



Les Prononciations

Hard and soft vowels

- A , O , and U are sometimes called hard vowels
- E and I are soft vowels ,
- Because certain consonants (C , G , S) have a "hard" and a "soft" pronunciation, depending on which vowel follows.

Nasal vowels

- Vowels followed by M or N are usually nasal.
- Nasal pronunciation can be very different from the normal pronunciation of each vowel.

Accents

- o Accents may change the pronunciation of vowels.
- o There are four French accents for vowels and one accent for a consonant :
 1. The accent aigu ´ (acute accent)
 2. The accent grave ` (grave accent)
 3. The accent circonflexe ^ (circumflex)
 4. The accent tréma ¨ (dieresis or umlaut)
 5. The cédille ¸ (cedilla)

The accent aigu ' (acute accent)

- o Can only be on an E.
- o At the beginning of a word, it often indicates that an S used to follow that vowel,
- o e.g., étudiant (student).

The accent grave `

(grave accent)

- o Can be found on an A, E, or U.
- o On the A and U, it usually serves to distinguish between words that would otherwise be homographs;
- o e.g., ou (or) vs où (where).

The accent circonflexe ^ (circumflex)

- can be on an A, E, I, O, or U.
- The circumflex usually indicates that an S used to follow that vowel, e.g., forêt(forest).
- It also serves to distinguish between homographs;
- e.g., du (contraction of de + le) vs dû (past participle of devoir).

The accent tréma ¨ (dieresis or umlaut)

- ◊ can be on an E, I, or U.
- ◊ It is used when two vowels are next to each other and both must be pronounced,
- ◊ e.g., naïve, Saül.

The cédille , (cedilla)

- o Is found only on the letter C.
- o It changes a hard C sound (like K) into a soft C sound (like S), e.g., garçon.
- o The cedilla is never placed in front of E or I, because C always sounds like an S in front of these vowels.

Important !

- o It is essential to put accents in their proper places
- o An incorrect or missing accent is a spelling mistake just as an incorrect or missing letter would be.
- o The only exception to this is capital letters, which are often left unaccented