



Lesson 1: Thank You!

Merci!

LESSON NOTES

In French, there is only one word you need for expressing gratitude: "merci." And for emphasis, "merci beaucoup". In either case, there is no situation in which "merci" and "merci beaucoup" are inappropriate. They can be used as often as you like without regard for age difference, gender difference, formality or casualness. However, since there is no other way to express gratitude in speech, "merci" is often said in a mechanical way. We will look at two ways in which to make "merci" more personal.

PHRASES

| French | English |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Merci beaucoup. | Thank you very much. |

VOCABULARY

| French | English |
|----------|---------------------|
| Merci. | Thank you. / Thanks |
| Monsieur | Sir |
| Madame | Madam |

QUICK TIP

As mentioned, you can never say "merci" too much in France. Showing gratitude, especially for newcomers, can be a very successful way to have the French warm up to you. So one way to make "merci" more personal is to use it generously. For instance, in a shop or restaurant, if you ask a question, it is a good idea to make eye contact and say "merci" or "merci beaucoup" at the end of the exchange. This is the same when getting off the bus or out of a taxi, after an exchange with a waiter, or really, anyone. If you make the extra effort to look the person in the eye and say "merci," the person feels acknowledged. It can be refreshing, especially in a culture that can be quite formal and make gratitude somewhat automatic. However, on the flip side, don't be surprised if you don't have as many "merci's" coming back to you—at first.

QUICK TIP 2

Showing gratitude with people you don't know personally is done by adding the word "Monsieur" or "Madame" at the end. For instance, if someone helps you, say a shopkeeper, and you want to show you're appreciation while keeping a distance, say "Merci, monsieur" (Thank you, sir) for a man, and "Merci, madame" (Thank you, madam) for a woman. In fact, you can add "Monsieur" or "Madame" at the end of any address to a stranger to make it ring with more politeness and respect.