

French For Gringos Lesson 1 Greetings Introductions 2026 10 04

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Maya: Bonjour, and welcome to French for Gringos, the show where two regular Americans try to teach you French without butchering it too badly. I'm Maya.

Devon: And I'm Devon. Over the next thirty lessons, we're taking you from zero to confidently ordering dinner in Paris or chatting with a shopkeeper in QuØbec.

Today, we start with the single most important French word there is.

Maya: Bonjour. That's boh(n)-zhoor. It means hello, or good day, and you'll say it about fifty times a day in France. Pronunciation tip: that first syllable, boh(n), is a nasal vowel. Don't actually pronounce the n. Just let the sound hum through your nose, like you've got a cold coming on. Boh(n). Then zhoor, with a soft French j, like the s in measure.

Devon: Next up is bonsoir, boh(n)-swahr. Same nasal start, then swahr. It means good evening. Rule of thumb: bonjour before about six in the evening, bonsoir after.

Tip: that final r is soft, almost swallowed. Boh(n)-swahr, not bon-soir with a hard r.

Maya: Third, a fun one: salut. Sah-loo. It means hi, but it's casual, for friends and people your own age. Tip: the t is silent, so it's sah-loo, never sah-loot. French is full of silent final letters, so get used to ignoring them at the ends of words.

Devon: Next: je m'appelle, zhuh mah-pell. That means my name is, literally "I call myself." So you say zhuh mah-pell, then your name. Tip: the j in je is that soft zh sound again, zhuh, like the g in garage. And appelles has that double l that just sounds like a quick pell.

Maya: Then: comment ça va, koh-mah(n) sah vah. How are you? Tip: nasal vowel in the middle, koh-mah(n), then sah vah with short, crisp a sounds. To answer, you can just say ça va, sah vah, which doubles as "I'm doing fine."

Devon: When you meet someone new, you say enchantØ, ah(n)-shah(n)-tay. It means enchanted, as in nice to meet you. Tip: two nasal vowels here, ah(n) and shah(n), then tay. If you're a woman you'd write enchantØe with an extra e, but it sounds exactly the same, so don't stress it.

Maya: And when you leave: au revoir, oh ruh-vwahr. Goodbye, literally "until the re-seeing." Tip: the re is swallowed, just ruh, and vwahr rhymes with noir. Say it slowly: oh ruh-vwahr.

Devon: Let's put it all together now. Scene: Maya walks into a little Paris cafØ, and I work there.

Maya: Well, boh(n)-zhoor, everyone!

Devon: Boh(n)-zhoor! Koh-mah(n) sah vah?

Maya: Sah vah, merci. Zhuh mah-pell Maya.

Devon: Ah(n)-shah(n)-tay. Maya. Zhuh mah-pell Devon.

Maya: Three: au revoir, oh ruh-vvahr, goodbye. That's your first French, and you're already dangerous. See you tomorrow!