

Poser vs Demander



Both **poser** and **demander** can sometimes be translated as “to ask,” but they’re not interchangeable.

Understanding the difference is all about **what** you’re asking: a *question* or a *favor/information*.

1. Poser - To put / to ask (a question)

The true English translation of **poser** is *to place* or *to put down*. That’s why it’s used for things like *poser un livre sur la table* (to put a book on the table).

When it comes to asking questions, French uses the same verb. You *place* or *put* a question out there:

poser une question - *to ask a question*

Examples:

- Je peux te **poser** une question?
- Can I **ask** you a question?

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- L'élève **pose** beaucoup de questions.
- The student **asks** a lot of questions.
- Le journaliste lui **a posé** une question difficile.
- The journalist **asked** him a tough question.

Structure:

poser + une question (à quelqu'un)

poser une question à Marie - to ask Marie a question

You can also use **poser** for abstract “placing”, like *poser un problème* (to cause a problem) or *poser une condition* (to set a condition).

2. Demander - To ask (for something) / to request

Demander means *to ask for* or *to request*. It's not about putting a question out there. It's about wanting information, permission, or an object.

Examples:

- J'**ai demandé** de l'aide.
- I **asked** for help.

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- Il **demande** son chemin.
- He **asks** for directions.

- Elle m'**a demandé** si j'étais libre.
- She **asked** me if I was free.

- Tu peux me **demander** n'importe quoi.
- You can **ask** me anything.

Structure:

demander quelque chose (à quelqu'un)

demander à quelqu'un de + infinitif

Examples:

- **Demande** à Paul de venir.
- **Ask** Paul to come.

- J'**ai demandé** à ma mère de m'aider.
- I **asked** my mother to help me.

3. The Basic Rule

If you're talking about **asking a question**, use **poser**. If you're talking about **asking for something**, use **demander**.

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Meaning	Verb	Example
To ask a question	poser	Il pose une question à son prof.
To ask for something	demander	Il demande un café au serveur.

4. Easy way to remember

- **Poser** - You *put* a question out there.
- **Demander** - You *demand* or *request* something.

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