

A pronoun replaces a noun in order to avoid repetition. Subject pronouns are subjects of verbs. In French, a subject pronoun is immediately or almost immediately followed by its verb. The use of subject pronouns is mandatory in French; always use a subject pronoun to construct sentences in the absence of a noun subject. Here are the French subject pronouns:

person	singular	plural
1st person	<b>je</b> , I	<b>nous</b> , we
2nd person	<b>tu</b> , you	<b>vous</b> , you/y'all
3rd person	<b>il</b> , he/it <b>elle</b> , she/it <b>on</b> , one/we (colloquial)	<b>ils</b> , they (masc.) <b>elles</b> , they (fem.)

Subject pronouns are labelled by the term 'person', referring to the subject's role in the conversation. 1st person refers to the person(s) speaking (I, we); 2nd person to the person(s) spoken to (you); and 3rd person to the person(s) or thing(s) spoken about (he, she, it, they).

#### je

Unlike the English pronoun 'I', **je** is not capitalized unless it begins a sentence.

#### tu

The pronoun **tu** is singular and, importantly, informal. Use **tu** to address people your own age and those you know well.

#### on

The pronoun **on** means 'one', or 'they' in a nonspecific sense: 'comme on dit' (as they say). **On** often replaces 'nous' in spoken French: 'On y va?' (Shall we go?).

#### vous

The pronoun **vous** is conjugated with a plural verb so it obviously refers to more than one person. However, it is also the customary form of address when you are talking to only one person you do not know well, such as an elder, a boss, a shopkeeper, etc. Inappropriate use of the **tu** form is considered a sign of disrespect.



Tammy: Bonjour, Paw-Paw. **Vous** allez bien?

Tammy: Hello Paw-Paw. Are you doing well?

Paw-Paw: Ah, oui! Et vous, mes enfants, Tex, Tammy, **vous** allez bien?

Paw-Paw: Ah, yes! And you, kids, Tex, Tammy, are you doing OK?

#### il/elle

**Il** and **elle** besides meaning 'he' and 'she' can both express the meaning 'it' depending on the gender of the noun being replaced. For example:



Bette: **La musique** est bonne, n'est-ce pas?

Bette: The music is good, isn't it?

Tex: Non, **elle** est terrible! Je déteste la musique country.

Tex: No, it's terrible. I hate country music.

Bette: Oh, qu'est-ce que tu as fait, Tex? **Le juke-box** est cassé?

Bette: Oh, what did you do, Tex? The juke-box is broken



Tex: Oui, **il** est cassé!

Tex: Yes, it is broken!

LE JUKE-BOX  
EST CASSÉ ? OUI,  
IL EST CASSÉ.

### ils/elles

**Ils** and **elles** are similar to **il** and **elle** since they agree with the gender of the noun they replace. **Ils** and **elles** may refer to people or things. **Elles** is used to mean 'they' if it replaces people who are all women or objects that are all feminine in gender. On the other hand, **ils** is used to mean 'they' for objects that are masculine in gender or a group of all men or any group where there is at least one male person or masculine object in the group.



Bette et Tex sont de bons amis.

Bette and Tex are good friends.

Normalement **ils** s'entendent bien, mais pas aujourd'hui!

Normally, they get along well, but not today!

Listen to the dialogue:



Fiona: Bonjour Tex, **tu** vas bien?

Fiona: Hi Tex, are you doing well?

Tex: Pas du tout, **je** vais très mal. **Je** veux écouter de la musique française. Et puis Bette et moi, **on** s'est disputé.

Tex: Not at all. I'm doing poorly. I want to listen to some French music. And then Bette and I had a fight.

Fiona: Ah bon? **Elle** est toujours là?

Fiona: Oh really? Is she still here?

Tex: Non. **Elle** est partie avec Tammy. **Elles** sont allées au Broken Spoke.

Tex: Non, she left with Tammy. They went to the Broken Spoke.

Fiona: Tiens, **nous** y allons, toi et moi?

Fiona: Hey, why don't you and I go there?

Tex: **Tu** ne m'as pas entendu? **Je** n'aime pas la musique country!!! Beur! Qu'est-ce qu'**on** aime la musique country au Texas!

Tex: Didn't you hear me? I don't like country music!!! Argh! People really like country music in Texas!



exercices

### fill in the blanks

Fill in the blank with the correct subject pronoun: je, tu, il, elle, on, nous, vous, ils, elles.

1. Edouard: \_\_\_\_\_ suis un escargot français. (I)
2. Tex: \_\_\_\_\_ m'appelle Tex. (I)
3. Joe-Bob: Bonjour, Tammy \_\_\_\_\_ vas bien? (you, fam)
4. Corey: Tex, \_\_\_\_\_ es un tatou? (you, fam)
5. Tex? \_\_\_\_\_ est professeur. (he)
6. Tammy? \_\_\_\_\_ est étudiante. (she)
7. Tex: En France, \_\_\_\_\_ est content? (one/we)

8. La craie? \_\_\_\_\_ est bleue. (it, fem)
9. Tex: Mes étudiants, \_\_\_\_\_ sommes français. (we)
10. Joe-Bob: Bonjour, monsieur le professeur. Comment allez- \_\_\_\_\_? (you, formal)
11. Corey et Joe-Bob? \_\_\_\_\_ sont du Texas. (they)
12. Tammy et Bette? \_\_\_\_\_ sont étudiantes. (they)