

# Advice for Reserving at a French Restaurant for Non-French Speakers

Making a reservation at a French restaurant can feel intimidating if you don't speak the language, but with a few strategies, it can be done smoothly. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you secure a table with confidence, even if your French skills are minimal or nonexistent.

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## 1. Before You Go: Preparation

### Key Points to Prepare:

- Know the restaurant's **name** and **location**.
  - Decide the **day** and **time** you want to dine.
  - Know the **number of people** in your party (e.g., 2 people = "deux personnes").
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## 2. Use Online Reservation Tools

Many restaurants in France, especially in tourist areas and larger cities, allow reservations through online platforms. This avoids language barriers completely.

- **Popular Online Tools:**
    1. **LaFourchette** (The Fork): A widely used reservation website and app in France.
    2. **Google Maps:** Often includes reservation links or phone numbers.
    3. **Restaurant Websites:** Many French restaurants have their own websites with booking forms.
  - **Tip:** Look for restaurants that offer an English version of their website or booking page.
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## 3. Calling to Reserve: Key Phrases in French

If you prefer or need to call, here are simple phrases to use when reserving a table:

- **"Bonjour, je voudrais réserver une table, s'il vous plaît."**
  1. Translation: \*Hello, I would like to reserve a table, please.\*
- **They may ask:**
  1. \*"Pour combien de personnes?"\* → **For how many people?**
    1. Reply: **"Deux personnes"** (2 people) or **"Quatre personnes"** (4 people).

2. \**“Pour quel jour et à quelle heure?”*\* → **For what day and at what time?**

1. Reply: **“Samedi soir à 19h30”** → \*Saturday evening at 7:30 PM.\*

• **Ending the call:**

1. **“Merci beaucoup. À bientôt!”** → \*Thank you very much. See you soon!\*

**Pronunciation Tip:** Don't worry about perfect pronunciation—speaking slowly and clearly is enough. Most French people will appreciate the effort!

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## 4. Emailing the Restaurant

If you prefer to write rather than speak, consider sending an email to make a reservation.

**Sample Email (Simple and Polite):** `` ` Subject: Réservation de table

Bonjour,

Je voudrais réserver une table pour deux personnes, le samedi 15 juillet à 19h30, s'il vous plaît.

Merci beaucoup, [Your Name] `` `

**Translation:** “Hello, I would like to reserve a table for two people, on Saturday, July 15th at 7:30 PM, please.

Thank you very much, [Your Name]”

\*Tip\*: If you don't receive a confirmation, follow up or call the restaurant to check.

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## 5. In-Person Reservations

If you walk into the restaurant to reserve:

- Start with **“Bonjour, je voudrais réserver une table, s'il vous plaît.”**
  - Use gestures and numbers (e.g., holding up fingers) to indicate how many people and pointing to your watch or phone for the time.
  - If you struggle, say:
    1. **“Parlez-vous anglais?”** → \*Do you speak English?\*
  - Most restaurant staff in tourist areas will switch to English or try to help.
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## 6. Backup Strategies: If You Get Stuck

If language barriers arise:

- **Be Polite:** A simple “Bonjour” (hello) and “Merci” (thank you) go a long way.
  - Use a **translation app** like Google Translate to show your request on your phone.
  - Write down the reservation details (e.g., date, time, number of people) on a piece of paper to show the staff.
  - If the restaurant is too busy or you can’t communicate, politely try another nearby place.
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## 7. Important Cultural Notes

- **Timing:** French people often eat later than Americans. Dinner reservations typically start around **7:30 PM**.
  - **Restaurant Hours:** Many restaurants close between lunch and dinner, typically from **2:00 PM to 7:00 PM**.
  - **Politeness:** Always start with “Bonjour” and end with “Merci beaucoup.” Politeness is highly valued in France.
  - **Confirmations:** Some restaurants may ask for your phone number or a confirmation closer to the day.
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## 8. Example Scenario: Dialogue with English Support

Here’s an example conversation for reserving a table with minimal French:

**You:** \**“Bonjour! Je voudrais réserver une table pour deux personnes, s’il vous plaît.”*\* **Waiter:** \**“Pour quelle heure?”*\* **You:** \**“À 19h30, ce soir.”*\* (At 7:30 PM tonight.) **Waiter:** \**“Très bien. Votre nom?”*\* **You:** \**“[Your Name]. Merci beaucoup!”*\*

If they switch to English at any point, simply follow along and speak clearly.

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## 9. Summary

To reserve at a French restaurant without speaking much French:

1. Use online tools like **LaFourchette** or email when possible.
2. Learn key phrases for phone calls or in-person reservations.
3. Be polite and don’t be afraid to ask, \**“Parlez-vous anglais?”*\*
4. Use backup tools like translation apps or writing your request down.

By preparing ahead of time and showing effort, you’ll likely have a smooth and enjoyable experience dining at a French restaurant. Bon appétit!

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