

French Adjectives in Writing

Adjectives after the Noun

When using adjectives in French, it is important to note that the majority of the adjectives come AFTER the noun, unlike how we would write in English. For example:

Un livre noir Une femme canadienne
Une histoire intéressante Des gâteaux délicieux

- In these examples, the adjectives are noir, canadienne, intéressante, and délicieux.
- Adjectives that express a nationality, a colour, shape, taste, religion, social class, personality, and the type of mood, will always go after the noun.

Adjectives before the Noun

However, there are some adjectives that will appear before the noun. The adjectives that come before the noun are usually the most basic types of adjectives and are very small words. Most of these adjectives you can memorize using the acronym "BAGS" (Beauty, Age, Goodness, Size). For example:

Beauty	Age	Goodness	Size
Beau Joli	Jeune Vieux Nouveau	Bon Vrai Mauvais Meilleur Faux Gentil Pire Villain	Grand Petit Gros Long Court Bref

The Exceptions:

Autre, Même

Remember:

Make sure that the adjective agrees in gender and number with the noun to which it applies.

Adjectives that Change Meaning Depending on their Place

Certain adjectives have different meanings depending on whether they follow the noun or appear before the noun. Most of the time when the adjective is before the noun, it is used in a figurative sense. If the adjective follows the noun, it is used in a literal sense.

Adjective	English Translation before Noun	English Translation after Noun
ancien	former	antique, old
brave	nice/good	courageous
certain	certain	definite
cher	dear	expensive
dernier	final	previous/last (in expressions of time)
différent	various	different
drôle	strange	amusing/funny
grand (for people)	great	tall
gros	big	fat
même	same	itself/personified
nouveau	latest	brand-new
pauvre	unfortunate	poor, broke
prochain	next (in a sequence)	next/following
propre	(my) own	clean
sale	nasty	dirty
seul	only	alone/single
simple	mere	simple
vert	fruitful	green

Sources Consulted

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