

# BON vs. BIEN

## How to Say “Good” in French



### Bon vs. Bien How to Say “Good” in French

In English, we often use "good" for both direct description and for giving our opinion about an experience. In French, you have two main options: bon and bien. They don't always match up exactly with “good” and “well,” and that's where the confusion starts.

word	part of speech	main use	example
bon (masc.) bonne (fem.)	adjective	Describes a noun directly (a good thing)	C'est un bon film. It's a good movie.
bien	adverb (sometimes used adjectivally after être)	Describes the quality of something, your impression, or how it works	Le film est bien. The movie is good. (I like it.)

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## Bon

Attaches to the noun (before the noun).

You're talking about the inherent quality of the thing.

## Bien

Attaches to the verb or to the situation/experience.

You're giving an opinion about how it is, functions, or feels.

<b>BON / BONNE</b> <b>(adjective before noun)</b>	<b>BIEN</b> <b>(after être or a verb)</b>
C'est un bon livre. It's a good book. (quality of the book)	Ce livre est bien. This book is good. (I like it)
C'est une bonne idée. That's a good idea.	L'idée est bien. The idea works well. (It's fine)
C'est un bon restaurant.	Ce restaurant est bien. This restaurant is good / nice.
C'était un bon concert.	Le concert était bien. The concert was good / enjoyable.

## Why is it tricky?

In English, "The book is good" could mean:

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It's a good book (inherent quality = bon).

I enjoyed it / it works well (overall impression → bien).

French forces you to make the choice, so you have to decide:

Am I directly describing the noun? If so, use “bon”.

Am I giving my impression of the experience or situation?  
If so, use “bien”.

## **More examples with context**

### **Bon / Bonne**

C'est un bon repas.

It's a good meal (tasty food).

C'est une bonne solution.

It's a good solution (clever choice).

C'est un bon moment pour partir.

It's a good time to leave.

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## Bien

Le repas est bien.  
The meal is good / I like it.

La solution est bien.  
The solution works well.

Ce professeur est bien.  
This teacher is good / I like him.

## Quick tips to remember

### Bon

Think: "good + noun" (bon vin, bonne idée, bon moment)

### Bien

Think: "good + how it is / how it works" (ça marche bien, c'est bien)

If you could replace "good" with "enjoyable" or "fine," *bien* is often the right choice.

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