

Real Life — Chez le coiffeur: At the Hairdresser

Whether you're living in France or passing through, going to the hairdresser is an enjoyable experience and a great opportunity to practice your French through making requests and small talk. Of course, you need some of the basic vocabulary to first make an appointment and to express your wishes at the hairdresser's. Read the following scenarios which will give you the overall language to facilitate that first or subsequent experience at the 'coiffeur'.

Role plays

<p>Amy passe un coup de fil pour prendre rendez-vous chez "Coiffure Mode". C'est sa première fois chez un coiffeur en France et elle aimerait se faire couper les pointes et avoir des mèches.</p> <p>Le téléphone sonne, le coiffeur répond : Coiffure Mode, bonjour !</p> <p>Amy: Bonjour Monsieur, j'aimerais prendre rendez vous s'il vous plaît pour samedi matin.</p> <p>Le coiffeur : Oui, je ne sais pas si nous avons encore de la place. C'est pour quoi ?</p> <p>Amy : Je voudrais que l'on me coupe les pointes et j'aimerais des mèches.</p> <p>Le coiffeur : Ah, alors il faut bien deux heures de temps – nous pourrons vous prendre samedi mais pas avant 11h 30. Est-ce que ça ira?</p> <p>Amy : Oui, si vous ne pouvez pas avant, alors d'accord pour 11h 30.</p> <p>Le coiffeur : Quel est votre nom ?</p> <p>Amy : Je m'appelle Amy Cunningham.</p> <p>Le coiffeur : Comment vous écrivez votre nom de famille ?</p> <p>Amy: C-U-N-I-N-G-H-A-M.</p> <p>Le coiffeur: Très bien ! Alors à samedi à 11h 30!</p> <p>Amy : Merci et au revoir !</p>	<p>Amy is placing a phone call to make an appointment at "Coiffure Mode". This will be her first experience with a hairdresser in France, and she would like to have her hair trimmed and some highlights added.</p> <p>The telephone rings, the hairdresser answers: Hello, Coiffure Mode!</p> <p>Amy: Hello Sir, I would like to make an appointment for Saturday morning please.</p> <p>The hairdresser: Yes, I don't know if we still have a slot available. What is it for?</p> <p>Amy: I would like to have my hair trimmed and some highlights.</p> <p>The hairdresser: Ah, that takes a good 2 hours – we can take you on Saturday, but not before 11:30. Will that be alright?</p> <p>Amy: Yes, if you cannot take me before, then it's alright for 11:30.</p> <p>The hairdresser: What is your name?</p> <p>Amy: My name is Amy Cunningham.</p> <p>The hairdresser: How do you spell your last name?</p> <p>Amy: C-U-N-I-N-G-H-A-M.</p> <p>The hairdresser: Very well then, see you on Saturday at 11:30!</p> <p>Amy: Thank you and good bye!</p>
--	--

NOTE: In France, we say 'take an appointment' (prendre un rendez-vous) not 'make an appointment'! To ask how to spell a word, there are two possibilities: "Comment écrivez-vous?" (how do you write) or 'comment épelez-vous'? (how do you spell?).

'Passer un coup de fil' is another popular way to say 'to make a phone call'.

<p>C'est samedi et Amy arrive à son rendez-vous :</p> <p>Amy : Bonjour, j'ai rendez-vous à 11h 30. Je suis Amy Cuningham.</p> <p>Le coiffeur : Bonjour ! Je suis à vous dans 5 minutes.</p> <p>Le coiffeur : Voilà Madame, suivez moi ! Asseyez-vous ici. Dites-moi – qu'est ce qu'on vous fait aujourd'hui ?</p> <p>Amy : Pourriez-vous couper juste les pointes et faire des mèches aujourd'hui ?</p> <p>Le coiffeur : Quelle couleur désirez-vous pour les mèches ?</p> <p>Amy : J'aimerais un blond foncé, presque couleur miel.</p> <p>Le coiffeur : Je vais vous montrer des échantillons. Aussi, si vous êtes d'accord, j'aimerais vous montrer une photo d'une coupe qui vous irait très bien. Je peux ?</p> <p>Amy : Pourquoi pas !</p> <p>Le coiffeur : Voici la coupe ! Je pensais vous suggérer un dégradé sur les côtés.</p> <p>Amy : Ah oui, si vous pouvez me faire aussi belle qu'elle, alors je veux bien !!</p> <p>Le coiffeur : Allons-y, je vais vous donner un look de grande actrice !!</p>	<p>It's Saturday. Amy arrives at her appointment :</p> <p>Amy: Hello, I have an appointment for 11:30. I'm Amy Cuningham.</p> <p>The hairdresser: Hello! I'll be with you in 5 minutes.</p> <p>The hairdresser: OK, Madam, follow me! Have a seat here. Tell me – what are we going to do on you today?</p> <p>Amy: Could you just trim my hair a bit and do some highlights today?</p> <p>The hairdresser: Which colour would you like for the highlights?</p> <p>Amy: I would like a dark blond, almost like a honey colour.</p> <p>The hairdresser: I'm going to show you some samples. Also, if it's OK with you, I would like to show you a photo of a cut that you would suit you very well. May I?</p> <p>Amy: Why not!</p> <p>The hairdresser: Here is the cut ! I was thinking of suggesting that we layer the sides.</p> <p>Amy: Ah yes, if you can make me as beautiful as she is, then I would like that!!</p> <p>The hairdresser: Then let's do it ! I'm going to give you the look of a great actress!!</p>
--	--

NOTE: Ça vous va bien? = does it suit you well? 'aller bien' is used to express 'to suit well' for haircuts, clothing, hats, etc...

Un peu de vocabulaire

Vos cheveux = Your hair
 Cheveux courts ou longs= short or long hair
 Mèches = highlights
 Cheveux colorés = dyed hair
 Le shampoing = shampoo
 La permanente = Perm
 Les soins = Haircare
 Le brushing = blow-dry
 Cheveux fins = fine hair
 Cheveux épais = thick hair
 Cheveux gras = oily hair
 Cheveux bouclés : curly hair
 Cheveux lisses : smooth hair

Cheveux abîmés= damaged hair
Les pellicules = dandruff
En dégradé = layered
Look naturel, un peu désordonné = natural/scruffy look
Balayage = hair weaving
Les pointes = hair ends
La frange = bangs
La raie = part
La nuque = nape of the neck
Sèche-cheveux = hairdryer
Après-shampooing =
hair conditioner

Tips & Traps

Protect yourself against questionable insurance company practices

In France, nearly 150 million insurance contracts are signed every year – an average of 3 per inhabitant! To sign on the dotted line for an insurance policy is as easy as filling up your grocery cart at the supermarket, and the insurance agents are very persuasive. However, when it comes to filing a claim for a reimbursement for an accident or loss, they are much slower to react, and will always try to use any possible justification to declare that the “options” that you signed for don’t cover the type of accident or problem you have. Or, they will find other reasons not to reimburse you: your car has been stolen? You must certainly have left the keys inside. Your cell-phone has been stolen from the pocket of your coat by a pickpocket? You cannot be reimbursed because you have not been physically aggressed by the person who stole it from you (the same is true of car hijackings – if you are forced from your car, even at gun point, and your car is stolen in this way, most insurance companies will not cover the loss). There is a flood in your apartment from a leaky roof? You should have taken better care of the roof. Your cat has damaged the wallpaper? This is your responsibility, you could certainly have avoided it. We could go on and on with examples.

Therefore, before signing an insurance policy contract, you should first of all determine if the insurance is compulsory, or if it can be of any use. It is difficult to generalize, but sometimes you will be asked to buy insurance for damages which are already covered by another agency, your credit card insurance for example in the case of a travel insurance. And take all the time necessary to read the nearly illegible small print at the bottom of the contract and the list of *clauses* attached to the main document to see in which cases you may not be covered. For example many travel cancellation policies (*assurances annulation*) for a trip will work only if you have a serious medical or professional reason to cancel, and not if you just changed your mind or were prevented by a traffic jam from reaching the airport in time for your flight. Apart from the basic car insurance (*tierce collision*) and the insurance for your housing, very few are compulsory. Learn to protect yourself against questionable insurance company practices!...

Insurance: questions to ask before signing (Assurance: les questions à poser avant de signer)

Est-ce que cette assurance est absolument obligatoire ? = Is this insurance absolutely compulsory?

Donnez-moi le détail de ce que couvre l'assurance = Give me the details of the insurance coverage.

Donnez-moi toute la documentation, et je vais prendre le temps de réfléchir = Give me all documentation needed, and I'll take the time to think about it.

Si ma maison est totalement détruite par un incendie (une inondation, une tempête, une catastrophe naturelle, une coulée de boue, des actes criminels...) est-ce que l'assurance couvrira entièrement les dépenses de reconstruction ? = If my house is totally destroyed by fire (flood, storm, natural disaster, mudslide, criminal act...), will the insurance cover the entire cost of rebuilding?

Comment fait-on concrètement une demande de remboursement, et quel est le délai après l'incident ? = How exactly do we file a claim, and what is the time limit after the incident?

Dans quelle situation l'assurance ne me remboursera pas ? = In which situation won't the insurance reimburse me?

Dans quelle situation l'assurance ne rembourse que partiellement ? = In which situation will the insurance only reimburse partially?

Quel est le montant de la franchise ? = What is the amount of the deductible?

Cela prend combien de temps pour rembourser ? = How long does it take to get reimbursed?

Quelles sont les conditions de résiliation de l'assurance ? = what are the conditions in order to cancel my policy?

Si j'ai un accrochage en voiture, est-ce que je dois immédiatement remplir un constat à l'amiable, et est-ce que je dois appeler la police ? = If I am involved in a car accident, do I have to fill out the accident report immediately, and do I have to call the police?

Travelling by train: Finding the best deals online

France is a wonderful country to travel in by train; most large cities, and even many of the out of the way places, are accessible by train, the TGV lines are very fast, and it can be very cheap if you organize yourself well in advance in order to benefit from special fares. However, there are a few drawbacks: it is not easy to find good information on connections on the SNCF website, or to identify the best ticket formula – and getting help is not always very easy. A few suggestions.

Searching for the right train and schedule

It is not very easy to find the proper website among the series of SNCF sites. There is an English version for the purchase of tickets* but the information is very limited. If you feel comfortable in French, the best way to access the time & fare schedules is to go to www.voyages-sncf.com (a travel agency belonging to the SNCF where you can also buy plane tickets, book hotels, etc.), and then click on "Train". Then you can try something on the page "*Rechercher votre billet*" (Look for your ticket) – which is almost the same, even if the title of the page is not translated, in the English website, but not as complete as the French one. However, if your trip will involve changing trains more than twice, or if you want to

travel to a neighbouring country, the website is unable to provide further information. For such cases we suggest another website which is much easier to use when there are a number of connections, and which gives all routing details about the stations you would go through, etc. This is... the German railroad website! And there is even an English version www.deutsche-bahn.co.uk

Getting back to the SNCF website, that you have to use to purchase your ticket, on this “*Rechercher votre billet*” page you will be asked at Nr. 3 “*Qui participe à ce voyage?*” (Who will travel on this trip?). There you are asked for your age, and what kind of travel card (carte senior, etc.) you have. We suggest that you not reply at all to these questions and just indicate the number of passengers. Then, when the various schedules appear on the next page, you will see the price of the tickets. At this point, you can try to look for cheap fares (see below). Only if you don’t find any reduced fares, you can go back to those Nr. 3 questions and indicate your age – and, of course, if you have one of the travel cards.

Several kinds of lower-priced tickets

If you plan a trip by train, it is always advisable to book far in advance (but not earlier than 3 months) to get the best price. There are two very good fares, on both 1st and 2nd class: the “*Prem’s*”, and the “*Piccolo*”, even cheaper, and its various forms such as “*Piccolissimo*”: with these tickets the prices can be as low as 30 to 50% of the full fare. To find the train which will allow you to get this price, you need to check the various trains and hours possible – contrary to easyJet’s website, the SNCF website doesn’t display several possible trains at the same time, not to mention several days, and will certainly not direct you to the cheapest price straight away! One more detail: “*Prem’s*” and “*Piccolos*” are often cheaper than a reduced ticket for seniors or children. And this is why we advised you above not to mention the age of the passenger at first: the ticket offered for a 6-year-old child might be more expensive than a “*Prem’s*”...

It may also happen, not so often though, that tickets are sold at a reduced price at the last minute, “*Dernière minute*”. It is always worth checking.

Tuesday's Discount

Another way to get a good price ticket is to check the availability on Tuesdays. On that date, some unsold tickets are sold at half price. However, to find them on the web is quite difficult. Forget about the English version where they don't appear at all. On the French one, click first on “*Voyages-sncf.com*”, then on “*Promos*” (the yellow button, top right). Then, in the “*Train*” box of this new page, click on the third button:
Here they are!

Note: all “*Prem’s*”, “*Piccolos*” and Tuesday's tickets are non-refundable and you cannot change the date – except if you have subscribed to a cancellation option (2,50 € per passenger per trip), but be careful, it only works under specific conditions that are indicated on the website (“*En savoir plus*”). “*Dernière minute*” tickets cannot be reimbursed at all. And for any other full fare ticket, you should always try and cancel your trip before the time of departure of the train in order to get a refund. Look carefully at the cancellation conditions on the webpage – they appear even on the English version!

Reservations: some are compulsory

They are only compulsory for the TGVs. If you want to change a reservation at the last minute, you can do it before getting on the train at the ticket windows of the “*gare*”, on electronic “*bornes*” called “*Echange Minute TGV*” when they are available – and when they work. If you want to take an earlier train and you just don’t have the time to change your ticket, you can always (but don’t tell anyone that we gave you this advice!) get on the train, you won’t be kicked off, and manage to see the “*contrôleur*” before he comes to your seat to explain to him, with your most serious and sincere voice, that you had to change trains and just couldn’t make the change of ticket in advance.

The most important thing for the SNCF is that you don’t forget to “*composter*” your ticket in one of these orange or yellow “*bornes*” in the station. If you fail to do so you will have to pay a fine – unless you manage to convince the conductor by using your most sincere voice, etc. etc...

Finalizing the purchase on the web

Assuming that you finally found the right ticket at a decent price, now you need to purchase it. For TER (Transports express régional) forget it, they are not sold on line, and you have to get them at the station– any station, though. For the TGVs they can be purchased on line, but the SNCF website, on the page “*Comment retirer votre billet*” (How to get your ticket), will propose as a first option for some ticket purchases (but, strangely enough, not for all), that you print your ticket yourself. That might be a good thing to do if you are sure to travel yourself, but such a ticket is not transferable and must be used by the person whose name is on the ticket. The only advantage is that you don’t need to “*composter*” before getting on the train. However you need to have your ID card, with the exact name that is on the ticket, with you when you are checked by the conductor. This is why we suggest that you ask to have the ticket sent to your home by mail. This is a quick and free service, and then you can always give the ticket to someone else if you cannot make the trip yourself.

Good luck!... and enjoy the beautiful countryside of France once you manage to get on the train – and if there aren't any strikes at that time...

* To access this page, go to: www.voyages-sncf and click on the UK flag at the bottom.

IDTGV: a new formula

A new formula was launched a few years ago by the SNCF, on four lines from Paris only: the “IDTGV”. It is a good way to get excellent fares on special trains, from as low as 19 € for a one-way ticket on these lines. Another advantage is that there is a special website, easily accessible, and with a totally identical English version: www.idtgv.com

The four lines link Paris to Bordeaux, Marseille, Montpellier and Nice, with stopovers, depending on the line, at Aix-en-Provence, Avignon, Cannes, Nîmes, Saint-Raphaël, Toulon and Toulouse.

As you will see on the website, these tickets can only be purchased on line, and have to be printed out by, and can only be used by the purchaser. You don't, however, have to “*composter*” these tickets.

Le bricolage pour tous — Do it Yourself

Whether you're a confirmed and experienced do-it-yourselfer or an occasional amateur, you will undoubtedly have occasion to attach something to a wall or other surface. Since construction techniques and materials differ quite widely between France, England and North America, we thought it would be useful to discuss the various systems of wall and ceiling anchors, their use and the essential vocabulary in French for buying them at your local DIY outlet. Even the best of the books on *bricolage* published in France don't have complete discussions with easy-to-follow instructions. There are few things more discouraging than to have a recently installed mirror or bookshelf fall to the floor because of poorly chosen fasteners.

An exploration hole

The first thing to consider when choosing an anchor is the construction used in building the wall or ceiling in question. Some older homes may have solid stone walls, especially on exterior and load-bearing walls, while new constructions methods combine cement blocks or solid concrete for the exterior walls and interior walls of either plaster blocks (*carreaux de plâtre*) or dry wall/sheet rock/gypsum board (*plaque de plâtre* or *placoplâtre* or simply "*placo*") fastened to either wood or metal studs. You may have to drill an exploratory hole in your wall to determine the type of construction material that has been used in your dwelling.

1) FOR HOLLOW WALLS made with *placoplâtre*, you will need to use anchors designed for such walls (*chevilles pour matériaux creux*) such as:

Expanding or deforming plastic sleeves = "*chevilles à expansion/déformation*"



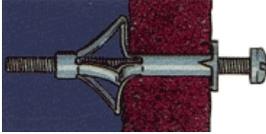
— by far the most commonly used and easiest to install. Simply drill a pilot hole of the proper dimension, insert the sleeve, often with the help of a hammer, and the action of screwing in the accompanying screw causes the anchor to expand or to deform inside the hollow space. These plastic anchors can be used for most light loads, and there is an amazing variety of sizes, shapes, and systems.

Spring-loaded toggle bolts = "*chevilles à basculement*" or "*chevilles à ressort*"



— for heavier loads, these spring-loaded anchors work very well. A pilot hole the diameter of the entire mechanism should be drilled first. Then the fairly long accompanying bolt is inserted in the item you want to hang on the wall, then into the spring-loaded toggle before finally inserting the anchor into the pilot hole. Once placed in the pilot hole, the ends of the anchor unfold and are drawn firmly up against the backside of the gypsum board when the bolt is tightened. These anchors are also quite easy to remove, should you ever need to.

Molly bolts = "chevilles [métalliques à expansion] Molly" —



another excellent anchor for heavier loads and one that requires a smaller pilot hole than the toggle bolts described above. The sides of the metal anchor are designed to collapse when pressure is exerted by tightening the bolt and they fold out along the inside of the wall board. It is important to drill the pilot hole the specified diameter of the anchor, especially if you use a screwdriver to set the anchor. Once the hole has been drilled and the Molly bolt inserted, you have to tighten the screw to collapse and fold out the sides of the bolt. Once this is done, you have to remove the screw from the anchor before you can put it through the item you want to fasten to the wall. At that point, you re-insert the screw and tighten. An easier way of installing Molly bolts is to use a specific tool (*une pince à expansion*) that puts sufficient pressure on the head of the screw to quickly and easily collapse the part of the bolt inside the wall. Using this tool will also avoid the problem of the entire Molly bolt turning in the pilot hole when you use a screwdriver to set the anchor. An inexpensive version of this tool can be purchased at most DIY stores for under 20 euros. Fischer makes a more elaborate Molly bolt setter, but it is considerably more expensive.

NB: Molly bolts cannot be used on walls with a double layer of drywall, which would be too thick. You would have to use a toggle bolt in such situations.

2) FOR SOLID MASONRY WALLS, the choice is equally great:

Non-expanding plastic sleeves = "chevilles en plastique" —



the cheapest and easiest to install of all the solid wall (*murs à matériaux pleins*) anchors. A hole of the same diameter as the sleeve is drilled into the wall, after which a screw, a normal wood screw will do, is used to attach your item to the wall. Only for fairly light loads. These non-expanding sleeves should not be used on hollow walls since they can be pulled out of drywall fairly easily.

Masonry bolts = "chevilles métalliques" ("métal") —



used for heavier loads. A hole of the same diameter is drilled and the bolt is inserted, just as in the case of the plastic sleeves above. However, when the bolt is tightened, after first attaching whatever you want to fix to the wall, the end of the bolt expands and anchors it firmly in the hole you have drilled. These anchors are excellent for use in solid concrete walls.

Nail-in plugs = "chevilles à col long"



— similar to the expanding plastic sleeves described above for hollow wall fasteners, but they are extremely handy for fastening flat items, such as strips of wood on which you would nail wall panelling. They are, in essence, a long plastic sleeve anchor with a screw already in place. A hole is drilled through the item to attach and into the wall; then the anchor is driven into the item and subsequently into the wall with a hammer until the head of the plastic sleeve is flush with the surface of the item you are hanging. The screw is then tightened firmly with a screwdriver. They can also be used to shore up something already in place, since you don't have to remove the item first before installing.

A tip on drilling holes in solid masonry walls. You will need a percussion drill (*une perceuse à percussion*) for most drilling jobs, especially in concrete and stone, and you should use carbide tipped drill bits (*mèches*). If you have a hole of 8 or 10 mm to drill, it is often easier to drill an initial hole of 6 mm and then redrill it to the larger diameter. Purchasing high quality drill bits is an investment you will appreciate in the long run.

Happy fastening!

Roger Stevenson