

How to use *tout*

Tout le monde était là.
Everybody was there.

LESSON

What is it?

Tout is one of the most commonly used word in French. It can be an adjective, a noun, a pronoun or an adverb. It is also used in many expressions.

What is it like in English?

Tout has no equivalent in English and can be translated by many different words (any, all, entirely, every, etc.).

“Every child deserves a champion.” (Rita Pierson) → « *Tout enfant a besoin d'un champion.* »

All is well. → *Tout va bien.*

What is it like in French?

1. *Tout* as an adjective

- a. As an adjective *tout* means “all”, “every”, and agrees with the noun it precedes.

As an adjective, *tout* and *tous* are pronounced [tu]. *Toute* and *toutes* are pronounced [tut].

C'est toute une affaire. → It's quite a story.

Tous les colis sont arrivés. → All the parcels have arrived.

- b. The negative form of *tous* in this case is *aucun*.

Tous les colis sont arrivés. ≠ *Aucun colis n'est arrivé.*

→ All the parcels have arrived. ≠ No parcel has arrived.

- c. Note that in front of the name of a town, *tout* does not agree.

Tout Rome brûlait. → All of Rome was burning.

Watch out! *Tout Paris* (all of Paris) is not equivalent to *le Tout-Paris* (the elite of this city). They mean two different things.

Le Tout-Paris se trouvait rassemblé dans cette salle de concert.

→ The affluent Parisian elite was present in this concert hall.

- d. Expressions with *tout*:

- *Le tout premier* (the first ever) behaves like an adverb. It remains *tout* in the masculine plural but it agrees in the feminine plural.

les tout premiers jours de l'hiver → the first winter days

les toutes premières semaines de grossesse → the first few weeks of pregnancy

- With the following expressions, you can choose between the singular or the plural:

à tout point de vue / à tous points de vue → in all aspects

à tout moment / à tous moments → at any time, at all times

en tout cas / en tous cas → at any rate, anyhow, in any event

de/en tout/tous temps → always, anytime, at all times, all the times

en tout lieu / en tous lieux → everywhere, anywhere, in all places

de toute sorte / de toutes sortes = en tout genre / en tous genres → of any kind

- The following expressions can only be in the singular:

en toute liberté → freely

à toute allure → fast, quickly

à tout hasard → by any chance

de tout cœur → wholeheartedly

à toute épreuve → unparallel, retentless

- The following expressions can only be in the plural:

en toutes lettres → spelled out

de toutes pièces → from scratch

à toutes jambes → at top speed

de tous côtés → on all sides

2. *Tout* as a noun

As a noun, *tout* is pronounced [tu] and becomes *touts* in the plural, although it is rarely used.

J'achète le tout. → I buy the whole.

Ces entités forment plusieurs touts. → These entities form several groups.

3. *Tout* as a pronoun

As a pronoun, *tout* is neutral and agrees with the noun it replaces. In the masculine plural, *tous* is pronounced [tus].

Tout est possible. → Everything is possible.

Restez tous ici ! → All of you, stay over here!

Elles sont toutes arrivées. → All of them have arrived.

4. *Tout* as an adverb

As an adverb, *tout* is pronounced [tu] and means "entirely", "completely", "very".

- It remains invariable in the masculine plural:

Ils sont tout tristes. → They are very sad.

Watch out! *Ils sont tout tristes.* ≠ *Ils sont tous tristes.* → They are very sad. ≠ All of them are sad.

- It agrees if the adjective is feminine and starts with a consonant:

Elles sont toutes sales. → They are completely dirty.

- In front of a silent *h* or a vowel, the agreement is optional:

Les opportunités vous sont tout/toutes ouvertes. → Opportunities are wide open for you.

EXERCISES

1 Tick the correct pronunciation.

	[tu]	[tus]
a. à tous moments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Je les prends tous.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. plusieurs touts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. en tous cas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Ils ne sont pas tous arrivés.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Je les aime tous.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. tous les enfants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Ils sont tous bêtes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. de tous côtés	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Changez tous de place !	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 Fill in the gaps with *tout*, *tous*, *toute* or *toutes*.

- a. J'ai lu les premiers chapitres de ce roman.
- b. Le n'est pas la somme des parties.
- c. Ils sont prêts (*entirely*) et seront présents ce soir (*all of them*).
- d. Exprimez-vous en liberté.
- e. Avignon était là.
- f. Cela peut arriver à moment.
- g. Le liquide débordait de côtés.
- h. Le-Boston participait à les manifestations artistiques.
- i. Elles sont excitées.
- j. Elles ne sont pas d'accord avec lui.

3 Translate the following sentences into French.

- a. He ran at top speed.
→
- b. Are you free tomorrow, by any chance?
→
- c. Everything was fake.
→
- d. All the names of the beneficiaries must be spelled out.
→
- e. I wholeheartedly support you.
→
- f. My mother would be delighted to see you.
→
- g. No fish was caught.
→

4 Free Writing: Make up a few proverbs starting with *tout*, *toute*, *tous* and *toutes*.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....