



Jacques  
Tits

**Jacques Tits** was born in Uccle, in the southern outskirts of Brussels, Belgium, on August 12, 1930. He retired from his professorship at the Collège de France in Paris in 2000 and has since then been Professor Emeritus.

His father a mathematician, Jacques's mathematical talent showed early. At the age of three he was able to do all the operations of arithmetic. He skipped several years at school. His father died when Jacques was only 13 years old. Since the family had very little to live on, Jacques started tutoring students four years older to contribute to the household expenses. He passed the entrance exam at the Free University of Brussels at the age of 14, and received his doctorate in 1950 at 20 years of age.

Tits was promoted to professor at the Free University of Brussels in 1962 and remained in this position for two years before accepting a professorship at the University of Bonn in 1964. In 1973 he moved to Paris, taking up a position as Chair of Group Theory in the Collège de France. Shortly after, in 1974, he became a naturalised French subject. Tits held this chair until he retired in 2000.

Jacques Tits has been a member of the French Académie des Sciences since 1974. In 1992 he was elected a Foreign Member of the US National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In addition he holds memberships of science academies in Holland and Belgium. He has been awarded honorary doctorates from the Universities of Utrecht, Ghent, Bonn and Leuven.

Tits has received many awards, such as the Wolf Prize, the Cantor Medal, the Grand Prix des Sciences mathématiques et physiques and the Wettrems Prize. He was appointed Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in 1995 and Officier de l'Ordre National du Mérite in 2001.

In addition to his mathematical research Tits has played a major role in international mathematical life. He was editor-in-chief for mathematical publications at the French Institut des Hautes Etudes Scientifiques from 1980 to 1999. He served on the committee awarding the Fields Medal in 1978 and again in 1994. He has also served since 1985 on the committee awarding the Balzan Prize.

The publications of Jacques Tits contain a remarkable number of fundamental and path-breaking mathematical ideas, making him one of the most influential and original mathematicians of our time.