

37. Personal pronouns (2) - Object pronouns

1 Direct object pronouns

A **direct object pronoun** is one which takes the place of a **direct object noun**, that is to say a noun which experiences the direct action of a verb. The direct object pronouns in French are:

me	<i>me</i>	nous	<i>us</i>
te	<i>you</i>	vous	<i>you</i>
le	<i>him / it</i>	les	<i>them</i>
la	<i>her / it</i>		

Unlike in English, object pronouns, both direct and indirect, come **before** the verb in simple tenses (like the present):

Je connais Marie depuis cinq ans	⇒ Je la connais depuis cinq ans
<i>I've known Marie for five years</i>	⇒ <i>I've known her for five years</i>
Je vois mes cousins souvent	⇒ Je les vois souvent
<i>I see my cousins often</i>	⇒ <i>I see them often</i>

Or before the auxiliary verb *avoir* or *être* in compound tenses (like the perfect):

J'ai prêté le livre à ma soeur	⇒ Je l' ai prêté à ma soeur
<i>I lent the book to my sister</i>	⇒ <i>I lent it to my sister</i>

2 Indirect object pronouns

2.1 An **indirect object pronoun** is one which takes the place of an **indirect object noun**, i.e. the beneficiary of the action of a verb and its direct object. In French indirect object nouns are usually introduced by the preposition *à*. In French the indirect object pronouns are:

me	<i>(to) me</i>	nous	<i>(to) us</i>
te	<i>(to) you</i>	vous	<i>(to) you</i>
lui	<i>(to) him / her / it</i>	leur	<i>(to) them</i>

J'ai prêté le livre à ma soeur	⇒ Je lui ai prêté le livre
<i>I lent the book to my sister</i>	⇒ <i>I lent it to her</i>
Il a donné les tickets au contrôleur	⇒ Il lui a donné les tickets
<i>He gave the tickets to the inspector</i>	⇒ <i>He gave him / her the tickets</i>

2.2 Using the right object

The following constructions take an indirect object in French where the English equivalent takes (or appears to take) a direct object:

demander qch à qn - *to ask sb sth*
dire qch à qn - *to tell sb sth*
donner qch à qn - *to give sb sth*
prêter qch à qn - *to lend sb sth*
plaire à qn - *to please sb*
obeir à qn - *to obey sb*

montrer qch à qn - *to show sb sth*
conseiller qch à qn - *to advise sb sth*
promettre qch à qn - *to promise sb sth*
refuser qch à qn - *to refuse sb sth*
téléphoner à qn - *to phone sb*
ressembler à qn - *to look like sb*

Il a donné les fleurs à sa femme
He gave the flowers to his wife
Elle a promis à ses amis de venir
She promised her friends she'd come
Cette pièce a plu à Marie
Marie enjoyed this play
Il a obéi à ses parents
He obeyed his parents

⇒ Il **lui** (and **not l'**) a donné les fleurs
He gave her the flowers
⇒ Elle **leur** (and **not les**) a promis de venir
She promised them she'd come
⇒ Cette pièce **lui** (and **not l'**) a plu
She enjoyed it
⇒ Il **leur** (and **not les**) a obéi
He obeyed them