to be (un)able to do s.t.** is usually due to physical causes, whereas
- **to be (in)capable of doing s.t.** is usually on grounds of morality (q.v.) or scruple.
- The **ability to do s.t.** is a quality possessed by both able and capable persons, whereas the **capacity for s.t.** suggests quantity rather than quality. So while **inability to do s.t.** is merely a handicap, **incapacity** suggests some moral or intellectual failing. Tess’s capacity for suffering is enormous, and for most of the novel Angel is quite incapable of perceiving it. At the moment when he might have been more perceptive, she is unable to contact him.

ADJECTIVES

In English the adjective is invariable, whatever the gender, number, or case of the noun it qualifies, even in compound adjectives. Thus you could read a three-hundred-page novel about an eighteen-year-old heroine. (Note the use of **HYPHENS** in compound adjectives.)

See also **TIME** and **SPACE**

- ☞ The one exception to this would appear to be **blond-e**, which ‘agrees’ with the human gender of the following noun. A blond Englishman. A blonde German girl.
- ☞ Nouns used as adjectives are invariable, except for **man** and **woman** which ‘agree’ with the plural: girl students **but** men and women students. Of course, an adjectival noun may in itself be plural: the admissions office.
- ☞ **sport** as an adjective and **overseas** as both adjective and adverb are always ‘plural’: a sports car / day / jacket | overseas students.
 - Adjectives and participles used as nouns are invariable: the young and the old | the quick, the dying, and the dead | the working poor | the unaware.
 - When several adjectives precede a noun, put the most specific or particular first, and proceed towards the most general – allowing euphony to suggest the order when they seem to be of equal generality.

ADJECTIVES and PAST PARTICIPLES

Many English adjectives and similar past participles with rather different meanings correspond to a single word in French. Distinguish between appropriate and appropriated; considerate and considered; corrupt and corrupted; definite and defined; elaborate and elaborated; incomplete and uncompleted; open and opened; opposite and opposed; polite and polished; requisite and required; resolute and resolved; rotten and rotted; welcome and welcomed, for example. As a general rule, the adjective qualifies a state, and the past participle a state *resulting from a (recent) action*.

- Note that the final **-ate** of adjectives, nouns and adverbs is pronounced with a schwa [ə], e.g. separate [ˈsepəɾət], whereas it is a diphthong in all **-ate** verb forms, e.g. separated [ˈsepəreitɪd]. So their *function* is signalled by pronunciation, even when their *spelling* is the same, e.g. a delegate [ˈdelɪgət] vs to delegate [ˈdelɪgeɪt]. See also **z/s**

ADJECTIVES in **-ic** and **-ical**

As a general rule, prefer the **-ic** form of adjectives derived from nouns. Most of those based on nouns ending **-ism**, like **paternalistic**, **realistic** and **idealistic**, **pessimistic** and **optimistic**, exist only in this form.

- Some adjectives, however, such as **ethical**, **hysterical**, **logical**, **practical**, **sceptical**, **statistical** and **tactical**, exist only in the **-ical** form, because there is (or was, e.g. *practic*) a corresponding **NOUN ENDING -ic**.
- The adjectives of all the ‘-ology’ sciences end with the **-ical** form only.
- A few adjectives exist in both the **-ic** and **-ical** forms. Consider the first as the ‘true’ or ‘direct’ form, and the second as only indirectly related to the concept in question. What a tragic decision! (It had a truly tragic consequence: people died.) Oh, he and his comical manner! (I find his

behaviour funny, but it is not something out of a comedy.) It was his economic policy that dictated his choice of an economical car. Here **economic** relates to money; **economical** relates to running costs, primarily fuel consumption, and thus only indirectly to economics.

- With **classic** and **classical** a convenient rule is to think of what is (or used to be) taught in class. Thus **classic** qualifies an instance that is often cited in the classroom (a classic approach to fiction-writing), whereas **classical** relates to traditional Greek and Roman culture, as in classical literature and classical mythology, or to whatever preceded a modern form: you might listen to a classic piece of classical music. Newtonian physics is classical physics.
- The case of **history** is very clear: a historic event made history. A historical novel is merely situated in the past.
- Actions that are **politic** seem ‘sensible and judicious in the circumstances’, whereas **political** relates to ‘the state or government or public affairs of a country’ (NODE); it is only optatively sensible or judicious.

after having done s.t. is a Latinate structure, heavier than English generally requires. Use either **having done s.t.** or **after doing s.t.**

all + **SPACE** and **TIME**

all + a preposition emphasizes continuity. Compare She spilled coffee on her dress; she spilled coffee down her dress and She spilled coffee all down her dress. The first might cause a localized stain; the second something longer; the third involves the entire length.

- Use (**all**) **along** with measurable, horizontal objects: wild flowers were growing all along the banks of the river. **All over** adds the notion of ‘everywhere-on-the-surface’ of the object. Ants were climbing all over the flowers.
- **all ... long** is used with monosyllabic units of time: **day**, **night**, **week**, **month**, **year**. It’s been raining all day long! Use **throughout** (q.v.) or **for the whole** with **morning**, **afternoon**, **evening**, **winter**, **decade**, etc.
- **all through** enters or penetrates the associated object or fills a unit of time: all through the city / the day. For greater emphasis use **throughout** (q.v.), which is to be preferred with objects that are not spatially measurable. Jane Austen uses this technique throughout the novel.

all the vs **the whole**

As a general rule, use **all the** with uncountable nouns (all the poetry), and **the whole** with countable ones in the singular (the whole poem).

- **all (of) the** with plural, countable nouns (all the poems) means ‘each and every one of the [noun]’.

See also **all** + **SPACE** and **TIME**, and **throughout**

all what? can only be a question: *Tout quoi?*

In French, it is possible to add *tout* in front of *ce que* without changing anything else in the sentence. In English, however, **what** has to change to **that** when it is preceded by **all**. *Ce qu'il a dit était sensé*: What he said made good sense. But *Tout ce qu'il a dit était sensé*: All that he said made good sense. For this, you can often use **everything** instead, and you may have to do so on occasion to avoid the limitative meaning of **all**. That's all I know.

altération and **altérer** are FA. **alteration** and **to alter** are perfectly neutral, like **modification** and **to modify** or **change**. To render the idea of 'to change for the worse' use **spoil**, **taint**, **mar**, **adulterate**, or **impair** (depending on the context).

ancien FA

Ancient qualifies something that is very old, dating from classical antiquity or earlier. So *mon ancienne amie* has to be **my ex-girlfriend**. **Former** is also possible, but more formal: a former President (see **sometime**). For *mon ancien prof d'anglais*, say 'the English teacher I had at school/university.'

Anglicized French words

Do not put accents on French words, like *café* and *regime*, that have passed into English, except for: **compère**, **exposé**, **lamé**, **résumé**, and **roué**.

The **ANGLO-SAXON GENITIVE**

Reserve the possessive form (i.e. an apostrophe+s after a singular noun and irregular plurals, and s+apostrophe after regular plurals) for animate(d) nouns (and noun phrases: The King of Spain's daughter). This includes objects to which animation is attributed. The ship's rudder fell off in mid-Atlantic. | The car's headlights weren't working.

- Intrinsic qualities of a piece of writing may also be expressed in this way: the poem's structure | the book's title | the article's conclusion.
- The apostrophe+s may also be descriptive, as in a ladies' hairdresser (i.e. *for ladies*) and the men's toilet. (This is often shortened to the gents, signed simply **GENTS**, i.e. *for gentlemen*, with no apostrophe.)
- The designation of shops and places of abode uses this form elliptically, omitting the following noun: the butcher's, the baker's (i.e. their respective shops) and Tom's or Mary's (i.e. their homes).
- In some cases where you might be tempted to use the apostrophe+s, English turns the possessing noun into an adjective: the group leader rather than the group's leader, and the car driver – BUT the ship's captain. There is no rule for this, unfortunately.
- For periods of time, see **TIME & SPACE**; for values, see **worth**.

- Distinguish between Emma's description (what she said in describing s.t. or s.o.) and the description of Emma (how s.o. else described her). The same applies to her drawing (of Harriet), a drawing of her (by s.o. else, depicting Emma), and a drawing of hers (i.e. one of her many drawings, depicting subjects unknown), the possessor being written *without* an apostrophe when it's a pronoun, and *with* when it's a proper name: Mr Elton admired a drawing of Emma's.

The **ANGLO-SAXON** (idiomatic) **PLURAL**

When a number of individuals each possess or manipulate a countable object, that object is expressed in the plural. With their guns in their hands, they drove off in their cars. Each has only one gun in one hand and drives one car, but English sees several people, guns, hands and cars.

ANIMATION

French likes to animate abstractions and inanimate nouns, often with reflexive verbs (*La grande route étendait sans en finir son long ruban de poussière—Madame Bovary | Les élections se sont déroulées dans le calme | Les vers suivants se présentent...*). English does not, preferring concrete nouns and active verbs. The elections passed off without incident.

as or like?

- **as** is a *conjunction*, introducing a group with a verb, a prepositional phrase, or an adverb. So Donne plays with words as often as he can, rather as Shakespeare does, in his plays as in his sonnets.
Rule 1: If there's a verb in the group that follows, or just an adverb, or a preposition, it must be **as**. Resist the temptation to infer a verb where none is expressed. Do as I do!
- **like** is a *preposition* and as such can introduce only a noun or pronoun. Like Shakespeare, Donne plays with words.
In literary essays, shun the colloquial use of **like** as a conjunction.
Rule 2: If there's no verb, use **like** + (pro)noun, but—
- **as** is also a *preposition* meaning *en tant que* or *dans le rôle de*. Did you enjoy Johnny Depp as Jack Sparrow? Thus we find minimal pairs like He went as a soldier (*comme soldat*: he had joined the Army) and He went like a soldier (*comme un soldat*: he was not a soldier but he behaved like one).
Rule 3: if a noun follows, without a verb, decide whether you mean 'similar to' (**like**) or 'in the role of' (**as**).
- *tel que* may be rendered by **such as**, or **like** if no verb follows (Rule 2).

aside

When a character in a play or film says s.t. that only the audience (and not the other characters present) can supposedly hear, it is an **aside**.

ASPECT

'Aspect is the way that a verb group shows whether an activity is continuing, is repeated, or is completed' (COBUILD). Types of aspect include: **inchoative** (beginning); **iterative** (repeated); **durative** (continuing or long-lasting); **punctual** (of minimal duration, brief); and **terminative** (ending or completed).

assister à is a FA meaning **to be present** at an event (to witness an accident) or **to attend** (q.v.) a ceremony or performance of some kind (to attend a concert).

- To **assist** s.o. is to **help** them (see **PRONOUNS** for this use of 'them').
- *Dans ce roman nous assistons à* is a dangerous metaphor to have in mind when analysing literature because it implies that you are a passive witness of the events described. Think rather that reading is creative; the text is nothing but inert little black marks on white paper until you start to read it and bring it to life. So use some other expression, even as neutral as *This novel contains ...*

at first suggests that things are different subsequently; it is opposed to **later**. **First** (or **firstly**) by itself indicates merely the first (in order of importance or time) without implying (see **impliquer**) subsequent change.

at and **in** with **the beginning** and **the end**

In the beginning refers to *all* time, as in the Bible: *In the beginning (au commencement) was the Word*. Use **at the beginning** for a story or poem.

See also **since vs from**

- Distinguish between what happens **at the end** (*à la fin*) of a story with what happens **by the end**, i.e. before the end is reached. **In the end** adds suspense (*finalement* – see also **enfin**). Contrast *They all get married at the end* (i.e. in the final scene) with the relief of *They all get married in the end*. N.B. **at the end** may be followed by a defining phrase ('of the novel', for instance), but **in the end** (being an adverb of time) cannot.
- With **the middle**, you can say **by** or **in** the middle, but not **at**. See **milieu**

at and **in** the same time

Distinguish between s.t. that happens **at the same time** as s.t. else, i.e. **simultaneously** (Don't speak at the same time as her!), and two things that are done **in the same time**, i.e. within the same **space of time** or **duration**: *We ran the marathon in the same time* (she last year and me this year).

at, **in** and **on** in text analysis

Use **at** a certain **line** or **page** for a *fixed* point in the work. *I stopped reading at page 224*. Not used for spans, i.e. you cannot say **at lines 10–15*.

- **in** to indicate things *within lines, chapters, acts, and scenes*. A change of rhythm in chapter 24. Used for spans: as can be seen in lines 10–15.
- **on** a certain **line** or **page** to locate something *dynamically* within the work. *The new chapter begins on p.123*. | *The Invocation ends on line 26*. May be used for spans, but we tend to say *on pages 24, 25, and 26* instead. See also **DEFINITE ARTICLE**, and **NUMBERS**

attend (FA)

To **attend** plus a direct object means to be present at a ceremony or performance of some kind (*All the staff attended the meeting*), or to go regularly to an institution: *What school did you attend?* (This is quite formal.)

- To **attend to** s.t. or s.o. is to **pay attention**. *You're not attending! Listen to what I'm saying, please*.
- To **attend to** s.t. can also be to deal with it, especially by improvement or care. *I know this paragraph needs attending to; I'll revise it later*.

both vs **the two**

Generally speaking, **both** serves to *merge* the two elements in question (or stress their similarity), and **the two** to *differentiate* them (in quality or in time, for instance). The heroines of *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice* both marry the man they love, yet the two novels are quite different in tone. Use **the two** when making a *rapprochement*: *The two men are similar*.

CAPITAL LETTERS (also called 'upper case', as opposed to 'lower case')

All proper nouns (including religions, languages, nationalities, and the Christian God), the days of the week and the months of the year, and all adjectives derived from them take an initial capital letter. *A Buddhist Chinaman speaking Mandarin. A Sunday driver*. See also **HONORIFICS**

- The seasons and abstractions take capital letters only when personified. Both Time and Death are generally male figures in English literature.
- In the titles of books, articles, chapters and poems, and the titles of works of art in general, including films, operas, ballets, paintings, and pieces of sculpture, use a capital for the initial letter of the first word, and for the initial letter of all subsequent nouns and adjectives, personal pronouns, verbs, and adverbs. After the first word, function words (articles, conjunctions, prepositions, etc.) are not given capitals: *Of Mice and Men* | *The War of the Worlds* | *All's Well That Ends Well*.
- Capital letters are familiarly known as 'caps', and words ALL IN CAPITAL LETTERS are in 'running caps'. Don't use running caps for emphasis in an essay.

chercher may be to **search for** s.t. that is lost; **seek** s.t. new or a solution; **try to think of** a name or an idea; or **look for**, or **try to find**, any of these.

CIRCUMLOCUTIONS

English is happy to repeat names or titles far more frequently than French, which seeks to avoid repetition, preferring *ce dernier* or *le romancier* to repeating a writer's name. For Fowler, 'it is the second-rate writers, those intent rather on expressing themselves prettily than on conveying their meaning clearly' (*Modern English Usage*) who are seduced (q.v.) by circumlocutions like 'the writer' or 'her novel'.

Worse, they can be misleading. If you write 'Conrad's character' for 'Marlow', it may seem to designate the-personality-of-Conrad-the-novelist, not the-character-that-he-created. Similarly, if you write 'the poet' when discussing Keats, your reader may think that you are now referring to all poets in general, not just Keats. So repeat 'Joyce' or 'Dickens' ten times rather than mislead by switching to 'the novelist'.

See also **NAMES**

cite vs quote

You **quote** actual words (from a text) but **cite** only the title or author. She cited Shakespeare as a case in point, but couldn't quote him.

COLLECTIVE NOUNS

A few nouns designating groups of people and institutions may take a singular or a plural verb, depending on whether they are considered *collectively* or *individually*. Common ones include: audience, army, committee, crowd, enemy, family, government, group, police, public, and staff.

Singular and plural may be used within the same sentence: A television crew was chased when they tried to interview people in the street—*The Times*.

- This dual aspect affects the relative pronoun; use **who** for the persons concerned, and **which** for the unit or institution: a couple who were arguing | a couple which was walking hand-in-hand. See also **PRONOUNS**

comedy is either uncountable (the theatrical genre) or countable (a play of this genre). (See **COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE**)

- *Le comique* is usually **comedy** when it is a concept (comedy of character or situation), and '(what we find) funny or laughable' when we refer to a specific instance of it. He could not see the funny side of / what was so funny about his mistake: *le comique de son erreur*. See also **laugh**
- For the adjectives **comic** (relating directly to comedy) and **comical** (something that we find funny) see **ADJECTIVES** in **-ic** and **-ical**.
- An actor of comedy is a **comedian**, of tragedy a **tragedian** [trə'dʒi:diən] – the two words rhyme. *Un comédien* is a FA: it's just **an actor**.
- A **comic** is a magazine containing cartoon strips for children; it is also a stand-up comedian (telling jokes and funny stories).

compare

Use **compared with** for things that are similar or when you want to establish similarity; **compared to** for dissimilar objects or for distancing. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?—Shakespeare (Sonnet 18)

compose, comprise and consist

In the statement, the moon consists of green cheese, **consists of** means the same as **is composed of** or **is made of**. On the other hand, **to consist in** (+ -ing) means **to comprise, to entail, or include** (an activity). Obtaining a driving licence consists in taking a theoretical test followed by a drive on the road with an examiner. cf. *impliquer*

CONCRETE and ABSTRACT NOUNS

English frequently has two nouns, one concrete and the other abstract, that correspond to a single French word. Be sure to use the right one, otherwise the effect can be quite comic. Contrast *axe* (concrete) and *axis* (abstract); *base* vs *basis*; *gender* vs *genre*; *prize* vs *price*; and *statute* vs *status*.

See also **freedom vs liberty**

conscience vs consciousness

- The **conscience** is that inner moral sense that tells us whether what we are doing is right or wrong. My conscience wouldn't allow me to ...
- To be **conscious** is to be in the normal state of wakefulness, aware of oneself and one's surroundings. The blow on the head caused him to lose consciousness. Thus there is also the state of **semi-consciousness**.
- Prefer **aware(ness)** for knowledge of situations or facts. Emma suddenly became aware that she really loved Mr Knightley.
- For the French *inconscient*, meaning *irréfléchi*, use **thoughtless** (behaviour) – *T'es une inconsciente!* How thoughtless of you! – or **reckless** (person or behaviour). The accident was caused by reckless driving / a reckless driver.

COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE

- A count(able) noun is 'a noun such as "bird", "chair", or "year" which has a singular and a plural form.' In the singular, it must have a determiner, such as **a**, **the** or **her**, in front of it (COBUILD, adapted).
- An uncount(able) noun is 'a noun such as "gold", "information", or "furniture" which has only one form and can be used without a determiner' (COBUILD). Gold is a precious metal. Of course, as soon as it is qualified by a following clause (the gold you have in the bank), it takes an article, just like a count noun.
- Some nouns belong to both categories. Those based on the present participle are uncountable when they are concepts (misspelling) or an activity (writing), and countable, often plural, when they designate

specific instances (misspellings) or concrete objects (writings). See also **CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS; critic(ism); experience, and language.**

- Countables used as concepts or collective nouns remain countable and take the definite article: as performed in theatres / on the stage | as heard on the radio, BUT not **television**: as shown on tv.
- Beware of French plural nouns that are uncountable in English: *les informations* = information or news; *prévisions* = forecast (for weather, but predictions in other contexts); *conseils* = advice; *preuves* = proof or evidence.
- An uncountable noun may have a countable counterpart with a very different meaning in the plural. For example, **hair** grows on our heads. Ugh, I found a hair in my soup. ✱ **Hairs**, on the other hand, grow elsewhere on the body (= *les poils*). So if you say, 'I am just going to wash my hairs,' you will get some very strange looks.

criterion [krai'tiəriən] (= *critère*) has a Latin-type plural: **criteria** [krai'tiəriə].

critic, criticism, and to criticize

The verb is **to criticize**, the persons who do it are **critics**, and the product of their activity is **criticism** (which is uncountable when applied to the arts, music or literature, and countable when applied to a person).

The noun **critique** [kri'ti:k] is also used occasionally, in the sense of an assessment or evaluation. In AmE it is now frequently a verb too.

DASHES

When typing, distinguish between the **HYPHEN**, which joins two words, or parts of words – so there is no space before or after it – and the **en dash** (or **en rule**) which does have a space on either side (as in the line above). Dashes are longer than hyphens. In modern English, the dash is never combined with any other punctuation mark.

- Use the dash without spaces for **spans**: lines 25–32 | pages 399–425.
- There is also the longer **em dash** or **em rule**, which serves to set off the source of quotations (example below), or to indicate an interrupted statement (in which case it generally ends a paragraph; see Rule 2 of **as or like?** for an example). It is printed without spaces, and without punctuation (except for closing quotation marks when required). In early fiction, it replaced letters omitted from proper names. 'There's Mayor —, ' says she, 'he was an eminent pickpocket; there's Justice Ba—r, was a shoplifter.'—Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders* ('In Virginia').
- Some American presses and word-processors use em rules as dashes.

DATES

- **Years**: when speaking, separate the hundreds and thousands from the tens and units, saying four seventy-six (476) | ten sixty-six (1066) | nineteen o

four (1904) (see **NUMBERS** for the zero, pronounced 'oh'). For the current millennium, say two thousand and x (for 200x) up to 2009 (two thousand and nine), then revert to pairs as usual: the twenty-twelve Olympics in London. See also **nought** under **NUMBERS**

- For BC (before Christ) and AD (*anno Domini*), you can now write BCE (= before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) after the year (with a space before and no space between the letters; no punctuation either). When speaking, just name the letters: 55 BC(E) = fifty-five bee see (ee).
- The Middle Ages (*le moyen âge*) are plural and take the article + caps. Of course a middle-aged man (*d'âge moyen*) takes no caps. See **HYPHENS**
- In writing, spell out the centuries: a sixteenth-century comedy. See **NUMBERS** for the use of arabic (and not roman) figures for centuries.
- **Days and months**: in BrE say the twenty-second of April, and write only 22 April. In AmE say April twenty-second, and write April 22. See also **CAPITAL LETTERS**

de

If there is one French word that you can *never* translate blindly, it's *de*. Depending on what precedes it, it may be any preposition in English from **about** to **with** – or none at all (my father's house | a money matter). And when *de* means *en tant que* (e.g. *son rôle d'écrivain*) you need to use **as** (q.v.). There is only one rule: learn the prepositions that go with each noun, verb, or adjective, e.g. careful about / of / to / with; absent from; synonymous with; close to; far from; the reason for (or to); the story about / of | a story by; and to suffer from, etc.

See also **depend on it!**, plus **excerpt vs extract**

déduire

Use **to deduce** for logic, **to deduct** for arithmetic, and **deduction** for both.

défini-tif

Note the very different meanings of **definite** (firm and clear) and **definitive** (final, after changes). See also **ADJECTIVES** and **PAST PARTICIPLES**

DEFINITE ARTICLE

Omit the definite article in front of nouns like **chapter, page, verse, line, etc.**, when they are followed by a number. In line four of stanza ten | On page 123 | At the beginning of chapter six | In the last paragraph of Part II

See also **at, in and on; COUNTABLE vs UNCOUNTABLE; next, and NUMBERS**

- The names of tenses take the definite article (the simple past, the present, and the future), whereas literary technical terms (being uncountable) do not: free indirect speech | dramatic irony | verbal humour, etc.
- Use the definite article in **on the one hand** and **on the other hand**.

depend on it!

You can say, It depends and That counts (with no complement) but you cannot say *It relies. With a complement, all three verbs are structured with *on*: **to count on, to depend on, and to rely on** s.t. or s.o. You can rely on that.

dernier

The **last** designates the end of a series, whereas the **latest** is simply the most recent. The last novel by Jane Austen | The latest news. See also **THIS** vs **THAT**

dès

When *dès* means **with effect from**, use **as of**, but only with a date or an expression that implies a known date in the recent past, the present, or the immediate future, not with an event. As of today | As of 1st May, 2015. So you can't say, *as of her arrival. Say rather, from the moment she arrived.

devant

Use **in front of** only when you are referring to the strictly literal spatial organization of concrete objects. The tree in front of the house. (The same applies to **opposite** for *face à* and *en face de*.) **Before** can also be used for this in more formal texts; it is standard for *devant Dieu*: before God.

For figurative and abstract senses, use (**when**) **faced with, in the face of** (especially for threatening, dangerous objects or situations) or simply **when**: *Devant tant de misère* – When I see so much poverty...

Keep **to be confronted by** or **with** for instances of *true* confrontation.

différent (FA)

Used before a noun, *différent* means **discrete, diverse, separate, various**, or just **several**. Keep **different** for cases where *différent* follows the noun.

digne corresponds to two different notions in English:

- **dignified** qualifies a composed and serious manner, or behaviour that commands (or merits) respect, whereas
- **worthy** means having qualities or abilities that merit recognition in some special way. Has there ever been a worthy successor to Sean Connery as James Bond? As in the French *digne de*, **worthy** is often used with **of**: She's a novelist worthy of the name.

worthy combines with nouns: **newsworthy, noteworthy, roadworthy, seaworthy** (*apte à prendre la route / la mer*), and **trustworthy** (*digne de confiance; fiable*). It forms neologisms like **quote-worthy**. See also **worth**

disposer (de) is a *FA. Translate it by **to have at one's disposal** (He had a whole team of researchers at his disposal); or simply **to have** (I don't have much time – but bear in mind I can't spare you much time); or **to use**: you can use my car while I'm away. Finally, *Merci, vous pouvez disposer* = Thank you, you may go.

- *disposer de la vie / du sort de quelqu'un* is to **hold their life / fate in one's hands**.

- *Le droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes* is **the right to self-determination**.

- * The primary meaning of **to dispose of** is **to get rid of s.t.** (*s'en débarrasser*). **Disposable articles** (or simply **disposables**) are *jetables*.

DOLLARS and CENTS

The **dollar** (\$), adopted as the monetary unit of the United States in 1792 at the suggestion of Thomas Jefferson, is divided into 100 **cents** (¢). Dollars are familiarly called **bucks** after the buckskins used for commercial exchange by the early settlers. The dollar coin was made of silver until 1935. It derived from the Spanish peso, which was made to be broken (when required) into quarters, and for this reason the 25-cent piece is still known as a **quarter**. The other coins are the **dime** (10¢), the **nickel** (5¢) and the **penny** (1¢). (See **penny** for the British coin.) Paper money (often called **bills**, and known familiarly as **greenbacks** because they are printed in green on the back) was introduced during the Civil War of 1860–65. cf. **POUNDS, SHILLINGS** and **PENCE**.

Many other countries now call their currency dollars, too.

during precedes a noun that designates (or implies) a period of time. During the night | During those two days. During the play is possible, when it means 'in the course of the action'. During the story is possible too but *only* when 'story' means the telling of it or the lapse of time that it covers. In the latter case, **in the course of the story** would be preferable. To express 'for a period of' or 'a duration of', use **for**: She stayed for the night / for two days.

For **during all** see **throughout**

editor (FA)

An **editor** is a person responsible for selecting and preparing texts for publication, often with an introduction and notes. A **publisher**, on the other hand, is a firm or company whose business it is to produce and market books and periodicals. In bibliographies, editors are mentioned only when they figure on the title page of the book, whereas the publisher and the place of publication should always be specified.

effectivement (FA) is best rendered by **indeed**: It is indeed true. **Effective(ly)** means **having or producing a result** and therefore **efficient(ly)**. The aim of this handbook is to enable (cf. *permettre*) you to write more effectively.

ELLIPSES

French commonly uses an ellipsis (*les points de suspension*) at the end of a sentence to mean **and so on, etc.** English does not generally do this.

- When quoting in English, use ellipses (*without square brackets and with spaced points: . . .*) to signal omission in the *middle* of a quotation. They are not required at the beginning or end of quotations integrated into your own sentence structure (i.e. 'run in').

empêcher, éviter, s'empêcher

- We cannot avoid s.t. or s.o. when we are unable to prevent an undesirable meeting, a collision, or an accident.
- We cannot avoid s.o., avoid doing (or get out of doing) s.t. for external reasons, often out of social obligation. Elizabeth could not avoid (speaking to) Mr Darcy, much though she would have wished to get out of it.
- We cannot help doing s.t. for internal reasons. (Her feelings were so strong that) she could not help telling him how much she despised him. Also used with an **it** for the undesirable behaviour: Don't blame him. He can't help it.
- We cannot prevent (or stop (q.v.)) s.t. external to ourselves from happening. She could not stop her sister from running off with Mr Wickham.
- As a general rule use **unavoidable** for concrete, physical events, and **inevitable** for more abstract ones. Because the accident was unavoidable, their death was inevitable.

end(ing)

You can refer to either **the end** or **the ending** of a story – but only **end** is opposed to **means**, as in 'ends and means' (*les fins et les moyens*).

'*Le happy-end*' is a French expression. When it is used in English – Does the story have a happy end? – it is never hyphenated. (See **HYPHENS**)

en faisant covers several notions. Render them with

- **by** for change in the *object* (By making promises, he induced her to marry him) but **in** or **through** when the *subject* is affected: One acquires knowledge through reading. (Some structures may require other prepositions.)
- **on** for 'immediately after', not 'during'. She shut the door on leaving.
- **while** or **when** for simultaneity. Don't speak while eating. | MIND YOUR HEAD WHEN LEAVING YOUR SEAT. [A notice in public transport with overhead luggage racks.]

☞ but with *verbs of locomotion* you can

- (a) use just the present participle, as in he went out laughing, or
- (b) render the *manner* with a *verb*, and the *direction* with a *preposition*: *traverser la route en courant* = to run across the road | *entrer dans la pièce en dansant* = to dance into the room | *descendre la rivière en nageant* = to swim down the river.

This also applies to lifestyles: *détruire sa vie en buvant* = to drink one's life away | *se ruiner en jouant* = to gamble one's money away.

enfin corresponds to several different notions:

- **at last** (the positive *Ouf!* at the end of a wait);
- **in the end** or **finally** (*≈ à la longue, finalement*); and
- **last** or **lastly** (or **finally**) which are used before the final item in a series. See also **at** and **in** with **the beginning** and **the end**

ever

First of all, **ever** is used like *jamais* in French. I think I'm skiing better than ever. (Have you ever heard that before?) Never more! In English it also means:

- **increasingly, or more all the time**: computers get ever more complex and ever more powerful; it's an ever-changing world. See also **toujours** (and **HYPHENS**).
- **always** or **eternally**: ever more; ever open; ever present; ever ready. Some common instances have become a single word: everlasting and forever. (See **for ever** contrasted with **forever**.) An evergreen is a plant or tree that keeps its leaves throughout the year, unlike a deciduous one.
- **Ever** combines with other words for emphasis: **however** (However you do it = *de quelque manière que tu le fasses* | However tall he may be = *si grand qu'il soit*); **whenever** (*chaque fois que*); **what(so)ever** (Bring whatever you can. Whatsoever you bring, I'll find a use for it.), and **who(so)ever** (*quiconque*), the 'so' adding an absolute dimension. They are written as two separate words in questions that express strong feelings; here they correspond to something like *diable* in French: Why ever did you do it? What ever are you thinking of? Who ever are you going to meet? How ever will I see you again?
- In familiar, spoken English, **ever** also serves for emphasis in **ever since, ever so, and ever such**. 'Do I like him? Oh ever so! (= *énormément*). He's ever such a good dancer, so I come here ever so often. Ever since I met him in fact.'

excerpt vs extract

Any passage, from a line or so to a whole chapter, extracted (or excerpted) from a text and presented separately, is an extract (or an excerpt) **from** the original text. Do not call quotations **extracts** in an essay; an anthology contains extracts.

On the other hand the **extract of** s.t. is a natural or industrial product: Extract of coffee and extract of vanilla are used for flavouring foods. It used to figure in the names of patent remedies. Pond's extract | Liebig's extract.

- A similar distinction can be made with **solution**: the solution to a problem but (in chemistry) a solution of salt in water.

See also **de**, and the **ANGLO-SAXON GENITIVE**

experiments are what scientists perform; (countable) **experiences** are events in our lives, which result in (uncountable) **experience**. Thus, an experiment may prove to be a memorable experience. The same distinction applies to the corresponding verbs, **to experiment** and **to experience**.

FARTHER VS FURTHER

Use **farther** for measurable space and time (farther down the road), and **further** for more abstract notions (further reading provided the evidence she needed).

FAUX AMIS

By definition *faux amis* – words which look the same in French and English but have rather different meanings – are insidious and subtle: false friends indeed. Make your own collection as you encounter them. A few are included in this booklet, flagged FA.

few

Like *peu*, **few** without an article emphasizes the smallness of the following quantity; **a few** means simply a small number. Contrast He has few friends (so he feels lonely) with he has a few friends (and he's perfectly satisfied). The same applies to **little** (+ uncountable) – but beware, *le peu de* can also mean **the lack** (or **absence**) of.

FICTION

All imaginary, invented narratives in prose are **fiction**, i.e. not fact. The term **fiction** is often used as though it were synonymous with **the novel**. Jane Austen was a great fiction writer / a great novelist. *Length* is the criterion (q.v.) used to distinguish between basic types of fiction: the **short story** (no more than a few pages); the **novella** (which may be just long enough, say 30,000 words, to be sold as a separate work, but is usually bundled with other stories); and the **novel** (which may run to several volumes). Fictionalized documentary is **docu-fiction**.

first

English distinguishes between the first two (for instance) and the two first. Take ten different poems: the first line of each poem will make a total of ten first lines, whereas if we take just one poem, we can refer to its first ten lines. This applies to any number as well as to **last**.

☞ With **next** (q.v.), only the form **the next four lines** is possible.

- **It's the first time** is followed by the present perfect where French uses the present. Well, it's the first time I've heard *that* rule!

See also **at first**; **at**, **in** and **on**; **NUMBERS**; and **one**

for ever means **definitive(ly)** or **for all time** – and **forever** means **repeatedly**.

Diamonds are for ever. | James Bond is forever making love with beautiful girl spies.

See also **ever**

freedom vs liberty

As a general rule, use **freedom** for the philosophical concept, and **liberty** for countable concrete examples, including symbolic figures (the Statue of Liberty). Contrast the **liberty to move** (physical) with **freedom of movement** (the principle; no article). However, if the context implies *being free*, use **freedom**: a captive struggles to reach freedom | a freedom fighter.

Liberty combines easily with other nouns, as in liberty bell/day/man/ship, and civil liberties; it takes prepositions – I am not at liberty to answer your question. It also forms phrases like to take liberties (i.e. to be unduly or improperly familiar), and to take the liberty to do or say s.t.

See also **CONCRETE** and **ABSTRACT NOUNS**

habiter

✳ *habiter* is rendered by **to inhabit** (or, of course, **to live in**). **Habitation** has much the same meaning in both French and English – i.e. the concept (signs of human habitation) as well as 'a place or building in which to live' – but *habitants* are **inhabitants**, *habitable* is **inhabitable**, and so for *inhabitable* (meaning 'not suitable to live in'), English uses **uninhabitable**.

hardly means *à peine*, **scarcely**. The adverb of **hard** is **hard**: Tess worked hard.

See also **presque**

here, **there** and **where** all have old forms with a 'sense of direction':

| | | | |
|----------|------------------|------------|-----------------|
| to here | : hither | from here | : hence |
| to there | : thither | from there | : thence |
| to where | : whither | from where | : whence |

They are mainly found in poetry and Biblical phrases. Whither goest thou (q.v.)? Some are still used in academic discourse – hence this list.

See also **ORIENTATION IN SPACE**

HONORIFICS and forms of address in BrE (see also **names**)

Dame is the honorary title for a woman (corresponding to **Sir**); it is followed by a first name, or a first name and family name, but never with just a family name. Dame Judi Dench. Never refer to women as 'dames'.

Esq. Until recently, **Esquire** [ɪs'kwɪə] was placed, in its abbreviated form, *after* the full name on any letter addressed to an otherwise untitled man. It is now replaced by **Mr**, which is placed *before* the name. **Esq.** survives in AmE where it designates a lawyer.

Lady is followed by a place name, a family name, or a first name, depending on whether the bearer is a peeress, a female relative of a peer, or the

wife or widow of a knight (see **Sir**), respectively. Used alone and without a **CAPITAL LETTER** only in uneducated speech. Give us a penny, lady!

Lord is followed by a place name or a family name when the bearer is a marquis [ˈmɑːkwɪs], earl, viscount [ˈvaɪkaʊnt] or baron, and by a first name when he is the younger son of a duke or marquis. Requires ‘my’ when used without a name: Yes, my lord, pronounced [məˈlɔːd] or [mɪˈlɔːd].

madam is the formal and polite term of address for a woman whose name is not known, used especially in shops, restaurants, and hotels. Can I help you, madam? Use Dear Madam in letters when you do not know the name of the woman you are writing to. ✱ **A madam** keeps a brothel.

Miss is the traditional honorific for an unmarried woman, used both in front of the name (with or without the first name) and alone. Schoolchildren often call their teacher **Miss**, whatever her marital status, and in the past all young women were addressed in this way, especially by their social inferiors. Today, use the first name and family name when speaking; when writing, use **Ms**. See also **ABBREVIATIONS**

Mr is used for every otherwise untitled man (e.g. not a professor or a doctor). It should never be spelled out in front of a name *unless* you wish to be facetious, mocking, or insulting. (Begin a letter with Dear Mr A.) On the other hand, it is spelled out in popular titles. Mister Switzerland. Used without a name to represent uneducated speech, it is spelled out. Hey, mister! Where d’you think you’re goin’? See also **ABBREVIATIONS**

Mrs [ˈmɪsɪz] is the traditional honorific for a married woman. It is never written out, except to represent uneducated speech, spelled **missis** or **missus**. Now generally replaced by **Ms**. (Begin a letter with Dear Ms A.)

Ms [mæz] is the politically correct written honorific for all women, used in front of the family name only (i.e. without the first name): Ms Greer. As it is unpronounceable, say: ‘Yes, madam’ (which is very formal, fine if you’re working in a hotel); ‘Yes, Miss’ (and risk causing offence); or play safe with ‘Yes’ plus ‘I will’ / ‘you do’ / ‘it is’, etc., as applicable.

Sir (with a **CAPITAL LETTER**) is the title of a knight or baronet and is followed by a first name, or a first name and family name, but never with just a family name. So Sir Peter Teazle is addressed as ‘Sir Peter’.

It is also used (with a capital) in letters when you do not know the name of the man you are writing to. Dear Sir, Please find enclosed my application for the job you advertised in today’s newspaper. Use the plural when writing to firms and institutions. Dear Sirs. If you do not know the gender of the person you are addressing, use Dear Sir or Madam.

- **sir** without a name (and no capital) is used as a polite way of addressing an unknown man, especially in shops, restaurants, and hotels.

What can I do for you, sir? Schoolchildren use it for their male teachers. Please sir, I know the answer!

HONORIFICS and the **DEFINITE ARTICLE**

In BrE, only two honorifics are preceded by a definite article, the **Reverend** and the **Honourable**, because they are adjectives. Consequently you should write the Reverend (or Rev.) Chasuble, and the Honourable (or Hon.) Algernon Moncrieff. Otherwise it’s General de Gaulle, Queen Elizabeth, and President Putin.

☞ For this reason it is not possible to address or refer to a clergyman as plain **Reverend** in BrE. You have to call him by his clerical status: Tell me, Vicar, how close is your house to Rosings Park? AmE ignores this rule.

humain

In essays, call people **human beings** unless you are contrasting them with **animals**. A perfect human figure (*Gulliver’s Travels*, Bk IV, Ch.2).

- As a rule, keep **humane** for human behaviour that respects other species. Laboratory animals must be treated humanely.

HYPHENS

Compound adjectives need hyphenating in English. A man-eating tiger is very different from a man eating tiger. Contrast also to be well known (adverb + past participle, never hyphenated), and a well-known person or work.

See also **DASHES**, **TIME & SPACE**, and **WORD-BREAKS**

ill

In BrE **ill** traditionally meant to be or to feel **unwell**, whereas **sick** implied that the sufferer was **nauseous** and might **vomit**. ✱ The meanings are reversed in AmE. Because BrE usage is increasingly following AmE, I was sick this morning could now mean I did not feel well rather than I vomited. The expression she called in sick means that she telephoned her employer (for example) to announce that, being unwell, she would not be coming to work. There is a new idiom for this: to throw a sickie. To avoid ambiguity, use **well** and **unwell** as appropriate. British mothers also use **poorly** to mean **unwell**. ‘Are you feeling poorly?’ she asked her daughter.

- When **ill** qualifies a state of health, it must be used predicatively, like the **A- WORDS**: The child is ill = The child is unwell = It is a sick child. (See **PRO-NOUNS**)
- Meaning **unfavourable** it is used pronominally (ill health | ill omen | ill use [juːs] – see **z/s**), and with a verb form (often the past participle) it forms a compound with a similarly ‘bad’ meaning: to ill-treat | ill-favoured | ill-formed, etc. (Use **HYPHENS** in compounds containing verb forms.)

impliquer covers several different meanings:

- **to implicate s.o.** is to show that the person has participated in s.t. bad.
- **to imply s.t.** is to communicate indirectly so that the addressee has to deduce the meaning. 'Is that so?' 'Are you implying that I'm wrong?'
- **to involve s.o.** is to include them in an activity or process. Compared with **to implicate**, it is morally neutral. When the complement is a verb, use the –ing form: activity x involves doing action y. Also used passively. Elizabeth did not expect Darcy to be involved in her sister's wedding.

important (FA) has only a qualitative meaning in English, not a quantitative one, so when it precedes the noun in French, as in *une importante somme d'argent*, use an adjective denoting size, e.g. a large sum of money.

in to vs into

In may combine with **to** when the two prepositions fulfil similar functions in the sentence. He put his hand into his pocket. When **in** is part of a verb (e.g. to give s.t. in) it does not combine with the **to** that introduces the indirect complement. She handed her essay in to her teacher. Contrast this with *He handed his essay into his teacher: somehow, the essay goes by hand 'into' the teacher – stuffed down his throat perhaps?

INVERSION of SUBJECT and VERB

English requires the inversion of subject and verb less often than French does. As a general rule, invert only

- for questions (Is that so?), or hypotheses (replacing *if*): 'Had we but world enough, and time...'—Andrew Marvell. NB The *but* functions like *only* here.
- when a negative or a restrictive, like **seldom** (but not **perhaps**), heads the sentence. Not until the third chapter does the narrator reveal his identity. | Never before had she written so long a novel. | At no point is the movement perceptible. | Rarely does the author allow her presence to be felt. | Only in the final scene is the villain unmasked. See also **only**
- when an adjective or adverb heads the sentence, as often found in poetry ('Much have I travelled in the realms of gold'—Keats) and
- in exclamations beginning with **how** (How green was my valley!).
- After quoted direct speech, inversion is optional, a stylistic effect that belongs to fiction-writing rather than the critical essay. 'Sheer magnetism, darling,' said Bond. When the subject is a pronoun, invert *only* with the verbs **say** and **ask**. 'The things I do for England,' said he with a sigh.
- No inversion is required in statements that may seem like indirect questions. Exactly where the story takes place is not made clear. | I don't know how the story ends. Unlike in French, inversion is not an option here. See also **non plus**, and **what & which**

it

French structures like *Comme je l'ai dit plus haut ... Comme nous l'avons vu ... Ainsi que vous pouvez le constater ...* must be rendered without an **it** in English: As we have already seen. As you may have noticed, this occurs particularly in sentences beginning with *as*.

- Conversely, an idiomatic, anticipatory **it** is required after verbs of deliberation like **consider**, **find**, **judge**, **think** and **to give it as one's opinion that...** I thought it useful to bring this to your attention. The same applies to structures like: I take it that you agree with me (*Je pars de l'idée que vous êtes d'accord*). | Stop proposing solutions! You're making it hard for me to choose. See also **to leave s.o. to do s.t.**; **so**; and also **worth**

jusqu'à

Use **until** ('til or even **till**) only for time; for movement use **to** or **as far as**. Lady Catherine offered to take Elizabeth with her as far as London, in her barouche. In writing, an old form, **hitherto**, meaning **until now** (*jusqu'alors*), is still used for time; see **here**, **there** and **where**.

For 'space' in texts use **down to** or **up to**. Down to the end | Up to p.123

JUXTAPOSITION vs COORDINATION

French tends to juxtapose ideas, whether as nouns, phrases, or whole sentences. English does not, preferring to show the relationship between them. So put **and** between two items and before the last item in a list. X, y, and z (or **or**, depending on the context: X, y, or z.)

- In English, two grammatically independent sentences must be separated by at least a semi-colon, not just a comma (as in French). The French practice is deplored in English as a run-on sentence or 'comma splice'.
- For the same reasons, English does not tolerate verbless sentences in expository prose (such as you write in essays).

language

English, French, and German are each a (countable) **language**. **Language** is uncountable when it means a **style of speech** – metaphorical language, for example – and in this case it takes no article. Contrast What a language! Is it Hindustani? with What language! Stop swearing, please!

See also **CAPITAL LETTERS**, and **COUNTABLE vs UNCOUNTABLE**

laugh, laughing and laughter

All three correspond to *le rire*: **laugh** is countable and punctual (a short laugh | his fooling raised a few laughs); **laughing** (uncountable) is durative (There is generally no laughing at a funeral) and more directed towards the action, whereas **laughter** (also uncountable) may be concrete, evoking the

sound (Their laughter echoed down the corridor) or abstract, as in Bergson's 1900 study of laughter, *Le Rire*. (For *punctual* and *durative* see **ASPECT**)

leave vs let

Both translate *laisser*, and the difference in usage is as much a question of structure as of meaning. First of all, **let** is an auxiliary that requires an infinitive without **to** and means **to allow**. On the other hand, **leave** can stand without a following infinitive (cf. *quitter*); if it has one, it will be with **to**; and it means either **to permit** or **to go away** (*s'en aller*; *partir*).

☞ Let go and leave go both mean *lâche!* – but if a direct complement is added, only **let** is possible. Let him go! With an adverb it remains **let**: Let him go alone! (*Qu'il aille seul!*) But with an adjective, the verb must be **leave**: Leave him alone! (*Laissez-le tranquille!*)

- **let** cannot be used in a passive structure; use **allow**: They would not let me speak = I was not allowed to speak.
- Verbs of movement, such as **go** and **come**, may be omitted after **let**, the direction being expressed by a preposition. 'Let me in – let me in!' cried Catherine at the window. | Estella approached with the keys to let me out.
- Both **to let s.o. do s.t.** and **to leave s.o. to do s.t.** convey the idea that the subject does not intervene, **let** inclining more to the idea of *permission*, and **leave** to the notion of *desertion* or leaving the object *alone*. So Let me do it by myself means I want you to allow me to do it without your help, and Leave me to do it by myself means I want you to go away while I do it without another person, including you, being present.
- **to leave s.o. to do s.t.** may include the notion of entrusting the person with the (possibly unwelcome) responsibility of performing a task. I'll leave you to do that while I'm away. The same idea may be expressed with an idiomatic **it**: I'll leave it to you to put in the corrections. See also **it**

loose vs lose

- **loose** [lu:s] means **not tight** (loose clothes); **not attached or not firmly fixed** (a loose end | a loose tooth | to break loose); or **not assembled into a compact unit** (loose hair | loose change). It is also a noun: on the loose = *en liberté*.
 - **to lose** [lu:z] is the verb corresponding to *perdre*. Compared with **loose** it has *lost* an 'o', which makes the spelling easy to remember.
- ★ Contrast **looser** [lu:zə] = *moins serré* with a **loser** [lu:zə] = *un perdant, un(e) raté(e)*. See also **z/s**

Ltd

Placed after the name of a company, **Ltd** indicates that the financial responsibility of the shareholders is limited (cf. the French *Sàrl*). When speaking, say ['lɪmɪtɪd]. Like **Inc.** (short for *incorporated*; say [ɪŋk]), it is an

abbreviation, not an acronym, so it does not need to be spelled out. Not written in **CAPITAL LETTERS**. For the punctuation, see **ABBREVIATIONS**

make vs do

Both **make** and **do** translate *faire*. As a general rule, **make** is *punctual*, used for constructive, creative activities (love | an effort | a fortune) or ones involving personal responsibility (a promise | a mistake | a mess) whereas **do** is *durative*, used for routine, habitual activities (the shopping | the washing | one's teeth), including studies (I'm doing English at school), jobs and – in questions – professions: What does he do? He's a lawyer but he also does odd jobs at the weekend. Thus we can contrast to make a crossword (i.e. create one) with to do a crossword (i.e. resolve one). (For *punctual* and *durative* see **ASPECT**)

- In passive constructions, the contrast is clear: You're made! (i.e. your future is assured) | You've been done (i.e. swindled).
- Note also: That's a nice new car! What speed does it do? | He's doing time in Wormwood Scrubs (i.e. serving a prison sentence). | She does for the Hadley-Smiths (i.e. does the housework for them). | He did all the food shops in search of a cucumber for the sandwiches, without success.

MARKED VS UNMARKED FORMS

The marked form of a pair of words carries more distinguishing features than the unmarked. Compared with animal, words like cow, horse, mouse, and pig are all marked forms; compared with horse, words like foal, gelding, mare, and stallion are marked forms. This distinction can be applied to syntactic structures: I know is unmarked whereas the emphatic I do know is marked (or emphatic).

marriage & matrimony vs wedding

Use **marriage** for the state and the relationship, **matrimony** for the institution, and **wedding** for the ceremony. Their wedding lasted two days and their marriage only three – matrimony obviously didn't agree with them. An old-fashioned word for the institution of marriage, **wedlock**, would be possible here (wedlock obviously didn't agree with them), but it might sound pompous today. It is still used in the phrase 'born out of wedlock'.

MEMORY: NOUNS

- a **memoir** is a short personal account of past events; usually plural when autobiographical. *Memoirs of a Geisha*.
- a **memory** is a trace in the mind of a past event. Treasure happy memories!
- **remembrance** is generally used only in the sense of honouring the memory of s.o. or s.t. I summon up remembrance of things past—Shakespeare (Sonnet 30). Remembrance Day honours the dead of two world wars.

- a **recollection** is a memory that you bring to consciousness, often used negatively, e.g. He had no recollection of what happened after he drank the bottle of vodka. As an uncountable, it emphasizes the act of remembering, most often used in the set phrase, to the best of my recollection.
- a **reminder** is anything that causes s.o. to remember s.t.
- a **reminiscence** is an account of one or several memories. Old men love reminiscing about the exploits of their youth.
- a **souvenir** (FA) is an object, often of little use or value, that is sold to tourists, or something kept as a reminder of a past event or person.

MEMORY: VERBS

- **to memorize** is to deliberately and consciously commit s.t. to memory; to learn by heart. The actress was memorizing her lines (see *réplique*).
- **to recall s.t.** – a deliberate act of remembering; cannot be intransitive. Can you recall what you were doing at this time last week? Also used when an object has similarities with s.t. else. This story recalls the early work of James Joyce. No indirect complement can be added; cf. **to remind s.o.** of s.t.
- **to recollect s.t.** emphasizes the ability to remember s.t. A formal verb, it is often used interrogatively, negatively, or with ‘if’. ‘Do you recollect what you were doing on the night of November 5?’ enquired the judge.
- **to remember (to do) s.t.** – a spontaneous or a deliberate act; can be either transitive or intransitive; must have an animate subject. I remember, I remember / The house where I was born—Th. Hood. You can tell s.o. to remember to do s.t.: Remember to hand in your essay on time!
- **to remind s.o. of s.t. or to do s.t.** – an interpersonal transaction; cannot be intransitive. Bulstrode reminded the doctor of his promise (= that he had promised) to give his services free of charge. | Remind me to hand in my essay!
- **to remind s.o. of s.t.** – a subjective experience: a characteristic of s.o. or s.t. makes s.o. think of s.o. or s.t. else. Always with both direct and indirect complements. This story reminds me of the early work of James Joyce.

mépris

- **to despise** s.o. or s.t. is a verb only. The noun is **scorn** (or **contempt**).
- **to scorn** is generally used with things rather than people, with the meaning of **to refuse s.t. with disdain**. Jane scorned his assistance in descending from the carriage at Thornfield. | Scorn not the sonnet—Wordsworth.

milieu

Use **middle** (e.g. in the middle of the novel) unless you mean **surrounded by** (*au milieu de la foule*), in which case use **in the midst** (of the crowd).

Use **milieu** for the social circle or class in which a person moves.

See also **at** and **in** with **the beginning** and **the end**

moral, morals, morale, and morality

- The **moral** (countable) of a story is the lesson that can be drawn from it; it may be explicitly expressed by the writer or left for the reader to deduce. La Fontaine’s *Fables* often end with a moral. The moral of the story is that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones.
- **Morals** (always plural) are the principles and values (q.v.) which underlie the acceptable ways of behaving, for an individual or a society. Uriah Heap’s lack of morals makes him one of Dickens’s most detestable villains.
- The **morale** (uncountable; stress the second syllable [məˈrɑ:l]) of a person or group is the level of optimism and confidence they feel, particularly in adverse situations. The morale of the soldiers that we glimpse in Jane Austen’s novels is consistently high, despite the war with France.
- **Morality** (uncountable) is the principle or belief that some ways of behaving are right, proper, and acceptable, and that others are wrong. Does Hardy question the morality of Tess’s murder of Alec D’Urberville?

NAMES

Always use the customary names of famous people (such as writers). This is usually the form found on the title page of their works, but may differ. Thus we speak of the poet Keats, for example, as ‘Keats’ or ‘John Keats’. If you suddenly refer to ‘J. Keats’ in an essay, the reader may well think that this is another Keats, since you are not using the customary form. Beware of local traditions: Anglo-Saxons speak of ‘Poe’ or ‘Edgar Allan Poe’ but never ‘Edgar Poe’ (as the French do).

- Do not call writers by their first name alone, as though they were old friends of yours, except to distinguish between members of the same family. When it came to writing poetry, Emily far surpassed her sisters.
- When amongst speakers of English, wherever you may be, always give your own name in the order: first name + family name. Of course you may say, My name is Bond. Jane Bond, but never say *Bond Jane.

See also **CIRCUMLOCUTIONS**, and **HONORIFICS**

next with and without the definite article

Without the definite article, **next week / year** means *la semaine / l’année prochaine*. With the article, **the next week / year** (like **the following week / year**) means *la semaine / l’année suivante*. **The next day** is *le lendemain*.

- **The next door** is merely *la porte suivante*, whereas **next door** is the house or flat adjacent to the speaker’s, or the people who live there, *les voisins*. Next door wants us to turn down the volume.
- **With time**, notice how the article is required if there is a complement: Remember this next time. | Remember this the next time you write.

no

Use **no** before nouns and comparatives. No man is an island—John Donne. | No way! | No hope. | no fewer than before | no greater love | no less a man

no longer vs no more

Prefer **no longer** for time, and **no more** for other quantities. When Silas looked round, she was no longer there. There was no more gold either.

☞ When the **no longer** or **no more** precedes the verb, no auxiliary is required, because the **no** qualifies the **longer** or **more** and not the verb. At this point in the novel, she no longer wishes to marry him. See **not only** for a similar case. See also **no**, and **INVERSION**

- Remember that **any more** is always written as two separate words.

non plus

To express this notion, negate the main verb(s), and place **either** at the end of the second statement. She wasn't there. He wasn't either. (The first statement may be implicit, or made earlier in the text.) In this structure only **either** is possible.

Alternatively, you can use **neither** or **nor** as the first word of the second phrase + **INVERSION**. She wasn't there. Neither was he. In this structure there is no semantic difference between **neither** and **nor**. Let euphony and rhythm dictate your choice.

Otherwise use **nor** only after **neither** or with an **INVERSION** after a negation. Neither she nor I find this difficult. Nor do our friends.

- **Nonplussed** means to be surprised, confused or bewildered, so that the subject is not sure how to react. The question left me nonplussed.

☞ A new meaning – more or less opposite to this traditional meaning – has recently appeared in AmE, as in he was clearly trying to appear nonplussed. This probably originated from the mistaken belief that *non-* was a negative prefix. This usage is not standard AmE or BrE, and is best avoided, for it can easily lead to misunderstanding.

not only

In sentences where **not only** precedes the verb, no auxiliary is required because the **not** governs the **only** and not the verb. Tess not only christens her child but buries it as well. See **no longer** for a similar case. For sentences beginning with **not only**, see **INVERSION**. See also **only**

NOUNS ending –IC(S)

Of the more common abstract uncountable **-ic** nouns, only **arithmetic**, **logic**, **magic**, **music** and **rhetoric** do not have an 's' at the end; they are always treated as singular. All the others (e.g. linguistics, mathematics, pragmatics, and semantics) are treated as *singular* until they are qualified in

some way, when they become *plural*. Acoustics is the science of sound. | The acoustics of the concert hall were near perfect. | Their politics are dubious.

☞ In BrE, **mathematics** is abbreviated to **maths**; in AmE it is **math**.

- As a rule, countable nouns never end with the 's' in the singular. For the exceptions see **NOUNS** ending **-s**.
- As a general rule, prefer the more concrete form of abstract **-ic** nouns. **Symbolism** rather than the symbolic, **theme** rather than the thematic, and **problem** rather than the problematic. These abstract forms have specialized meanings which may be thought of as the state produced by the corresponding verb: the problematic is what is produced by problematizing something; the symbolic is produced by symbolizing. See also **ADJECTIVES** in **-ic** and **-ical**

NOUNS ending –S

A few countable nouns end with 's' in the singular. Some common ones are: a barracks, a crossroads, a means, and a series [ˈsiəriːz]. Their plural form being exactly the same as the singular, only the verb will indicate the number. The means employed is/are as important as the desired end.

- **news** is always singular;
- **the Middle Ages** (see **DATES**), **surroundings**, and **thanks** are always plural.
- For **maths** see **NOUNS ENDING –IC(S)**

nous sommes

French commonly introduces the time and/or place of a scene or action with *Nous sommes* (*en France en 1914 et la guerre vient d'éclater*, for example). This is not done in written English. In fact, using 'we are' like this in an essay might give the impression that the writer is thoroughly confused. Say something like, The novel opens in France at the outbreak of the first world war. cf. **we can notice**

NUMBERS

When a number, however large or small, is the first word of a sentence, it should always be spelled out. Three days later... | *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is by far the most famous of George Orwell's novels. See also **DATES**

<100 All numbers up to one hundred should be spelled out in literary prose (the first sixty chapters of *Bleak House*), except in page references (see 'numbers after one hundred', below).

- When speaking, pronounce numbers as you do when counting (I'm quoting line twelve of stanza twenty-seven), except for digits after the decimal point; name them one by one: 3.142 = three point one four two.

- In everyday speech the zero is pronounced ‘oh’ [əu], represented in writing by the lower-case letter ‘o’. Agent double-o-seven (007). In maths and the sciences it is **nought** [nɔ:t]. Nought point one (= 0.1). (In Britain, the years 2000 to 2009 are punningly referred to as ‘the noughties’.) Use **zero** to name the number in isolation (The progression tends towards zero) and for counting down. Three. Two. One. Zero. We have lift-off! Contrast **nought** with the archaic word **naught**, also pronounced [nɔ:t], meaning **nothing**; it is used in phrases like it was for naught (*cela ne servait à rien*), bring to naught (= to ruin), and he’s naught but a fool.
 - Stress **thir’t**een clearly on the second syllable, and **’thirty** on the first. The same applies to all the numbers from 14 to 19 versus 40 to 90.
- >101 After one hundred, we use figures when writing, unless we are being approximate: Barbara Cartland wrote more than seven hundred books.
- When speaking, we have two options. A number used as a means of reference is usually ‘named’ digit by digit: ‘Look at page one two three four (= p.1234) in your *Norton Anthology*.’ This also applies to telephone numbers, post codes, car number plates, etc. When we feel we are *counting*, on the other hand, we name the hundreds and thousands: ‘I’ve written two thousand, six hundred and thirty-seven words today!’ In this case, you should always say the ‘and’ after the hundreds in BrE, and after the thousands even when no hundred is mentioned. 2008: two thousand and eight.
 - Use roman numerals for monarchs (e.g. Henry VIII: we say ‘Henry the Eighth’ but *do not write* the article; cf. **DATES**), and – where the printed source does so – for acts and scenes in plays and parts of novels. When not spelled out, centuries are always written in arabic numerals. See also **DATES**, and **DEFINITE ARTICLE**

offrir is a FA when used to mean **to give (a present)**: *ses parents lui ont offert une voiture pour ses vingt ans*. Translate this using **offer** and an English speaker would expect the statement to continue with something like, and (s)he declined at once, saying (s)he would prefer a trip round the world. **to offer** means to propose s.t. *that the other may refuse*. He offered his help.

one(s) replaces a noun that has just been mentioned. This poem is a difficult one. It is *not* required after a colour (I prefer the blue), an ordinal number, a genitive, a comparative or a superlative, including **first** and **last**. This book was his third. It was his best and last. | Charlotte’s view of marriage was not the same as Elizabeth’s.

only governs the word that follows immediately after it, so place it carefully. Only she could hate him for what he had said. | She could only hate him for what he had said. | She could hate only him for what he had said. | She could hate

him only for what he had said (and therefore not for what he had *done*) | She could hate him for what he had only said (and *not done*).

See also **INVERSION of SUBJECT and VERB**

or

To render the French conjunction *or*, you have to choose between **although**, **and**, **but**, **however**, and **yet**, or various phrases. To introduce:

- conflicting evidence (and mean *et pourtant*), use **although**, **but** or (**and**) **yet**: His diary records that he sent the poem off at once, but / (and) yet the editor claims he never received it. **However** requires a fresh sentence: However, the editor claims he never received it. A milder form uses just **and**: *Tu m’as dit que tu serais là, or tu n’y étais pas* = You told me you’d be there and you weren’t.
- clinching evidence (*le coup de grâce*), use a phrase like Now the fact (of the matter) is that | It just so happens that | What actually happened was that ...

ORIENTATION IN SPACE and the sense of direction

English has a more developed sense of spatial orientation than French. Consider King Dagobert who put his trousers on *à l’envers*: were they **upside down**, **inside out**, **back-to-front**, **the wrong way round**, or just on **backwards**? Each term has a slightly different meaning. Another example: *Je suis là!* means ‘I am here!’ In English only a schizophrenic would say, ‘I am there!’

- Many English verbs imply direction with respect to the speaker, as in **borrow vs lend**, **bring vs take** or **send**, **come vs go**, **drive vs lead** (*mener*). When you pay to live in a house or flat that belongs to someone else, you **rent** it; the owner **lets** it.
- Beware of French words in which the *re-* prefix does not imply repetition, as in *se retourner* for to **turn round**, and *réunir* for **bring together** or **unite**. Students **hand in** their work; teachers **hand it back**.

See also **here**, **there** and **where**, and **this** vs **that**

où

French habitually uses **où** with reference to time (*le jour où*); English generally does not. When the period of time (day, week, month, etc.) is specified, use **when**. Elizabeth would never forget the day when she first saw Pemberley. You can also use **on which** for days, and **in which** or **during which** for longer (and less definite) periods of time. That was the year in which / the summer in which / the holiday during which / she first saw Pemberley.

- For conditions, states and situations use **in which** or **which ... in**.
- For *d’où* in argumentation use **hence** or **whence** – see **here**, **there** and **where**.

own (adj.) must be preceded by a possessive article: my / her / our / their own book, for example. *An own book is impossible.

PASSIVE VOICE

In literary analysis, avoid statements like 'it is said'. The passive voice deletes the agent, whereas one of the major components of close reading consists in determining *who* (particularly between narrator and character) says *what*.

penny

In the past, the British **penny** (see **POUNDS**, **SHILLINGS** and **PENCE**) had two plural forms: **pennies** for the coins, and **pence** for their value; so s.t. worth twopence (pronounced and sometimes spelled **'tuppence**) could be purchased with two pennies. Since decimalization in 1971, people say [pi:] for both: It's only worth 3p | Have you got a 2p piece? [ə 'tu: 'pi: 'pi:z]

people is either singular, corresponding to *peuple*, or the standard plural of **person** (q.v.). Some people began to say, 'Let's consult the people.'

permettre covers a much wider semantic field than **to permit**, which is generally used only for the act of giving s.o. permission to do s.t., often passively. Visitors are often permitted to view stately homes. In negative and passive sentences, **to allow** is frequently employed: Unauthorized persons not allowed beyond this point. See also **leave**, and **let**

Other ways of expressing *permettre* depend on the complement:

- When the object is a person, use **to enable** or **to make it possible for s.o. to do s.t.** This approach enables the novelist to ...
- When the object is a thing, use **to make s.t. possible**, or **to make it possible to do s.t.** That's what makes the tragedy possible.
- When the object is an infinitive, use **to enable** and add a direct complement: *Le couplet final permet de résoudre la situation*. The closing couplet enables the speaker to resolve the situation.
- **permit**, **allow** and **enable** all require a direct object. In other words, you cannot say *This allows to draw the following conclusion.

person has two plurals:

persons, which is generally used in formal and legal contexts (This table seats four persons | Several missing persons have recently been found), and

people (q.v.) corresponding to *gens*.

See also **PRONOUNS**

persuader

As a general rule, use **to persuade** for the *process* of making s.o. change their mind (cf. **POINTS OF VIEW**), and **to be convinced** for the *state* of having

been persuaded or having a fixed opinion or prejudice about s.t. Are you convinced? Have I succeeded in persuading you to use these verbs like this?

POINTS OF VIEW

Your **opinion** and your **views** express your own thoughts or ideas about s.t.

Point of view adds an implicit spatial metaphor of being situated in a certain spot. You express your ideas *about* s.t., or view or opinion *of* s.t., from 'where you stand'; you cannot have a point of view *about* s.t. Notice that the preposition changes when **view** is plural: What are your views on (i.e. opinion of) gay marriage?

Point of view is synonymous with **perspective**: a mountain seen from a high-flying aeroplane may appear a mere pimple, while from the riverbed at its foot it towers to heaven. Thus we can share the same opinion (It's a mountain!), even though our points of view (or **stand-points**) are different. Elizabeth had a low opinion of Mr Darcy. From her point of view he was proud and snobbish (q.v.), and Wickham offered her a similar perspective. From Darcy's standpoint, of course, the matter was quite otherwise.

- Where opinions are polarized into *for* or *against*, another metaphor, **position**, is sometimes used: What is your position on state intervention?
- For *un changement d'avis* English uses a **change of mind**; the verb is **to change one's mind** – *not* opinion – as in **to make up one's mind**. N.B. No other verb collocates with **mind** to express this.
- Do not use **vision** for opinion; it refers to future possibilities.

POUNDS, SHILLINGS and PENCE

Until it was decimalized in 1971, the British system of currency was based on the **penny** (q.v., abbreviated **d**), the **shilling** (**s**), and the **pound** (**£**). There were twelve pennies to a shilling, and twenty shillings to a pound (familiarily **quid** (inv.); thus £2 is two quid). The coins included the **farthing** ['fɑ:ðɪŋ] (1/4d), the **ha'penny** ['heɪpɪnɪ] (1/2d), the penny, the **threepenny bit** ['θri:pɪnɪ 'bit] (3d), the **sixpence** (the smallest of the silver coins), the shilling (familiarily **bob** (inv.); thus 10s is ten bob), the **florin** (2s), the **half-crown** (2s-6d or 2/6), and the **crown** (5s; latterly minted only in small quantities for commemorative purposes).

These coins were often referred to collectively by the name of the principal metal they contained: pennies were **coppers**, and the sixpence upwards **silver** (inv.). They begged for coppers and were astonished to receive a shower of silver.

The £1 coin, made of gold and called a **sovereign** ['sɔ:vɪn], was withdrawn in 1914 after 450 years and replaced with a paper note, which in turn gave way to the current £1 coin in the 1970s.

Another old gold piece, the **guinea** [ˈɡɪni], worth 21s (£1-1s-0d) was not minted after 1813, but some prices, particularly of luxury goods, were still quoted in guineas right up until decimalization in 1971.

préciser has no single, precise(!), equivalent verb in English. You can use **to clarify** or **to specify** or phrases like **to make it clear that**, **to be quite clear about s.t.**, **to be (or more) specific about s.t.**, **to spell s.t. out**, etc.

Il faut préciser que may be rendered by it must (or should) be **pointed out** that ... Alternatively, use I should (like to) add or mention that ...

- **precision** is uncountable and refers to the fact or condition of being accurate or precise. What detailed precision in this short story!
- To render the French notion of additional facts, use **further** (q.v.) **details**, or **more information**. *Une précision!* introducing an intervention at a meeting would be On a point of information, I should like to add that
- In an essay, *plus précisément* is best rendered by **more specifically**.

PRESENT VS FUTURE

In English the simple present tense often fulfils functions that correspond to the future in French. When discussing events in a work of fiction (q.v.) and the reader's experience of that work, use the present rather than the future (which tends to sound like a prediction). Ultimately, the reader discovers that Emma marries Mr Knightley.

PRESENT VS PAST

Use the present to recount fictional events – Emma finally marries Mr Knightley – and the simple past for historical events. Charles meets Sarah in the spring of 1867, the year the first volume of *Das Kapital* was published.

See also **nous sommes**

presque

In *affirmative* statements, reserve **nearly** for concrete (We're nearly there), rather than abstract, contexts or situations; **almost**, **practically**, and **virtually** can be used in any context.

- As **very nearly** belongs rather to the spoken language, when writing use **all but** (the poem was all but finished) or **well-nigh**, a literary word which adds a tinge of regret. Such a marriage was well-nigh impossible for Romeo.
- Use **almost** to qualify an adverb: Darcy turned to go almost immediately.
- Where *presque* can be replaced by *quasi*, prefer **practically**. Elizabeth was practically certain never to see him again.

In *negative* statements (i.e. *presque pas*), use **hardly**, or **barely**.

- For *presque plus*, you can say **almost no** (q.v.) in addition to **barely**, **hardly** and **scarcely** + **any**: She felt there was almost no hope left (= barely / hardly / scarcely any hope left).

- For *presque rien* think of **virtually nothing** as well as **almost nothing** and **barely anything**.
- In short answers (*Non, presque pas.*), **almost** goes with **never** and **none**, and **hardly** with **any** and **ever**. 'Is there any wine left?' 'No, hardly any / almost none.' 'In any case, do you drink?' 'Hardly ever / almost never.'

prétendre (FA)

to pretend means *faire semblant*. For *prétendre (que)* use **to claim** (that), except in the noun form: the pretender to the throne.

to procure is a ✱ FA! While basically meaning to obtain s.t., especially with care or effort (she procured the drugs that he depended on), it is often used with the meaning of obtaining a prostitute for another person (so a **procurer** is a *proxénète*) or causing s.o. to do s.t., often illegal or illicit. Safer verbs are **to obtain**, **to provide**, or with sensations, **to arouse**.

PRONOUNS

English possessive pronouns 'agree' with the gender of the human owner of an object, thus *Le livre de la femme dans la main de l'homme* is simply her book in his hand. Other species and things like machines take personal pronouns *only* when we attribute human qualities to them.

- English lacks an impersonal pronoun for a **person**, **someone**, **no one**, **collective nouns**, and adjectives and past participles used as nouns (see **ADJECTIVES**). So we use **they** and **their**: Someone has left their coat here.
- In the case of **child**, however, we cannot use the plural so we fall back on **it**. This avoids the unpronounceable '(s)he' and 'her or his' etc., not to mention the embarrassment of getting the gender wrong.
- Beware of inadvertently changing pronoun in mid sentence. If you start with **one**, carry on with **one**. Do not change to **us** or **her** or **him**. See also **thou**, **thee** and **thy/thine**

provoquer is a FA when it means to **cause s.t. to happen** or to **bring s.t. about**.

To provoke s.o. is to (deliberately) make them angry. The corresponding noun is **provocation**. The present participle is often used adjectivally in this sense when addressing a child: Don't be so provoking! (i.e. Your behaviour is annoying me.) However, ✱ the primary meaning of **provocative** is 'tending to arouse sexual desire'—NODE.

QUOTING from POETRY

When you make a quotation that includes more than one line of verse, use a slash (/) to show where the line end falls. Full many a glorious morning have I seen / Flatter the mountain-tops—Shakespeare (Sonnet 33).

- Poetry (or ‘verse’ when it is rhymed) comes in **lines**; as a countable, **verse** is a familiar word for **stanza**, so it is a FA. See also **DEFINITE ARTICLE**

rather

Be careful of **rather**, first because it often evokes the spoken rather than the written language, then because its effect varies according to the adjective it qualifies, and finally because of differences in word order between French and English.

- Meaning: it enhances a positive adjective (This is rather interesting), gives a negative connotation to a neutral one (She came rather early), and makes a negative adjective a little more positive (The film was rather boring). Not recommended for use in essays.
- Word order: the French *plûtôt x que y* can go directly into English when it forms a complete optative statement, with adjectives or verbs: Rather dead than red. | Rather starve than surrender. **But when *plûtôt x que y* is a factual complement, we say, for clear-cut cases, His face was white rather than pink or They preferred to starve rather than surrender. For less affirmative statements, use **rather more**: His face was rather more red than pink.**

receipt

As an uncountable, **receipt** is the act of receiving something – I acknowledge receipt of your letter – and as a countable it is a document acknowledging a payment (= *un reçu*). In the past (see novels by Jane Austen, for example), it could also mean the same as *recipe* [*resipi*] (= *une recette*).

Pronunciation: [rɪˈsi:t]. See **silent p**

refrain vs restrain

to **refrain from doing s.t.** is to **abstain** from an action whereas to **restrain oneself** (without an indirect object) means to **hold oneself back**.

To refrain is never reflexive. Elizabeth could not restrain herself: ‘Would you kindly refrain from making derogatory comments about my family?’

REPETITION

English practises *minimal repetition* of prepositions, (relative) pronouns, and function words such as *this* and *that* (and not *such as *this* and such as *that*). So to his mother and father **rather than** *to his mother and to his father.

réplique

In a play, an uninterrupted statement by one character to another is a **speech**. Use **answer** and **reply** for responses to questions or remarks. When an actress learns her speeches, she says she is learning her **lines**.

rien à faire

When *rien à faire* means something like ‘there is no remedy’, use a passive construction: **there is nothing to be done** (about s.t.). For the other meaning, use a personal subject: ‘I am bored because I have **nothing to do**.’

rien d’autre by itself is **nothing else**. *Rien d’autre que* is either **nothing other than** or **nothing (else) but**.

risquer should be rendered by **to risk** only when it means **to endanger** (Maggie risked her life to save her brother from the flood). In less dramatic situations, use **to venture**. Elizabeth ventured only one glance at Darcy.

- When it expresses *possibility*, use a modal: Don’t eat that; it may be poisonous. | Don’t climb up there: you might fall.
- When it expresses *probability*, use **to run the risk of being** + past participle for *passive* situations (Oliver ran the risk of being arrested), and **likely to** for *active* ones. David knew that Mr Murdstone was likely to beat him if he did not learn his lesson properly.
- To add a habitual aspect, use **liable to**. At any moment Betsy Trotwood was liable to jump up and chase the donkeys away from her garden.
- In legal contexts, use **to face**. Fagin faced at least twenty-five years in prison.

scarce [skɛəs] is best used as a predicate: strawberries are scarce this year. Pronominal use is rare; in this position it means ‘less than wished or hoped for’. She made use of the scarce opportunity to comment on the lecture. More neutral terms would be **occasional**, **rare** or possibly **infrequent**.

seduce, seduction, and seductiveness

✱ **to seduce** s.o. is **to induce** s.o. **to have sexual relations**, especially for the first time. Arthur seduced Hetty in the orchard. Consequently her **seduction** was an event that she experienced (q.v.). Her **seductiveness**, on the other hand, refers to her sexual attractiveness.

- **to be seduced**, usually with an inanimate agent, means that a person (q.v.) is drawn into doing s.t. (not only sexual) against their better judgment. Seduced by the prospect of making an instant fortune, he ...

selon may be **according to** (a source of information; like *d’après*) or **depending on** (a condition; like *suivant*). The Gospel according to St John. | Depending on the Gospel you read, you get a different story.

shortly may relate to time, meaning **soon** (I’ll be with you shortly) or it may qualify the manner of speaking, signifying **bad temper** or **impatience**: He answered me shortly. Context will determine which sense is intended. For **brevity** (shortness of expression, especially in writing) use **briefly**.

si

In French, it is common to begin sentences with *si* to express a logical relationship: *S'il a réussi, c'est grâce à ...*. As a rule English does not use **if** like this when the statement is a matter of *fact*, rather than a *hypothesis*. We would say Thanks to ..., he succeeded in ... or He succeeded because When there's a change of subject, use **whereas** (x does this, whereas y does that).

- The same applies to **même si**: use **even though**, or even **even when**, for matters of fact. The mood of the following verb reflects this: even if it *were* true and even though it *is* true. In short, reserve **if** for hypotheses.
- When the structure suggests the idea '... or not,' use **whether**. She was not sure whether she should accept him (or not).

SINCE vs FROM (meaning à partir de)

Use **since** for past time and **from** for future time and space: Since last month | From next October | From line twenty-four | From the beginning of the book.

Use **since** with parts of books only when you are referring to *the temporal experience of reading*, e.g. we have been in doubt as to the fate of the hero since the beginning of this chapter.

snob is a noun; the adjective is **snobbish** – and the behaviour **snobbery**.

so

Use **so** rather than **it** (q.v.) in short answers after verbs like expect, hope, say, suppose, and tell. Had you forgotten? I'm afraid so. Will you now remember? I think so. Also when there is no verb: How so? Just so! Note this usage: There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so—Shakespeare.

- ☞ Remember the particular word order when **so** is used to emphasize an adjective: so long a story, for instance. This is equivalent to saying 'such a long story.' The same word order occurs with **that**: it's not that big a problem, really = it's not such a big problem = it's not so big a problem.

some time vs sometime

It is easy for French speakers to distinguish between **some time** (*du temps; un certain laps de temps*) and **sometime** (*une fois ou l'autre*). In *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth spends some time with her friend Charlotte, and some with her aunt and uncle. | 'Why don't you come up sometime 'n' see me?'—Mae West.

- **any time** corresponds to **some time** in negative and interrogative sentences, whereas **anytime** is *n'importe quand*.
- **sometime** may be used pronominally with the meaning of **former** (*ancien* – q.v.): George W. Bush, sometime president of the United States ...

soumis

To render *soumis* you must first identify the notion you wish to convey, and then find a suitable verb or phrase. For example, when people do not stand up for themselves, use **submissive** or **dependent on**. He was a submissive partner. | Tess was entirely dependent on her husband. In more gendered senses, along the lines of *la femme était soumise à l'homme*, think of: Women were ruled by men. | They had to obey men. | They were treated as inferior to men. When a person has been ill-treated (q.v.), use **subjected to**. The prisoners had been subjected to extreme humiliation. For active repression, there are many verbs: The natives, dominated / downtrodden / oppressed / subdued / subjugated / by the colonists ...

For more neutral and passive meanings, use phrases like the stock market is **liable to** violent fluctuation. | He was **subject to** fits of coughing.

NB The English have a sneaking sympathy for the **underdog**.

For *soumis à la condition de* use **conditional on**.

Use **submitted** only for things that are **put forward** or **proposed** for discussion or approval. The draft project was submitted to the commission.

stop

Contrast **to stop to do s.t.** (in order *to do*) with **to stop doing s.t.** (Clearly, you have to be *doing* it before you can *stop doing* it.)

See also *empêcher*

suffer-ing

When a person suffers (from s.t.), they experience **suffering**.

As a general rule, the only use of **sufferance** ['sʌfrəns] is in the idiom **on sufferance**. 'If you are allowed to do s.t. on sufferance, you can do it although you know that the person who gave you permission would prefer that you did not do it' (COBUILD).

tell takes a direct object (or two, as in to tell s.o. a story, a tale, or a lie). Thus you cannot say *He told that he had some problems. For such cases you must use another verb like admit, confess, confirm, reveal, say, etc.

thing is used affectionately of *people* in English: You lucky thing! (You've won the lottery.) | You poor thing! (You've cut yourself.) | Your grandmother is a dear old thing. There's no explaining an idiomatic usage like this. (If it shocks you, think of the French endearment, *mon chou*. To an English speaker, it's like calling s.o. a vegetable! Try 'honey-bunny' instead.)

this vs that

As demonstrative articles, **this** and **these** are for things that are close, such as something just mentioned, and **that** and **those** for things farther

away in time and space, like someone else's argument. The latter are best reserved for creating contrast or opposition. Beware: the distance of **that** may also be emotive, signifying rejection, humour, irony, etc. Take that smile off your face!

☞ Use **this** for both the immediate past and the immediate future (this morning, this afternoon, this evening) except for **last night** (= *cette nuit*), **today**, and **tonight** (= *ce soir*), which require no demonstrative.

- As a pronoun and the subject of a sentence, **this** announces what is to follow (this is what Shakespeare wrote: 'This above all: to thine own self be true'), whereas **that** refers back to what immediately precedes: 'To be or not to be; that is the question'—Shakespeare | That's a simple enough rule, isn't it?

cf. **what** and **which**. See also **MARKED vs UNMARKED FORMS, ORIENTATION IN SPACE, and so**

thou, thee and **thy/thine** are archaic forms for the second person singular. You will find them in poems, prayers, and dialects. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?—Shakespeare (Sonnet 18) | Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name | Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

throughout is a most useful preposition (rhyming with 'threw out') that means **all (the way) through, during all, and from start to finish**. This is a technique that Jane Austen uses throughout *Emma*. For emphasis add **whole** before the noun: Emma observed Frank throughout the whole evening.

TIME and SPACE in adjectives

There are two adjectival structures in English for expressing time and space.

- In the first, the unit of measure is hyphenated and invariable (cf. **ADJECTIVES**); a singular noun requires a determiner. She took a two-week holiday.
- The second structure contains an **ANGLO-SAXON GENITIVE**. No determiner is required in addition to the number; 'a' may be used to mean 'one': at a moment's notice | a fortnight's sick leave (i.e. sick leave lasting for two weeks) | She took two weeks' holiday | Cancellation requires three months' notice (i.e. three months in advance) | last season's fashions. See also **worth**
- The difference between the two is sometimes subtle: in Five hours' climbing brought her to the summit the implied point of view is the climber's. On the other hand A five-hour climb brought him to the summit is more objective. Between Her three-week holiday was pure heaven and The three weeks' holiday did him a world of good, on the other hand, the difference lies in the emphasis: in the first, it's the *holiday* that was heaven; in the second, it's the *duration*, as much as the holiday itself, that's important.

toujours covers two different meanings:

- **always** is for something that has happened (often frequently) in the past, happens now and is likely to continue happening in the future. Water has always been wet and always will be.
- **still** suggests that something was the case in the past and has not yet changed, although we expect it to, or know that it will change soon. Is it still raining? | I still haven't finished my essay.
- *Depuis toujours* is typically rendered by **since the beginning of time**.
- For *pour toujours* see **for ever**. See also **ever**

trouble is a troublesome word, often a FA.

- Use the *uncountable* noun for
 - (a) **difficulties** corresponding to *de la peine*, as in With all this traffic I had trouble getting here on time, and for *ennuis*: He's got money trouble again.
 - (b) the state in which s.o. deserves (or is liable) to be **punished** (You'll get into trouble if you do that. | He's in trouble again.), and for
 - (c) the **care** that s.o. takes to do s.t. She went to a lot of trouble to find the information. | He took the trouble to check the word before using it.
- As a *plural countable* noun, usually with a personal possessive article, it means **personal worries**. She shared all her troubles with her best friend. But with a **CAPITAL LETTER**, it refers to Ireland's violent struggle for independence in the early twentieth century. He was killed in the Troubles.
- For the **emotional state**, use the verb. She was deeply troubled (or **upset**) by his change of attitude.
- For other French usage of the noun to designate the **emotional state**, use **difficulties, or trials and tribulations**.
- With a modal, the *verb* is used for polite requests: Could I trouble you to open the door for me? (*Auriez-vous la gentillesse de...*). Beware of irony: if someone says to you, Would it trouble you to stop smoking? with a level tone of voice, you are either in a non-smoking area or you have ignored a previous polite request.
- The verb is also used for apologies prefaced with 'sorry': Sorry to trouble you = *Navré de vous déranger*.

urgence

Something that is **urgent** needs to be attended to at once (an urgent message), but *une urgence* is an **emergency**. In a British hospital, A&E handles Accidents and Emergencies; in the US, it's the Emergency Room (ER). In a crisis, a government may apply *emergency measures*, or request *emergency powers*, etc.

used to has two different pronunciations – see **z/s** – and various meanings:

- In passive constructions, **used** [ju:zd] + infinitive means that the subject is utilized to do s.t. *Vacherin* and *gruyère* are used to make fondue.
- Pronounced [ju:st], **used** expresses familiarity in the present or habit in the past. For the present, the structure is with –ing. I'm used to making fondue. For the past, signifying that the action is no longer performed or is no longer the case, the structure is with the infinitive. Heidi used to make fondue, but she stopped because her grandfather could no longer digest it. In spoken English, **used** is commonly reduced to just **use** [ju:s] in negative sentences: You didn't use to make fondue out of a packet!
- ✳ If you say /ju:zd/ instead of /ju:st/, your statement may become absurd: imagine saying, 'Heidi used [ju:zd] to make fondue.' D'you mean, she was put into the *caquelon*? That would be fondue for cannibals!

valid vs valuable and values

Something that is **valid** has operative effect, like a contract that has been drawn up in accordance with the law, or the right railway ticket for you and the journey you are making at that moment, or (in an essay) an argument that is well founded on the text. It may apply to a period: This ticket is valid 30 days from the date of issue. Noun: **validity**. Antonym: **invalid**, stressed [ɪn'vælɪd] – an ['ɪnvəlɪd] is a disabled or sick person.

- Something that is **valuable**, on the other hand, has monetary or sentimental value. Antonym: **worthless**. Noun: **valuables** (plural only).
- **Values** (always plural) are personal standards and principles of behaviour; cf. **morals**. ✳ The hotel notice, *Prière de laisser vos valeurs à la réception*, must therefore be translated Please leave your valuables at reception.
- BrE. This computer is good value = it is well worth (q.v.) what it cost.
- ✳ Against all expectation, **invaluable** means **precious** in a non-monetary sense. One day this information may be invaluable to you! | Invaluable advice.

(se) venger

The usual verb is **to take revenge** (intransitive; or **for** s.t. **on** s.o.); **to avenge** (s.t. like a crime or an insult) is more abstract and literary, whereas **to wreak vengeance** is concrete. Use the noun **revenge** for a specific instance, and **vengeance** for the concept. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.

verbs vs nouns

French loves nouns, especially abstract ones; English prefers verbs. If you are tempted to write of the problems of the interpretation and translation of these texts, think rather of the problems of interpreting and translating them.

want of s.t. means **a lack of s.t.** Want of foresight can lead to disaster.

for want of means **for lack of** (*faute de* or *à défaut de*): I'll call him simply 'the speaker', for want of a better term.

'**We can notice x**' (e.g. the regular form of this poem) is best avoided in literary analysis. It is possible to use the imperative instead – Notice the regular form of this poem – but it is preferable to make 'x' the subject of your statement: The regular form of this poem suggests that...

It is superfluous to write, 'It is interesting to notice' s.t., for if it was not interesting, you would not draw your reader's attention to it.

cf. *nous sommes*

what and **which** translate both *ce que* and *ce qui*

What refers to what is to follow, **which** to that which precedes. What makes this novel so convincing is its realism. | This novel is very realistic, which makes it particularly convincing. See also **all what?**

- As a relative pronoun, **what** signals a choice among an unlimited number of alternatives, whereas **which** implies a limited number (which may or may not be specified). There are 250,000 books in this library, and I don't know which to choose. I don't know what to do about it, either. I can't read them *all*.
- There is no inversion (q.v.) in a clause introduced by **what**: We do not know what the source of his inspiration was.

when

Use the present or past perfect after **when** (and **as soon as**) to express anteriority compared with the rest of the sentence, exactly as you would with **after**: When they have got to know each other, they discover ... The same applies to future events: I'll tell you as soon as (or when) I have finished (or I finish) my essay (*dès que je l'aurai fini*) | When I'm dead and gone...

See also *en faisant*

WORD-BREAKS

- ✳ Do not use the French hyphenation routine of your computer to break English words at the end of the lines: it will make nonsense of them, e.g. *thin-king for think-ing. Change the language option to English. When writing by hand or typing, insert the hyphen (q.v.) *between syllables*, especially prefixes and suffixes. If in doubt, don't hyphenate.

WORD ORDER

As a general rule, avoid putting adverbial clauses or phrases between subject and verb, or between verb and direct object. Adverbs and phrases of time go best first (or last) in the sentence.

See also **ADJECTIVES; INVERSION; non plus; not only; only; rather; so; what & which**

worth often corresponds to *valoir la peine*. Is this film worth watching?

Note the idiomatic *it* (q.v.) in sentences like Was the concert worth it? and Don't bother, it isn't worth it.

Combine **worth** with **while** (I think it would be worth your while doing x) to suggest that it would be profitable or useful to do x, despite the effort that may be required, i.e. that it would be **worthwhile**.

- The other common use of **worth** is for monetary value: What's it worth? = *Qu'est-ce que ça vaut?* When combined with amounts of money or time, it corresponds to *pour*: He bought her a hundred francs' worth of chocolate. | They stocked the chalet with a whole month's worth of food. See **TIME** & **SPACE** in compound adjectives. See also **valid**
- The fortune of a **man of worth** commands respect. His language (q.v.) distinguishes the man of spirit from the man of worth.
- When you do something for **all your worth**, you do it with great energy and determination. Maggie was rowing for all her worth against the current. See also **digne**, and **penny**

z/s

To distinguish between certain words which look alike but have different functions, English uses a phonemic opposition: /z/ in verbs (and **-er** nouns derived from them), and /s/ in nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Thus we find **to (ab)use** [ju:z] and **the (ab)user** [ju:zə] versus **the (ab)use** [ju:s], and adjectives like **useful** and **useless** ['ju:sləs], along with **to excuse** [ɪ'ksju:z] vs **the excuse** [ɪ'ksju:s]. Similarly, **to close** [kləuz] and **a closer** (derived from the verb, hence [kləuzə]) contrast with the adjective **close** [kləʊs] and its comparative **closer** [kləʊsə]. We have **to house** [haʊz] (*héberger*) and **housing** ['haʊzɪŋ], as both noun and adjective, e.g. housing estate, opposed to the familiar **house** [haus].

This contrast is also found in words whose stress changes with their grammatical function, e.g. **to refuse** [rɪ'fju:z] vs **refuse** ['refju:s] (= rubbish; *détritus* or *ordures*). It is sometimes reflected in the spelling too, as in **to advise** [əd'vaɪz] vs the **advice** [əd'vaɪs].

☞ Both **to practise** and the noun **practice** are pronounced ['præktɪs]; AmE tries to make the spelling reflect the pronunciation by writing **practice** in both cases. Applying the same principle, it introduces **analyze** for the verb, whereas BrE writes **analyse**; both are pronounced ['ænəlaɪz]. In both BrE and AmE the noun is spelled **analysis** [ə'nælɪsɪs].

- Both AmE and (very commonly today) BrE use the spelling **-ize** rather than **-ise** for verbs and (when they exist) the corresponding nouns: organize and organization | realize and realization.
- See the separate entries for **used to** and **lose** vs **loose**.

SEE BUT NOT SAY

Silent Consonants in (British) English

NB *These guidelines do not generally apply to proper names.*

- B** Always silent before a final *t* (debt, doubt, redoubt – think of *le réduit national*) and *-tle* (subtle rhymes with scuttle) and words formed on them (doubtful, doubtless), so *debtor* rhymes with *better*, for instance.
- It is always silent in final position after the letter *m*: bomb, climb, comb, crumb, dumb, lamb, succumb, thumb, tomb, etc. It remains silent in all words formed on them (except for *crumble*), so for instance *dumber* rhymes with *summer*, *bomber* with *comma* (in BrE at any rate), and *climbing* rhymes with ... *rhyming*.
NB Neither *bombard* nor *bombast* is derived from *bomb*, so both *bs* are pronounced in them. Similarly, the noun *number* ['nʌmbə] has nothing to do with *numb*, so the *b* is pronounced there too.
- C** Silent in *corpuscle* and *muscle* (which both rhyme with *mussel*) and *yacht* (which rhymes with *not*) and in words derived from it (*yachting*, *yachtsman*), BUT pronounced (as a /k/) in *corpuscular* and *muscular*.
- There is *one* verb in which the *c* is elided before *t*: *indict* [ɪn'daɪt], meaning 'to formally accuse s.o. of a serious crime' (NODE). This also applies to words derived from it, e.g. *indictment*.
- *c* in front of *k* forms a single /k/ sound. See also **κ**
- D** Silent in a few common words when followed by a consonant, e.g. *handkerchief* and *handsome*, and many people omit it in *Wednesday*.
- G** Silent in initial position when followed by *n* (*gnaw* – rhymes with *nor* – *gnash*, *gnat*, *gnome*, *gnostic*) and in words formed on them (but not in *agnostic*, since the *gn* is not in initial position). The African *gnu* [nju:], a kind of antelope, follows the rule, so it rhymes with *new*, but some people pronounce the *g*.
- It is silent when followed by *h* or *ht* in final position, and in words formed on them, irrespective of whether the *gh* group is pronounced /f/ (as in *cough*, *enough*, and *tough*) or is silent (as in (al)though, *thought* [θɔ:t], and *through*, which rhymes with *threw*). More examples: *fight*, *might*, *right*; *sigh*; *laugh* and *laughter*; also *daughter*, *slaughter*. *Weigh* rhymes with *way*, and *weight* with *wait*. (A pun. A: 'Tell me how heavy you are.'
B: 'No weigh!' (= *Il n'en est pas question puisque je ne me suis pas pesé/e.*)
- It is silent in words ending *-gm*, as in *diaphragm*, *paradigm*, and *phlegm* but not in words formed on them (*paradigmatic*, *phlegmatic*).

- It is silent when followed by *n* in final position (align, arraign, assign, design, malign, sign) both in their verb forms (designed, signing) and in words in *-er* and *-ment* formed on them (designer, signer; alignment, assignment), but pronounced in all others: designation, malignant, signature. (The /ai/ becomes /ɪ/ and the syllabication is *ma-lig-nant*, for example.)
 - It is silent in *-eign* words (feign, foreign, reign, and sovereign) and words formed on them (reigning, foreigner). Another pun: Why do the English always carry an umbrella? Because the Queen is still reigning.
 - It is also silent in words which we recognize as being French or Italian like *champagne* (rhymes with *sham pain*) or a /nj/ as in *cognac* [ˈkɒnjæk].
 - It is *not* silent in initial position in words beginning *gh-* (ghastly, ghost).
- H** Silent in initial position in just four words: *heir, honest, honour, and hour*. The same applies to words formed on them, like *honesty* [ˈɒnɪstɪ].
- ★ In AmE, the word *herb* is pronounced without the *h*, which can puzzle speakers of BrE, since the American ‘herbs’ sounds like the Latin *urbs*.
- It is silent in *wh-* words. Exceptionally, to distinguish between homophones such as *whale / wail* (Did I hear a whale wail?), *where / wear, which / witch* (Which witch is she?), *why / Wye*, the presence of the *h* may be indicated by blowing through the rounded lips before the *w*. See also **w**
 - Two exceptional silent aitches: Anthony, and the River Thames [temz].
 - In final position, the *h* is never aspirated (so always silent). Hurrah!
- K** Silent in initial position when followed by *n* (knack, knee, knight, knob, knock, knot, know) and in words formed on them (knacker, knocker, knob-bly, knotted, knowledge), including *acknowledge(ment)* [əkˈnɒlɪdʒ] – here it’s the *c* that sounds /k/.
- L** For the silent ell, learn this rhyme:
- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| After <i>o</i> and <i>a</i> | (Say: After oh and ay |
| Before <i>m</i> and <i>k</i> | Before em and kay |
| No ell. | – Christmas!) |
- A few examples: chalk, talk, and walk (NB a mobile telephone used to be called a *walkie-talkie* [ˈwɔːkɪˈtɔːkɪ]); the Falkland Islands (see also **s**); folk, yolk (= *le jaune d’oeuf*); almond, balm, calm, palm (both the tree and the part of your hand), psalm (note the silent **p**), and salmon (rhymes with *gam-mon*); Sherlock Holmes, and the holm oak (= *le chêne vert*).
- Americans are confused about this rule, so you will sometimes hear them pronounce the ell in common words like *palm* and *calm*. This rule does not apply to words formed by combining two other words, like *almost* [ˈɔːlməʊst], or foreign words like *polka* (the dance).
- The ell is also silent in words ending *-alf* like *calf* and *half*, and in words

- formed on them, even when the *f* becomes a *v* as in *calving* (said of a cow giving birth to a calf; unfortunately, in BrE it rhymes with *carving*).
 - Then of course there is a silent ell in *could, should, and would* (but not in any other apparently similar words, *shoulder*, for instance).
- ☞ Two exceptional cases: no ell in (Abraham) *Lincoln* [ˈlɪŋkən], nor in the military rank of *colonel* – it rhymes with *kernel*.
- M** Silent in initial position before *n*: *mnemonic(s)* [niːˈmɒnɪk], *mnemosyne*.
- N** Silent after *m* in final position (autumn, column, condemn, damn, hymn, solemn) and in their verb forms (so condemning rhymes with lemming) but *not* in nouns or adjectives formed on them (autumnal, condemnation, solemnity) – the syllabication is *au-tum-nal* and *sol-em-ni-ty*, for example.
- P** Silent in initial position in words of Greek origin beginning *pneu-* (pneumonia), *ps-* (psalm, pseudo-, Psyche, psychi-, and psycho-), and *pt-* (ptomaine, Ptolemy).
- Mid-word, it is silent before *b* in *cupboard* and *raspberry*, and before *t* in just *one* word: *receipt* [rɪˈsi:t] (q.v.), which rhymes with *deceit*.
- ☞ The silent *p* and *s* in *corps* [kɔː] (a group of ballet dancers, diplomats, or soldiers) significantly distinguish it from *corpse* [kɔːps] (a cadaver).
- R** In BrE, not pronounced before a consonant. In monosyllabic words, it lengthens the vowel: contrast *am* with *arm, had* with *hard, bid* with *bird, head* with *heard, pot* with *port, hut* with *hurt*, etc. If the vowel is already long, it becomes a diphthong: *bead* [bi:d] > *beard* [biəd].
- In BrE it is also silent in final position; it lengthens a single vowel (contrast *fit* with *fir, hen* with *her, not* with *nor*), and turns *-er* and *-our* (spelled *-or* in AmE) – *monosyllabic words excepted* – into a schwa /ə/: *ardour, clamour* (rhymes with *hammer*), *endeavour, favour, flavour, glamour, harbour, honour* (see **H**), *humour, labour, odour, rancour, rigour, rumour, saviour, savour, succour* – so it rhymes with *sucker!* – *valour, vigour, and vapour, etc.*
- ☞ Only in the word *iron* (meaning both the metal (*le fer*) and *le fer à repasser*), and in words formed on it, is the *r* silent between two vowels. In BrE *iron* sounds just the same as *ion* [aɪən].
- Do you do your own ironing? [ˈaɪənɪŋ]? I ask the question without *irony* (in which the *r* is pronounced as usual: [ˈaɪrənɪ]).
- S** Silent in *aisle, island, and isle*. (This enabled Janet Frame to play with multiple meanings in the title of her remarkable autobiography, *To the Is-land: Vers le Pays de l’être* and *J’Atterris* as well as the obvious *À l’île* or *Vers l’île*.) Also in *corps* [kɔː] (see **P**), and *tsetse* [ˈtetsɪ] (see **T**).

T Silent in words ending *-ften* and *-sten* like *chasten*, *christen*, *fasten*, *glisten*, *hasten*, *listen*, *moisten*, *often*, and *soften*. Also in words formed on them like *christening* [ˈkrɪsnɪŋ] (= *baptême*), *listener* [ˈlɪsnə], and *softener* [ˈsɒfnə]. NB Some people pronounce the *t* in *often*, and some use both forms, depending on the formality of the context.

- Also silent in words ending *-stle* like *apostle*, *castle*, *hustle*, and *jostle*; *mistle* (giving *mistletoe* (= *le gui*) and *mistlethrush* (= *la draine*, a kind of *grive*)); *rustle*, *thistle* (= *le chardon*), *trestle* (= *le tréteau*), *whistle*, and *wrestle*.
- Also silent in *chestnut* (= *châtain* & *châtaigne*), *Christmas*, and *mortgage* (= *l'hypothèque*).

☞ In AmE, words of foreign origin beginning *ts-* like *tsar*, *tsetse*, and *tsunami* are generally pronounced without the initial *t*. The fly in the ointment here is that BrE says [ˈtetsɪ] for *tsetse* (see the silent **s**).

W In initial position, it is silent in front of *h* in just six words: *who*, *whole*, *whom*, *whose*, *whooping-cough* (= *la coqueluche*) and *whore* (meaning *prostitute*), and in words formed on them (*whosoever*, *wholesale*, *wholesome*, *whoreson*). In all other *wh-* words (*what*, *when*, *where*, *whistle*, *whoop*, *why*) the *w* is pronounced and the *h* is not (see also **H**).

- Also silent in initial position in front of *r* as in: *wrap*, *wreck*, *wriggle*, *wright*, *wrist*, *write*, *writhe*, *wrong*, *wrought*, *wry* (and therefore *awry*: **A- WORDS**).
- It is silent in words ending (vowel)+*w*: *claw*, *raw*, *straw*; *few*, *new*, *knew*, *view*; *below*, *fellow*, *know*; *brow*, *cow*, *how*, *now*; and in words formed on them (even in *nowadays* [ˈnaʊədəɪz]), so *knowing* rhymes with *going*.

☞ Some BrE speakers pronounce an intervocalic /r/ in *drawing*: [ˈdrɔːrɪŋ].

- It is silent in the sequence (vowel)+*w*+(consonant) in initial, medial and final positions: *awkward*, *awl*, *awning*; *hawk*, *squawk*; *bawl*, *brawl*; *dawn*, *yawn*; *newt* (= *triton*); *strewn*; *howl*, *down*, *town*. Also in words ending with *e*: *awe*, *ewe* (a mother sheep, which sounds just like *you* – not you personally, of course), and *owe*; and in words formed on them: *awful*.
- NB the *-ow* sequence is pronounced either /au/ (as in *now*) or /eu/ (as in *know*); in some words both are possible, depending on the meaning: a deep bow [bau] (*une révérence profonde*) | a bow [beu] and arrows. The pronunciation is generally /au/ when *ow* is followed by a consonant: *brown*, *owl* (NB owls don't *howl* (= *hurler*), they *hoot*); but not in *bowl* or *own*.

☞ It is silent in the middle of *two* (rhymes with *too*).

- It is pronounced in common nouns like *sandwich* and *candlewick*, BUT is elided in many proper names: *Greenwich* [ˈɡrenɪtʃ], *Southwark* [ˈsʌðək] and *Warwick* [ˈwɔːrɪk] (and therefore *Warwickshire* [ˈwɔːrɪkʃə]).

★ Only the silent *w* in *sword* [sɔːd] (= *l'épée*) distinguishes it from a *lawn*: (*green*)*sward*. Get it right if you say, 'He fell on the sword'!

WHERE TO FIND ...

aback – A-WORDS
 ablaze – A-WORDS
 absence – few
 abstract – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS
 AD – DATES
 adrift – A-WORDS
 adulterate – altérer
 adverbs – WORD ORDER
 advice/advise – z/s
 afire – A-WORDS
 ahoy – A-WORDS
 aisle – silent S
 ajar – A-WORDS
 alike – A-WORDS
 alive – A-WORDS
 all but – presque
 all the way through – throughout
 all through – all + space and time
 all ... long – all + space and time
 all over – all + space and time
 allow – leave vs let; permettre
 almost – presque
 alone – A-WORDS
 along – all + space and time
 always – ever; toujours
 amiss – A-WORDS
 analyse/analysis/analyze – z/s
 animate(d) – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES;
 ANGLO-SAXON GENITIVE
 answer – réplique
 any more – no longer vs no more
 anytime – sometime
 appropriate(d) – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
 arabic numerals – NUMBERS
 arise – A-WORDS
 arithmetic – NOUNS ending -ic(s)
 army – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
 arouse – A-WORDS; procure
 as + it – it
 as of – dès
 as soon as – when
 asleep – A-WORDS
 at last – enfin
 attention – attend
 audience – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
 avenge – venger
 avoid – empêcher
 awake(n) – A-WORDS

aware(ness) – A-WORDS; conscience vs consciousness

awry – A-WORDS

axe – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS

axis – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS

back-to-front – ORIENTATION IN SPACE

backwards – ORIENTATION IN SPACE

barely – presque

base – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS

basis – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS

BC(E) – DATES

beginning – at & in the beginning etc.

beginning of time – toujours

bill (=banknote) – DOLLARS & CENTS

blond(e) – ADJECTIVES

bob – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE

borrow – ORIENTATION IN SPACE

briefly – shortly

bring – ORIENTATION IN SPACE

bring s.t. about – provoquer

bring together – ORIENTATION IN SPACE

buck – DOLLARS & CENTS

by the end – at & in the beginning etc.

cannot help doing s.t. – empêcher

cannot prevent – empêcher

capable – ability

capacity – ability

cause – provoquer

CE – DATES

cent – DOLLARS & CENTS

century – DATES; NUMBERS

change one's mind – POINTS OF VIEW

chapter – at, in & on; DEFINITE ARTICLE

child – PRONOUNS

claim – prétendre

clarify – préciser

classic(al) – ADJECTIVES IN -ic & -ical

close – z/s

colonel – silent L

come – leave vs let; ORIENTATION IN SPACE

comic(al) – ADJECTIVES IN -ic & -ical

committee – COLLECTIVE NOUNS

comma splice – JUXTAPOSITION VS COORDINATION

common era – DATES

conditional on – soumis

confronted – devant

consider – it

considerate – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES

considered – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES

contempt – mépris

convinced – persuadé

coordination – JUXTAPOSITION & COORDINATION

coppers – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE

corrupt(ed) – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
 count on – depend on it!
 crew – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
 crossroads – NOUNS ending –s
 crowd – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
 crown – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
 Dame – HONORIFICS
 days of the week – CAPITAL LETTERS
 deal with s.t. – *assister à*
 dear – HONORIFICS
 defined – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
 definite – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES; *défini*
 definitively – for ever
 dependent on – *soumis*
 desertion – leave vs let
 despise – *mépris*
 details, more – *préciser*
 dime – DOLLARS & CENTS
 direction, sense of – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
 discrete – *différent*
 disdain – *mépris*
 diverse – *différent*
 do – make vs do
 docu-fiction – FICTION
 down to – *jusqu'à*
 Dr – ABBREVIATIONS
 drive – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
 dual aspect – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
 duration – at & in the same time
 durative – ASPECT
 dying – ADJECTIVES
 economic(al) – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
 efficiently – *effectivement*
 e.g. – ABBREVIATIONS
 elaborate(d) – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
 emergency – *urgence*
 enable – *permettre*
 end – at & in the beginning and the end
 endanger – *risquer*
 enemy – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
 Esq(uire) – HONORIFICS
 eternally – ever
 ethic(al) – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
 even if – *si*
 evening – this vs that
 even though – *si*
 everything – all what?
 evidence – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
 ewe – silent W
 excuse – z/s
 experience – experiments
 exposé – Anglicized French words
 extract – excerpt

face – *risquer*
 faced with – *devant*
 false friends – *FAUX AMIS*
 family – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
 farthing – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
 feel sick – ill
 feel unwell – ill
 finally – *enfin*
 find – it
 first(ly) – at first
 florin – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
 for – during
 for all time – for ever
 forecast – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
 former – *ancien*; some time vs sometime
 forms of address – HONORIFICS
 from – since vs from
 from the beginning to the end – through-
 out
 further – farther vs further
 future – PRESENT VS FUTURE; since vs from; when
 gamble one's money away – *en faisant*
 gender – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS; PRONOUNS
 genitive – ANGLO-SAXON GENITIVE
 genre – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS
 get out of doing – *empêcher*
 get rid of s.t. – *disposer (de)*
 go – leave vs let; ORIENTATION IN SPACE
 government – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
 greenback – DOLLARS & CENTS
 guinea – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
 hair(s) – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
 half-crown – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
 hand – DEFINITE ARTICLE
 hand back / in – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
 ha'penny – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
 hardly – *presque*
 heir – silent H
 help (doing s.t.) – *empêcher*
 hence – here, there & where
 herb – silent H
 historic(al) – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
 hither – here, there & where
 hitherto – *jusqu'à*
 honest – silent H
 honour – silent H
 honourable – HONORIFICS & THE DEFINITE ARTICLE
 hour – silent H
 house/housing – z/s
 however – ever
 human(e) – *humain*
 –ic & –ical – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
 –ics – NOUNS ending –ic(s)

idealistic – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
 i.e. – ABBREVIATIONS
 if – INVERSION OF SUBJECT & VERB; *si*
 impair – *altérer*
 impatience – shortly
 implicate – *impliquer*
 imply – *impliquer*
 in + beginning/middle/end – at & in the
 beginning and the end
 in (+ page references) – at, in & on
 in fact – *effectivement*
 in front of – *devant*
 in the end – *enfin*
 in the same time – at & in the same time
 inability – ability
 incapacity – ability
 inchoative – ASPECT
 incomplete – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
 increasingly – ever
 indeed – *effectivement*
 indict – silent C
 indirect questions – INVERSION
 inevitable – *empêcher*
 information, more – *préciser*
 infrequent – scarce
 inhabit(ant) – *habiter*
 inside out – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
 interesting – we can notice
 invalid – valid vs valuable & values
 involve – *impliquer*
 iron(y) – silent R
 island – silent S
 isle – silent S
 iterative – ASPECT
 lack – few; want
 Lady – HONORIFICS
 lamé – Anglicized French words
 last – *dernier*; first
 last(ly) – *enfin*
 later – at first
 latest – *dernier*
 lead – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
 lend – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
 let – leave vs let
 let (vs rent) – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
 letters, writing – HONORIFICS
 liable to – *risquer*; *soumis*
 liberty – freedom
 like – as or like?
 limited – Ltd
 Lincoln – silent L
 line – at, in & on; DEFINITE ARTICLE
 lines – *réplique*
 little – few

logic – NOUNS ending –ic(s)
 long – all + space and time
 look for – *chercher*
 Lord – HONORIFICS
 lower case – ABBREVIATIONS; CAPITAL LETTERS
 madam – HONORIFICS
 made of – compose
 magic – NOUNS ending –ic(s)
 make – it
 make s.t. clear – *préciser*
 make s.t. possible – *permettre*
 mar – *altérer*
 math[ematic]s – NOUNS ending –ic(s); NOUNS
 ending –s; NUMBERS
 matrimony – marriage & matrimony vs wed-
 ding
 means – end(ing); NOUNS ending –s
 memory – MEMORY; NOUNS
 middle – *milieu*; at & in the beginning etc.
 Middle Ages – DATES; NOUNS ending –s
 midst – *milieu*
 mind – *persuadé*, POINTS OF VIEW
 Miss – HONORIFICS
 missis – HONORIFICS (Mrs)
 mister – HONORIFICS (Mr)
 months – CAPITAL LETTERS
 Mr(s) – ABBREVIATIONS; HONORIFICS
 Ms – HONORIFICS
 music – NOUNS ending –ic(s)
 nationalities – CAPITAL LETTERS
 naught – NUMBERS
 nearly – *presque*
 neither – *non plus*
 never – INVERSION OF SUBJECT & VERB
 news – NOUNS ending –s
 newsworthy – *digne*
 next – first
 nickel – DOLLARS & CENTS
 night – this vs that
 no more – no longer
 nonplussed – *non plus*
 no one – PRONOUNS
 nor – *non plus*
 noteworthy – *digne*
 nothing (else) but – *rien d'autre*
 nothing other than – *rien d'autre*
 nothing to be done / to do – *rien à faire*
 notice – we can notice
 nought(ies) – NUMBERS
 novel – FICTION
 novella – FICTION
 o(h) – NUMBERS
 obtain – procure

occasional – scarce
on (+ page number) – at, in & on
only – INVERSION of SUBJECT & VERB; not only
open(ed) – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
opinion – POINTS OF VIEW
opposed – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
opposite – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES; *devant*
optimistic – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
overseas – ADJECTIVES

page – at, in & on; DEFINITE ARTICLE
paternalistic – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
pay attention – attend
pence – penny; POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
penny (AmE) – DOLLARS & CENTS
perhaps – INVERSION of SUBJECT & VERB
permission – leave vs let
permit – *permettre*
perspective – POINTS OF VIEW
pessimistic – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
point out – *préciser*
police – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
politic(al) – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
poor – ADJECTIVES
possession – ANGLO-SAXON GENITIVE
practice/ise – z/s
practical – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
practically – *presque*
prepositions – *de; en faisant*
precious – valid vs valuable & values
precision – *préciser*
predictions – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
present perfect – first; when
prevent – *empêcher*
price – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS
prize – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS
problem – NOUNS ending –ic(s)
Prof. – ABBREVIATIONS
proof – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
provide – procure
provoke – *provoquer*
public – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
publisher – editor
punctual – ASPECT
put forward – *soumis*

quarter – DOLLARS & CENTS
quick – ADJECTIVES
quid – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
quote – cite vs quote
quote-worthy – *digne*

rare – scarce
rarely – INVERSION of SUBJECT & VERB
realistic – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
recall – MEMORY: VERBS

receipt – silent P
reckless – conscience vs consciousness
recollect – MEMORY: VERBS
recollection – MEMORY: NOUNS
refuse – *mépris; z/s*
religions – CAPITAL LETTERS
rely on – depend on it!
remember – MEMORY: VERBS
remembrance – MEMORY: NOUNS
remind – MEMORY: VERBS
reminiscence – MEMORY: NOUNS
rent – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
repeatedly – for ever
reply – *réplique*
required – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
requisite – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
resolute – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
resolved – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
résumé – Anglicized French words
revenge – *venger*
reverend – HONORIFICS & the DEFINITE ARTICLE
revise – POINTS OF VIEW
rhetoric – NOUNS ending –ic(s)
right to self-determination – *disposer*
rise – A-WORDS
risk – *risquer*
roman numerals – NUMBERS
rotted – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
rotten – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
roué – Anglicized French words
rouse – A-WORDS
run a risk – *risquer*
running caps – CAPITAL LETTERS

salutations in letters – HONORIFICS
same time – at & in the same time
scarcely – hardly, *presque*
sceptical – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
scorn – *mépris*
search – *chercher*
seasons – CAPITAL LETTERS
seaworthy – *digne*
seek – *chercher*
seldom – INVERSION of SUBJECT & VERB
semi-colon – JUXTAPOSITION VS COORDINATION
semi-conscious – conscience vs consciousness
send – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
sense of direction – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
separate(d) – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES; *dif-
férent*
series – NOUNS ending –s
several – *différent*
shilling – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
short story – FICTION
sick – ill

silver – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
simultaneously – at & in the same time
since the beginning of time – *toujours*
sir – HONORIFICS
sixpence – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
slash – QUOTING FROM POETRY
solution – excerpt vs extract
someone – PRONOUNS
souvenir – MEMORY: NOUNS
sovereign – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
spans – DASHES; at, in & on
spatial orientation – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
specific – *préciser*
speech – *réplique*
spell s.t. out – *préciser*
spoil – *altérer*
sport(s) – ADJECTIVES
staff – COLLECTIVE NOUNS
standpoint – POINTS OF VIEW
stanza – QUOTING FROM POETRY
statue – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS
status – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS
statute – CONCRETE & ABSTRACT NOUNS
still – *toujours*
style of speech – language
subject(ed) to – *soumis*
submissive – *soumis*
submitted – *soumis*
such as – as or like
surroundings – NOUNS ending –s
sword – silent W
symbolism – NOUNS ending –ic(s)

taint – *altérer*
take – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
television – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
tense(s) – ASPECT; DEFINITE ARTICLE; PRESENT VS
FUTURE; when
terminative – ASPECT
tsetse – silent S and silent T
thanks – NOUNS ending –s
that – this vs that
thee – thou, thee, thy/thine
theme – NOUNS ending –ic(s)
thence – here, there & where
these – this vs that
thine – thou, thee, thy/thine
think – it
thither – here, there & where
those – this vs that
threepenny bit – POUNDS, SHILLINGS & PENCE
thy – thou, thee, thy/thine
though – *si*

thoughtless – conscience vs consciousness
tonight – this vs that
tragedy – comedy
tragic(al) – ADJECTIVES IN –ic & –ical
trustworthy – *digne*
try to think of – *chercher*
tuppence – penny
turn round – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
two, the – both vs the two

unavoidable – *empêcher*
unaware – A-WORDS; ADJECTIVES
uncompleted – ADJECTIVES & PAST PARTICIPLES
uncountable – COUNTABLE & UNCOUNTABLE
underdog – *soumis*
unfavourable – ill
uninhabitable – *habiter*
unite – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
units of time – all + space and time
until now – *jusqu'à*
unwell – ill
upside-down – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
up to – *jusqu'à*
upper case – CAPITAL LETTERS

various – *différent*
vengeance – *venger*
verse – DEFINITE ARTICLE; QUOTING FROM POETRY
view – POINTS OF VIEW
virtually – *presque*
vision – POINTS OF VIEW

wedding – marriage & matrimony vs wedding
wedlock – marriage & matrimony vs wedding
well-nigh – *presque*
whatever – ever
when – *où*
whence – here, there & where
whether – *si*
where – *où*
whereas – *si*
which – what & which
while – *en faisant*; worth
whither – here, there & where
whoever – ever
whole – all the vs the whole; throughout
whosoever – ever
will – PRESENT VS FUTURE
working poor – ADJECTIVES
worthless – valid vs valuable & values
wreak – *venger*
writing(s) – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
writing letters – HONORIFICS

zero – NUMBERS

OÙ TROUVER ...

à défaut de – want
à jamais – ever
à la fin – at & in the beginning and the end
à la longue – enfin
à l'envers – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
à partir de – since vs from
à peine – hardly
ancien – some time vs sometime
au commencement – at & in the beginning and the end
ce que – what & which
ce qui – what & which
ce soir – this vs that
cette nuit – this vs that
changer d'avis – POINTS OF VIEW
chaque fois que – ever
comédien – comedy
comique – comedy
comme – as or like; it
commencement, au – at & in the beginning and the end
compère – Anglicized French words
comprendre – compose, comprise & consist
conseils – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
d'après – selon
défaut de – want
de quelque manière que – ever
diable – ever
d'où – here, there & where
du temps – some time vs sometime
en face de – devant
en liberté – loose vs lose
en tant que – as or like; de
ennuis – trouble
entrer dans la pièce en dansant – en faisant
et pourtant – or
éviter – empêcher
exposé – Anglicized French words
face à – devant
faire – make vs do
faire semblant – prétendre
faute de – want
finalement – at & in the beginning and the end; enfin
fins et moyens – end(ing)
fois ou l'autre, une – some time vs sometime

gens – person
hier soir – this vs that
inconscient – conscience vs consciousness
information – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
irréfléchi – conscience vs consciousness
jamais – ever
je suis là! – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
lâche! – leave vs let
laisser – leave vs let
lamé – Anglicized French words
laps de temps – some time vs sometime
lendemain – next
louer – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
même si – si
mener – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
ne servir à rien – NUMBERS
n'importe quand – some time vs sometime
ouf! – enfin
partir – leave vs let
peine – trouble
perdant – loose vs lose
personnes – person
peu – few
peuple – people
plûtôt x que y – rather
pour – worth
preuves – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
prévisions – COUNTABLE VS UNCOUNTABLE
proxénète – procure
qu'est-ce que ça vaut? – worth
quiconque – ever
quitter – leave vs let
raté(e) – loose vs lose
recette, reçu – receipt
résumé – Anglicized French words
se retourner – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
réunir – ORIENTATION IN SPACE
rire – laugh
roué – Anglicized French words
se ruiner en jouant – en faisant
suivant – selon
tel que – as or like
tout ce que – all what?
traverser en courant – en faisant
valoir la peine – worth
voisins – next

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There's a useful and entertaining website called 'How do you say that word?'

* This handbook follows the spelling of NODE.