

# se souvenir vs se rappeler



Even though **se souvenir** and **se rappeler** both mean “to remember,” they don’t behave the same grammatically. Learning the difference — including how people really use them when speaking — will help your French sound smoother and more natural.

## 1. Se souvenir - Always “de” + object

### Structure:

se souvenir **de** + person, thing, event

### Examples:

- Je me **souviens de** mon enfance.
- I **remember** my childhood.
  
- Elle se **souvient de** son premier jour d’école.
- She **remembers** her first day of school.
  
- Nous nous **souvenons de** nos vacances en Italie.
- We **remember** our vacation (holidays) in Italy.

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- Tu te **souviens de** Marie?
- Do you **remember** Marie?

Think of **se souvenir** as reflecting **on a memory**, always pointing *back to* something, and always requiring **de**.

## 2. Se rappeler - Usually direct object (no “de”)

### Structure:

se rappeler + person, thing, event

### Examples:

- Je me **rappelle** mon enfance.
- I **remember** my childhood.
  
- Elle se **rappelle** son premier jour d'école.
- She **remembers** her first day of school.
  
- Nous nous **rappelons** nos vacances en Italie.
- We **remember** our holidays in Italy.
  
- Tu te **rappelles Marie**?
- Do you **remember** Marie?

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## Spoken French Exception:

Many native speakers add **de** with **se rappeler**, especially in conversation:

- Je me **rappelle de mon enfance.**
- Tu te **rappelles de Marie?**

Even though it's **not formally correct**, it's extremely common in everyday speech. It's useful to recognize it when listening, but in formal writing, leave the **de** out.

## 3. Clauses

When the object is a **full clause** (a complete sentence), it's easier to use **se souvenir de**.

- Je me **souviens de quand nous sommes arrivés.**
- I **remember** when we arrived.
  
- Elle se **souvient de ce que tu as dit.**
- She **remembers** what you said.

**Se rappeler** with clauses is a bit tricky and less formal. In this case a past infinitive is required:

- Je me **rappelle avoir vu ce film.**
- I **remember** seeing that movie.

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## 4. Reflexive pronouns

Both verbs are reflexive and must match the subject:

- Je **me** souviens / Je **me** rappelle
- Tu **te** souviens / Tu **te** rappelles
- Il/elle **se** souvient / Il/elle **se** rappelle
- Nous **nous** souvenons / Nous **nous** rappelons
- Vous **vous** souvenez / Vous **vous** rappelez
- Ils/elles **se** souviennent / Ils/elles **se** rappellent

## 5. Common idiomatic expressions

- **Se souvenir de** quelque chose comme si c'était hier
- To **remember** something as if it were yesterday
- **Se rappeler** quelque chose parfaitement
- To **remember** something perfectly

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## 6. Comparison Chart

Verb	Structure	Notes
<b>Se souvenir</b>	de + object	Always requires <b>de</b> , reflective, formal or neutral
<b>Se rappeler</b>	direct object (no de)	More direct, conversational; spoken French often adds <b>de</b>

### Rule of thumb:

- If you're unsure or using a clause, it's easier to use **se souvenir de**.
- If it's a simple noun or person, **se rappeler** is fine — and you'll hear it with **de** in spoken French.

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