

FRENCH NEUTER PRONOUNS LE / L'



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What Is the French Neuter Object Pronoun "Le"?

In French, "le" is most commonly known as the masculine direct object pronoun, replacing a masculine noun:

Tu as vu le film? (Did you see the movie?)

Oui, je l'ai vu. (Yes, I saw it.)

"Le" also functions as a neuter pronoun, replacing a whole idea, clause, or statement - not a specific masculine noun.

In this case, it doesn't refer to a gendered noun. It refers to "that" or "it," in English when we refer to something abstract or previously said.

Key Use Cases of the Neuter "Le"

Replacing an Entire Clause or Idea:

Il va échouer, je le sais. (He's going to fail, I know it.)

Here, "le" = "it" = "that he's going to fail" → a whole idea.

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Tu es triste, je le vois. (You're sad, I can see it.)

Elle partira bientôt, je le crains. (She'll leave soon, I fear it.)

Trick: If you can say "I know it / I fear it / I see it" in English — and you're referring to an idea — you're likely using the neuter "le" in French.

With Verbs That Take Clausal or Abstract Objects

Some verbs are commonly used with the neuter "le" to refer to facts or abstract statements:

Verb in French	Translation	Example
le savoir	to know it	Je le sais. I know it.
le dire	to say it (so)	Tu le dis. You say it (so).
le croire	to believe it	Je le crois. I believe it.
le penser	to think it (so)	Elle le pense. She thinks it (so).
le sentir	to feel it	Je le sens. I feel it.

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le regretter	to regret it	Je le regrette. I regret it.
l'espérer	to hope it (so)	Je l'espère. I hope so.

"Le" Before an Infinitive or Clause

Sometimes, the neuter "le" stands in for something yet to come or an idea to follow:

Je le trouve difficile à croire. (I find it hard to believe.)

Elle le trouve normal que tu partes. (She finds it normal that you're leaving.)

Note: In English, "it" would also precede "hard to believe" or "normal that..." French mirrors this with "le."

Word Order with Neuter "Le"

Like other direct object pronouns, "le" / "l'" goes before the conjugated verb:

Je le sais. (I know it.)

Je ne le crois pas. (I don't believe it.)

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Or before the infinitive if there is one:

Je vais le faire. (I'm going to do it.)

Tu dois le savoir. (You must know it.)

Summary Table

Usage	French	English
Whole idea or clause	Il va échouer, je le sais.	He will fail, I know it.
Verbs that take abstract objects	Je le crois / Je l'espère.	I believe it / I hope so.
Adjective + infinitive structure	Je le trouve difficile à croire.	I find it hard to believe.
Replacing impersonal clauses	C'est vrai. Je le pense.	It's true. I think so.

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