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## Le français interactif — *An vs année, jour vs journée*, etc. How to Know Which One to Use?

Who has not been confused over the difference between *jour* vs *journée*, *soir* vs *soirée* and *an* vs *année*? The reasons for using one or the other can be complicated, therefore, I would like to give an easy and straight forward explanation. The idea is to avoid thinking too much about it when speaking to a French person.

In a nutshell, you should use the shorter version: *jour*, *soir* and *an* when you're talking about a number of *jours*, etc., which means that there will be a number placed in front or after the word. However, when you are adding descriptive words (such as interrogative words, indefinite adjectives or certain prepositions), then you will mainly use the longer version with the suffix "ée" or "née": *journée*, *soirée* and *année*. Let's shine some light on things with examples:

### 1. Expressing numbers:

#### –Age

*J'ai 30 ans.* = I am 30 years old.

*Ce bébé a 8 jours.* = This baby is 8 days old.

#### –Time spent

*Il est parti pendant 15 jours.* = He left for 15 days.

*Nous avons terminé notre projet en 5 jours.* = We finished our project in 5 days.

*J'ai mangé le même gâteau 3 soirs de suite.* = I ate the same cake 3 evenings in a row.

#### –A number of days and years ago

*Ils se sont mariés il y a 30 ans.* = They got married 30 years ago.

*Je suis parti des Etats-Unis il y a 10 jours.* = I left the USA 10 days ago.

**EXCEPTION:** When using ordinal numerals such as first, second, third, etc., you need to add the suffix "née":

*C'est ma deuxième année dans mon nouveau poste.* = It's my second year in my new job.

### 2. Using descriptive words, adjectives, prepositions:

First let's clarify a few terms:

**demonstrative adjectives** = words such as *ce*, *cette*, *ces* (this, these);

**Interrogative adjectives** = words such as *quel*, *quelle* (what), *combien* (how many);

**Prepositions:** words such as *pour* (for), *dans* (in), *avant* (before), *après* (after), etc.

Again, in short, with **adjectives** in general, you will most of the time use the longer version.

## -Descriptive adjectives

### Examples:

*Aujourd'hui, c'est une belle journée.* = Today, it's a beautiful day.

*La veille de mon anniversaire a été une mauvaise soirée.* = The evening before my birthday was a bad evening.

In these cases, *belle* and *mauvaise* are adjectives and they trigger *jour* to become *journée*, and *soir* to become *soirée*.

**NOTE:** You've also probably heard *Bonne journée* et *Bonne soirée* to say "Have a nice day" and "Have a nice evening"? This is another example of how the adjective *bonne* calls for the use of "ée" or "née".

### Other examples:

*L'année prochaine sera une année intéressante.* = Next year will be an interesting year.

*Je l'ai vu au bar pendant plusieurs soirées.* = I saw him at the bar during several evenings.

## -Demonstrative adjectives

### Examples:

*Je vais en Allemagne cette année.* = I'm going to Germany this year.

*L'année 2015 ? J'ai beaucoup travaillé cette année-là.* = The year 2015? I worked a lot that year.

**NOTE:** At times it is possible to say *ce-jour là* and *quel jour*. It really depends on the situation.

### Examples:

*J'étais vraiment fatigué ce jour-là.* = I was really tired that day.

*Quel jour pars-tu pour Los Angeles ?* = Which day are you leaving for Los Angeles?

## -Interrogative adjectives

### Examples:

*Tu pars pour combien d'années en Afrique ?* = You're leaving for how many years in Africa?

*Quelle journée as-tu préféré pendant l'atelier ?* = Which day did you prefer during the workshop?

**NOTE:** When *quelle* is an exclamation, is it also followed by the long form.

### Examples:

*Quelle belle soirée !* = What a beautiful evening!

*Quelle année !* = What a year!

### 3. Exceptions to remember

A few exceptions are worth remembering because we say and hear them very frequently:

#### –Frequency

Even though we're not working with a number, when speaking about frequency, we have tendency of also using the **shorter version with a masculine word** but the longer version with the suffix "ée" or "née" for a **feminine word**.

Examples:

*J'ai travaillé tous les soirs la semaine dernière.* = I worked every evening last week.

*Je lis un journal français tous les jours.* = I read a French newspaper everyday.

*Depuis qu'il est arrivé en France, il a changé de travail tous les ans.* = Since he arrived in France, he has changed jobs every year.

**HOWEVER**, we say:

*J'ai étudié toute la journée.* = I studied all day.

Another example with the masculine/feminine situation in a rather frequency situation:

*Une fois par an, je vais à Paris.* = One time per year, I go to Paris.

**HOWEVER**, we say:

*Chaque année, je vais à Paris.* = Each year, I go to Paris.

#### –Tonight and last night

Examples:

We say *ce soir* when referring to "tonight" and *hier soir* for "last night":

*Ce soir je sors !* = tonight I'm going out!

*Je voulais aller au cinéma hier soir, mais il pleuvait.* = I wanted to go to the movies last night, but it was raining.

The scenario will help you to see how these words can be put into context.

## Scenario: Et si on dînait ensemble ce soir ?

<p><b>Yvan invite Lucie à dîner.</b></p> <p><b>Yvan :</b> Bonjour Lucie, on se connaît depuis 2 ans maintenant et on n'a jamais dîné ensemble. Ça te dirait ?</p> <p><b>Lucie :</b> Haha, d'accord ! Je suis libre ce soir...</p> <p><b>Yvan :</b> Super. Il fait tellement beau en ce moment, ce sera une belle soirée en terrasse. Tu veux aller au Bistrot de l'Opéra ?</p> <p><b>Lucie :</b> Ouais, mais j'y suis déjà allée il y a 4 jours. Et si on allait à la Brasserie Bertrand ? La dernière fois que j'y suis allée ça fait au moins 1 an !</p> <p><b>Yvan :</b> D'accord mais ça sera la deuxième fois cette semaine pour moi. J'y suis allée avant-hier.</p> <p><b>Lucie :</b> Alors, si on changeait de quartier ? On travaille ici toute la journée, ça ferait du bien de voir autre chose.</p> <p><b>Yvan :</b> Bonne idée, on pourrait aller vers la rue Mouffetard. C'est touristique mais il y a un restaurant que je voudrais essayer. Il est ouvert depuis 3 mois et il a de super bonnes critiques.</p> <p><b>Lucie :</b> Chouette ! Je crois que ça fait des années que je ne suis pas allée à la rue Mouffetard ! Ça fera l'occasion.</p> <p><b>Yvan :</b> Je passe te chercher dans la soirée vers 19h ?</p> <p><b>Lucie :</b> Ça marche, je suis contente de sortir un peu. J'ai travaillé tous les jours et soirs non-stop !</p> <p><b>Yvan :</b> Moi aussi, à ce soir !</p>	<p><b>Yvan invites Lucie for dinner.</b></p> <p><b>Yvan:</b> Hello Lucie, we've known each other for 2 years and we've never had dinner together. How about it?</p> <p><b>Lucie:</b> Ha ha, OK! I'm free tonight...</p> <p><b>Yvan:</b> Great. It's so beautiful out now, it will be a nice evening out on a terrace. You want to go to the Bistrot de l'Opéra?</p> <p><b>Lucie:</b> Yeah but I already went there 4 days ago. And what if we went to the Brasserie Bertrand? Last time that I went there, it was at least 1 year ago!</p> <p><b>Yvan:</b> OK but that will be the second time for me this week. I went there the day before yesterday.</p> <p><b>Lucie:</b> So, what if we changed districts? We work here all day, it would be nice to see something else.</p> <p><b>Yvan:</b> Good idea, we could go to Rue Mouffetard. It's touristic but there is a restaurant that I would like to try. It opened 3 months ago and it has great reviews.</p> <p><b>Lucie:</b> Great! I think it has been years since I have gone to Rue Mouffetard! This will be my opportunity.</p> <p><b>Yvan:</b> Should I pick you up this evening around 7:00pm?</p> <p><b>Lucie:</b> That works, I'm happy to get out a bit. I've been working days and evenings nonstop!</p> <p><b>Yvan:</b> Me too, see you tonight!</p>
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## Exercices

### I. Remplissez les espaces avec *an* ou *année* (penser à mettre au pluriel si besoin):

1. J'ai 18 \_\_\_\_\_.
2. As-tu passé une belle \_\_\_\_\_ à Lyon ?
3. Tu as habité à New York pendant combien d' \_\_\_\_\_ ?
4. Mon père a travaillé pour Lindt pendant 30 \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Je me suis mariée en 1995, c'était une magnifique \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Quelle \_\_\_\_\_ difficile !

**II. Remplissez les espaces avec *an, année, jour, journée, soir ou soirée* (penser à mettre au pluriel si besoin) :**

1. La fête du mariage a duré 3 \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Hier \_\_\_\_\_, j'ai passé un/une \_\_\_\_\_ inoubliable. Je suis rentrée à minuit.
3. La Coupe du Monde de football est tous les 4 \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Quelle belle \_\_\_\_\_ aujourd'hui. Il faisait très beau !
5. Tu pars combien de \_\_\_\_\_ en vacances ?
6. Je dois aller au travail, bonne \_\_\_\_\_ à et demain !
7. Ca fait des \_\_\_\_\_ que j'ai arrêté le café !
8. Je vais arriver dans 5 \_\_\_\_\_ à Londres.
9. Je suis contente que la fin de l' \_\_\_\_\_ arrive car je vais prendre des vacances pendant la période de Noël.
10. Je suis heureuse de te voir ce \_\_\_\_\_ ! Je viens à 18h ?

(Solutions below)

## Le coin des branchés : Plein les bottes

***Se tenir droit dans ses bottes*** = To be self-assured, self-righteous, even when one is wrong.  
Lit.: To remain upright in one's boots. This is probably the most common expression using the word *botte* these days, often to refer to the attitude of a politician, as we can see in this cartoon by the cartoonist Placide published in the French media. In spite of their many demonstrations and expressions of dissatisfaction, the *gilets jaunes* complain that both president Macron (right) and Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, aren't doing anything for them.

***En avoir plein les bottes*** = To be fed up, to be sick to the back teeth, to have had it up to here.  
Lit.: to have your boots full of (something). Ex.: ***J'en ai plein les bottes de t'entendre rouspéter.*** = I'm fed up to hear you complain.

***Lécher les bottes de quelqu'un*** = To lick someone's boots: exactly the same meaning in English and French. Ex.: ***Tu as vu comme il lèche les bottes du patron ?*** = Have you seen how he licks the boss's boots?

***Être à la botte de quelqu'un*** = To be someone's puppet. Lit.: To be at someone's boot. Such a person may very well have the same habit of licking that person's boots, like above... Ex.: ***Il est totalement à la botte du patron.*** = He's totally the boss' puppet.

### Solutions des exercices

I. 1. ans. – 2. année. – 3. années. – 4. ans. – 5. année. 6. année.

II. 1. jours. – 2. soir ; une soirée. – 3. ans. – 4. journée. – 5. jours. – 6. journée. – 7. années. – 8. jours. – 9. année. – 10. soir.