

# Masculine and Feminine Suffixes

## I. Introduction

One of the main differences between English and French is the existence of gender in French nouns. For English-speakers, this can make learning French difficult. With every French noun you learn, you must memorise the gender that corresponds with it. This is essential for other grammar points, such as partitive articles and more complex grammar that will be covered at A-level. It is, therefore, very important to be able to identify the gender of each noun.

We can make identifying the gender of French nouns much easier. There are suffixes (word endings) that are typical of masculine nouns and word endings that are typical of feminine nouns in French, and we will cover that in this article.

## II. Masculine Suffixes

The table below shows common suffixes for masculine words, examples and exceptions to the rule.

Suffix	Example	Common Feminine Exceptions
-age	Le jardin <b>age</b> (gardening)	La rage (rage), la plage (beach), l'image (image), une cage (a cage), la page (page)
-ble	Un immeu <b>ble</b> (a building)	La table (table), La fable (fable), Une cible (a target)
-eau	Un table <b>au</b> (a painting/drawing)	La peau (skin), l'eau (water)

-ège	Le collè <b>è</b> ge (college)	La <u>Norvè</u> ge (Norway)
-eur	Un mente <b>ur</b> (a liar)	Some jobs have this suffix for masculine and feminine (e.g. professeur)
-ien	Le chrét <b>ien</b> (the Christian)	~rare to find a feminine noun ending in –ien~ Feminine nouns usually change from ‘-ien’ to ‘-ienne’
-isme	Un organis <b>me</b> (an organism)	~rare to find a feminine noun ending in –isme)
-ment	Le comporte <b>ment</b> (behaviour)	~rare to find a feminine noun ending in –ment~
-oir	Un miro <b>ir</b>	~rare to find a feminine noun ending in –oir~

### III. Feminine Word Endings

Suffix	Example	Common Masculine Exceptions
-ace	Une men <b>ace</b> (a threat)	Un pal <b>ace</b> (palace)
-ade	La limon <b>ade</b> (lemonade)	Le stad <b>e</b> (stadium)
-esse	La trist <b>esse</b> (sorrow)	~rare to find a masculine noun ending in –esse~
-ie	La fol <b>ie</b> (madness)	Un paraplu <b>ie</b> (umbrella), un incend <b>ie</b> (a fire)
-ière	Une cafeti <b>ère</b> (a coffee-maker)	Un cimeti <b>ère</b> (a graveyard)

-ion	L' <b>information</b> (information)	Un avion (an aeroplane), Un camion (truck), un million (a million), un billion (a billion), un scorpion (a scorpion)
-mme	Une <b>gamme</b> (a variety)	Un gramme (a gram), un programme (a program)
-rre	La <b>terre</b> (the Earth)	Un verre (a glass), le beurre (butter)
-ude	Une inquié <b>ude</b> (a worry/concern)	~rare to find a masculine noun ending in -ude~
-ure	La confit <b>ure</b> (jam)	Un dinosaure (dinosaur), un murmure (a murmur)

## IV. Conclusion

If you learn these word endings and associate them with the correct gender, it will be far easier to apply grammar points correctly and speak more fluently. Not every French noun will have one of these endings, so there will still be many words whose gender you just have to learn.

# Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Which one of the following words ending in '-age' is feminine?

- a)Jardinage
- b)Concubinage
- c)Mirage
- d)Plage

2. Which of the words below ending in '-ble' is masculine ?

- a)Table
- b)Immeuble
- c)Cible
- d)Fable

3. The suffix '-eur' is commonly used in :

- a)Masculine nouns
- b)Feminine nouns
- c>Both
- d)Masculine nouns and is used as a feminine for some jobs

4. Which word with the suffix '-ie' is feminine?

- a)Folie
- b)Parapluie
- c)Incendie
- d>All of the above

5. Which word ending in '-ion' is masculine?

- a)Information
- b)Equitation
- c)Livraison
- d)Camion

6. Which common masculine suffixes rarely have feminine exceptions?

- a) '-ien'
- b) '-isme'
- c) '-ment'
- d) All of the above

7. Which one of the words below is written with the **wrong** gender?

- a)Un gamme
- b)La tristesse
- c)Un Chrétien
- d)Un parapluie

8. Which of the words below is written with the **right** gender?

- a)La terre
- b)Une inquiétude
- c)Un tableau
- d)All of the above

9. Which of the words below is written with the **right** gender?

- a)Le limonade
- b)Une menace
- c)La collègue
- d)None of the above

10. Why is it so important to learn the gender of French nouns?

- a)It isn't
- b)It doesn't matter too much if you don't know them, but they are still useful to learn
- c)To be able to apply grammar rules correctly, you have to know the gender of French nouns
- d)You will fail your exams if you get the gender of nouns wrong

Answers:

- 1. D
- 2. B
- 3. D
- 4. A
- 5. D
- 6. D
- 7. A
- 8. D
- 9. B
- 10. C