

French “Slang” Words for All Ages



Casual vocabulary is everywhere in spoken French. You need to know that informal French to communicate! A few words of French slang (for all ages!) will really help you when you're travelling in France or speaking with French friends.

I'm not talking about *les gros mots* (= literally “big, fat, thick words”) which are rude like swear words. No, today we'll dive into the kind of informal words that you can use around children. French sentences that my small son could say at home!

So you can understand a text like this:

On s'est bien marrés avec les potes ce soir. Même si la bouffe était chelou. Je me suis cassée tôt, j'étais vachement crevée. Johanna voulait me ramener en bagnole, mais tu parles ! Elle était déjà un peu bourrée. Je suis rentrée à vélo sous la flotte, c'était relou.

Don't worry, let's dive in.

C'est parti !

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9 – Informal French: Test yourself

1 - Informal French: “se marrer” = to laugh

Se marrer (informal verb) = *rire* = to laugh

Se marrer is a pronominal verb, meaning it comes with “*se*” (= “oneself”), the reflexive pronoun.

So we say for instance:

- *Je me marre.* = I’m laughing.
- *Tu te marres.* = You’re laughing.
- *On se marre.* = We’re laughing.

It has nothing to do with the formal verb *entacher* (= to marr).

However, it’s close to another expression with another meaning.

En avoir marre = to be fed up with the situation, “I’m sick and tired,” “I’m done with...”



“*Quand y’en a marre, y’a Malabar*” (= When life is too much, there’s always Malabar.) is a famous catchphrase for the French bubblegum brand “Malabar.” “Malabar” is an area in India, but in older French slang it came to mean “a strong man.”

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For example:

J'en ai marre, c'est toujours moi qui perds.

= I'm done with that, I'm always the one who's losing.

= I'm sick and tired of always losing [at this game.]

Or: ***Il y en a marre.*** = “***Y'en a marre.***” = That's enough, that's unbearable (informal)

2 - Informal French: “les potes” = buddies

“***Les potes***” (informal) = “***les copains***” (informal) = “***les amis***” (formal and heavy) = friends

There are different words to say “friends,” with subtle differences.

Un pote / une pote (informal) is always a friend, a “buddy.”

Un copain / une copine (informal) is similar, except it can also mean a romantic partner: ***mon copain / ma copine*** (= boyfriend / girlfriend)

Un ami / une amie is the formal word for friend, but it can be intimidating. It's hard to become ***un ami*** with someone, it takes time and patience.

Whereas “***un pote***” can be more superficial.

Click here to learn more : [Never Say “Mon Ami” in French \(And What to Say Instead\)](#)

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3 - Informal French: “la bouffe” = food, “la flotte” = water

- **La bouffe** (informal) = **la nourriture** (correct, respectful) = food
- **La flotte** (informal) = **l'eau** (correct, respectful) = water

La bouffe is a very common slang word. It means “food.” “**Une bouffe**” is “a meal.” And **bouffer** means “to eat.”

For instance:

On s'appelle, on se fait une bouffe ?

= Let's talk on the phone later, and grab lunch or dinner at some point, OK?

Je vais bouffer, je reviens.

= I'm going to eat, I'll be back.

La flotte technically means “fleet” – but most of the time it's everyday slang for water. And rain!

☒ **Il flotte** (informal) = **il pleut** (correct) = it's raining

La flotte and **la bouffe** are mild slang that everyone can use, but it's not elegant. Don't use it in a restaurant with the waiter! Or it will sound dismissive.

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4 - Informal French: “Vachement” = very, a lot

- **La vache** (correct French) = the cow
- **Oh la vache !** (informal) = “Holy cow!” / “Oh wow!”
- **Vachement** (informal) = “very” / “a lot”

For instance:

C'est vachement bien ! (informal) = **C'est très bien !** = That's very good!

5 - Informal French: le verlan (“relou,” “chelou”)

Le verlan is a type of slang where usual words have their syllables switched around, **à l'envers** (= the other side around.) For instance:

- **Lourd** (= heavy / annoying) ? Lou-re ? Re-lou ? **Relou** (= annoying)
- **Louche** (= suspect, weird) ? Lou-che ? **Chelou** (= weird)
- **Fou** (= crazy) ? F-ou ? **Ouf** (= crazy)



“Meuf” isn't very elegant, it can be tricky to

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- **Femme** (= woman) ? Fe-mme ? mme-fe ? **meuf** (= woman, girlfriend)
- **À l'envers** ? (à) l'en-vers ? (à) ver-l'en ? **verlan** !

“**Lourd**” is already an informal word for “**ennuyant/embêtant**” (= annoying.)

Le verlan isn't really used by most people born before the 80's, but it's used a lot by younger people, and you'll definitely hear some verlan when you travel in France.

use it in the right context. A popular expression in verlan and slang: **un truc de ouf** = “something crazy!” / “That's crazy / awesome!”

6 - Informal French: to leave (“se tirer”, “se casser”)

- **Tirer** (correct French) = to pull / to shoot
- **Se tirer** (informal) = to leave
- **Casser** (correct French) = to break
- **Se casser** (informal) = to leave

It's pronominal, just like “**se marrer**,” remember?

Four ways to say “I'm leaving” in French:

- **Je me tire** (informal slang)



Tu te tires ailleurs. (= You take off somewhere else.) sounds like “**tirailleur**” (= a military term for “skirmisher” or “infantryman”)

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- *Je me casse* (informal slang)
- *Je pars* (correct French)
- *Je m'en vais* (correct French)

7 - Informal French: tired and hungry

- *Je suis crevée.* (informal) = *Je suis très fatiguée.* = I'm dead tired, really tired.
- *J'ai la dalle.* (informal) = *J'ai très faim.* = *Je suis affamé.* (formal) = I'm really hungry.

Crever means “to burst / to puncture”, but it’s also used informally for “dying” (like “to croak.”)

And it can then be used in other expressions!

Je meurs de faim. = “I’m dying of hunger, I’m famished.”

🔗 *Je crève de faim.* (same but more informal)

🔗 *Je crève la dalle.* (same but even more informal)

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8 - Informal French: “Tu parles !”, “bagnole,” “bourré.”

Let’s finish with a lightning round, before going back to the text from the introduction.

Tu parles ! = “You’re talking!” (literally) = “Yeah, right...” (sarcastic)

The sarcastic expression **Tu parles** is never used with “Vous” or “Ils” or other pronouns.

French words for “car” :

- **L’automobile** (formal French)
- **Le véhicule** (administrative)
- **La bagnole** (informal French)
- **La caisse** (informal French) = literally “the box”

French words for “drunk” :

- **Ivre** (correct French)
- **Soûl** (correct French)
- **En état d’ébriété** (administrative)



See also the more up-to-date slang “genre” :

- **Genre !** = As if!
- **Tu fais genre...** = You’re acting as if [+ something] / You’re pretending.
- **Fais pas genre.** = Stop pretending / Stop acting as if [+ something]

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- **“Pompette”** (slightly drunk and happy, cutesy word)
- **Bourré** (common slang)
Pété, rond, torché, beurré... (other slang words!)

Two fun expressions for “drunk” in particular:

- **Rond comme une queue de pelle** = “round like a shovel’s handle”
- **Beurré comme un coing** = “battered like a quince”

But now, let’s get back together to the very beginning. Watch the first few minutes of the video again. What can you now understand from the text?

You’ll find it below with its English translation!

9 - Informal French: Can you understand?

On s’est bien marrés avec les potes ce soir.

= “On a bien ri avec les amis, ce soir”

= We had a good laugh with the friends this evening.

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Même si la bouffe était chelou.

= Même si la nourriture était étrange.

= Even though the food was weird.

Je me suis cassée tôt, j'étais vachement crevée.

= Je suis partie tôt, j'étais très fatiguée.

= I left early, I was really tired.

Johanna voulait me ramener en bagnole, mais tu parles !

= Johanna voulait me ramener en voiture, mais bon.

= Johanna wanted to drive me back in her car, but, yeah, right!

Elle était déjà un peu bourrée.

= Elle était déjà un peu soûle.

= She was a bit drunk (tipsy) already.

Je suis rentrée à vélo sous la flotte, c'était relou.

= Je suis rentrée à vélo sous la pluie, c'était embêtant.

= I got back home on my bike under the rain, that was annoying.

Congratulations!

You can now feel a bit more confident in everyday spoken French!

But it's a whole journey, of course.

Learn more about informal French, and what you need to understand (and speak) French in real everyday life. Click on the links to these other lessons:

French “Slang” Words for All Ages



- [Never Say “Mon Ami” in French \(And What to Say Instead\)](#)
- [Fast Spoken French: Understanding French Slang](#)
- [10 Popular French Slang Words for Everyday Life](#)

À tout de suite.

I'll see you in the next video!

🔗 If you enjoyed this lesson (and/or learned something new) – why not **share this lesson with a francophile friend**? You can talk about it afterwards! You'll learn much more if you have social support from your friends :)

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