

French Accents

Languages

The five accent marks, what each does, and when it changes meaning.

Each mark has a specific job.

Accent	On	Does
é aigu	e only	Closed 'ay' sound
è grave	e, a, u	Open 'eh'; on a/u it distinguishes words
ê circumflexe	all vowels	Often marks a lost s: forêt = forest
ë tréma	e, i, u	Pronounce both vowels: Noël
ç cédille	c only	Keeps c soft before a, o, u

The grave on a and u is purely to distinguish words: a/à, ou/où. It does not change the sound.