

FRENCH VERBS «DIRE» VS. «PARLER»



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Dire vs. Parler: When to Use Each Verb in French

The French verbs *dire* and *parler* relate to speech, but they are used in different ways. Choosing the right one depends on what is being communicated and how.

Dire – To Say or To Tell

"Dire" means "to say" or "to tell." It is used when you are reporting specific words, statements, or pieces of information.

It usually takes a direct object (what is being said) and sometimes an indirect object (to whom it is being said).

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je dis	nous disons
tu dis	vous dites
il - elle - on dit	ils - elles disent

Common Sentence Structures with "Dire"

Dire quelque chose à quelqu'un

→ To say something to someone / To tell someone something

Je te dis la vérité.
I am telling you the truth.

Il dit bonjour à son professeur.
He says hello to his teacher.

Nous disons toujours la même chose.
We always say the same thing.

Dire que + Clause

→ To say that...

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Elle dit qu'elle est fatiguée.
She says that she is tired.

Ils disent que le film était super.
They say that the movie was great.

Expressions with "Dire"

Que veut dire ce mot?
What does this word mean?

Je ne sais pas quoi dire.
I don't know what to say.

Ça veut dire quoi?
What does that mean?

Tricky Mistakes with "Dire"

Mistake: Il dit en français.
Correct: Il parle en français.

Mistake: Il m'a parlé la vérité.
Correct: Il m'a dit la vérité.

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Parler – To Speak or To Talk

"Parler" means "to speak" or "to talk." It is used when talking about language ability or the act of speaking in general.

It does not take a direct object (unlike "dire"). Instead, it may take "à" (to someone) or "de" (about something).

je parle	nous parlons
tu parles	vous parlez
il - elle - on parle	ils - elles parlent

Common Sentence Structures with "Parler"

Parler à quelqu'un

→ To talk to someone

Je parle à mon ami tous les jours.
I talk to my friend every day.

Elle parle à son médecin.
She is talking to her doctor.

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Parler de quelque chose

→ To talk about something

Nous parlons de nos projets.
We are talking about our plans.

Il parle toujours de politique.
He always talks about politics.

Parler une langue

→ To speak a language

Il parle trois langues.
He speaks three languages.

Tu parles français?
Do you speak French?

Expressions with "Parler"

Elle parle bien anglais.
She speaks English well.

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On en parlera plus tard.
We'll talk about it later.

Arrête de parler!
Stop talking!

Tricky Mistakes with "Parler"

Mistake: Je dis anglais.
Correct: Je parle anglais.

Mistake: Nous disons de nos problèmes.
Correct: Nous parlons de nos problèmes.

Key Differences: French Verbs Dire and Parler

FRENCH	ENGLISH	USES
Dire quelque chose à quelqu'un	To say something to someone	Reports specific words or phrases
Dire que + phrase	To say that	Reports statements
Parler à quelqu'un	To talk to someone	Emphasizes the act of conversing

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Parler de quelque chose	To talk about something	Discusses a topic
Parler une langue	To speak a language	Expresses language ability

More Examples with Context

Using "dire" correctly

X Elle parle qu'elle est fatiguée.

✓ Elle dit qu'elle est fatiguée. (She says that she is tired.)

Using "parler" correctly

X Il dit à son ami de son voyage.

✓ Il parle à son ami de son voyage. (He talks to his friend about his trip.)

Both in the same sentence

Elle dit qu'elle ne veut plus parler de ce problème.

She says that she doesn't want to talk about this problem anymore.

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Il parle souvent de ses rêves, mais il ne dit jamais s'il va les réaliser.

He often talks about his dreams, but he never says if he will achieve them.

Final Tips

- ✓ Think of "dire" as delivering information ("to say" or "to tell").
- ✓ Think of "parler" as focusing on the act of speaking (conversations, languages, or topics).

When in doubt:

- ✓ If there's a direct object (a thing being said), use "dire".
- ✓ If the sentence talks about who you're speaking to, use "parler à".
- ✓ If it's about a subject of discussion, use "parler de".

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