



# How French Adjectives Change and Move in Sentences

KS4 FRENCH Ages 11-16 ⌚ 3 min read

## Why Do French Adjectives Change?

In **English**, adjectives stay exactly the same no matter what. We say "the blue car" and "the blue cars" — the word "blue" never changes. But **French** works differently. In French, adjectives have to "agree" with the noun they describe. This means they change their spelling and ending to match whether the noun is **masculine**, **feminine**, **singular**, or **plural**.

Here's why: French nouns are either masculine or feminine. A **table** ("table") is feminine, so the adjective meaning "red" becomes "rouge" (feminine). A **book** ("livre") is masculine, so "red" becomes "rouge" too — but wait, they look the same! The real difference shows up with other adjectives. "Beautiful" is "beau" (masculine) but "belle" (feminine). When you add more books, "beautiful" becomes "beaux" (masculine plural).

Think of it like getting dressed for different occasions. You wear the same outfit in different colours depending on where you're going. French adjectives "dress up" differently depending on the noun they're describing.

## Where Do French Adjectives Go?

This is the tricky part that confuses many learners. In **English**, adjectives almost always come **before** the noun: "a big house", "a red car", "a happy child". But in **French**, most adjectives come **after** the noun!

For example: "un livre intéressant" means "an interesting book" — but literally, it's "a book interesting". You describe the colour, smell, taste, or material **after** the noun: "une voiture rouge" (a car red), "un café chaud" (a coffee hot).

Think of it like telling a story. In English, you introduce the character first ("the brave knight"), but in French, you describe them after ("the knight brave").

However, some common adjectives break this rule and go **before** the noun in French. These include "**bon**" (good), "**mauvais**" (bad), "**petit**" (small), "**grand**" (big), and

**"nouveau"** (new). So you'd say "un petit chat" (a small cat) with the adjective first.

## Why Does French Do This?

Language rules develop over **hundreds of years** of how people speak. French kept older patterns from **Latin**, where adjectives often followed nouns. English evolved differently, probably because of how **invasions and mixing of languages** shaped it. Neither way is "better" — they're just different!