French Pronouns: Who Is Speaking and When

KS4 FRENCH GRAMMAR Ages 13-16 ⏰ 4 min read

What Are Pronouns?

Pronouns are words we use instead of names. When you talk about yourself, you say "I" instead of repeating your name all the time. In **French**, pronouns work differently than in English, and they're super important because they change how verbs work.

Think of it like swapping a person's name for a nickname. Instead of saying "Jack thinks pizza is great," you say "He thinks pizza is great."

Subject Pronouns: Who's Doing the Action?

Subject pronouns tell us who is doing something. In French, there are **nine main subject pronouns**: **je** (I), **tu** (you—informal), **il/elle** (he/she), **on** (one/we), **nous** (we—formal), **vous** (you—plural or formal), **ils/elles** (they—masculine/feminine).

The tricky part? French has different ways to say "you." Use **tu** with friends and family. Use **vous** when you're being polite to adults, teachers, or strangers, or when talking to more than one person.

Object Pronouns: When You're Receiving the Action

Object pronouns show who or what receives the action. These are: **me** (me), **te** (you), **le/la** (him/her), **nous** (us), **vous** (you), **les** (them). For example: "Il me regarde" means "He looks at me."

Think of it like: the subject throws a ball (action), and the object is the person who catches it. "Marie throws the ball to him" – "him" is the object pronoun.

Indirect Object Pronouns

Indirect object pronouns show who benefits from or receives an effect of the action: **me, te, lui, nous, vous, leur**. Use these when the action goes "to" or "for" someone. Example: "Je lui donne un cadeau" = "I give him a gift."

Reflexive Pronouns

Some verbs in French use **reflexive pronouns**: **me, te, se, nous, vous, se**. These show that the action bounces back to the person doing it. "Je me lave" means "I wash myself."

Why This Matters

Learning pronouns helps you speak French correctly because **verb endings change depending on which pronoun you use**. This is why pronouns are one of the first building blocks of French grammar. Practice spotting them in sentences, and soon using them will feel natural!

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