

French Determiners - Les adjectifs déterminants

Determiners introduce and modify nouns in French

The grammatical term **determiner** refers to a word, either an article or a certain type of adjective, which introduces and simultaneously modifies a noun. Determiners, also known as non-qualifying adjectives, are much more common in French than in English - some sort of determiner is nearly always required in front of each noun used.

The main difference between a qualifying (descriptive) adjective and a non-qualifying adjective (determiner) has to do with usage: qualifying adjectives qualify or describe a noun, while non-qualifying adjectives introduce a noun and may determine or specify it at the same time.

In addition, qualifying adjectives may be

- placed before or after the noun they modify
- modified by a comparative or superlative adverb
- used in conjunction with one or more other qualifying adjectives to modify a single noun
- separated from the noun they modify by other words

In contrast, **determiners** always directly precede the noun they modify, cannot themselves be modified, and cannot be used with other determiners (although they can be used with qualifying adjectives: *Ma belle maison* - My beautiful house).

Types of French Determiners

Articles

Definite articles	Definite articles indicate a specific noun. le, la, les <i>the</i>
Indefinite articles	Indefinite articles refer to an unspecified noun. un, une, des <i>a, an, some</i>
Partitive articles	Partitive articles indicate unknown quantity, usually of food or drink. du, de la, des <i>some</i>

Adjectives

Demonstrative adjectives	Demonstrative adjectives indicate a specific noun. ce, cet, cette, ces <i>this, that, these, those</i>
Exclamative adjectives	Exclamative adjectives express a strong sentiment. quel, quelle, quels, quelles <i>what a</i>

Indefinite adjectives	There are two types of French indefinite adjectives:
affirmative	Affirmative indefinite adjectives modify nouns in a unspecific sense. autre, certain, chaque, plusieurs... <i>other, certain, each, several...</i>
negative	Negative indefinite adjectives negate or cast doubt on a quality of the noun. ne... aucun, nul, pas un... <i>no, not a single, not one...</i>
Interrogative adjectives	Interrogative adjectives clarify "which" of something one is referring to. quel, quelle, quels, quelles <i>which</i>
Numerical adjectives	Numerical adjectives are all the numbers; however, only cardinal numbers are determiners, because fractions and ordinal numbers can be used with articles. un, deux, trois... <i>one, two, three...</i>
Possessive adjectives	Possessive adjectives modify a noun with its possessor. Mon, ta, ses... <i>My, your, his...</i>
Relative adjectives	Relative adjectives indicate a link between a noun and an antecedent. lequel, laquelle, lesquels, lesquelles <i>which</i>