

LES ADJECTIFS DEMONSTRATIFS

Goal: By the end of this lesson, you should be able to indicate a noun (person, an object, or anything) by its the proper demonstrative adjective in French.

First, let's try to break down the word “Démonstratif” into simpler segments.

The term « démonstratif » comes from « démontrer », whose main root is “montrer” → to show in English. So, basically, you used an *adjective démonstratif* to show something or somebody, in other terms, situate them in space and time. You are already familiar with these in English: This, That, These, Those. In French, we have, CE – CET – CETTE – CES.

Now, let's see in what situations they can be used.

CE → This OR That

You should use CE before any masculine noun. (An exception follows, of course☺)

Ce plat → This/That dish
 Ce ball → This/That ball
 Ce père → This/That father
 Ce vélo → This/That bike

The only exception to this rule is when the masculine noun begins with a vowel or a silent h, then use CET.

CET → This OR That

You should use CET before any masculine noun starting with a vowel or a silent h.

Cet oeil bleu → This/That blue eye
 Cet oiseau vert → This/That green bird
 Cet homme → This/That man
 Cet hotel → This/That hotel
 Cet idiot → This/That idiot

Note: Cet immense cadeau → This big (huge) gift.

It may happen that an adjective stand between a demonstrative adjective and its noun as in sentence above, IMMENSE (huge) stands between CET and the noun CADEAU (gift). If the noun is MASCULINE, AND the adjective starts with a VOWEL (immense), go ahead and use CET (to make the *liaison*). But it only works when the noun is masculine. If feminine, use CETTE, even if the adjective in between start with a vowel.

For example:

CETTE immense maison → This/That huge house. (maison is a feminine noun)

CETTE immense école → This/That huge school (école is a feminine noun)

CETTE → This OR That

You should use CETTE before any feminine noun. (no exception)

Cette femme → This/That woman
 Cette table → This/That table
 Cette créature → This/That creature
 Cette habitation → This/That dwelling

CES → These OR Those

Easy rule: If any of the nouns listed in all the examples above are plural, use CES, regardless of their gender. CES is NEUTRAL.

Ces plats → These/Those dishes
 Ces yeux bleus → These/Those blue eyes
 Ces femmes → These/Those women
 Ces hommes → These/Those men

THIS or THAT??? → NEAR or FAR???

When I was learning English, (and I still am, hehe) my teacher told me that we should use THIS when the item is near the speaker, and THAT if it is distant. Same thing with THESE and THOSE. But I'm sure that, based on the examples above, you have certainly noticed that with CE – CET – CETTE – CES, you can use This OR That / These OR THOSE interchangeably. So the question many of you must be trying to figure out is how we express (or imply, if you want) the distance (near or far) between the object and the speaker. Well, 2 words to solve the problem: -ci and -là.

Let's say you want to say THIS woman, (implying that she is NEAR you). In order to do so, simply add -ci after Cette femme → THIS woman → Cette femme-ci.

Now, let's say the woman you are talking about is FAR from you, and you mean THAT woman. In order to express that (far) distance in French, you'll need -là after Cette femme. Cette femme → THAT woman → Cette femme-là.

Formula 1 (Object is NEAR): This + noun → Ce/Cet/Cette + noun + -ci (singular form)
 These + nouns → Ces + nouns + -ci (plural form)

Formula 2 (Object is FAR): That + noun → Ce/Cet/Cette + noun + -là (singular form)
 Those + nouns → Ces + nouns + -là (plural form)

Note that you don't need to use -ci and -là after nouns unless you REALLY want to stress that distance relation between the speaker and the nouns. The context surrounding the speaker and its audience is usually enough to provide this kind of information.

INDICATING A CHOICE

You can also use -ci and -là after a noun if you wish to express a choice in a very obvious manner. In English, the emphasis will be on the THIS or THAT as in "No, not THIS woman,

THAT woman”. In French, you can do the same using –ci and –là after the noun. “*Non, pas cette femme-ci, cette femme-là*”. In the next lesson about the Demonstrative Pronouns, we will spend more time on that aspect. Merci!