How to type accented characters in French

Importance of accents in written French: missing or wrong accents will be counted as spelling errors in your written work. This is because the accent often changes the meaning of a word.

- ***à*** 'at, to' vs. ***a*** 'has'
- ***où*** 'where' vs. ***ou*** 'or'
- ***bouché*** 'obstructed, clogged' vs. ***bouche*** 'mouth'
- ***pâle*** 'pale' vs. ***pale*** 'blade (of a propeller)'
- ***pécher*** 'to sin' vs. ***pêcher*** 'to fish' / 'peach tree'

II. Directions for Macintosh

For Macs, in most cases, first hold the "Option" key on the keyboard and then strike a regular character key as indicated below. Nothing will appear on your screen at this point. Release both keys, and then type the letter which should carry the diacritical. For some special characters press "Option" and one key together. See the following table to get the character that you want.

Acute	é	Option + e, *the letter*
Grave	è, à, ù	Option + `, *the letter*
Circumflex	ê, î, û, ô	Option + I, *the letter*
Umlaut	ä Ä	Option + u, the letter *"a"* (Option + *u*, *Shift* + the letter *"a" for "Ä")*
Umlaut	ö Ö	Option + u, the letter *"o"* (Option + *u*, *Shift* + the letter *"o" for "Ö")*
Umlaut	ü Ü	Option + u, the letter *"u"* (Option + *u*, *Shift* + the letter *"u" for "Ü")*
Cedilla	ç Ç	Option + c or C

To find characters others than those listed above, choose Key Caps from the Apple menu for a diagram of your particular keyboard. Vary the font that is displayed by selecting other fonts from the new menu "Key Caps" which will have appeared at the right of your menu bar. The Apple Language Kits offer additional foreign language fonts and Zapf Dingbats consist of nothing but special characters.

NOTE: There is also a website where a virtual keyboard with accents allows you to type your text and then paste it into an email, Word document, etc. : http://french.typeit.org/