

In this edition: asking people how they're feeling and saying "yes" and "no".

# Lesson 1

## Notes

## Ça va bien, merci

### Asking "how are you?"

#### Programme Notes

Welcome to Coffee Break French, the podcast aimed at independent learners of French. Our regular podcasts will introduce you to the French language in easy steps. These programme notes will help you get more out of each episode by explaining how words are written and giving you more information about each phrase along with some bonus vocabulary where appropriate.

If you have specific questions about the contents of each lesson, why not email us at [cbf@radiolingua.com](mailto:cbf@radiolingua.com) or phone our helpline on 0141 416 2600 (UK) or 408 540 6114 (US), or you can skype *radiolingua*. By recording your question on our voicemail line you may feature on our phone-in show, *French Espresso*.

#### Language Notes

<b>oui</b>	yes	sounds like "wee"
<b>non</b>	no	Remember to get the nasal sound here - if it helps, hold your nose!
<b>ça va?</b>	how are you?	Just as in English, there are many ways of asking someone in French how they're feeling. This is the simplest way and it literally means "that's going?", as in "things are going well?" Note also that the word <i>ça</i> has a diacritic mark on the 'c'. It's like a very small comma or number 5 hanging down from the 'c'. It's called a "cedilla" and it makes the 'c' sound like an 's'. If there was no cedilla in the word <i>ça</i> it would sound like "ca-" in "car".
<b>ça va</b>	"things are fine"	Note that you can answer the question <i>ça va?</i> by saying <i>ça va</i> . The difference is that with the question you raise your voice towards the end of the sentence, and with the statement there's no change in intonation.
<b>bien</b>	well	Note the nasal sound in the recording.

## Language Notes

<b>ça va bien</b>	things are going well	Note that <i>bien</i> means “well” as opposed to “good”. If you learn the word as meaning “well” it should save you some confusion later!
<b>merci</b>	thank you	Take care with the French ‘r’ sound. It’s like a guttural, rolled ‘r’, quite difficult to produce for non-native speakers.
<b>ça va bien, merci</b>	things are going well, thanks; “I’m fine, thanks”	
<b>et toi?</b>	and you?; what about you?	<i>Toi</i> is the informal form of “you” in this phrase. There is a formal form which we’ll cover in future episodes.
<b>très</b>	very	Again, watch the French ‘r’ in this word.
<b>ça va très bien</b>	things are going very well	
<b>ça va très bien, merci</b>	things are going very well, thank you	
<b>excellent</b>	excellent	Although the word looks identical to the English word, it’s pronounced in French
<b>ça ne va pas</b>	things aren’t going well	To make something negative in French you put <i>ne ... pas</i> round the verb. There will be further discussion of this in future episodes.
<b>je suis en forme</b>	I’m feeling good; I’m on form	<i>Je suis</i> means “I am” and is a phrase we’ll be coming back to many times. <i>En forme</i> literally means “on form”.
<b>je suis fatigué</b>	I’m tired (masculine)	The word <i>fatigué</i> comes from the same root as the English word “fatigue”, meaning “tiredness”.
<b>je suis fatiguée</b>	I’m tired (feminine)	There is a feminine form of <i>fatigué</i> which has an extra ‘e’ on the end. This makes no difference to the pronunciation, but it’s vital to include the extra ‘e’ when you’re writing in French.

## Spotlight

<b>ç é è</b>	We mentioned earlier that French uses a cedilla to make a ‘c’ sound like an ‘s’, as in the word <i>ça</i> . French also uses other accents, or “diacritic marks”. In this lesson we’ve come across an “acute accent”, as in <i>fatigué</i> and what’s called a “grave accent”, in the word <i>très</i> . Both these accents affect how a word is pronounced: <b>é</b> (“e acute”) results in a sound something like the “ay” in “hay”, and <b>è</b> (“e grave”) normally sounds like the “e” in “egg”.
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Where appropriate we'll include some bonus vocabulary which will help to extend the range of language covered in each lesson.

Bonus Vocabulary		
<b>comment ça va?</b>	how are things?	This is the 'full' version of the shortened phrase <i>ça va</i> ?
<b>ça roule?</b>	how's it going?	a very colloquial way of asking "how are things?" This phrase should be kept for close friends only and tends to be used more among young people.
<b>génial</b>	great	You're more likely to say this as a one-word answer, rather than say <i>ça va génial</i> which sounds a little strange.
<b>comme ci, comme ça</b>	so so	in between <i>ça va bien</i> and <i>ça ne va pas</i>
<b>je ne suis pas en forme</b>	I'm not on form	the negative version of <i>je suis en forme</i> : note the <i>ne ... pas</i> going round the verb ( <i>suis</i> )
<b>bof</b>	almost untranslatable!	This is a very French expression and virtually always is accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders and/or raised eyebrows. If you ask someone <i>ça va</i> and they reply <i>bof</i> then basically it means things aren't great but they've accepted that things are never that great anyway...



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