



The amazing verb *faire*

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BETTER FRENCH

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What's so important about *faire*?

Faire is one of the most multi-purpose French verbs. Alain Rey, linguist and editor of the renowned French dictionary LE PETIT ROBERT, maintains that *faire* is one of the richest verbs in the French language.

Did you know that *faire*

- is the most frequently used verb in French, after *avoir* and *être*, in both written and spoken French?
- can be translated into English by 'to make', 'to do', 'to say', 'to play' and in some circumstances by pretty much any other verb?
- can help you to be polite, to get things done, to express frustration, to be precise, to talk about the weather and the list goes on?
- is part of over one hundred frequently used set expressions and idioms?

How to use this module

Where to start

The module is divided into sections, each corresponding to a different use of the verb *faire*. In the opening sections, you will probably find expressions you already know but perhaps need to revise. You can then move on to the sections giving explanations and examples of more sophisticated uses of *faire*.

If you are an intermediate learner, you will find it easier to work through the module in order, at least for the early sections. If you are a more advanced learner, you will find you can skip about depending on your specific needs and interests.



To speak better French, you need to have a good grasp of *faire* and its many uses and meanings. As a result, you will master some of the many subtleties of the French language and increase your ability to nuance what you say.

In this module of BETTER FRENCH, you will find some of the most practical and frequent uses of *faire* as well as a host of ways you can use *faire* to enrich your French.

Basics checklist

You probably know the various parts of the verb *faire*, as it's usually one of the first verbs you learn in French. Just for the record, though, remember it's an irregular verb that you need to know by heart.

Look out particularly for *vous faites* in the present. *Faire* is one of only three French verbs that does not use *ez* as an ending for the *vous* form. The other two verbs are *être* and *dire*.

Remember too that the future form of *faire* has only one *r* (*je ferai, nous ferons*) unlike *voir* (*je verrai, nous*

verrons). You can hear this in the way that it's pronounced.

The past participle has, of course, a *t* at the end and not an *s* as French schoolchildren often think! *J'ai fait le repas*. When the past participle agrees, you'll be able to hear that *t*. *La réponse ? Il l'a déjà faite*.

Faire is also one of the verbs for which you should be sure to know the subjunctive form. Aren't you always telling yourself or someone else what needs doing? *Il faut que je fasse le ménage. Il faut que tu fasses la vaisselle*.

Grammar Points

Here, for easy reference, are the key parts of the verb. Learn these and you will be able to work out all the other parts you are likely to need. Most dictionaries provide full conjugations of the various tenses should you need them. Check your pronunciation with the audio recording.



Present

Je fais

Tu fais

Il/Elle fait

Nous faisons

Vous faites

Ils/Elles font

Perfect - *J'ai fait*

Imperfect - *Je faisais*

Future - *Je ferai*

Conditional - *Je ferais*

Past historic - *Je fis*

Present subjunctive - *que je fasse*

Present participle - *faisant*

Past participle - *fait, faite*

The jobs to-do list

Many household chores and other regular tasks involving cleaning or tidying up can be expressed in French by using the verb *faire* plus the word for the particular task. Some of these chores are probably on your regular to-do list. Here are some of the most frequently used expressions. Make sure that you know them.



Check your pronunciation too.

faire les courses - to do the shopping

faire le lit - to make the bed

faire sa toilette - to get washed

faire la vaisselle - to do the washing up

faire la cuisine - to do the cooking

faire le ménage - to do the housework

faire la lessive - to do the washing

faire le repassage - to do the ironing

faire la chambre - to do the bedroom

faire ses chaussures - to clean one's shoes

faire les vitres - to clean the windows

faire la poussière - to do the dusting

faire du rangement - to tidy up

faire le jardin - to do the gardening

faire ses ongles - to do one's nails

Learning Tips

The next time you're deciding what needs doing in the house, say it aloud, or make a list, in French. At least those boring chores will help you to reinforce your French!

Getting things done...by others!

Sometimes you may need (or prefer!) to get certain jobs done by someone else. It's easy to express this with *faire*. Just use *faire* plus the infinitive of the verb for the action you want accomplished. You may need to get something repaired, *faire réparer*, or washed, *faire laver*, or delivered, *faire livrer*.

Often, you will be talking about your intention to have these things done in the near future. You can use the verb *aller* to express this, *Je vais faire réparer ma voiture*. Or, *Je vais faire laver ma voiture*.

Remember that if you want to say that you must or have to get something done, you will need to use the subjunctive. *Il faut que je fasse réparer ma montre*. *Il faut que je fasse vérifier la pression des pneus*.

Don't be surprised if you find you sometimes need to use *faire* twice consecutively in a sentence. This happens when you are saying that you want, or are going to oblige, someone to do something. *Je vais faire faire le jardin par mon oncle*. *J'ai fait faire le repas par une amie*. *Je vais faire faire ses devoirs à mon petit-fils*.

Grammar Points

When you want to arrange for something to be done for yourself, you need to use *se faire* plus the verb for the action. *Je vais me faire faire une nouvelle coupe de cheveux*. *Je vais me faire faire une robe pour le mariage*.

Learning Tips

Allow yourself some blue-sky thinking. Make a wish list of the things you would ideally like to have done in order to prepare yourself for your next holiday, such as getting a haircut, having a manicure, or a massage!

Having fun

Of course *faire* is not all about doing chores or getting things done. It's also useful when you want to talk about leisure activities, hobbies or agreeable activities such as:

- practising a sport (*faire du volley, faire du tennis, faire de la natation*)
- playing a musical instrument (*faire du piano, faire du violon, faire de la guitare*)
- going on outings or holidays (*faire une promenade, faire un voyage, faire une sortie*)
- cooking (*faire des confitures, faire un coq au vin, faire un gâteau*)
- shopping/window-shopping (*faire du shopping, faire les magasins, faire du lèche-vitrines*)
- making things (*faire de la poterie, faire du dessin, faire de la couture*)

Remember also that *faire la fête* is to live it up or to have a party, while *faire la grasse matinée*, to sleep late, is for some people one of the greatest pleasures of them all!



J'ai fait un coq au vin.

Cultural Info

Faire la fête may be fun for those participating. *Nous avons fait la fête toute la nuit, c'était super*. For neighbours kept awake by a noisy party, it may be the opposite of fun. When a French person says, *Ils ont fait la fête toute la nuit*, it's probably a complaint. If the person says, *Je vais leur faire leur fête*, it's a threat. Listen to the tone of voice.

Lots of French people in cities live in apartments. Sometimes you will see, taped inside the lift, a paper announcing a party and apologising in advance for any inconvenience it may cause. There is often an invitation to the other residents to drop in for a glass of wine. This forewarning often makes for easier relations with neighbours.