



## Lesson 2: You're Welcome!

Je vous en prie.

### LESSON NOTES

In French there are several ways to say "you're welcome," each depending on a particular context. Essentially, for our purposes, there are two categories of context: formal and informal. Each has its own form of the word "you": "tu" (informal) "vous" (formal). First we'll take a look at the informal contexts and then the formal. The difference is quite subtle at times, so if ever in doubt, use the formal.

In French "You're welcome." is "de rien". The first word "de" means "of". It is followed by "rien", which in French is "nothing". So all together we have "de rien". Literally this means "of nothing"

Another way of responding to a phrase of gratitude is "Je vous en prie" which is more formal. The first word "Je" means "I". It is followed by "vous", which in French is the formal "you". So to recap here, we have "Je vous". Literally this means "I you" The next word "en" means "of it". It is followed by "prie", which in French is "pray".

### PHRASES

French	English
Je vous en prie.	"You are welcome" or "by all means" (formal)
Je t'en prie.	"You are welcome" (informal "you," but somewhat formal expression)
De rien.	"You're welcome" (informal)
C'est moi.	"The pleasure's mine." (informal, personal)

### QUICK TIP

We use "tu" in contexts where we know the person personally and the environment is casual. People of one's own age, classmates, family, and friends are such people. At home, at school, friendly social settings are such contexts. "Tu" is the most common form of "you" that you will hear, so don't feel nervous about using it. In fact, over-use of "vous" can come off as old-fashioned or stuffy. If there is a doubt, start with "vous" and let the other person invite you to use the "tu" form.

To say "you're welcome" in an informal setting, say "de rien". If you feel you want to express this more emphatically, you can use the formal phrase we learned "je vous en prie" and replace the formal, "vous," with the informal "tu" which in this case is "te" (the reflexive form of "tu"). This makes "je t'en prie". This is a more gracious expression than the more common and perfunctory "de rien". Finally, to express "you're welcome" in a sincere and personal way we can say "c'est moi" which literally means "it's me (who gives thanks)" and is similar to "the pleasure is mine." "C'est moi" is considered very touching and authentic, so to use this as a traveler will surely impress.

## QUICK TIP 2

We use "vous" when we want to show respect to the other person or when the context requires formality. For instance, when meeting someone for the first time, at a shop, at work, with a professor, or with an older person. However, "vous" is not always required when you meet someone for the first time if the setting is casual, say at a party with people of your own age. Younger people, especially, are using "vous" less and less. They often speak directly in "tu" with each other and even their grandparents. They reserve "vous" for their teachers and bosses. The use of "vous" is not so much a strict rule as it is a way to create a formal distance with others and this is at personal discretion. For instance, one can be on a very friendly basis with the local baker for years and still say "vous". Or two motorists who have a disagreement in the street who may be angry with each other, will still argue in "vous" form to keep a distance.

To say "You're welcome" in a formal setting, say "Je vous en prie", as we have learned. This phrase is very courteous and will work in almost any situation. So to adopt this expression would be as important for travelers as "de rien", if not more so. It shows good manners and respect, which are imperative in French culture.