



Office of the  
Commissioner of  
Official Languages

Commissariat  
aux langues  
officielles

ENG  
FR

# ACTIVE OFFER

A culture of **respect**,  
a culture of **excellence**

[www.officiallanguages.gc.ca](http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca)



# WHAT IS ACTIVE OFFER?

An active offer of service is an open invitation to the public to use one of our two official languages—English or French—when communicating with or receiving a service from the federal government. Active offer includes a bilingual greeting, such as “Hello! Bonjour!”, and visual cues, such as signs, that support this invitation.

# WHY DO I HAVE TO MAKE AN OFFER?

Section 28 of the *Official Languages Act* requires offices that have been designated as bilingual to clearly indicate that services are provided in both official languages.

A bilingual greeting is a clear way to inform the public that service is available in both official languages.

It lets clients know on first contact that they have the right, without exception, to use the official language of their choice.



# I MAKE AN ACTIVE OFFER BECAUSE:

- o I RESPECT THE LANGUAGE RIGHTS OF THE PUBLIC.

Clients have the right to be served in the official language of their choice in designated bilingual offices.

- o I CANNOT ASSUME THAT I KNOW THE CLIENT'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGE PREFERENCE.

Unless I make an active offer, I have no way of knowing which language the client will choose.

- o I MAINTAIN A STANDARD OF SERVICE EXCELLENCE.

By providing a bilingual greeting, I can better meet the public's needs.

- o I REPRESENT THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA.

As a federal employee, I promote Canada's fundamental values: linguistic duality, diversity, inclusion and respect.

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## CREATING A VIRTUOUS CYCLE

By making an active offer, federal employees are creating a **virtuous** cycle. A bilingual greeting tells the public that the government supports the use of our two official languages and encourages members of the public to use the official language of their choice.

A lack of active offer leads to a **vicious** cycle. Without a bilingual greeting, clients are less inclined to request service in the official language of their choice. If they do not ask, employees start to think that there is no need for service in both official languages and are therefore less inclined to provide an active offer.

# WHEN DO I HAVE TO MAKE AN ACTIVE OFFER?

The obligation to provide an active offer rests with your institution. You may need to provide an active offer if you communicate directly with the public.

## DO I HAVE TO MAKE AN ACTIVE OFFER:

### o EVEN IF I'M NOT IN A BILINGUAL POSITION?

*Yes! Clients won't know bilingual service is available at the office without your active offer.*

### o EVEN IF I HEAR THE CLIENT SPEAK ENGLISH OR FRENCH WITH ANOTHER PERSON?

*Yes! The language you heard may not be the official language in which the client prefers to be served.*

### o EVEN IF IT'S A BUSY DAY AT THE OFFICE AND THERE'S A LONG LINE OF CLIENTS WAITING?

*Yes! The client's rights do not depend on how busy the office is.*

### o EVEN IF ONE LANGUAGE IS CLEARLY THE ONE USED IN THE COMMUNITY?

*Yes! You can never assume which official language the client will choose.*

Signs and posters are also part of a complete and effective active offer.

# WHO HAS A ROLE TO PLAY?

Federal employees at all levels have a role to play in delivering service excellence. To achieve this, employees working in designated bilingual offices must make an active offer of service to the public.

As a **federal employee**, I must make an active offer of service with each greeting to let clients know that they are free to use English or French.

As a **manager or supervisor**, I am aware of my office's language obligations, and I am an active leader when it comes to official languages. I communicate with my employees regularly about the importance of making an active offer of service to the public. To guarantee service continuity, I ensure that there are always employees available who can serve the public in both official languages, and I monitor the presence and quality of active offer in the offices under my responsibility. In designated bilingual offices, I include specific criteria related to active offer in the performance evaluations of my employees.

As an **executive**, I demonstrate leadership in terms of official languages and show that active offer is a priority by giving it the necessary attention and resources. I ensure that active offer is included in the performance evaluations of the managers in my organization.

# HOW DO I MAKE AN ACTIVE OFFER?

In each instance (in person, on the telephone and by e-mail), I first use the official language of the majority community and then the official language of the minority community when I make an active offer of service:

- In Quebec: French first, then English
- Elsewhere in Canada: English first, then French



## ACTIVE OFFER IN PERSON

» I make sure I greet clients in person in both official languages at all times.

1. I provide a short greeting that is the same in both languages. This is an appropriate way to show that service is available in English and French, without exception. For example:

*(in Quebec)*

**Bonjour! Hello!**

**Bienvenue! Welcome!**

*(elsewhere in Canada)*

**Hello! Bonjour!**

**Welcome! Bienvenue!**

2. I pause to let the client respond.
3. I continue to provide service in the official language of the client's choice.

» If I am unilingual, I know whom to contact to ensure that service is provided in a timely manner in the official language of the client's choice.

1. I inform the client that another colleague will provide service.

*(for a client who chooses English)*

**One moment please. I will find a colleague who can help you.**

*(for a client who chooses French)*

**Un instant, s'il vous plaît. Je vais trouver un collègue qui peut vous aider.**

2. I inform my colleague of the official language chosen by the client.



CLIENTS WHO ARE NOT IMMEDIATELY OFFERED SERVICE IN THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THEIR CHOICE MAY ASSUME THAT SERVICE IS NOT AVAILABLE IN THAT LANGUAGE OR THAT ASKING FOR IT MAY CAUSE DELAYS OR EMBARRASSMENT.



## ACTIVE OFFER ON THE TELEPHONE

» I make sure I answer the telephone in both official languages at all times.

1. I provide a short greeting that is the same in both languages. This is an appropriate way to show that service is available in English and French, without exception. For example:

### ***Name of your institution in both languages, your name***

*(in Quebec)*

***Agence des services frontaliers  
du Canada, Canada Border  
Services Agency, Étienne Côté***

*(elsewhere in Canada)*

***Canada Border Services Agency,  
Agence des services frontaliers  
du Canada, Étienne Côté***

### ***Bilingual greeting, your name***

*(in Quebec)*

***Bonjour! Hello! Annie Bennett***

*(elsewhere in Canada)*

***Hello! Bonjour! Annie Bennett***

2. I pause to let the client respond.
3. I continue to provide service in the official language of the client's choice.



## **CHECK:**

**ANSWERING THE PHONE BY SAYING YOUR NAME**

**ONLY IS NOT AN ACTIVE OFFER OF SERVICE!**



## ACTIVE OFFER ON THE TELEPHONE

» If I am unilingual, I know whom to contact to ensure that service is provided in a timely manner in the official language of the client's choice. For example:

1. I inform the client that I will transfer the call to a colleague.

*(for a client who chooses English)*

*I am going to transfer your call to a colleague. One moment please.*

*(for a client who chooses French)*

*Je vais transférer votre appel à un collègue. Un instant, s'il vous plaît.*

2. I inform my colleague of the official language chosen by the client.

» My recorded telephone message contains the same information in both official languages. For example:

*(in Quebec)*

*Bonjour/Hello, vous avez joint la boîte vocale de    (name)    au    (French name of department)   . S'il vous plaît laissez-moi un message et je vous rappellerai dans les plus brefs délais.*

*and*

*You have reached    (name)   's voicemail at    (English name of department)   . Please leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible.*

*(elsewhere in Canada)*

*Hello/Bonjour, you have reached    (name)   's voicemail at    (English name of department)   . Please leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible.*

*and*

*Vous avez joint la boîte vocale de    (name)    au    (French name of department)   . S'il vous plaît laissez-moi un message et je vous rappellerai dans les plus brefs délais.*

### CHECK:

CAN A UNILINGUAL PERSON UNDERSTAND

ALL OF THE INFORMATION IN MY MESSAGE?





## ACTIVE OFFER ON THE TELEPHONE

» My telephone message for extended absences contains the same information in both official languages.

For example:

*(in Quebec)*

**Bonjour, hello.**

*Je suis absent/absente du bureau et je serai de retour le \_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_ . Veuillez me laisser un message ou communiquer avec \_\_\_\_ (name of colleague) \_\_\_\_, au ###-###-####.*

*I am out of the office and will be back on \_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_ . Please leave a message or contact \_\_\_\_ (name of colleague) \_\_\_\_ at ###-###-####.*

*(elsewhere in Canada)*

**Hello, bonjour.**

*I am out of the office and will be back on \_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_ . Please leave a message or contact \_\_\_\_ (name of colleague) \_\_\_\_ at ###-###-####.*

*Je suis absent/absente du bureau et je serai de retour le \_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_ . Veuillez me laisser un message ou communiquer avec \_\_\_\_ (name of colleague) \_\_\_\_, au ###-###-####.*

**JUST BECAUSE THERE IS LITTLE DEMAND FOR SERVICE IN ONE OF THE TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES, THAT DOES NOT MEAN THERE IS NO NEED FOR IT. AN ACTIVE OFFER INVITES MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO USE THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THEIR CHOICE.**



## ACTIVE OFFER BY E-MAIL

» The signature block in my e-mail contains the same information in both official languages to show that service is available in English and French, without exception. For example:

*(in Quebec)*

**Marie Canadienne**

*Analyste, Direction générale  
des services d'infotechnologie  
Parcs Canada / Gouvernement  
du Canada*

*marie.canadienne@canada.ca*

*Tél. : 613-955-5555*

*ATS : 613-955-5556*

*Analyst, Information Technology  
Services Branch*

*Parks Canada / Government of  
Canada*

*marie.canadienne@canada.ca*

*Tel: 613-955-5555*

*TTY: 613-955-5556*

*(elsewhere in Canada)*

**John Canadian**

*Analyst, Chief Information  
Officer Branch*

*Treasury Board of Canada  
Secretariat / Government of Canada*

*john.canadian@canada.ca*

*Tel: 613-955-5555*

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*Analyste, Direction du  
dirigeant principal de l'information  
Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor du  
Canada / Gouvernement du Canada*

*john.canadian@canada.ca*

*Tél. : 613-955-5555*

*ATS : 613-955-5556*

**Instructions for signature blocks can be found in the Government of Canada's Standard on Email Management.**





## ACTIVE OFFER BY E-MAIL

» My message for extended absences contains the same information in both official languages. For example:

*(in Quebec)*

*Bonjour, je suis présentement à l'extérieur du bureau. C'est avec plaisir que je vous répondrai à mon retour le     (date)    . Si votre demande est urgente, veuillez communiquer avec     (name of colleague)     au ###-###-#### ou par courriel à l'adresse     (e-mail address)    .  
Merci.*

*and*

*Hello! I am currently out of the office. I will gladly reply to your message upon my return on     (date)    . If you require immediate assistance, please contact     (name of colleague)     by telephone at ###-###-#### or by e-mail at     (e-mail address)    . Thank you.*

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*(elsewhere in Canada)*

*Hello! I am currently out of the office. I will gladly reply to your message upon my return on     (date)    . If you require immediate assistance, please contact     (name of colleague)     by telephone at ###-###-#### or by e-mail at     (e-mail address)    . Thank you.*

*and*

*Bonjour, je suis présentement à l'extérieur du bureau. C'est avec plaisir que je vous répondrai à mon retour le     (date)    . Si votre demande est urgente, veuillez communiquer avec     (name of colleague)     au ###-###-#### ou par courriel à l'adresse     (e-mail address)    .  
Merci.*

### CHECK:

CAN A UNILINGUAL PERSON UNDERSTAND  
ALL OF THE INFORMATION IN MY MESSAGE?

Federal institutions have a duty to provide an active offer of service. Managers are responsible for monitoring whether their work teams are making an active offer every time they greet the public.



## CHECKLIST FOR MANAGERS

### AWARENESS

- I make sure my employees understand their active offer obligations.
- I communicate regularly with my employees (e.g., in staff meetings) to remind them that active offer is a sign of respect for the public and that making an active offer is an integral part of service excellence.
- I make sure my employees have the information they need to make an active offer and, if necessary, to reach a colleague who can provide service in the official language of the client's choice.



### PLANNING

- I ensure bilingual capacity in offices under my responsibility during breaks, vacations and absences so that service to the public in both official languages is guaranteed at all times.
- My employees always have access to a list of available colleagues who can serve the public in English and in French.
- Signage indicating that bilingual service is available is always visible in both official languages in offices under my responsibility.

*YOU CAN HELP YOUR TEAM DEVELOP A REFLEX OF GREETING CLIENTS IN BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES BY EXPLAINING HOW TO MAKE AN ACTIVE OFFER AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT.*

## EVALUATION

- I regularly monitor my employees' interactions with the public to make sure that each greeting includes an active offer of service. If that is not the case, I intervene.
- I make sure my employees' telephone messages and e-mail signature blocks are completely bilingual so that members of the public are aware that service is available in English and French, without exception.
- Active offer is included in the performance evaluations of all of my employees who have regular contact with the public.

Here is an example of an official languages performance objective and active offer indicators for employees:

**Objective:**

Respect for official languages is an integral part of my commitment to provide excellent service to the public.

**Active offer indicator:**

I greet clients in both official languages in person and on the telephone, and my automatic e-mail replies and my e-mail signature block are bilingual.

**Active offer indicator (for employees in bilingual positions):**

I greet clients in both official languages and serve them in the official language of their choice.

**Active offer indicator (for employees in unilingual positions):**

I greet clients in both official languages and, if necessary, am able to transfer service to a colleague who can serve them in the official language of their choice in a timely manner.

*SETTING PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS RELATED TO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES CLARIFIES YOUR EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR EMPLOYEES IN TERMS OF ACTIVE OFFER AND PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCUSS AWARENESS AND COMPLIANCE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.*

- Active offer is part of my performance evaluation.

Here is an example of an official languages performance objective and active offer indicators for managers:

**Objective:**

I comply with the *Official Languages Act* and understand its importance in delivering excellent service to Canadians and in creating a respectful work environment for federal employees.

**Active offer indicator:**

I ensure that all employees are aware of their active offer obligations and of the importance of proactively providing a greeting in both official languages.

**Active offer indicator:**

I make sure active offer is discussed as a regular agenda item at team meetings.

**Active offer indicator:**

I monitor active offer every week and check voicemail greetings, automatic e-mail replies and e-mail signature blocks twice a year to ensure that they are completely bilingual.

**Active offer indicator:**

I have created a plan for scheduling employee shifts and covering absences to guarantee bilingual service capacity.

**Active offer indicator:**

I provide unilingual employees with a list of available colleagues who can provide service in the official language chosen by the client.

# PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

## PRONOUNCING NUMBERS IN FRENCH

| #  | FRENCH SPELLING | FRENCH PRONUNCIATION |
|----|-----------------|----------------------|
| 0  | zéro            | zay-ro'              |
| 1  | un              | eunh                 |
| 2  | deux            | deuh                 |
| 3  | trois           | trwa                 |
| 4  | quatre          | katr                 |
| 5  | cing            | sank                 |
| 6  | six             | cease                |
| 7  | sept            | set                  |
| 8  | huit            | wit                  |
| 9  | neuf            | neuhf                |
| 10 | dix             | dis                  |

## SAYING A TELEPHONE NUMBER IN FRENCH

As in English, numbers are said individually in French.

| ENGLISH   | FRENCH SPELLING                   | FRENCH PRONUNCIATION             |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| extension | poste                             | pohst                            |
| area code | indicatif régional                | ain-dee-ca-tif' ray-zhee-oh-nal' |
| 1-800     | 1-800 (read: "un huit cents")     | eunh wit sanh                    |
| 1-888     | 1-888 (read: "un huit huit huit") | eunh wit wit wit                 |

### For example:

In English: 613-555-4646 extension 444

In French: 613-555-4646 poste 444

### 1-800-987-6543

In French: "Un huit cents, neuf huit sept, six cinq quatre trois"

### 1-888-987-6543

In French: "Un huit huit huit, neuf huit sept, six cinq quatre trois"

## WRITING AND SAYING THE DATE IN FRENCH

### 1. Months

Months are not capitalized in French.

| MONTH     | FRENCH SPELLING | FRENCH PRONUNCIATION |
|-----------|-----------------|----------------------|
| January   | janvier         | zhanh-vyay'          |
| February  | février         | fay-vree-yay'        |
| March     | mars            | mahrs                |
| April     | avril           | ah-vreel'            |
| May       | mai             | may                  |
| June      | juin            | zhwunh               |
| July      | juillet         | zhwee-eh'            |
| August    | août            | ooh                  |
| September | septembre       | sep-tanh'-bruh       |
| October   | octobre         | ok-toh'-bruh         |
| November  | novembre        | noh-vanh'-bruh       |
| December  | décembre        | day-sanh'-bruh       |

### 2. Days of the week

The days of the week are not capitalized in French.

Use "le" (pronounced *luh*) before the day of the week: "*le lundi quinze novembre.*"

| DAY       | FRENCH SPELLING | FRENCH PRONUNCIATION |
|-----------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Monday    | lundi           | luhn'-dee            |
| Tuesday   | mardi           | mahr'-dee            |
| Wednesday | mercredi        | mehr'-kruh-dee       |
| Thursday  | jeudi           | zhuh'-dee            |
| Friday    | vendredi        | vahn'-druh-dee       |
| Saturday  | samedi          | sam'-dee             |
| Sunday    | dimanche        | dee-mahnsh'          |



### 3. Date

The date is written using cardinal numbers, except for the first of the month, which is always “le premier” (pronounced *luh pruh'-me-ay*). To write the first of the month, use “1<sup>er</sup>” in French.

We say the date differently in English than in French: in English the month precedes the date, while in French the date precedes the month.

#### For example:

Today is Monday, July 24th.

Aujourd'hui, c'est le lundi 24 juillet.

| DATE            | FRENCH SPELLING | FRENCH PRONUNCIATION |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1 <sup>er</sup> | premier         | pruh'-me-ay          |
| 2               | deux            | deuh                 |
| 3               | trois           | trwa                 |
| 4               | quatre          | katr                 |
| 5               | cinq            | sank                 |
| 6               | six             | cease                |
| 7               | sept            | set                  |
| 8               | huit            | wit                  |
| 9               | neuf            | neuhf                |
| 10              | dix             | dis                  |
| 11              | onze            | ohnze                |
| 12              | douze           | dooze                |
| 13              | treize          | trehze               |
| 14              | quatorze        | ka-torze'            |
| 15              | quinze          | kainze               |
| 16              | seize           | sez                  |
| 17              | dix-sept        | dee-set'             |
| 18              | dix-huit        | diz-wit'             |
| 19              | dix-neuf        | diz-neuhf'           |
| 20              | vingt           | vaihn                |

## Date (continued)

| <b>DATE</b> | <b>FRENCH SPELLING</b> | <b>FRENCH PRONUNCIATION</b> |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 21          | vingt et un            | vaihn-tay-eunh'             |
| 22          | vingt-deux             | vaihn-deuh'                 |
| 23          | vingt-trois            | vaihn-trwa'                 |
| 24          | vingt-quatre           | vaihn-katr'                 |
| 25          | vingt-cinq             | vaihn-sank'                 |
| 26          | vingt-six              | vaihn-cease'                |
| 27          | vingt-sept             | vaihn-set'                  |
| 28          | vingt-huit             | vaihn-twit'                 |
| 29          | vingt-neuf             | vaihn-neuhf'                |
| 30          | trente                 | tronte                      |
| 31          | trente et un           | tron-tay-eunh'              |

## 4. Years

In French, the year is read as a whole number only.

| <b>YEAR</b> | <b>FRENCH SPELLING</b> | <b>FRENCH PRONUNCIATION</b> |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2017        | deux mille dix-sept    | deuh-meel-dee-set'          |
| 2018        | deux mille dix-huit    | deuh-meel-diz-wit'          |
| 2019        | deux mille dix-neuf    | deuh-meel-diz-neuhf'        |
| 2020        | deux mille vingt       | deuh-meel-vaihn'            |

## IN PERSON AND ON THE TELEPHONE

| ENGLISH  | FRENCH  | FRENCH PRONUNCIATION  |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Hello!</i>  | <i>Bonjour!</i>   | <i>Bonh-zhoor'</i>  |
| <i>Welcome!</i>  | <i>Bienvenue!</i>   | <i>Bee-yenh-ven-oo'</i>   |
| <i>One moment please.<br/>I will find a colleague who can help you.</i>  | <i>Un instant, s'il vous plaît.<br/>Je vais trouver un collègue qui peut vous aider.</i>  | <i>Un-ainstanh', sill-voo-pleh'.<br/>Zhuh vay' troo-vay' unh coll-legg' key puh vooz ay-deh.'</i>   |
| <i>I am going to transfer your call to a colleague.<br/>One moment please.</i>   | <i>Je vais transférer votre appel à un collègue.<br/>Un instant s'il vous plaît.</i>  | <i>Zhuh vay' trahns-fay-ray' votre ap-pel' ah unh coll-legg'.<br/>Un-ainstanh', sill-voo-pleh.'</i>   |
| <i>Hello, you have reached<br/>_(name)_'s voicemail at<br/>_(English name of department)_.<br/>Please leave a message, and I will get back to you as soon as possible.</i> | <i>Bonjour, vous avez joint la boîte vocale de _(name)_ au<br/>_(French name of department)_.<br/>S'il vous plaît laissez-moi un message et je vous répondrai dans les plus brefs délais.</i> | <i>Bonh-zhoor', Vooza-vay' jouainh' la bwot vo-cal' duh<br/>_(name)_ oh _(French name of department)_.<br/>Sill-voo-pleh' lay-say' mwah unh mess-sahge' eh zhuh voo ray-pond-ray' danh lay ploobref day-leh'.</i> |
| <i>I am out of the office and will be back on ___(date)__.<br/>Please leave a message or contact _(name of colleague)_ at ###-###-####.</i>                                | <i>Je suis absent/absente du bureau et je serai de retour le ___(date)__. Veuillez me laisser un message ou communiquer avec ___(name of colleague)__, au ###-###-####.</i>                   | <i>Zhuh swee zab-sanh'/zab-sanhte' doo burh-oh' ay zhuh ser-ay' duh ruh-toor' luh ___(date)__.<br/>Veuh-yay' lay-say' unh mess-sahge' ooh koh-mu-nik-ay' a-vek _(name of colleague)_ oh ###-###-####.</i>         |