

5. Combien?/Combien de..? How much/How many..?

How much or **how many** in French is translated by **Combien** and **Combien de**.

Combien can ask a question about quantity or price and can be used with a verb, or a noun in which case you use **combien de**.

Examples:

Combien coûte cette robe?	How much does this dress cost?
Combien de Français habitent à Paris?	How many French people live in Paris?
Combien de pommes veut-il?	How many apples does he want?
Combien de visiteurs viennent à Paris chaque année?	How many visitors come to Paris each year.

Note: In the passé composé **combien** causes an agreement with the past participle and the thing it refers to, see the example below:

Combien de livres as-tu **achetés**? (masculine plural) How many books have you bought?

Combien de lettres as-tu **lues**? (feminine plural) How many letters have you read?

But see also below:

J'ai vendus plusieurs robes cet après-midi. I sold several dresses this afternoon.

Combien en as-tu **vendu**? (not *vendues*) How many (of them) did you sell?

(robes - (f))

When using the pronoun **en** (of them/of it) with **combien** it is better not to make an agreement.

Exercise 7. Translate the following sentences into French.

How much is your rent?

How much is it?

How much is the bread? It's not much.

How much do I owe you?

How many children are in the class?

How many cars has he bought?

How many euros are in the jar?

How many guests are arriving today?

How many bottles of wine have they drunk?

How many pens do you want? I want three.

6. Comparisons

1. When we want to compare two things or people we can use adjectives and adverbs to do so. In English a comparative usually has **-er** on the end or the word **more** or **less** in front of it. We are using the comparative when we say, 'Julie is **taller than** Abbi.'

French

plus.....que

plus intelligent que

moins.....que

moins intelligent que

English

more (adj/adv) than

more intelligent than

less (adj/adv) than

less intelligent than

aussi.....que

aussi intelligent que

(or in negative sentences also **si.....que**)

as (adj/adv) as

as intelligent as

Examples:

Paris est **plus** grande **que** Lyon.

Cette robe est **plus** chère **que** celle-là.

Ce livre est **moins** intéressant **que** l'autre.

Tu cours **plus** vite **que** moi.

Paris is bigger than Lyon.

This dress is more expensive than that one.

This book is less interesting than the other one.

You run faster than I do.

Note: the adjective agrees in the normal way as in the first three examples above. **Vite** is an adverb and so does not agree.

We can also use the comparative of equality/inequality when we say something is **(not) as.....as** something or someone else:

Marie est **aussi** gentille **que** vous le dites.

Elle est **aussi** grande **que** toi.

Il n'est pas **si** intelligent **que** toi .

Ils ne sont pas **si** charmants **que** ça.

Marie is as kind as you say.

She is as tall as you.

He is not as intelligent as you.

They are not as charming as that

2. We can also compare things using **superlative** adjectives and adverbs. A superlative is when we say something is the **best, most, tallest** etc. We form the superlative in French by placing the definite article in the appropriate gender and number in front of the plus/moins.

le/la/les plus (adj etc)

le plus petit garçon

le garçon **le plus intelligent**

the most

the smallest boy

the most intelligent boy

le/la/les moins (adj etc)

la plus petite fille

la fille **la plus intelligente**

the least

the smallest girl

the most intelligent girl

La question **la plus facile**

The easiest question

J'ai trouvé le portable **le moins** cher I found the cheapest laptop/mobile phone

In the following type of sentence **in** is translated by **de**:

Marie est la fille **la plus intelligente de la** classe - Marie is the most intelligent girl in the class

Irregular comparatives and superlatives.

Adjective	Meaning	Comparative	Meaning	Superlative	Meaning
bon	good	meilleur	better	le meilleur	the best
mauvais	bad	pire/plus mauvais (often moins bon)	worse	la pire/le plus mauvais	the worst
petit	small	moindre	smaller/lesser	le moindre/le plus petit	the least/smallest

Adverb	Meaning	Comparative	Meaning	Superlative	Meaning
bien	well	mieux	better	le mieux	the best
mal	badly	pis (<i>rare</i>)/plus mal	worse	le pis (<i>rare</i>)/le plus mal	worst
peu	little	moins	less	le moins	least

Note. **Pire** is mainly used in literary language or with abstract nouns. Remember adverbs do not agree (are invariable) but adjectives must agree with the noun.

Examples

Elle a **la meilleure** idée. She has the best idea.
 Ce gâteau est **meilleur que** le vôtre. This cake is better than yours.
 Anne est **ta meilleure** amie. Anne is your best friend.
 Son attitude est **pire que** la tienne. His attitude is worse than yours.
 Ce vin est **plus mauvais que** l'autre. This wine is better than the other.

Exercise 8. Translate the following sentences into French paying attention to the relevant comparative or superlative form.

1. She works more quickly than you.
2. I work more slowly than my sister.
3. Juliette is older than her husband.
4. Your car is the least expensive.
5. I would like to finish my work as quickly as possible.
6. It is the most famous monument.
7. She is the kindest teacher in the school.
8. Everest is the highest mountain in the world.
9. This is the worst restaurant in town – c'est le plus mauvais restaurant de la ville.
10. The coffee here is bad but the coffee she makes is even worse.