

Nasal vowels:

If you're from Louisiana, or you've been living here a while, you're a step ahead of anyone else learning French because you probably already know the nasal vowels in French. Let's call them: the *boudin* vowel, the *LeBlanc* vowel, and the *couillon* vowel.

the boudin vowel [ɛ]

la faim (*hunger*)
un 'tit brin (*a little bit*)
du train (*some noise*)
le reintier (*the backbone*)
trinquer (*to toast [clink glasses]*)

the LeBlanc vowel [ã]

les dents (*the teeth*)
une tranche (*a slice*)
le temps (*the weather/time*)
une chandelle (*a candle*)
embrasser (*to kiss or embrace*)

the couillon vowel [ɔ̃]

le bourbon (*bourbon*)
Allons à Lafayette! (*Let's go to Lafayette!*)
du coton (*some cotton*)
ils sont (*they are*)
compter (*to count*)

PRATIQUEZ :

le Prince Charmant (*Prince Charming*)
du maïs tendre (*some tender aka 'sweet corn'*)
la Saint Valentin (*Valentine's Day*)
Ça fait longtemps! (*It's been a long time!*)
des cocombres (*some cucumbers*)
du vin blanc (*some white wine*)
du pain perdu (*some lost bread aka 'French toast'*)
Prends courage! (*Take courage aka 'Take heart!'*)
Papa et Maman (*Daddy and Momma*)

If you look in the Dictionary of Louisiana French, you'll see these symbols in the pronunciation key:

[ɛ]

[ã]

[ɔ̃]

Note: Like most things in the world, accents in Louisiana don't fit neatly into a single box. Pronunciation can vary from place to place or person to person, and for some Louisianians there isn't much of difference between the Leblanc vowel and the couillon vowel. This page is just hoping to give you a general guide to common Louisiana pronunciations.

“ein” & “eine”

Two of the first words you come across when learning French are the words “un” and “une,” which are the masculine and feminine forms of the word “a”. For example:

un garçon (*a boy*)
un chassis (*a window*)
un tablier (*an apron*)
un homme* (*a man*)

une fille (*a girl*)
une porte (*a door*)
une maladie (*an illness*)
une erreur (*a mistake*)

As you can see, it isn't just humans that are masculine or feminine, everything is! Also, whether it's “a” or “an” in English has no effect on whether it's “un” or “une” in French.

For some parts of the French-speaking world, “un” has its own nasal vowel, but for most places - including most of France and Louisiana - this vowel has evolved to be pronounced like the *boudin* vowel. In France and elsewhere, you will hear a very big difference between “un” and “une,” but in Louisiana, we tend to pronounce the masculine “un” like the *boudin* vowel, and the feminine “une” something close to the woman's name “Ann” in English. For this reason, some people who choose to write in dialect will write them “ein” and “eine”; however, writing “un” and “une” doesn't prevent someone pronouncing them like “ein” and “eine” - just like someone might say “Whatcha want?” and write “What you want?”

*Note: When a word starts with a vowel or a silent *h*: the *n* sound carries over and both *un* and *une* can sound like “Ann”