

Principles and values of the Republic

Theme 1 of 5 · conforms to the official programme (arrêté du 10 October 2025)

Revision sheet — Principles and values of the Republic

This is the most heavily represented topic in the exam: **11 of the 40 questions**. The official programme (the référentiel of the **decree of 10 October 2025**) splits it into three sub-topics: the **motto and symbols** (3 questions), **secularism / laïcité** (2 questions) and **situational questions** (6 questions). Together with "Rights and duties", this is the area to revise first. This sheet covers **the whole of the programme**.

The essentials in 30 seconds

- The Republic's motto: **Liberty, Equality, Fraternity**.
- The Republic is **indivisible, secular, democratic and social**; sovereignty belongs to the **people** (Constitution, art. 3).
- **Laïcité** guarantees freedom of conscience and the neutrality of the State (1905 law).
- The language of the Republic is **French** (Constitution, art. 2).

1. The motto and symbols (3 questions)

- **The motto** — Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, inscribed on the pediments of public buildings.
- **The tricolour flag** (blue, white, red) · **La Marseillaise** (national anthem) · **Marianne** (allegory of the Republic) · **14 July** (national day) · the **rooster** (emblem).
- **National sovereignty** belongs to the people, who exercise it through their representatives and by voting (Constitution, art. 3).
- **Freedoms** — freedom of thought, opinion, expression, religion, movement, assembly, association, work, marriage and sexual orientation.
- **Civic engagement** — creating or joining an association, joining a trade union.
- **French** is the official language of the Republic.
- Some practices are **prohibited** because they conflict with the Republic's principles, such as **polygamy**.

2. Secularism (laïcité) (2 questions)

Laïcité rests on the **law of 9 December 1905** separating Church and State.

- **Freedom of conscience**: everyone is free to believe, not to believe, or to change religion (including the right to criticise religions).
- **Neutrality of the State**: it neither favours nor fights any religion; public services treat all users equally.

- **At work:** strict neutrality for public-service staff; in the private sector, religious freedom may be limited for reasons of hygiene, safety or proper functioning
- **In state schools:** pupils may not wear conspicuous religious symbols; the school protects children's freedom and guarantees equality for all.
- **Laïcité does not ban religions:** it organises their freedom within the law.

Values and characteristics of the Republic

- **Equality between women and men** — a fundamental principle guaranteed by the Constitution and the law.
- **Non-discrimination** — no one may be treated differently because of their origin, religion, sex, disability, etc.
- **Fraternity and solidarity, human dignity** — mutual help and respect between citizens.
- France is an **indivisible** Republic (one law everywhere), **secular, democratic** (power comes from the people) and **social** (it protects the most vulnerable).

3. Situational questions (6 questions)

More than half of this topic's questions describe an everyday scene. They are **never published in advance**, so they cannot be learned by heart. What can be learned is the **method** — and it works for any situation.

The method in 4 reflexes

1. **Look for the legal rule, not the opinion.** The right answer is the one that applies the law, even if another answer sounds more accommodating or more polite.
2. **Rely on the values of the Republic.** Equality between women and men, non-discrimination, laïcité, respect for human dignity: an answer that offends one of these is wrong.
3. **Favour dialogue first, then legal recourse.** Talk about it, then turn to the competent body (the employer, the town hall, the police, the **Défenseur des droits**, the courts).
4. **Eliminate extreme answers.** Taking justice into your own hands, seeking revenge, threatening — but also "do nothing" or "ignore the law" — are almost always wrong.

Two markers that come up often

- **Laïcité:** neutrality binds **public-service staff**, not **users**. A user may wear a religious symbol at the town hall; an agent may not while on duty. In state schools, **pupils** may not wear conspicuous religious symbols.
- **Freedoms:** they stop where those of others begin and where **public order** requires (security, tranquillity, public health, dignity).

Example: "A colleague refuses to work with a woman." Apply the rule (equality between women and men is a fundamental principle), identify what it is (a **prohibited discrimination**), and rule out the extremes ("it's his opinion", "reorganise the team").

Common mistakes

lexamencivique.fr — free and official revision sheets

- Thinking laïcité **bans** religions: on the contrary, it guarantees freedom of conscience.
- Confusing the republican motto with "Work, Family, Homeland" (the motto of the Vichy regime).
- Thinking equality between women and men is optional: it is a **fundamental principle**.

Tip: this topic carries a lot of weight — revise it first, then test yourself under real conditions with the [timed mock exam](#).