

Starter activity: match cards

Je ne comprends pas ce qui se passe.

Je ne comprends pas ce qu'il fait.

Je ne comprends pas ce dont il a besoin.

Je ne comprends pas ce qu'il dit.

Je ne comprends pas ce dont il s'inquiète.

Je ne comprends pas ce qui le motive.

Je ne comprends pas ce dont il parle.

Je ne comprends pas ce qu'il lit.

Je ne comprends pas ce qui l'intéresse.

I don't understand what he's talking about.

I don't understand what he's saying.

I don't understand what interests him.

I don't understand what he's reading.

I don't understand what's happening.

I don't understand what motivates him.

I don't understand what he's doing.

I don't understand what he's worried about.

I don't understand what he needs.

**Grammar notes: relative pronouns (*ce qui*, *ce que*, *ce dont*)**

Expressing 'what' as a link word in French using *ce qui*, *ce que*, *ce dont*.

**1. Ce qui**

Je ne comprends pas ce qui se passe.  
*I don't understand what's happening.*

Je ne comprends pas ce qui l'intéresse.  
*I don't understand what interests him.*

Je ne comprends pas ce qui le motive.  
*I don't understand what motivates him.*



➔ *Ce qui* is used as the link word because 'what' is the subject of the verb that follows.

**2. Ce que / ce qu'**

Je ne comprends pas ce qu'il fait.  
*I don't understand what he's doing.*

Je ne comprends pas ce qu'il dit.  
*I don't understand what he's saying.*

Je ne comprends pas ce qu'il lit.  
*I don't understand what he's reading.*



➔ *Ce que* (abbreviated to *ce qu'* before a vowel) is used as the link word because 'what' is the object of the verb that follows.

**3. Ce dont**

Je ne comprends pas ce dont il parle.  
*I don't understand what he's talking about.*

Je ne comprends pas ce dont il a besoin.  
*I don't understand what he needs.*

Je ne comprends pas ce dont il s'inquiète.  
*I don't understand what he's worried about.*



➔ *Ce dont* is used as the link word because the verb that follows 'what' uses *de*.

**Translation into French**

1. He never knows what's happening.

.....

2. We don't understand what she's talking about.

.....

3. I don't understand what it's about.

.....

4. Can you explain what happens in this film?

.....

5. Does he know what he wants to do in life?

.....

6. I don't know what my parents are concerned about.

.....

7. I can't imagine what she's worrying about.

.....

8. He refuses to say what interests him.

.....

9. Her family doesn't understand what she's hoping to do.

.....

10. We're trying to discover what inspires these architects.

.....

**Vocabulary bank**

<b>pouvoir + infinitive</b>	to be able (to do) / can (do)	<b>imaginer</b>	to imagine
<b>expliquer</b>	to explain	<b>refuser de + infinitive</b>	to refuse (to do)
<b>ce, cet, cette</b>	this/that	<b>dire</b>	to say
<b>ces</b>	these/those	<b>espérer + infinitive</b>	to hope (to do)
<b>savoir</b>	to know	<b>essayer de + infinitive</b>	to try (to do)
<b>vouloir + infinitive</b>	to want (to do)	<b>découvrir</b>	to discover
<b>dans la vie</b>	in life	<b>un architecte</b>	architect

Translation answers

1. He never knows what's happening.

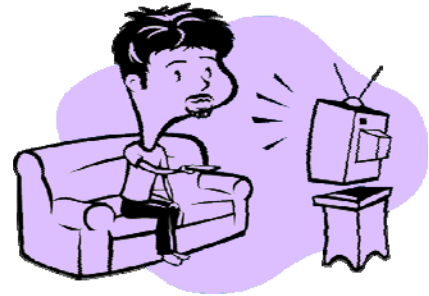
*Il ne sait jamais ce qui se passe.*

2. We don't understand what she's talking about.

*Nous ne comprenons pas ce dont elle parle.*

3. I don't understand what it's about.

*Je ne comprends pas ce dont il s'agit.*



4. Can you explain what happens in this film?

*Peux-tu / pouvez-vous expliquer ce qui se passe dans ce film?*

5. Does he know what he wants to do in life?

*Est-ce qu'il sait ce qu'il veut faire dans la vie?*

6. I don't know what my parents are concerned about.

*Je ne sais pas ce dont mes parents se soucient.*

7. I can't imagine what she's worrying about.

*Je ne peux pas imaginer ce dont elle s'inquiète.*

8. He refuses to say what interests him.

*Il refuse de dire ce qui l'intéresse.*

9. Her family doesn't understand what she's hoping to do.

*Sa famille ne comprend pas ce qu'elle espère faire.*

10. We're trying to discover what inspires these architects.

*Nous essayons de découvrir ce qui inspire ces architectes.*



Using *ce qui* and *ce que* at the start of sentences

Je ne comprends pas pourquoi elle fait ça.

Ce que je ne comprends pas, c'est pourquoi elle fait ça.

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La musique classique m'intéresse beaucoup.

Ce qui m'intéresse beaucoup, c'est la musique classique.

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J'adore aller en vacances aux États-Unis.

Ce que j'adore, c'est aller en vacances aux États-Unis.

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Le personnage principal dans ce livre me plaît beaucoup.

Ce qui me plaît beaucoup dans ce livre, c'est le personnage principal.

### Teaching notes

This resource is designed for year 12 or 13 students to develop translation skills with a specific focus on 'what' as a linking word (*ce qui / ce que / ce dont*).

### Starter

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Print one set of the French and English sentences on pp.1-2 of this Word document, cut them up and stick them up randomly around the classroom before the lesson. As a starter activity ask students to find matching pairs of sentences to bring to the board and stick up.

The aim of the starter is to establish that the English sentences all contain the word 'what' as a link word but the equivalent element in the French sentence can be one of three possibilities.

To establish this, ask the students to sort the French sentences on the board into three groups according to the relative pronouns used (e.g. *ce qui, ce que, ce dont*). Answers are on the grammar notes handout.

### Grammar notes

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Give students a copy of the grammar notes on p.3 and go through the explanation with them, checking that they understand the differences between *ce qui, ce que* and *ce dont*.

Emphasise that only *ce que* has an abbreviated form and that *ce dont* is used only when the verb that follows uses *de*. List on the board *parler de, avoir besoin de, s'inquiéter de*. Ask students if they know any other verbs in French that use *de* in this way. Prompt them with English verbs such as:

to be afraid/frightened of (*avoir peur de*); it's about (*il s'agit de*); to take care of (*s'occuper de*); to be concerned about (*se soucier de*). List these on the board.

### Translation activity

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Give students a copy of the translation sentences on p.4 and ask them to discuss in pairs the correct choice of the relative pronoun for each sentence: *ce qui, ce que* or *ce dont*.

Discuss this as a class, translating the first couple of sentences as examples, with suggestions from the whole group, before asking them to complete the sheets in pairs.

Point out that only the present tense of verbs is used in these sentences and that the vocabulary bank at the bottom of the sheet is provided to avoid the need for dictionary use. Once students have completed the task they can correct their own work by comparing their translations to the answer sheet on p.5.

### Extension

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You could also project or print off the sentences on p.6 to make students aware of a very common use of *ce qui* and *ce que* in French at the start of a sentence. Ask them to compare the pairs of statements. How are they different? What is the function in these examples of *ce qui / ce que*? Explain that this is a stylistic technique that enables the first idea to be given greater importance or emphasis.

### Plenary quiz

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Organise the students into two teams and either ask them to come up with their own suggestions for quiz questions based on the lesson - or ask your own. For example:

- Name three verbs in French that are followed by *de*.
- Which relative pronoun do we use for 'what' if the verb is followed by *de* (*ce dont*)?
- What does *ce que* abbreviate to before a vowel (*ce qu'*)?
- What does *ce qui* abbreviate to before a vowel (trick question: *ce qui* never abbreviates)?
- What would be the link word used in French if translating: 'I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want ...' (*ce que*)?
- And in this sentence: 'I am not sure what he needs' (*ce dont*)?
- Finally: 'He never says what makes him angry' (*ce qui*)?