

PENSER À VS PENSER DE

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Grammar topic: French Verb Penser - À or DE?

Curriculum: French Level A2

The French verbs "penser à" and "penser de" can both be translated as "to think" in English, but they are used in different contexts and have distinct meanings.

Penser à / au / aux / à l' + THING:

This construction can be used to express "thinking about" something, indicating what occupies your thoughts or when you're considering something specific.

When the verb penser is followed by À + a thing or things, you can use the pronoun Y to replace those things. In this case, the pronoun Y means "it" or "them".

It's important to recognize that the pronoun Y is not only used for places.

French	English
Elle pense à son voyage . Elle y pense.	She is thinking about her trip. She is thinking about it.
Nous pensons à nos projets . Nous y pensons.	We are thinking about our projects. We are thinking about them.

Penser à + PERSON:

This construction can also be used to express "thinking about" someone. The pronoun Y cannot replace people. You can't use a pronoun to replace À + a person or people. You need to either state the person's name or use a disjunctive pronoun as demonstrated in the chart below.

French	English
Je pense à Alice .	I'm thinking about Alice.
Tu penses à qui ?	Who are you thinking about?
Il pense à moi .	He is thinking about me.
On pense à toi .	We are thinking about you.
Nous pensons à lui .	We are thinking about him.
Vous pensez à elle ?	Are you thinking about her?
Ils pensent à nous .	They are thinking about us.
Je pense à vous .	I am thinking about you.
Tu penses à eux ?	Are you thinking about them?
Ils pensent à elles .	They are thinking about them.

Penser de / du / de la / des / de l' + PERSON, PLACE, THING:

This structure is used to express an opinion or judgment about someone or something. It indicates what you think "of" a particular subject or person.

When the verb penser is followed by de + a person, place or thing, you can use the pronoun EN to replace them.

It is interesting to point out that the pronoun EN can indeed be used for places when they are preceded by some form of DE.

French	English
Que penses-tu du professeur ? Qu' en penses-tu?	What is your opinion of the teacher? What is your opinion of him?
Que pensez-vous de cet endroit ? Qu' en pensez-vous?	What do you think about this place? What do you think about it?
Que pense-t-il de cette idée ? Qu' en pense-t-il?	What does he think of this idea? What does he think about it?

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