

Get ready for beginners' French

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Get ready for beginners' French

Introduction and guidance



Figure 1 Bonjour!

Welcome to this free badged course, *Get ready for beginners' French*.

This course is for anyone considering learning French – whether you have never studied the language before, or if you studied it some time ago and would like to refresh your language skills. You will discover, through guided readings and activities, the many facets to learning French, and you will have the chance to try some practical exercises, as well as consider your own motivation for learning French, and your goals for the future. The key aim of this course is to give you the confidence to pursue your learning of French, and continue your studies feeling motivated and prepared.

The course lasts eight weeks, with approximately three hours of study per week. You can work through the course at your own pace, so if you have more time one week there is no problem with pushing on to complete another week's study. You can also take as long as you want to complete it.

There are lots of opportunities to check your learning, including short quizzes at the end of each week. The quizzes at the end of Week 4 and Week 8 are a bit longer and will contribute towards earning a digital badge to recognise your achievement.

Badges are not accredited by The Open University but they're a great way to demonstrate your interest in the subject and commitment to your employer/potential employer, and to provide evidence of continuing professional development. You can find out more about the badges in the next section.

Moving around the course

In the 'Summary' at the end of each week, you can find a link to the next week. If at any time you want to return to the start of the course, click on 'Full course description'. From

here you can navigate to any part of the course. Alternatively, use the week links at the top of every page of the course.

The Open University would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us about yourself and your expectations for the course before you begin, in our optional [start-of-course survey](#). Once you complete the course we would also value your feedback and suggestions for future improvement, in our optional end-of-course survey. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand more clearly what learning French at beginners' level is like
- set some personal goals towards learning French
- recognise and pronounce a few basic French sounds and words
- explain a few basic notions of French grammar
- recall some basic facts about French-speaking countries and communities around the world, and understand basic cultural differences
- understand the skills developed by language learners, including intercultural communication skills.

What is a badged course?

While studying *Get ready for beginners' French*, you have the option to work towards gaining a digital badge.

Badged courses are a key part of The Open University's mission to promote the educational well-being of the community. The courses also provide another way of helping you to progress from informal to formal learning.

To complete a course you need to be able to find about 24 hours of study time, over a period of about 8 weeks. However, it is possible to study them at any time, and at a pace to suit you.

Badged courses are all available on The Open University's OpenLearn website and do not cost anything to study. They differ from Open University courses because you do not receive support from a tutor. But you do get useful feedback from the interactive quizzes.

What is a badge?

Digital badges are a new way of demonstrating online that you have gained a skill. Schools, colleges and universities are working with employers and other organisations to develop open badges that help learners gain recognition for their skills, and support employers to identify the right candidate for a job.

Badges demonstrate your work and achievement on the course. You can share your achievement with friends, family and employers, and on social media. Badges are a great motivation, helping you to reach the end of the course. Gaining a badge often boosts confidence in the skills and abilities that underpin successful study. So, completing this course should encourage you to think about taking other courses.



How to get a badge

Getting a badge is straightforward! Here's what you have to do:

- read each week of the course
- score 50% or more in the two badge quizzes in Week 4 and Week 8.

For all the quizzes, you can have three attempts at most of the questions (for true or false type questions you usually only get one attempt). If you get the answer right first time you will get more marks than for a correct answer the second or third time. Therefore, please be aware that for the two badge quizzes it is possible to get all the questions right but not score 50% and be eligible for the badge on that attempt. If one of your answers is incorrect you will often receive helpful feedback and suggestions about how to work out the correct answer.

For the badge quizzes, if you're not successful in getting 50% the first time, after 24 hours you can attempt the whole quiz again, and come back as many times as you like.

We hope that as many people as possible will gain an Open University badge – so you should see getting a badge as an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned rather than as a test.

If you need more guidance on getting a badge and what you can do with it, take a look at the [OpenLearn FAQs](#). When you gain your badge you will receive an email to notify you and you will be able to view and manage all your badges in [My OpenLearn](#) within 24 hours of completing the criteria to gain a badge.

You can now go to [.week 1](#)

Week 1: Why French?

Introduction

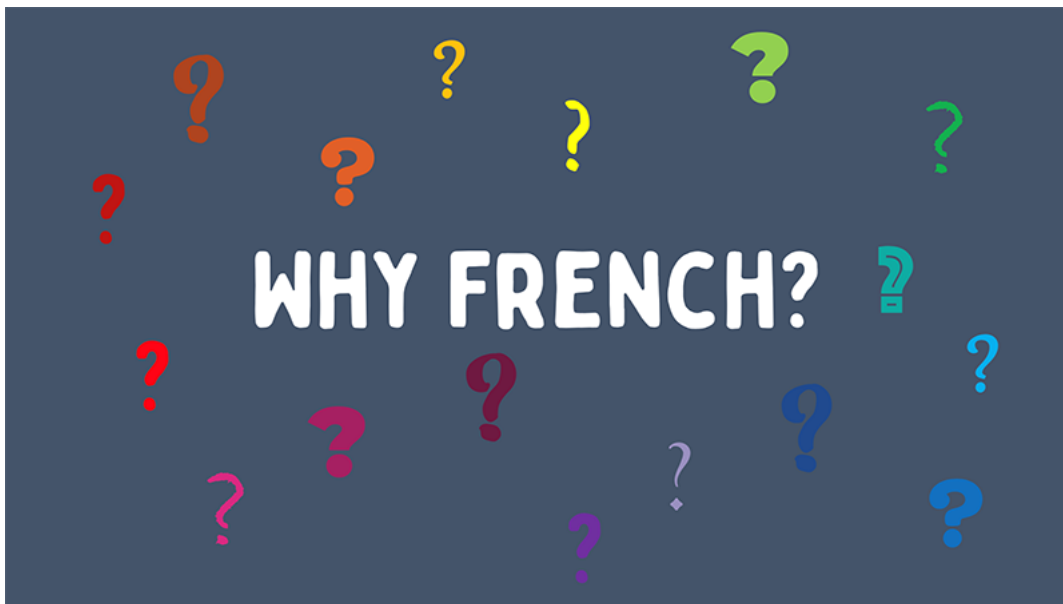


Figure 1 Why French?

Welcome to Week 1 of this free badged course, *Get ready for beginners' French*. This week you are going to start by thinking about your personal reasons for learning French, and perhaps you'll discover some reasons you hadn't considered before. You will find out that French is spoken all over the world, and you will learn a bit more about countries where French is spoken. You will have a chance to think about what learning French will mean to you, and how your personal strengths can contribute to your language learning. The Open University would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us about yourself and your expectations for the course before you begin, in our optional [start-of-course survey](#). Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

1 Reasons to choose French

There are endless reasons why people decide to start learning French. Here are just some possibilities.



Figure 2 Possible reasons to learn French

So, what is your motivation for learning French? Can you relate to any of the reasons above? Perhaps you have multiple reasons. Consider how they fit into these broader categories:

Travel: French is spoken on all five continents. You will be spoiled for choice about where to go for practice!

Communication: Learning a new language gives you opportunities to meet new people. You will also develop your communication skills in general, for example in your first language.

Career opportunities: France is the fifth biggest world economy. The ability to speak French is an asset if you want to work in France, or one of the many other countries where French is spoken. By learning a new language you will also develop applicable skills that are highly desirable to employers, for example resilience and problem-solving.

Becoming a polyglot: You might find one language is just not enough! Learning French will aid you with other Romance languages, such as Italian or Spanish. You will develop good language-learning skills to carry over to other languages too.

Culture: Learning French will give you access to the great works of literature, films, theatre and music from around the French-speaking world. This includes the works of Molière, Victor Hugo, Jean-Paul Sartre, Aimé Césaire, Amin Maalouf, Jacques Brel, Félix Leclerc, Youssou N'dour, Céline Dion, Stromae, to name just a few prominent French-speakers of the past and present who can transport you to different worlds through their writing or music. Language learners also develop broader intercultural communication skills, giving them greater ability to interact with people from diverse cultures, whether they speak the same language or not.

Fun: There is something for everyone in language learning. You might enjoy the nitty gritty of grammar, or the performance aspect of speaking a new language, or just the challenge of learning something new. In any case, make sure you enjoy learning and practising.

Activity 1 Your motivation

 Allow about 5 minutes

So, what will learning French mean for you? Take some time now to consider your own reasons for learning French. They may have been mentioned above, or you may have particular reasons of your own. Make some notes in the box below.

Provide your answer...

2 The French-speaking world

When you hear the word 'French', what immediately springs to your mind? Perhaps you have a picture of France as a beautiful landscape with sunflowers, lavender or vineyards. Or maybe it's a bustling city with elegant buildings and streets lined with cafés. When you hear someone speaking French, do you wonder where they come from? You may be surprised as you discover more about the regions and countries in the wider world where French is spoken, and the important place the French language has in the world.

Below are some facts and figures about French and the French-speaking world (Organisation mondiale de la francophonie, 2018). Do any of them surprise you?

- Over 300 million people around the world speak French.
- France is the most-visited country in the world, with 75 million tourists every year.
- Toulouse and Montreal are among the world's leading cities in aerospace technology.
- French film production is the second-largest in the world, producing 500 films per year. In Canada, Quebec films often outsell Hollywood films at the box office.
- The French alphabet has 26 letters, and the longest word in the dictionary is *anticonstitutionnellement* with 25 letters! The French language also makes use of accented characters, for example, these accents used on the letter e: é and è. These are not counted as separate letters of the alphabet.
- French is an official language in several countries in Africa, and it is a language used by part of the population in several more. Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is the world's second-largest French-speaking city after Paris.

You might like to do your own research into aspects of the French-speaking world that interest you most. If you live in a nearby country, perhaps there is an area of France that you visit frequently. See what you can investigate further: find out about the local industry, or whether any significant historical events occurred there. Is there a chance you might travel to a French-speaking country (other than France) for work? Try and find out more about that country – it could be very different to going to France! Armed with knowledge like this, you will feel more confident at striking up conversation with people who live there (whether that's in French or in your first language).

The French-speaking world is collectively referred to as *la francophonie*. How many countries belong to *la francophonie*, do you think? Test your knowledge with this short activity.

Activity 2 French-speaking countries

 Allow about 5 minutes

How many countries can you name where French is spoken? Write as many names as you can think of in the text box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

French is the fifth most spoken language in the world, and fourth on the internet. Did you include any African countries in your list? 59% of the people who use French daily are located on the African continent. 88 countries are members of the *Organisation Mondiale de la Francophonie*.

You will find out more about the countries in which French is an official language in the next section.

3 French-speaking countries

So, as you've just learned, there are over 300 million French speakers spread across the world's continents. You will now investigate this more closely.

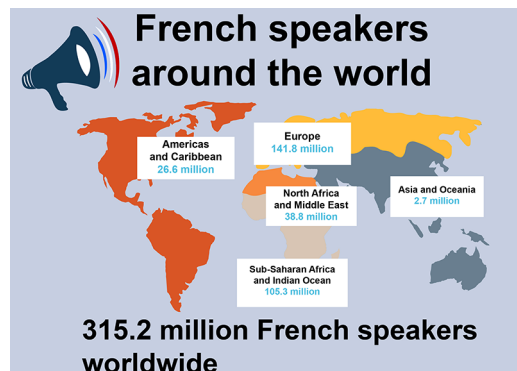


Figure 3 French speakers around the world

How many countries were you able to name when you completed Activity 2? The countries where French is an official language are, in alphabetical order:

Belgium • Benin • Burkina Faso • Burundi • Cameroon • Canada • Chad • Djibouti • Equatorial Guinea • France • Gabon • Guinea • Haiti • Ivory Coast • Luxembourg • Madagascar • Mali • Monaco • Niger • Rwanda • Senegal • Switzerland • The Central African Republic • The Comoros • The Democratic Republic of the Congo • The Republic of the Congo • The Seychelles • Togo • Vanuatu

Did the list surprise you at all? Perhaps you've visited some of these countries, or otherwise know something about them. Try the following activity and see if you can identify four of the flags of French-speaking countries (which appeared in the list just now).

Activity 3 Match the flags

 Allow about 5 minutes

Do you recognise these flags? Drag the country name to match up with its flag.

Belgium

Chad

Luxembourg

Senegal

Match each of the items above to an item below.



Some of the countries which belong to *la francophonie* have more than one 'official' language. Canada, Belgium and Switzerland are examples of this. Then there are countries and territories where part of the population speaks French, but it is not an official language. For example: Algeria, Andorra, Dominica, Morocco, Saint-Lucia and Tunisia. And of course, there are people who speak French as a second language all around the world. Hopefully you will join their ranks soon!

French is also one of the three procedural languages for the EU. It is the only language used for deliberations at the EU Court of Justice and it is one of the recognised working languages of the United Nations. It is one of just two official languages of the International Olympic Committee.

Being used in so many different contexts, you start to get the picture of French being a globally important language. No wonder that over 300 million people speak it around the world!

4 Be inspired!



Figure 4 *Le français: un super pouvoir*

Imagine this situation: you're waiting in a train station concourse, and you notice a French visitor is having great difficulty sorting out her travel arrangements at the ticket desk. You can speak French – you can help them! You might feel a bit nervous about your pronunciation and getting things exactly right, but your motivation to communicate and provide assistance outweighs this, and your bilingual abilities resolve the situation. The employee at the station is relieved and impressed. The French visitor is very grateful for your help. In a way, speaking a language is like having a special power – and no-one knows until you suddenly reveal it.

In the same way, you never know who else might possess this special power! As it turns out, some famous faces are French-speakers. Actors like Tom Hiddleston, Bradley Cooper and Hugh Grant, for example, can conduct interviews in French, as can Serena Williams. American politician Mitt Romney was once filmed talking in French about his visit to the country. Jodie Foster and Kristin Scott Thomas can use French very confidently to talk about their experiences both in front of and behind the camera. And Eddie Izzard has performed whole comedy shows in French!



Figure 5 Famous French speakers (L-R: Serena Williams, Hugh Grant, Jodie Foster, Kristin Scott Thomas, Eddie Izzard)

You can find various clips online of the people above speaking or performing in French. Some examples are below if you are interested (make sure to open any links in a new tab/window so you can easily return to this page).

[Serena Williams speaking French](#)

[Hugh Grant speaking French](#)

[Jodie Foster speaking French](#)

[Kristin Scott Thomas speaking French](#)

[Eddie Izzard speaking French](#)

Now, you might not find yourself interviewed on TV, but learning French will enable you to communicate in all sorts of different situations, and you never know when it will come in handy!

5 Top tips

Now you'll meet three students who recently took a beginners' French course. Drawing on their personal experiences of learning French, they'll be contributing their top tips relating to each week's content. You might find it helpful to keep notes on anything that sounds particularly useful for you. This will help you start your language learning journey on a good footing.

This week, Aisha, Helen and Stephen talked about what learning French has meant to them, and what they'd say to somebody who's unsure about learning French. Here's what they said.

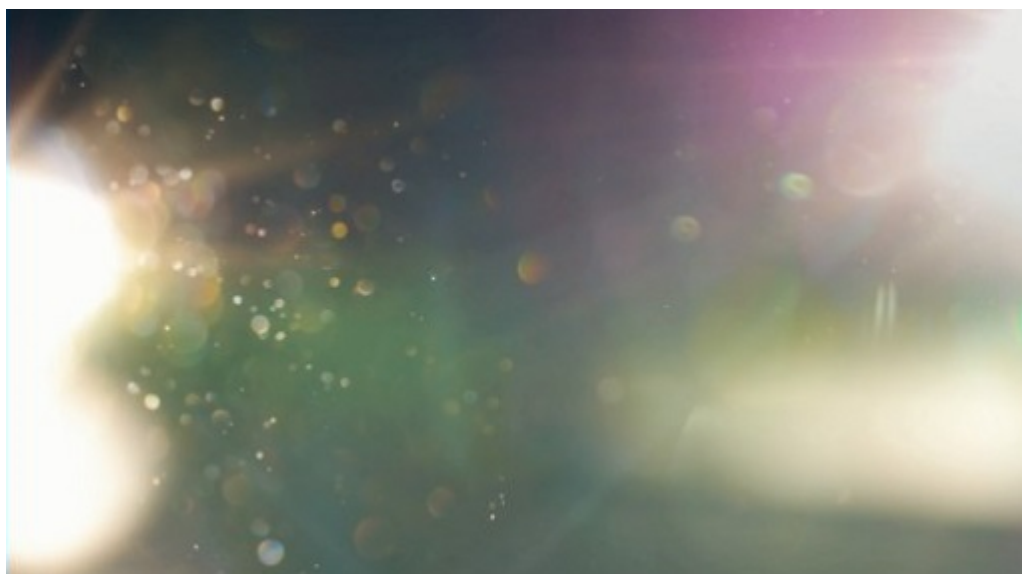
Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 What would you say to someone who's unsure about learning French?



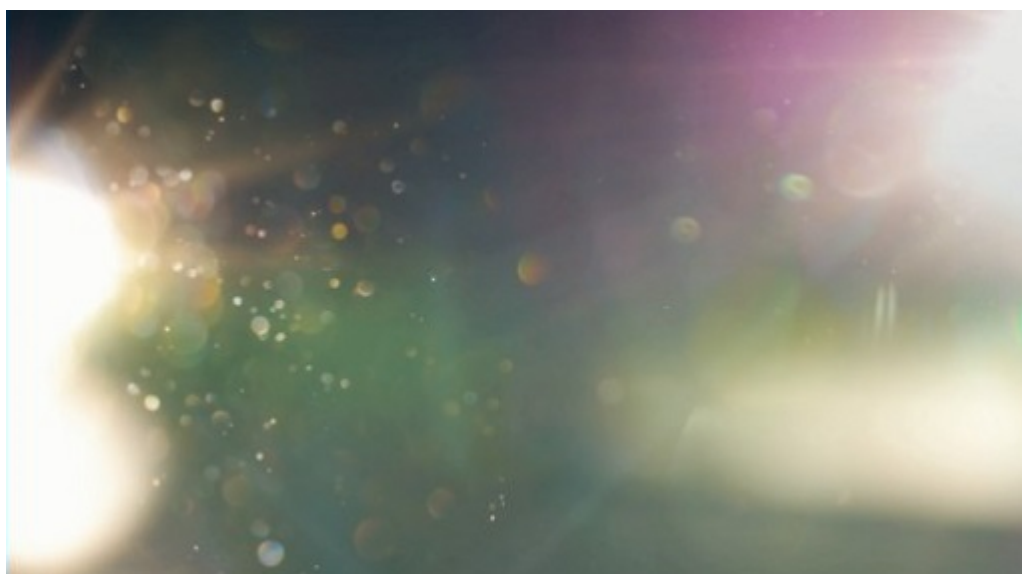
Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 What has learning French meant to you personally?



Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3 What tips would you give to someone who's about to start learning French?



6 Your goals

Before you embark on your language learning journey, think about what it will entail, and consider your goals.

What will you find challenging? For example, you might have negative memories from school about learning vocabulary and dread the thought of memorising long lists of words. Of course, learning a new language will inevitably involve remembering words and phrases – but you will receive some practical tips and advice which can help with that. As you work through this course, you will discover that there's more to learning French than simply recalling vocabulary, and there are plenty of other aspects that will make your studies interesting and rewarding.

Learning French will take some time and commitment, so it's important to maintain your enthusiasm and motivation. Keep sight of your personal goals while studying, and the situations in which you could use your French. Whether you just want to learn a few words and facts about France, or you're aiming to become fluent and move to a French-speaking country, there is no such thing as a bad reason to learn French!



Figure 6 Where will French take you?

To finish off this first week of study, take some time to recap and think ahead in more detail about your own goals and challenges.

Activity 4 Your learning journey

 Allow about 10 minutes

Consider the following questions about your goals and the journey to get there. Note down any thoughts in the box below.

- Why am I going to learn French?
- What will I be good at?
- What might I find challenging?
- How will I make the time?
- What will keep me motivated?

Provide your answer...

7 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 1, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

[Week 1 practise quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab, then come back here when you've finished.

Week 2: Start from what you know

Introduction



Figure 1 Start from what you know

Welcome to Week 2! Now that you have a sense of the valuable role the French language plays around the world, you are hopefully starting to feel confident that French is the right language for you. It's important to reiterate here that learning any language takes time; it isn't going to come to you overnight. However, one of the advantages of learning French is that there are probably a lot of words you already use regularly that are French in origin. As you progress through this week's activities you will also discover that understanding basic written French may not be as hard as you think.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- recognise a number of words and expressions that are French in origin
- understand the concepts of loan words (or borrowings), cognates, and false friends
- recognise the importance of focusing on what you know, rather than what you don't, when trying to understand French

- appreciate some strategies that can be used to grasp the meaning of unfamiliar words.

1 What do I know already?

When you learn French as a beginner, you will practise quickly spotting words that you can easily understand or recognise. This includes French vocabulary which has transferred to other languages such as English – like the example in Figure 2.

Have you ever been to a **restaurant**?

Figure 2 'Restaurant'

In this first activity, think about any French vocabulary that you already happen to know.

Activity 1 What French do you know?

 Allow about 5 minutes

See if you can list a few words or short phrases in French in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Well done if you came up with a few French words or phrases! Don't worry if you couldn't think of much – you may realise soon that you know more than you think.

Building on this, see how you get on with the next activity – perhaps it will contain some of your words from Activity 1.

Activity 2 French loan words

 Allow about 5 minutes

Here is a paragraph containing various words used in the English language, which actually originate from French. See if you can identify them – click to highlight the words before revealing the answer. There are ten in total.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



You probably found that many of the words highlighted in Activity 2 are recognisably French in origin. Words like this are used in English all the time. They're referred to as 'loan words' or 'borrowings'. Sometimes, the original word expresses something that does not fully carry over to the language that is doing the 'borrowing'. Being used within a different language, over the course of time, loan words can change slightly in meaning, according to the context in which they are used.

Consider, for example, the word 'baguette' – what comes to mind? How many possible meanings does the word have? In English it is only used to refer to a stick of bread, whereas in the French language it can also refer to different types of stick or baton: for example a chopstick, or a wand (*une baguette magique*).

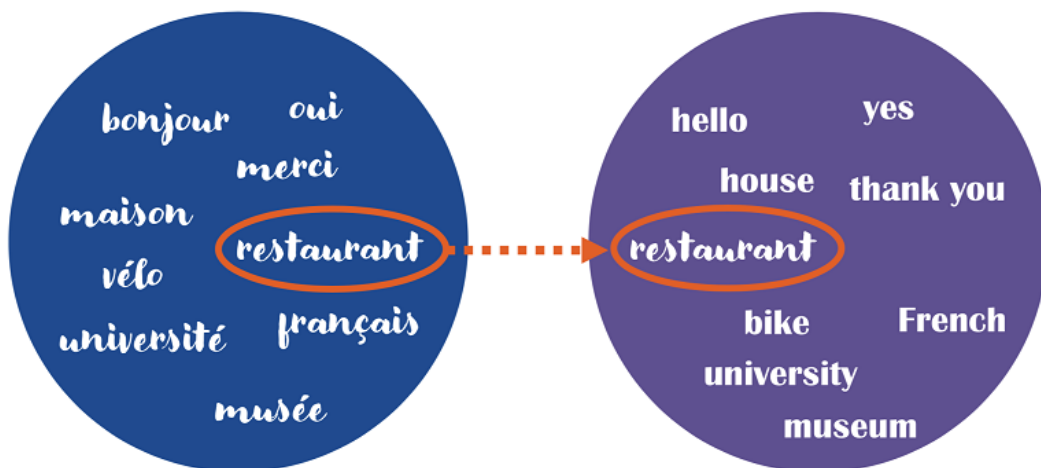


Figure 3 In English the word 'restaurant' is a loan word, or borrowing, from French

The study of the history of words – their origins and how their meanings have developed – is called etymology. If you're interested in the etymology of words, you will find some details listed in a good-sized dictionary. The next activity introduces some etymological information with the example of a few loan words.

Activity 3 Matching etymology



Allow about 5 minutes

See if you can match these words to their relevant etymological information.

restaurant

café

dessert

chef

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Borrowed from French verb meaning 'to restore', or food that restores one's strength.

Borrowed from French meaning 'coffee' or 'coffee shop'.

Borrowed from French verb literally meaning 'to remove what has been served', at the end of a meal.

Borrowed from French, referring to the 'head' of a kitchen.

Discussion

Well done if you matched them up! Here is a little more detail on some of these etymologies:

Restaurant – this is borrowed from the present participle of the French verb 'restaurer'.

Dessert – the French verb referred to here is 'desservir'.

Chef – this is borrowed from the French 'chef de cuisine', meaning head of the kitchen. 'Chef' here is originally derived from the Latin 'caput', meaning 'head'.

2 Words can travel: borrowings

It's no coincidence that all of the loan words so far this week come from the world of food and the kitchen! Gastronomy has been an important part of French culture for a long time, and one that has been exported, both by French chefs working outside of the country, and cooks from other parts of the world travelling to hone their craft in France. Those chefs took their vocabulary with them on their travels, and so the language travelled too, and French words ended up being 'borrowed' by other languages. Even if you're not a master chef yourself, you've most likely come across a few other culinary terms which are used in their original French. Some examples can be seen in Figure 4.



Figure 4 French culinary vocabulary

Loan words can be found everywhere in everyday life, when you keep an eye out for them. You might like to start noting down other French examples as you come across them. In the next activity, you will identify a few more that are used in other, non-culinary contexts.

Activity 4 Complete the sentences

 Allow about 5 minutes

Using the drop-down lists, choose the correct word to complete each of these sentences. The options are all words used in the English language that were borrowed from French.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Of course, word borrowing is not a one-way street; the French language has ‘borrowed’ from English too. You will come across words such as *le football*, *le rugby*, *le tennis* and *le cricket* when you browse French-language media. There is a clear sporting theme here, which probably has a lot to do with where these sports have developed and become popular. But you will also see, for example, *le marketing*, *le planning*, *le parking* and *le web* among many other terms that originated in English.

Interestingly, words borrowed from English are not necessarily the same in different variants of the French language. Below is a list of English borrowings commonly used in the language spoken in France, and the equivalent word used by French speakers in Quebec.

Table 1 Examples of French variants

France	Quebec
faire du shopping	magasiner
le chewing gum	la gomme (à mâcher)
le parking	le stationnement
le ferry	le traversier
le coach	l’entraîneur
le cupcake	le petit gâteau
vintage	rétro
le week-end	la fin de semaine

As a learner of French, spotting borrowed words in a text will provide clues to help you understand the meaning of the text, even if you don’t understand all the words.

3 A shared language history: cognates

Most European languages have common historical roots. A good example of one of these roots is Latin which, with the spread of the Roman Empire, influenced the development of the languages in the countries it controlled. As a result, a number of words in European languages have the same linguistic derivation. These are known as 'cognates'.

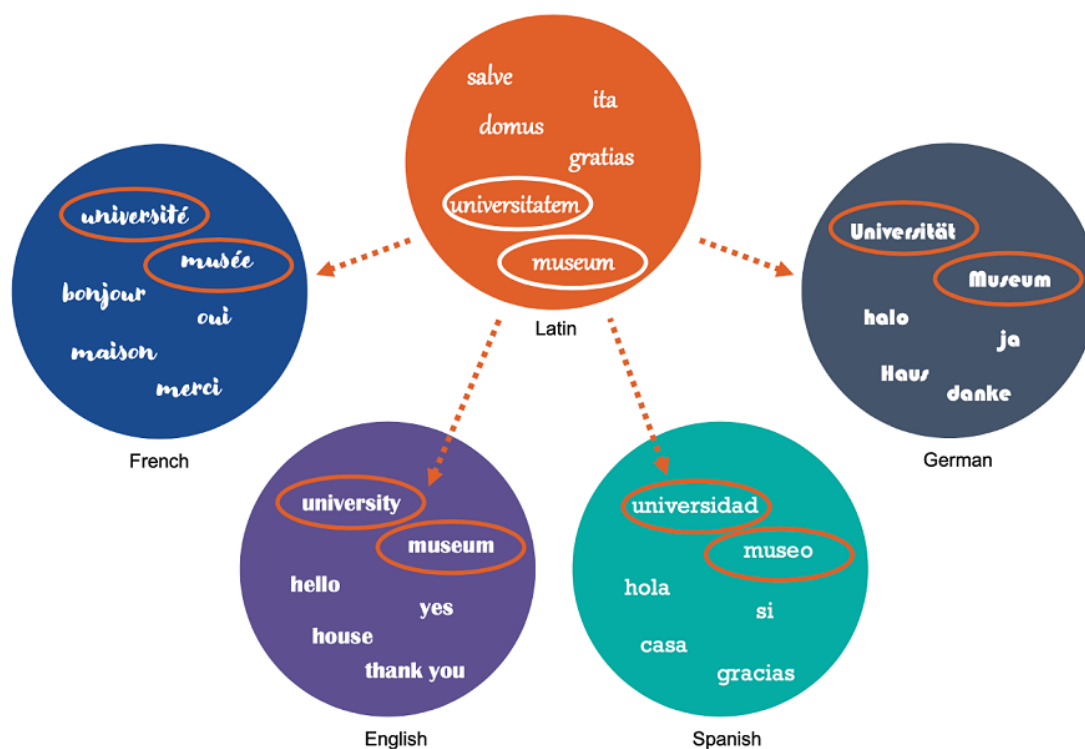


Figure 5 Cognates derived from Latin in French, English, Spanish and German

In the table below are six example English words and the French equivalent, along with the correct article and gender (f. for feminine and m. for masculine) (you will find out more about these aspects in Week 4).

Table 2 Article and gender

English	French
administration	l'administration (f.)
table	la table (f.)
direction	la direction (f.)
accent	l'accent (m.)
promotion	la promotion (f.)
information	l'information (f.)

Many cognates are nouns (naming words). Identifying them can be very helpful in figuring out the meaning of sentences or texts, even if your knowledge of French is relatively limited. Of course, if you were to hear a French speaker saying these words, they would sound different from the English – but notice that the spelling is identical. This isn't always the case, but even when the spelling differs slightly, the meaning can often be deduced without much trouble. Try identifying some cognates yourself in the next activity.

Activity 5 Translate the cognates

 Allow about 5 minutes

Have a look at the five French cognates below. What do you think their equivalents are in English? See if you can fill in the table.

Table 3 French cognates

télévision	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
présentation	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
porc	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
adresse	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
carotte	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>

Answer

Here's a completed version of the table:

Table 3 French cognates

télévision	television
présentation	presentation
porc	pork
adresse	address
carotte	carrot

In Week 1, it was mentioned that learning French could open the door to learning other languages too – the cognates you see here demonstrate this quite nicely. Italian, Spanish and Portuguese (which, together with French are ‘Romance languages’) in particular share a number of cognates. Notice how in Figure 7, these expressions of greeting in French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese are all so similar (literally translating as ‘good day’), and how different they are to the ‘hello’ or ‘hi’ that is used in English.

Figure 6 *Bonjour!*

Figure 7 shows another example from these Romance languages. This time the word is ‘authority’. This demonstrates just how closely related many words can be.

Figure 7 *Autorité*

4 False friends

Hopefully you are now feeling more confident that French vocabulary need not be a huge challenge, when you have an arsenal of useful skills to aid your learning. Finding immediately recognisable words is a valuable tool for deciphering meaning. Beware though – there is a complication with what you’ve just learned. You are now going to enter the perilous world of the ‘false friend’. A false friend is a word that looks like a cognate – and therefore looks as if it means one thing – but in fact it has a different meaning entirely. The image below provides some examples.

Figure 8 False friends

Don’t let this undermine your growing confidence. Being aware that false friends are out there will drive you to learn vocabulary more carefully. When you encounter false friends a few times you’ll learn to recognise them. You may even find that you remember the false friends more easily – it sticks in your mind that they don’t have the meaning you initially expect. The next activity presents a few more false friends which you could try and memorise.

Activity 6 Translate the false friends

 Allow about 5 minutes

Choose the correct translation for these French words, bearing in mind that they are all false friends.

- a) attendre
- ☐ to wait
 - ☐ to attend

- b) monnaie
- ☐ money
 - ☐ small change

- c) joli
- ☐ cheerful
 - ☐ pretty

- d) journée
- ☐ day
 - ☐ journey

- e) librairie
- ☐ library
 - ☐ bookshop

- f) location
- ☐ place
 - ☐ rental

g) coin

- ☐ coin
- ☐ corner

h) préservatif

- ☐ jam
- ☐ condom

Knowing the meaning of some false friends in one language will help you to recognise them in other related languages, where they are still cognates. For example, you might not know that the French for 'advertisement' is *annonce*, but with that established, it probably won't surprise you very much that in Italian it's *annunzio*, in Spanish *anuncio* and in Portuguese *anúncio*.

False friends have the potential to cause amusing or even awkward situations, but remember that misusing or misunderstanding a false friend will rarely cause any real communication problems. It is good practice for language learners to identify and learn false friends, but on the other hand, it's also important not to get too preoccupied with avoiding errors. The rewards for learning French and communicating with people far outweigh any occasional slips!

5 Context clues

When you come across vocabulary that you don't know, you can often use clues in the surrounding context to help you figure out the meaning.

While studying a language course, you might work on isolated words and sentences where there is no context to help. Remember that in real life situations though, there will often be plenty of clues to help you understand what somebody is trying to communicate to you, as the next activity will demonstrate.

Activity 7 Looking at context

 Allow about 10 minutes

Observe the situation depicted in each image, and read the sentence of French dialogue, focusing on the word or phrase that is underlined>. Use the context to help you select the correct option to complete the translation.

Scenario 1



Interactive content is not available in this format.



Scenario 2



Interactive content is not available in this format.



Scenario 3



Interactive content is not available in this format.



Scenario 4



Interactive content is not available in this format.



Scenario 5



Interactive content is not available in this format.



Scenario 6



Interactive content is not available in this format.



6 Trying it out

Now try this next activity, which presents some more new bits of vocabulary, and tests a few of the concepts you've been learning about so far.

Activity 8 Test your learning: vocabulary

 Allow about 5 minutes

See if you can match these words with their definitions. Look out for cognates and words that you can make sense of yourself and, using the context, watch out for the false friend!

l'aéroport

le jardin

le parc

la grappe

la banque

Match each of the items above to an item below.

a location you travel from (whether that's long- or short-haul)

a place to grow plants, either to eat or look at

a place to take your dog for a walk, or for children to play football and ride bikes

fruits that grow together (like dates or bananas) are sold in these groups

a location where money is safely kept

.....

Discussion

Your confidence in coping with slight differences in spelling, and/or the presence of accents (more on this shortly in Week 4) should have helped you match the definitions successfully. And by a process of elimination (another useful strategy when language learning) you will have identified the false friend.

Would you have translated the word *grappe* as 'bunch', or does it look like something else? *Une grappe de raisins* is French for 'a bunch of grapes'. This shows how a French person learning English needs to be wary of false friends too. In French the word *raisins* means 'grapes', while the French word for 'raisins' is *raisins secs*.



Figure 9 Left: *des raisins secs*. Right: *du raisin*.

There is no doubt that learning new words is the basis for achieving a good command of any language and you can see that this task does not have to be insurmountable. Starting from the knowledge that there are probably a number of words you can already recognise in French, from your observations of the context, and from your personal knowledge, you can develop the confidence to tackle brief written texts that otherwise you may have turned away from. As you discovered in this week's activities, you can apply strategies to understanding the written word which go beyond simply trying to remember vocabulary. This shows you that developing strategies as a language learner, and as a language user, is as important as learning vocabulary. With experience, it will become second nature.

6 Top tips

This week, Aisha, Helen and Stephen talked about the top learning strategies they'd suggest for new learners, particularly when it comes to learning and remembering vocabulary. Here's what they said.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 What are your best tips for learning French vocabulary?



Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 What strategies can you use as a beginners' French learner to memorise vocabulary?



Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3 What are the general learning strategies that you'd recommend?



7 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 2, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

[Week 2 practice quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab, then come back here when you've finished.

8 Summary of Week 2

Well done for completing Week 2!

This week you have been building your confidence to learn French by developing a 'can-do' attitude to unfamiliar language, and looking at the strong links between French and other European languages, including English. English-speakers already make use of a number of French expressions which have become part of the English language. This shared linguistic background, which goes back over many centuries, means that a huge number of words are immediately recognisable – but keep in mind that the spelling may differ, and accents may be present.

You should now be able to:

- recognise a number of words and expressions that are French in origin
- understand the concepts of loan words (or borrowings), cognates, and false friends
- recognise the importance of focusing on what you know, rather than what you don't, when trying to understand French
- appreciate some strategies that can be used to grasp the meaning of unfamiliar words.

This week has involved some close examination of vocabulary, because words are the linguistic building blocks for a learner to practise and memorise. However, this is by no means the only aspect of learning a new language. There's much more to it than learning lists of words! Next week, you will look at the bigger picture and investigate what else learning French will involve.

You can now go to [Week 3](#).

Week 3: What does learning French involve?

Introduction

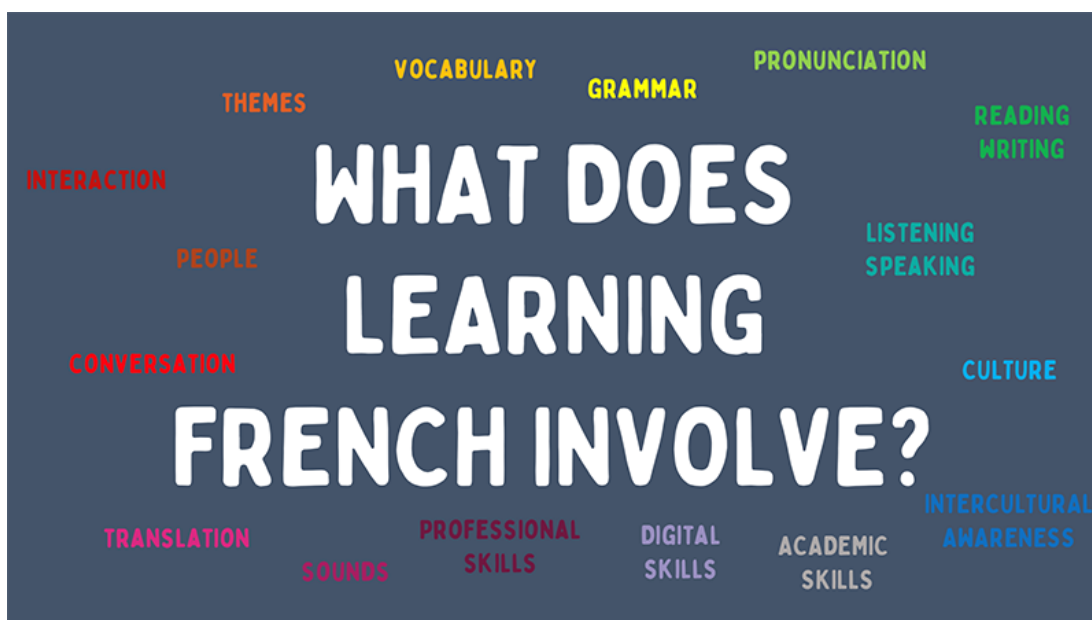


Figure 1 What does learning French involve?

Welcome to Week 3! Last week you found that you probably already know a few French words, and can recognise others if your own language is another European language. You learned that as a language learner you can develop strategies for understanding, such as looking out for loan words and cognates, using logic and deduction, and using context to figure out what somebody is talking about.

This week, you will continue exploring what learning French will be like. There is much more to it than just learning words. Through this week's activities you will get an overview of the different aspects of language learning, from recognising sounds to understanding culture and developing transferable skills.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- identify the different components of language
- recognise the knowledge and skills developed by learners of French

- appreciate strategies for learning and memorising French vocabulary
- understand that language learners develop a wide range of transferable skills.

1 The components of language

If you studied science at school, you will remember that you can take a micro- or macroscopic perspective on nature, looking at it from near or far. You can investigate the subject in question by looking at smaller and smaller parts, for example by looking at the human body, then the organs within it, the organ tissues, their cells and the atoms they are composed of.



Figure 2 Microscopic perspective

But you can also explore the surrounding environment by looking at bigger and bigger contexts, for example an ecosystem, the planet, the solar system or the wider universe.



Figure 3 Macroscopic perspective

In a way, studying language is really no different to this. Learning to master a language requires skills and knowledge that relate to the big picture, as well as the smallest details. Imagine a camera lens – you need to be able to ‘zoom in’ and ‘zoom out’ to look at things in different ways. Activity 1 will check your understanding of the components of language and their relative sizes.



Figure 4 Linguistic perspective

Activity 1 Components of language

 Allow about 5 minutes

Order these components of the written language from smallest (1) to largest (6).

letters

syllables

words

sentences

paragraphs

texts

Match each of the items above to an item below.

1 (smallest)

2

3

4

5

6 (largest)

2 The dimensions of language learning

If you open a French novel and examine its contents, you'll observe that the whole text is made up of numerous chapters; each chapter contains many paragraphs; each paragraph is composed of several sentences. Within sentences are words, which can be broken down into syllables, which are each made of several letters. If instead of a novel you were examining a conversation in French, you would not break up the language into chapters and paragraphs, but you could consider the chunks of the language within each speaker's turn, or between breaths. You wouldn't see letters, but you would hear sounds. Looking at the bigger picture with the French novel, you could consider it as one part of that author's entire oeuvre. Or you might see it as one book in a library that contains many novels alongside a wide variety of non-fiction (e.g. history, science, cookbooks and language textbooks). The books and the library are artefacts that form part of a community's culture. That community is perhaps just one of many within a society and country. Likewise, the conversations people have when they interact reflect their social status, are influenced by their cultures and shape their identities.

As a language learner, you will acquire knowledge and skills that relate to many of these dimensions, as demonstrated in the next activity.

Activity 2 Beginner's expectations

 Allow about 10 minutes

The list below shows several different stages and dimensions of learning French, from learning the basics to becoming a highly sophisticated user of French. Which of these would you expect to do in a beginners' French course? Which best describe your ultimate aim, beyond your first course, as a learner of French, and why? Consider how this relates to your goals from Week 1. Reflect and make some notes in the box underneath.

- Recognising and pronouncing the sounds of French which are new to you.
- Recognising the accented characters of French and learning how to pronounce them.
- Learning and understanding French words.
- Learning French grammar to form sentences describing objects and situations, to ask questions, to express opinions, to talk about the past or the future, etc.
- Understanding and creating texts/dialogues that tell a story, exchange information, argue a point, etc.
- Reading different types of texts, listening to French in different contexts, watching films, reading or listening to news or taking part in conversations and understanding cultural references within them.
- Interacting with people from French-speaking cultures (avoiding or correcting cultural assumptions), getting to know them, finding out about their background and identity, their cultural habits.
- Translating sentences, texts, documents or discussions, taking cultural differences into account.
- Developing learning skills (e.g. learning from mistakes), digital skills (e.g. using an online forum), academic skills (e.g. differentiating between different text types), professional skills (e.g. time management, planning and organisation) and/or other life skills (e.g. problem solving, resilience) through language studies.

Provide your answer...

You may have considered some of the following questions during Activity 2. Try to keep the bits most relevant to you in mind – they will help you to reflect about your goals (and your progress towards them) as a learner of French.

Why are you learning French?

This could be for professional reasons (e.g. if you have new customers based in French-speaking parts of Switzerland), for family reasons (e.g. a relative is moving to France), for travel reasons (you are planning a trip to Quebec), for personal reasons (you need a new challenge), etc.

In what sort of context are you aiming to use your French?

This will be related to your answer to the previous question. You could anticipate having to use French in a business context (with your new customers), as part of daily life (e.g. shopping with your relatives in France), as a tourist (e.g. asking for directions or booking a hotel in Quebec), or just as part of your studies.

What sort of language will you be reading or listening to?

Will it be formal business French, informal conversations, short interactions with shop owners, watching French-speaking films and TV shows, reading news and magazines, chatting with fellow students in tutorials?

What sort of people are you aiming to interact with?

What part of the French-speaking world might they come from? How will you get to know them? Will they be your peers? Will you feel relaxed when you interact with them? How different do you think their culture(s) might be from yours?

What are your short- and long-term goals?

Are you aiming to learn the basics, so you can greet people, introduce yourself and survive as a tourist in a French-speaking part of the world? Or is your objective to be able to read and understand texts and documents and follow basic conversations in French? Perhaps you intend to learn French over a long period of time to become highly proficient? Whether you're aiming for a few words and phrases, or complex grammar and idioms, these are all valid and valuable goals.



Figure 5 Where will you go? (Clockwise from top left: Quebec, Canada; Paris, France; Abidjan, Ivory Coast; Lausanne, Switzerland)

3 From words to communication



Figure 6 Starting to communicate

Some academic subjects are more content-oriented (e.g. history), whereas others are mainly based on learning skills (e.g. maths, art and design). The wonderful thing about language learning is that it's a subject that combines content and skills-based learning, so there is something in it for everyone – as the next sections will show.

4 Acquiring language-related knowledge

Knowledge is about knowing and understanding factual information and theoretical concepts. For a learner of French, this might involve, for example:

- vocabulary
- grammar rules
- pronunciation rules
- historical, geographical and cultural facts.

Knowledge is acquired by, for example, reading explanations and texts, listening to classes or lectures, or watching documentaries. As a beginners' French learner, you might:

- read an explanation on the difference between *le* and *la*
- listen to a teacher demonstrating the difference between the sounds /u/ (as found in *vous*) and /y/ (as found in *tu*)
- watch a video about a French-speaking community in Vietnam and their eating habits and cultural festivals.

Knowledge is retained by memorisation. As a learner of French, you will learn strategies and techniques to help you memorise what you learn. Try out the activities on the next page to have a go.

5 Have a go: learning and memorising words

Now you will have a go at the kind of activity that will help you to acquire and consolidate knowledge. This is a good way for a French learner to learn new words and memorise them.

Activity 3 Learning vocabulary: colours

 Allow about 5 minutes

This is an example of the type of interactive activity you will engage with if you take a beginners' French course with an online element.

Learn the vocabulary by matching the English words to the French, and checking your answers. If drag-and-drop functionality is difficult with the hardware/software you're using, you can click for a more accessible version of the task below. Make guesses where you need – you can have as many tries as you like. Then try to memorise the words and their meaning.

Choose the correct English translation for each of the following French words.

bleu

rouge

vert

jaune

blanc

noir

Match each of the items above to an item below.



blue



red



green



yellow



white



black

Here are two strategies you can use to learn, memorise or revise vocabulary in your studies. Strategy A can be used for any vocabulary topic, but strategy B as described here is intended for learning colours specifically. You may find ways to modify or develop other strategies that suit you best.

Two vocabulary strategies

Strategy A:

- Write the French words for each colour (or vocabulary for any other topic) on flash cards, using one card for each word, with a translation in your first language at the back.
- To practise the meaning of the words, go through the stack of cards looking at the French side, and try to recall the corresponding translation for each word.
- To practice the French words, go through the stack of cards looking at the translated side, and try to recall the French equivalent for each word.
- Repeat the activity a few times a day, which will help you to become familiar with all the words.
- If you prefer, there are free online tools to create online flash cards that you could use instead of paper cards.



Figure 7 Strategy A in action

Strategy B:

- Write the French word for each colour on a sticky note, and position each sticky note on an object of that colour somewhere in your home.
- Pay attention to the notes when you are in that room. Read them often.
- Practise in another location (without any sticky notes) by trying to name the French colour for objects that you can see.



Figure 8 Strategy B in action

6 Developing language-related skills

Developing skills is about being able to put knowledge into practice, and improving through repetition. Think about, for example, the skills needed to ride a bicycle or to bake bread, or the craft required to make objects, furniture or clothes through carpentry, pottery, sewing, knitting, etc. Acquiring skills implies learning by doing, and it requires practice.

Crucially, it also involves making errors and learning from them. This is important to realise as a language learner: mistakes will be made along the way. You need to embrace the risk in trying new things out, and accept that occasionally getting it wrong is all part of the learning process! The key thing to remember is that your aim is to be understood, rather than to produce perfect sentences immediately. Communication is more important than accuracy.

In this section, you will find out more about developing the main language-related skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking and interaction skills.

Language-related skills also include translation and intercultural communication. You will find out more about these skills later in Week 7.

6.1 Have a go: language skills

French language learners will develop a huge range of skills. Firstly, there are the skills generally labelled as ‘language skills’:

- listening
- reading
- speaking
- writing
- taking part in written and spoken interactions.



Figure 9 Language skills

Listening, speaking and taking part in spoken interactions (such as conversations) are skills related to the spoken language. Reading, writing and taking part in written interactions (like an exchange in an online text chat) are written skills.

Listening and reading can be grouped together as 'receptive' skills – meaning they require you to understand language written or spoken by somebody else – whereas speaking and writing are 'productive' skills, which involve producing language yourself. 'Interactions' are situations where a speaker needs to both receive and produce language: for example, when you take part in a conversation, you need to both listen and speak.

Activity 4 Developing language skills



Allow about 5 minutes

Read the list of activities below, which are all typically found in a beginners' French course to help you learn and practice language skills. For each one, tick the skill that they help develop.

Playing an audio clip and ticking the word(s) spoken in the clip.

- ☐ interaction
- ☐ listening
- ☐ reading
- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing

Looking over a short text and selecting the sentence that best summarises its content.

- ☐ interaction
- ☐ listening
- ☐ reading
- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing

Looking at a list of words and recording yourself pronouncing them.

- ☐ interaction
- ☐ listening
- ☐ reading
- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing

Producing a 50 word paragraph to introduce yourself, providing your name, nationality, where you live and what your occupation is.

- ☐ interaction
- ☐ listening
- ☐ reading
- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing

Taking part in a role play.

- ☐ interaction
 - ☐ listening
 - ☐ reading
 - ☐ speaking
 - ☐ writing
-

Matching some sentences with images that represent their meaning.

- ☐ interaction
 - ☐ listening
 - ☐ reading
 - ☐ speaking
 - ☐ writing
-

Reading some questions in English and recording your answers aloud in French.

- ☐ interaction
 - ☐ listening
 - ☐ reading
 - ☐ speaking
 - ☐ writing
-

Taking part in a conversation class with a language assistant.

- ☐ interaction
 - ☐ listening
 - ☐ reading
 - ☐ speaking
 - ☐ writing
-

Reading forum posts written by other learners and adding your own contributions.

- ☐ interaction
 - ☐ listening
 - ☐ reading
 - ☐ speaking
 - ☐ writing
-

Using an app to record yourself practising your pronunciation.

- ☐ interaction
- ☐ listening
- ☐ reading
- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing

6.2 Other skills

Week 7 will introduce you to more language-related skills developed by learners of French, such as translation and intercultural communication skills. However, through your studies you will also learn a range of skills that are not specifically related to languages. Linguists are highly skilled individuals and professionals, whether or not they use their language skills in their daily life or work. This course so far has stressed that learning a language involves much more than just learning new words. By progressively getting used to different sounds, different structures, and different cultural references, linguists develop problem-solving skills, agile thinking, flexibility, openness, and many more attributes which are highly sought after by employers. They also develop academic skills (e.g. citing sources), digital skills (e.g. using online forums or digital dictionaries) and general communication skills which make them well-rounded learners.

At The Open University, for example, language courses incorporate the development of a broad range of skills, represented visually by Figure 10.



Figure 10 Skills developed by French language learners

To hear about some personal examples of transferable skills developed by language learners, watch the video below in which languages graduates talk about acquiring these skills and how they've benefited their careers, which span many different fields.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 How languages can take your career further



HOW LANGUAGES CAN TAKE YOUR
CAREER FURTHER

7 Top tips

This week, Aisha, Helen and Stephen talked about what they particularly enjoyed while learning French, how their skills have proved useful in their personal lives and careers, and their top tips for developing a broad base of language skills. Here's what they said.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 Which part of learning French do you enjoy the most?



Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3 Has any knowledge or skill from your studies been useful in your personal life or career?



Video content is not available in this format.

Video 4 What are your top tips for developing language skills?



8 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 3, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

[Week 3 practice quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab, then come back here when you've finished.

9 Summary of Week 3

Well done for completing Week 3!

This week, you found out more about the different components of language, and examined language learning in closer detail. You worked through some examples of the types of activities typically found in a beginners' French language course. You have also reflected on the range of skills developed by language learners.

You should now be able to:

- identify the different components of language
- recognise the knowledge and skills developed by learners of French
- appreciate strategies for learning and memorising French vocabulary
- understand that language learners develop a wide range of transferable skills.

Next week, you will continue to explore the knowledge and skills involved in learning French, focusing specifically on basic French grammar.

You can now go to [Week 4](#).

Week 4: Introducing grammar – what does French look like?

Introduction

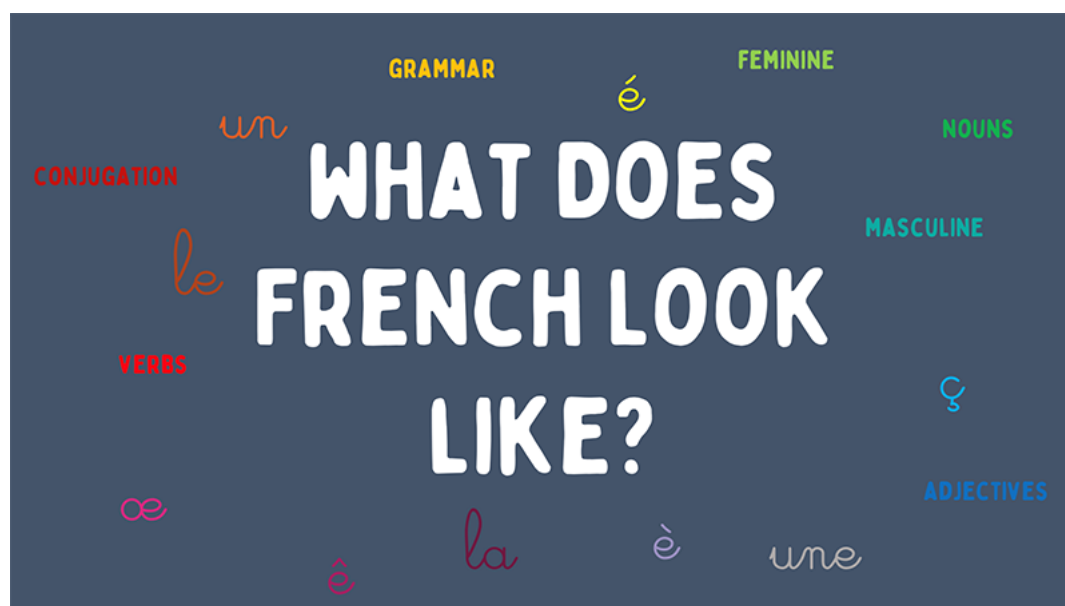


Figure 1 What does French look like?

Welcome to Week 4! By now you are hopefully feeling quite confident that you will be able to tackle learning French. You have thought about what learning French involves, with an overview of spotting words that you already know and learning new ones. You have read about the range of skills that language learners develop. You have also seen that there are a lot of cultural elements that are not only essential to ‘getting things right’ but interesting to learn in their own right.

There is one aspect of language learning that many people find challenging, however, and that is grammar. This difficulty often stems from the way it was taught at school. This week you are going to have a look at French grammar, and you’ll find it doesn’t have to be a chore, but it’s rather more like a tool to empower you. Knowing the right vocabulary is of course highly important, but if you can’t assemble words together into sentences, you won’t be able to communicate in French. Grammar is the set of principles that provides

structure to language. Some of these principles are similar in different languages; others are very different. This week you will get a taster of what learning French grammar is like.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- explain which accents and diacritics are used on some letters in French
- recognise and understand some basic grammatical terms
- identify a few differences between French grammar and the grammar of your own language
- understand what learning French grammar entails.

1 The letters of the French language

The French language uses a script written horizontally (unlike some written vertically e.g. traditional Chinese or Japanese) from left to right (unlike Arabic or Hebrew). You found out in Week 1 that the French alphabet is comprised of 26 letters. It is the same alphabet as used in the English language, sometimes referred to as the Latin alphabet (as opposed, for example, to the Greek or Cyrillic alphabets, used by Greek and Russian respectively).



Figure 2 French alphabet

Alphabets are a writing system where letters represent sounds. This is different from non-alphabetic systems (e.g. Chinese) where a single character can represent a whole word. In addition to the 26 letters of the alphabet, French uses diacritics (signs added to letters, for example in é or ç) and ligatures (two letters combined together, for example œ). Note that letters with diacritics or ligatures don't count as separate letters in the French alphabet.

Activity 1 French diacritics

 Allow about 5 minutes

Do you know which of the following letters with diacritics or ligatures are used in the French language? Try and select the five correct ones. Don't worry if you don't know the answer, have a go anyway: you'll get feedback about how many are right/wrong and you can keep trying.

- ☐ é
- ☐ â
- ☐ ø
- ☐ ç
- ☐ ñ
- ☐ æ
- ☐ ï
- ☐ å
- ☐ ß
- ☐ š

French uses the following diacritics and ligatures:

Table 1 French diacritics and ligatures

English term	French term	How to write
acute accent	accent aigu	é
grave accent	accent grave	à è ù
circumflex accent	accent circonflexe	â ê î ô û
diaeresis	tréma	ë ÿ ü
cedilla	cédille	ç
ligature	e dans l'a / a–e entrelacés / a–e liés	æ
	e dans l'o / o–e entrelacés / o–e liés	œ

The most frequently used ones are the acute, grave and circumflex accents. When you learn French vocabulary, you will need to remember whether words are spelt with any accents. With some practice it will become second nature!

Some of the diacritics in French are used to indicate different pronunciations of the same letters. You will learn how to distinguish and pronounce them when you start learning French. In Week 5 you will do a taster activity about this.

2 Grammar terminology

It is important to stress up front that a French sentence can look fairly similar to a sentence written in English or another European language (like the Romance languages you read about in Week 2). A sentence in French will start with a capital letter, and end with a full stop. Punctuation marks are broadly used in the same way as in English. Word order within sentences is also very similar.

When you learn French, though, you will be learning not just the names of things but also how to ask for things and express your opinion, and how to communicate on a more meaningful level. To do that, as a beginner, you will need to know a little more about what makes a sentence, and some basic grammar that forms the structure of the French language.

Words are the building blocks of sentences, and grammar is the set of principles that allows you to put them together in a way that ensures that others will understand what you want to communicate. Grammar provides tools to describe how language is used. It includes terminology which is useful to name different parts or aspects of language, for example 'noun', 'verb', 'tense', or 'question'. Are you familiar with terminology like this? Try the activity below.

Activity 2 Grammar terms

 *Allows about 5 minutes*

Read the sentence below, and select the correct term to refer to each individual word. Take a guess if you're unsure, check your answers and read the discussion beneath to find out more.

Scout is a black dog.

Scout...

- ☐ adjective
- ☐ article
- ☐ noun
- ☐ verb

... is ...

- ☐ adjective
- ☐ article
- ☐ noun
- ☐ verb

... a ...

- ☐ adjective
- ☐ article
- ☐ noun
- ☐ verb

... black ...

- ☐ adjective
 - ☐ article
 - ☐ noun
 - ☐ verb
-

... dog.

- ☐ adjective
 - ☐ article
 - ☐ noun
 - ☐ verb
-

Discussion

Here are a few explanations for these terms:

A noun is a naming word, referring to people ('Mary'), animals ('Scout', 'dog'), objects ('table', 'book'), or abstract notions ('love', 'intelligence').

A verb denotes an action or state: 'do', 'is', 'eat', 'jump', etc.

An adjective adds information to a noun, for example to add a description, like 'black', 'nice', 'difficult'.

An article is a word that can be used with a noun, like 'a' or 'the' in English.

Don't worry if grammar terminology is completely new to you! If you found the activity above challenging, don't be disheartened. Learning to use terminology like 'nouns', 'adjectives' and so on is part of learning a new language. You will become accustomed to these terms over time as you develop your skills.

3 Nouns and articles in French: introducing gender

So, as was just discussed, a noun is a naming word. When learning French, this is a well-established place to start: learning lists of names for things. Usually these are tangible things: dog, breakfast, hotel, swimming pool, son, daughter. If you have a good memory for these things, you can often get by in a French-speaking country, buying tickets or booking accommodation relatively successfully. Once you start to go beyond the naming of everyday things to, for example, the discussion of your own passions (white-water rafting, volunteering, wine tasting?) and achievements (black belt in judo, spiritual enlightenment?) you will see that nouns become far more exciting to learn.

If you want to practise learning some French vocabulary, why not start by taking some time to research the French for the key nouns you would use to describe your own life, like your family, your home, your hobbies or interests? If you do look up some nouns in a bilingual dictionary (whether that's a physical book or online), you will notice that the French translations are followed by 'm.' or 'f.'. You will now find out what this means and why it's provided.

Activity 3 Comparing French and English

 Allow about 5 minutes

Look at the word list below. What do you notice when you compare the French and English?









a tree		un arbre	a table		une table
a dog		un chien	a sock		une chaussette
a book		un livre	an apple		une pomme
a bike		un vélo	a house		une maison

Figure 3 Bilingual word list

Provide your answer...

Discussion

What is interesting to notice from the list is that there are two words in French which are equivalent to the English 'a': these are *un* and *une*.

The word list in Activity 3 was a list of nouns, but each noun was preceded by 'a' in English, and by *un* or *une* in French. These are articles, or more precisely 'indefinite articles'. So why does French have two of them when English only has one?

This is because in the French language, all nouns are categorised as masculine or feminine. This is termed as 'gender'. As a result, French grammar has a different article for each: *un* for masculine words, and *une* for feminine words. There are also masculine and feminine versions of the 'definite article' (equivalent to 'the' in English): *le* is masculine (*le livre* = the book), and *la* is feminine (*la maison* = the house). Note that if a noun starts with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) then both *le* and *la* are replaced by *l'* (*un arbre* > *l'arbre*: the tree; *une école* > *l'école*: the school).

Gender is not unique to the French language: Spanish, Italian and German, for example, also categorise nouns according to gender. The grammatical notion of gender exists in English too, but it's limited to differentiating between male and female individuals and animals. For example, English has the masculine pronoun 'he', and the feminine pronoun 'she' (among others like 'they'). Objects and abstract concepts are normally referred to as 'it', which is neither masculine or feminine.

What is different in French, and other languages, is that the notion of gender applies to all nouns. For example, the list in Activity 3 shows you that the French nouns for tree, dog, book and bike are masculine, whereas the French nouns for table, sock, apple and house are feminine. This does not mean that each naming word has a particular 'masculine' or 'feminine' quality, so it's important as you learn French not to look for that kind of rationale. For example, the word for a man's shirt in French is feminine (*une chemise*), but for a woman's blouse it's masculine (*un chemisier*).

This shows how the grammatical notion of gender in French is abstract and arbitrary. As a learner of French, this means that whenever you learn a new noun, you will also have to learn its gender, by learning the article that goes with it. In a dictionary, the gender of French nouns is usually indicated by a small m. or f., for masculine or feminine.

4 Memorising nouns and their gender

Think about how you might memorise masculine and feminine nouns. Some people like to colour-code their written vocabulary notes. Others learn sentences using the noun. Although you will not necessarily be misunderstood if you make a mistake with gender, it is nevertheless important to get to grips with this challenge early on; the more you repeat words and become familiar with them, the more likely you are to remember gender without much effort.

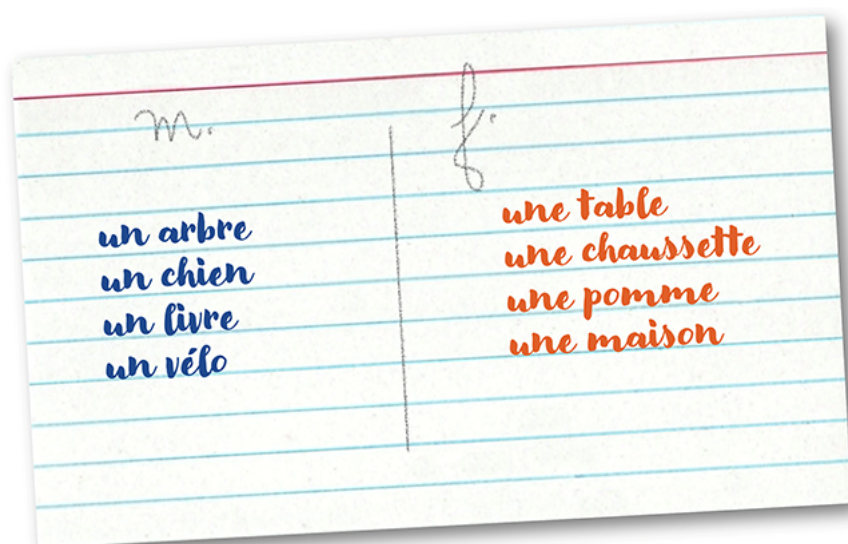


Figure 4 Vocabulary flash cards

As well as these tips, you will start to notice patterns as you build up your knowledge of vocabulary. For example, most nouns ending in -ion (you may remember the work you did with cognates in Week 2) are feminine, for example *la télévision*, *la présentation*, and *l'organisation*. Most nouns ending in -age are masculine, for example *le garage* and *le montage*. And most 'loan words' from English to French are also masculine, for example *le weekend*, *le marketing*, and *le web*. It is always useful to spot patterns when learning a language, and you will feel more empowered to use your new skills if you have a reliable base of rules (even though there are inevitably exceptions to them).

Now, it's time to turn to verbs.

5 Verbs in French: introducing conjugation

You may remember that a verb is a 'doing' word. In other words, verbs denote actions. Here are some English verbs, and their French equivalents.

love	eat	walk	finish	choose	know	take	read
							
aimer	manger	marcher	finir	choisir	savoir	prendre	lire

Figure 5 Some common verbs

When used in sentences, verbs are preceded by 'subjects' which refer to the person or thing doing the action described by the verb. Subjects can be nouns, like 'Simon', 'Debbie' or 'the cat', or pronouns, like 'I', 'he', 'she' or 'you'.

In many languages, verb forms can change depending on the subject used with the verb.

Activity 4 Verb endings

 Allow about 10 minutes

Look at the following verb endings in English. What do you notice? Make a quick note.

eat:

I eat
you eat
he/she eats
we eat
you eat
they eat

Provide your answer...

Discussion

This example shows us that the verb form for 'eat' used with 'he' or 'she' changes to 'eats'.

Now, you will compare 'eat' to its French equivalent. See how the French verb 'manger' changes depending on the subject. Pay close attention to the spelling – what's different?

manger:

je mange

tu manges
il/elle mange
nous mange**ons**
vous mange**z**
ils/elles mangent

Provide your answer...

Discussion

There's more variation in the verb endings in French than in English.

The variation of verb forms is called 'conjugation'. In the activity just now, you saw that verb forms can vary depending on the subject used with the verb. It can also vary depending on the tense used, i.e. whether you are using a verb form to refer to the present (*je mange* = I eat), to the past (*je mangeais* = I used to eat) or to the future (*je mangerai* = I will eat).

Learning verb conjugations can seem quite daunting at first, but when you start learning French, you will study these step by step, so you will have plenty of time to memorise them gradually. Your tutor and/or learning materials will also help you to identify patterns which will make your learning a lot easier. For example, all the verb endings for the subject *tu* always end in -s, and all of those for the subject *vous* end in -z.

Another pattern is that most of the verbs that end with -er (*manger*, *aimer*, *marcher*, etc.) follow exactly the same conjugation forms, so once you have learned those for one -er verb, you can work out how to conjugate almost all of the other -er verbs. Try the next activity to practise this.

Activity 5 -er verb endings

 Allow about 5 minutes

Manger and *marcher* are both regular -er verbs, so their conjugation patterns use the same verb endings. Look at the example below, and then write the appropriate ending to get the correct form for the next three instances of *marcher*, mirroring the pattern of *manger*.

je mange
tu manges
vous mangez
ils mangent

Interactive content is not available in this format.



As you keep learning, you'll become very familiar with these verb forms and find them much easier to recall.

6 Word order in French: adjectives

In the early stages of a beginners' French course, you'll start by learning some words and key phrases for communicating basic information, like your name and where you come from. When you reach the point of forming your own phrases and sentences, you will learn some grammar rules about word order, as this can differ between languages.

In Week 3, you learned some words (adjectives) for colours in French. Look at the two phrases below. What do you notice?

a green tree

un arbre vert

This example illustrates the fact that in English adjectives are always placed before the noun, whereas in French most adjectives (but not all of them!) are placed after the noun. Try applying this knowledge in the next activity.

Activity 6 Place the adjective

 Allow about 5 minutes

Practise using adjectives in French by translating the phrases below. Use the drop down boxes to put the words in the right order.

1. a green tree

Interactive content is not available in this format.



2. a blue bike

Interactive content is not available in this format.



3. a red apple

Interactive content is not available in this format.



4. a yellow sock

Interactive content is not available in this format.



7 Gender and adjectives: introducing agreement

You now know that all nouns in French have a gender, either masculine or feminine, and that they must be used with the appropriate article, *un/le* (or *l'*) or *une/la* (or *l'*).

You also know that most adjectives, including adjectives for colours, are placed after what they describe in French sentences.

There's another important grammar rule you must familiarise yourself with in your studies. Adjectives also have a masculine and a feminine form, and you need to use the appropriate form to match the gender of the noun they're describing. In most cases, the feminine form is formed by adding an -e to the masculine. The grammatical term for this is 'agreement': adjectives need to agree with nouns.

Take a look at the following examples:

un vélo bleu (a blue bike)
une maison bleue (a blue house)
un chien noir (a black dog)
une table noire (a black table)

Now you can have a go at forming nouns and adjectives that agree.

Activity 7 Noun/adjective agreement

Translate the phrases below, using the correct form of the adjective for each noun. Then reveal the discussion to check your answers.

1. a blue sock (a sock = *une chaussette*)

Provide your answer...

2. a blue book (a book = *un livre*)

Provide your answer...

3. a black bike (a bike = *un vélo*)

Provide your answer...

4. a black house (a house = *une maison*)

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The correct answers are:

1. une chaussette bleue
2. un livre bleu
3. un vélo noir
4. une maison noire

Note that when an adjective ends in -e in the masculine form (for example *rouge* and *jaune*) then the feminine form is the same. You do not add another -e. Here's an example:

un vélo rouge

une chaussette rouge

To wrap up your learning this week, see if you can produce your first complete sentence in French in this final activity.

Activity 8 Your first full sentence

 Allow about 5 minutes

Try and produce a translation for the full sentence 'I eat a green apple'.

You will need to:

- use the correct form of the verb *manger*
- use the correct form of the adjective *vert*
- use the noun for apple, *une pomme*
- check the word order.

Take your time, and look back to earlier pages/weeks if you need to review any grammatical rules.

Have a go in the box below, and then reveal the discussion to check your answer.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The correct answer is:

Je mange une pomme verte.

How did you do? Check the following:

- Did you use the correct form of the verb *manger*, i.e. *je mange*?
- Did you use the correct form of the adjective *vert*, i.e. the feminine form *verte*? It needs to agree with the noun *pomme* which is feminine, as indicated by the use of the article *une*.

- Did you check the word order, i.e., place the adjective after the noun it describes?

8 Top tips

This week, Aisha, Helen and Stephen talked about how they remember French spellings and accents, and their top tips for overcoming anxiety about learning grammar. Here's what they said.

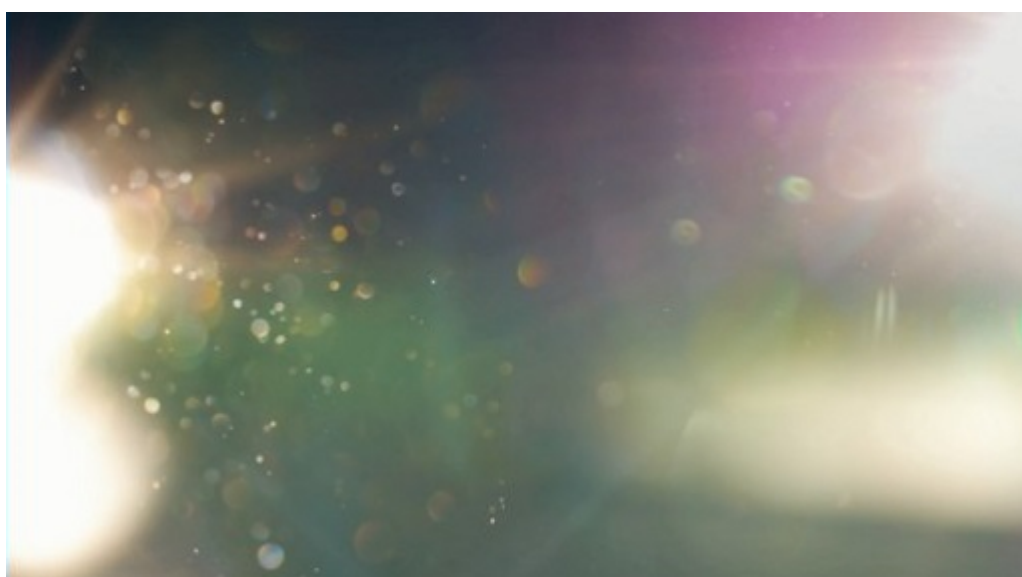
Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 What are your best tips for memorising word spellings, accents, etc.?



Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 What would you say to encourage a new learner who is anxious about learning grammar?



9 This week's quiz

It's time to complete the Week 4 badged quiz. It is similar to the previous quizzes but this time, instead of answering 5 questions, there will be 15, covering Weeks 1 to 4.

Remember that the quiz counts towards your badge. If you're not successful the first time, you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

[Week 4 compulsory badge quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab, then come back here when you've finished.

10 Summary of Week 4

Well done for completing Week 4!

Quite a lot of terminology was used this week; some of it was probably familiar, but maybe not something you've thought about for a while (since your schooldays perhaps). There is no need for your French studies to include an in-depth study of grammar – unless you want to of course. Nor do you need to spend time analysing sentences and looking for verbs and nouns and so on. But as a learner of French, you'll find that you encounter and learn some of these terms in the process.

You should now be able to:

- explain which accents and diacritics are used on some letters in French
- recognise and understand some basic grammatical terms
- identify a few differences between French grammar and the grammar of your own language
- understand what learning French grammar entails.

Hopefully this week's study has piqued your interest, and clarified some terms you might've wondered about. Perhaps grammar is an element you will enjoy tackling?

You've had a preview of what French looks like. Next week, you will start exploring what French sounds like.

You are now halfway through the course. The Open University would really appreciate your feedback and suggestions for future improvement in our optional [end-of-course survey](#), which you will also have an opportunity to complete at the end of Session 8. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

You can now go to [Week 5](#).

Week 5: Introducing pronunciation – what does French sound like?

Introduction



Figure 1 What does French sound like?

Welcome to Week 5! Earlier in this course, you found out about several key dimensions to learning French. While Week 4 focused on understanding written French, this week the spotlight will turn to speech. As a learner of beginners' French, you will come to recognise new sounds, you will practise pronouncing them, and you will develop listening and speaking skills. This week's content and activities aim to give you a taste of what it'll all be like. You will also hear tips from students about developing pronunciation skills, listening strategies and, very importantly, about developing confidence to speak!

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- recall some basic facts about French pronunciation

- complete the kind of listening and pronunciation activities found in a beginners' French course
- appreciate what is involved in developing listening skills
- understand the importance of having the confidence to have a go and speak.

1 The 'music' of French

Would you recognise someone speaking in your own language with a French accent? What are the distinguishing elements that make an accent sound 'French'? Perhaps you have visited a French-speaking country and heard conversations in French. What does that sound like?

Activity 1 The sound of spoken French

 Allow about 5 minutes

Listen to the audio clip below. You will hear snippets of spoken conversation recorded in a bar in France. Listen without trying to understand what the people are saying – as if you're listening to a piece of music. What are your overall impressions? Can you tell immediately that the language spoken is not English, or your own language? How exactly can you tell? What is the 'music' of the language like? You can make some notes below if you'd like, before revealing the discussion.

Audio content is not available in this format.

Audio 1 French bar conversation (note: audio contains overlapping voices and background noise with no main dialogue, so there is no transcript)



Discussion

Your thoughts on these questions will be specific to you, and might also depend on how close your own language is to the French language. People often think that French speakers talk much more quickly than in many other languages. Do you think that's true?

Here are some other questions you might've considered:

- Did you find that people's voices were monotonous or musical?
- Did the pitch of people's voices vary, from high-pitched to low-pitched (think about the difference between soprano and bass singers), or did it sound more constant?
- Did you notice any variation in how loudly people speak?
- Does it sound like people interrupt each other at all?

These are all factors which can vary from one language to the next, but also from one speaker to the next. As a language learner, you will develop an ability to notice how people speak French, and to imitate them.

If you want to hear some more variety, you could try this activity again using different sources. For example, you might listen to one of the national radio channels in France live on the internet for a couple of minutes, and note down your observations. If you are interested, Radio France channels can be found at radiofrance.com (make sure to open the link in a new tab/window so you can easily return here). Look out for links labelled *écouter* (meaning 'listen') to tune in.

In order to understand spoken French (and speak it yourself of course), you'll need to concentrate on the two key aspects of spoken language: pronunciation and intonation. You may recognise someone speaking your language with a 'French accent' because they pronounce words a bit differently to a native speaker. Listening to a conversation between two French people will demonstrate how the intonation works, the way sentences 'rise' and 'fall' and the overall rhythm of the utterances – what's meant by the 'music' of the language.

It is this difference in intonation between French and other languages that often gives the impression that 'French people speak more quickly than we do' when in fact, we just need to train our ears to track the new sounds. When you're more familiar with French, it gets easier to pick out the key information being communicated, because it won't seem like such a 'blur' of sound anymore. When you speak French, incorporating the appropriate pronunciation and intonation will make you easier to understand too.

2 Training your ear



Figure 2 Recognising French

When you start learning French, you will learn how to recognise and produce some unfamiliar sounds. Which sounds these are will depend on the languages you are already familiar with. For example, if your first language is English, you might initially find it tricky to pronounce the French sound /y/ which often corresponds to the letter 'u' in French. Listen to the audio clip below to hear examples:

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 2 The letter 'u'

However, if you speak other languages, you may already be familiar with that sound. In German, for example, the sound /y/ usually matches the letter 'ü', like in the word *Übung*. In any case, you shouldn't worry about which sounds you might find tricky in French: any beginners' French course will contain many activities to help you practise pronunciation. For example, in Week 4 of this course, you found out that some of the diacritics in French, like accents or the cedilla, are used to indicate different pronunciations of the same letters. You will learn how to distinguish and pronounce these. As a taster, the next activity demonstrates the kind of pronunciation activity you will encounter.

Activity 2 The letter 'e'

 Allow about 5 minutes

Used on the letter 'e', the acute (é) and grave (è) accents depict two different sounds in French. This activity will help you to distinguish them.

First, listen to the three sounds spoken out loud in these examples:

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 3 e

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 4 é

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 5 è

Now listen to each of these clips, and see if you can determine which letter is being pronounced.

Audio content is not available in this format.



- ☐ e
- ☐ é
- ☐ è

Audio content is not available in this format.



- ☐ e
- ☐ é
- ☐ è

Audio content is not available in this format.



- ☐ e
- ☐ é
- ☐ è

Audio content is not available in this format.



- ☐ e
- ☐ é
- ☐ è

Audio content is not available in this format.



- ☐ e
- ☐ é
- ☐ è

Now listen to these two clips, and see if you can tell whether each word contains the sound of é or of è.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 6 é or è

- ☐ é
- ☐ è

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 7 é or è

- ☐ é
- ☐ è

Discussion

The first word was *très*, which means 'very'. The second word was *été*, which means 'summer'. It contains the sound of *é* used twice.

3 From letters to sounds

The alphabet used in English and French has 26 letters – but there are more than 26 sounds in the English and in the French languages. This is because, as you saw in the previous activity, diacritics can be used to transcribe different sounds for the same letter (like é and è). Another factor is that letters can be combined to form new sounds. There is, therefore, no direct correspondence between sounds and letters. This is not unique to French, but it does mean that while you study, you will need to ensure that you check how words are pronounced when you learn new vocabulary.

In a beginners' French course, if you have a tutor they will be able to demonstrate pronunciation, but you will also work with audio and perhaps video clips to practise pronunciation. There are many freely available online dictionaries and translation tools which provide audio clips for pronunciation too. Other resources make use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to transcribe sounds. You will come across this when you use a large bilingual dictionary, for example. The IPA is a useful tool for language learners. For example, it distinguishes between the different sounds that the letter 'e' and diacritics can spell: the sounds corresponding to the accented letters 'é' and 'è' are transcribed /e/ and /ɛ/. If you learn a new French word with the letter 's' but are unsure whether it should be pronounced as a soft 's' (as at the start of the word 'sound') or like a 'z' (for example at the end of the plural 'sounds'), then checking the phonetic transcription will help you out. Here are a couple of examples of IPA:

The English word 'sounds' is transcribed /saundz/.

The French word *été* is transcribed /ete/.

The French word *très* is transcribed /tʁɛ/.



Figure 3 IPA in French

The International Phonetic Alphabet is a useful tool, but it is complex – even for seasoned linguists. The good news is that as a beginner, you will absolutely not be expected to memorise it, or even use it at all if you don't want to. But it's useful to know about it, and to

be able to recognise it. Knowing a few of the symbols will provide some handy clues about pronunciation.

Activity 3 Très

 Allow about 5 minutes

Look at the spelling of the French word *très*, and compare it to the IPA transcription, /tʁɛ/. What does this tell you about how the word is pronounced?

très

/tʁɛ/

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Comparing the spelling and the IPA transcription of *très* shows you that the letter 's' is not transcribed phonetically. This means that it is completely silent, and that the word is pronounced as if it was spelt 'trè'.

Listen to the audio clip below to hear this word again, paying attention to the absence of an 's' sound at the end.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 6 (repeated) *très*

4 Sounds and silence

As you've now seen, another characteristic of French language pronunciation is that some letters are silent. An important difference compared to English is that the final letter of words is often (but not always) silent. Have a go at Activity 4 for some more examples.

Activity 4 Silent endings

 Allow about 5 minutes

Listen to the audio clips below and decide whether each final 't' is pronounced or silent.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 8 *et*

- ☐ T is silent
- ☐ T is pronounced

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 9 *lait*

- ☐ T is silent
- ☐ T is pronounced

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 10 *test*

- ☐ T is silent
- ☐ T is pronounced

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 11 *ticket*

- ☐ T is silent

- ☐ T is pronounced

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 12 *petit*

- ☐ T is silent
- ☐ T is pronounced

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 13 *huit*

- ☐ T is silent
- ☐ T is pronounced

Discussion

For information, here is the meaning of each word:

et: and
lait: milk
test: test
ticket: ticket
petit: small
huit: eight

5 Accent, stress and rhythm

If your first language is English, you will be used to emphasising at least one sound in each word (whether or not you do this consciously). Learners of English have to study the stress pattern of each word and commit them to memory. For example, they have to learn that in the word 'English', it is the first sound 'en' which is stressed.

One of the reasons English speakers often exhibit a 'foreign' accent – at least during early French studies – is because they transfer the stress patterns of English words across to similar words in French. The good news here is that word stress is much more regular in French than it is in English. In French, the norm is for the emphasis to be placed at the end of words. There are of course exceptions, and it gets more complex than this, but it's a good rule of thumb to follow when you start learning French.

This means that the rhythm of the French language feels a little more 'monotonous' than the rhythm of English. To demonstrate this, it's useful to compare the pronunciation of cognate words (remember from Week 2 that cognates are words that are identical, or almost identical, in two languages) in English and French.

Play the following audio clips to compare the way the cognates are pronounced in English and French. For the English words, the main word stress is identified in the caption.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 14 television (stress on 'vi')

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 15 *télévision*

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 16 cathedral (stress on 'the')

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 17 *cathédrale*

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 18 intelligence (stress on 'tel')

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 19 *intelligence*

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 20 opera (stress on 'o')

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 21 *opéra*

Activity 5 Practise French pronunciation



Allow about 5 minutes

Now you can have a go at some French pronunciation. Play the model audio for each word below, then record yourself and listen back for comparison. Try them each a few times until the pronunciation feels familiar.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Interactive content is not available in this format.



Interactive content is not available in this format.



Interactive content is not available in this format.



Interactive content is not available in this format.



6 Developing listening skills

As you progress through your learning, you will become more and more familiar with the general sound of the French language, and with some pronunciation rules. This will progressively help you improve your listening skills. As part of a beginners' French course, you will also engage in activities specifically designed to help develop your listening skills.

The key difference between listening and reading is the time you have available to process the material. When you are deciphering a written text you usually have time to re-read it, or go over sections to check that you fully understand. When you listen, however, you are more likely to be in a situation where you need to recognise words and phrases instantly so that you don't miss what is coming next. Consider, too, that the kind of language you listen to will probably be different from the language that you read. For example, in casual conversations people use a different, less formal level of language. They will pause or repeat themselves, you will hear 'filler' sounds (like 'umm' in English or 'euh' in French) or words (such as 'kind of...' and 'like' in English, or *tu sais* and *en fait* in French) and unfinished sentences. These can act to your advantage, as you get a little more time to process what you hear, and if you pick up these French filler words yourself, you can use them to give yourself time to think as well.

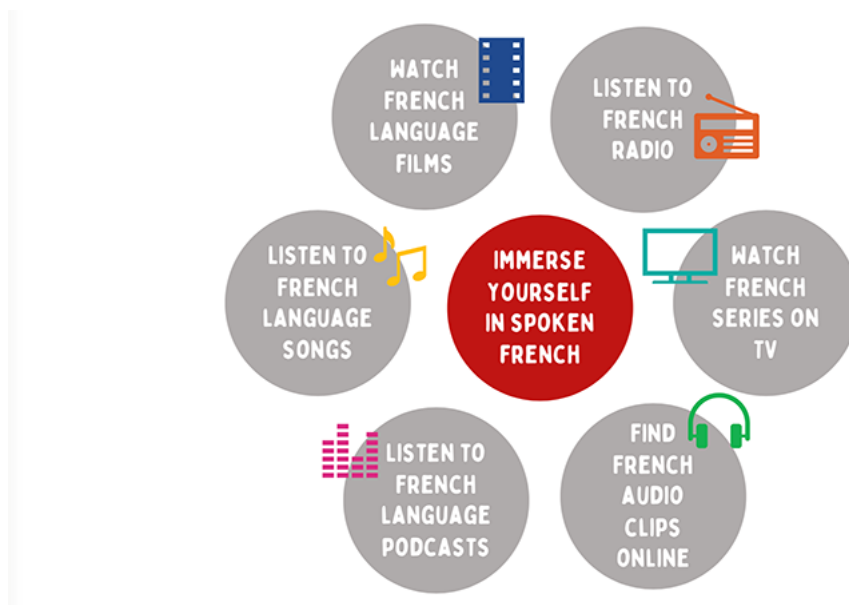


Figure 4 Immerse yourself

It's fundamentally important that you are prepared for how the language will sound when you hear it. You will do this through your studies, but it's a good idea to think about the other opportunities available to immerse yourself in the French language, and to take advantage of them. You could, for example, watch some French-language films with subtitles. While you read the subtitles, listen carefully to the dialogue to develop a 'feel' for how it sounds. You could occasionally listen to French-language radio or watch French-language TV; as a beginner you won't be able to understand the content, but you will get used to the sound and rhythm of the language. Another very enjoyable way of developing your listening skills is through music. Look up some French artists in the genres that you like and start listening to French songs (and maybe learn to sing along with them!). One great advantage of listening to music is that there are often repeated phrases, so you can imitate the sounds and repeat them. All of this will improve your listening skills while having fun.

7 Top tips

This week, Aisha, Helen and Stephen discussed their favourite things about spoken French, the advice they'd give for learning to pronounce new sounds, and tips on developing speaking skills in particular. Here's what they said.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 What is your favourite thing about spoken French?



Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 What are your top tips for remembering new sounds and practising pronunciation?



Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3 What advice would you give a new learner about developing their speaking skills?



8 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 5, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

[Week 5 practice quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab, then come back here when you've finished.

9 Summary of Week 5

Well done for completing Week 5!

Earlier in this course, you found out about the multiple dimensions involved in learning French. This week you've focused specifically on what's involved in understanding spoken French. You've had a taste of French pronunciation, and tried out the types of listening activities that you can expect in a beginners' French course. All of this has hopefully shown how you will attune your ears to the sound and rhythm of the French language as you study.

You should now be able to:

- recall some basic facts about French pronunciation
- complete the kind of listening and pronunciation activities found in a beginners' French course
- appreciate what is involved in developing listening skills
- understand the importance of having the confidence to have a go and speak.

This week you have also been encouraged to find opportunities to experience French-language media and entertainment. This will give you a chance to be immersed not just in the sound of the language, but also in the cultures of the French-speaking world. Week 6 will pick up on this and show how learning about culture is an integral part of learning the language. You will be thinking about where your French can take you, so get ready to travel in Week 6!

You can now go to [Week 6](#).

Week 6: Exploring cultures in the French-speaking world

Introduction



Figure 1 Exploring cultures

Welcome to Week 6! This week you will imagine yourself – as a budding French speaker – trying out your skills in the real world. You'll think about how you might put your growing confidence into action, interacting with people from French-speaking countries and learning about their cultures.

At the start of this course, you considered your personal goals in learning French. Keep those in mind as you now begin a virtual trip around the French-speaking world. Whatever context you might use your French skills in – holidaying in France or another French-speaking country; studying abroad; travelling for business – just imagine how useful speaking and understanding the language will be. Even if it crosses your mind to think 'well, everyone speaks English anyway', remember that you'll make a strong impression if you have some French at your disposal, if just to break the conversational ice. Perhaps you've heard the expression that 'you buy in your own language and sell in the other person's' – speaking to somebody in their language rather than yours can entirely shift the tone of the conversation.

The focus this week will not be on learning words, grammar or sounds, but rather investigating new environments and ways of life, and the history, art, customs or traditions shared among diverse communities. Through this week's activities you will get a flavour of

the richness of the worlds you will delve into as a learner of French. All of this makes the language learning journey so much more exciting.

So, where would you go in the French-speaking world? You have your passport and you want to speak French – it's time to set off. First stop: France!

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- recognise some of the cultural monuments and customs for which France is famous
- identify some overseas French territories
- discuss the French-speaking province of Quebec in Canada
- understand why French is a growing language in Africa
- describe how French is spoken across each continent on the planet.

1 Visit Paris as a tourist

France is a leading tourist destination, welcoming visitors from all over the world. If you live in the United Kingdom, then this is a convenient place to start, with a short trip across the Channel. You can get there by train, via the environmentally friendly Eurostar, arriving right in the centre of Paris.

Paris is one of the most-visited cities in Europe (and the world). It is home to the Eiffel Tower – the most-visited tourist site in the country – an iconic structure which seems to represent Paris in its own right.

If you like to spend your holidays sightseeing in cities, there's much to see and do in Paris. You can stroll up and down the Seine, and browse the *bouquinistes* stalls selling antiquarian books and artwork along the banks; you might stop at the Notre Dame cathedral and marvel at the architecture; or visit world-class museums such as the Louvre or the Musée d'Orsay. Take your companions to the Centre Pompidou or walk up the Champs Élysées to the Arc de Triomphe. Look in at the luxury shops along the way (good for some window shopping!). When you reach the Arc, take a moment to pause at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, before climbing the monument for an unforgettable view of the city.

Activity 1 French monuments

 Allow about 5 minutes

How many Parisian monuments and attractions do you recognise? Match the names to the correct photos. Don't worry if you're not familiar with all of them. You can make guesses, or click to reveal the answers.

The Eiffel tower / *la tour Eiffel*

Book and art stalls along the Seine / *les bouquinistes*

The Notre Dame cathedral / *la cathédrale Notre Dame*

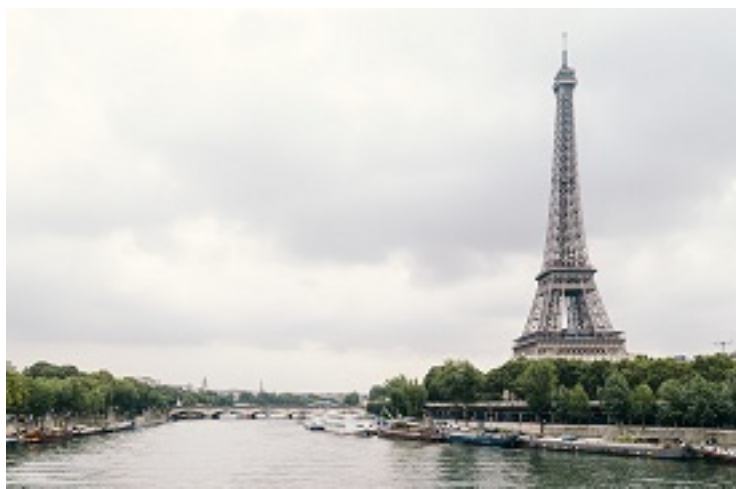
The Louvre museum / *le musée du Louvre*

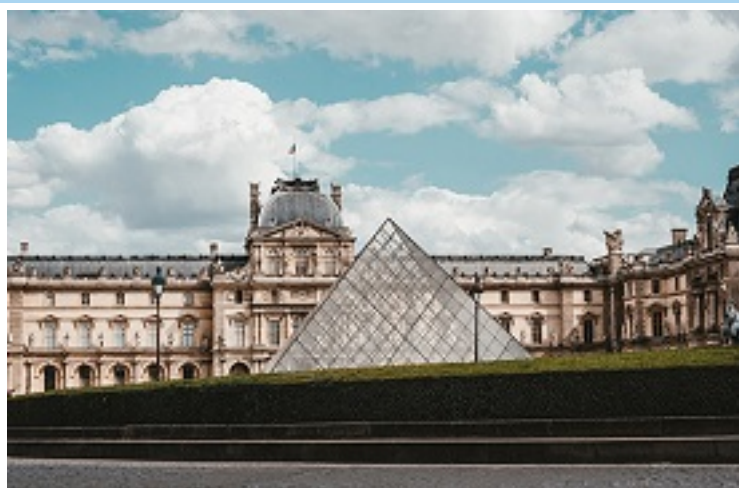
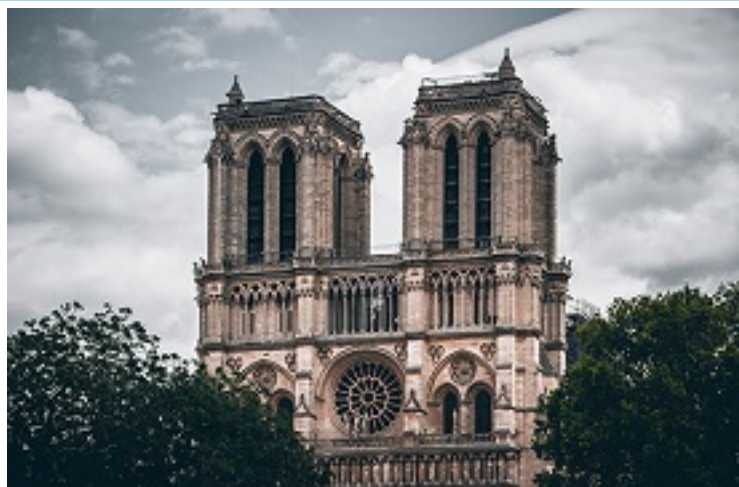
The Pompidou museum / *le centre Pompidou*

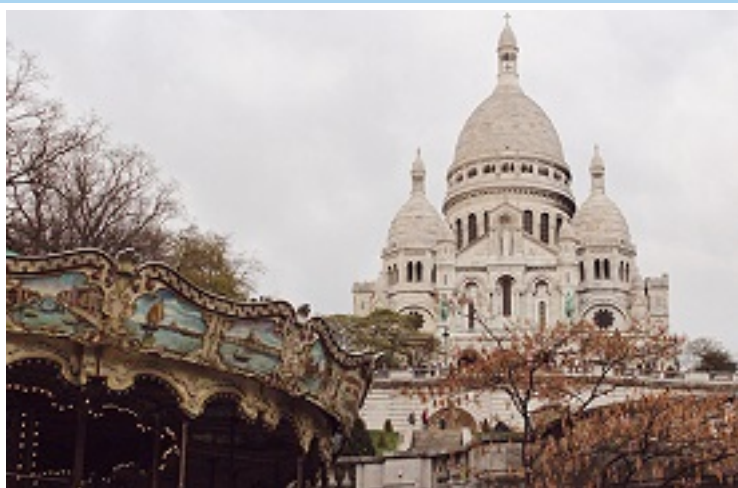
The Arc de Triomphe and the Champs-Élysées / *l'Arc de Triomphe et les Champs Élysées*

The Sacré Cœur / *le Sacré Cœur*

Match each of the items above to an item below.







2 Observe the local way of life

So you're getting together your checklist of sights to see. You just need to figure out how to fit everything in during your stay! If you have the language skills to buy tickets and traverse the Métro (the underground train system in Paris), you can get from one monument to the next in no time.



Figure 2 Métro

But if you want to get an insight into the authentic life of Paris residents, rather than just the tourist hotspots, you need to visit the places they go. This is where having some cultural knowledge will help you make the most of your stay.

Despite the growth in supermarkets, most French people still buy their bread from the neighbourhood bakery, and will often visit the local open air market to stock up on fresh, locally produced fruit and vegetables, and meat. Spending an hour or two at a *marché*, observing people and noticing what the stalls sell, will tell you a lot about the importance of food in French culture.



Figure 3 A market in Paris

If you take a stroll through any neighbourhood in Paris, you will soon notice how many cafés there are. When you want to take a break, or have a bite for lunch, do visit them. Immerse yourself in the sound of chatting customers, and gauge how important these places are for people to socialise with their colleagues and friends. If you are on a budget, you only need to order a coffee and you can take your time absorbing your surroundings – as long as the café is not in a highly touristy area, where the ‘rules’ will differ. Be aware of cultural differences in coffee too: if you order *un café*, you’ll be served a single espresso, the locals’ drink of choice. If you prefer a larger, weaker coffee, ask for *un grand café* or *un café allongé*. For a white coffee, order *un café au lait*.



Figure 4 A French café

You will learn about other cultural differences during your studies and travel experiences. For example, you will find out that the typical time for dinner in France is around 8 p.m.. If you come from the UK, you might find that very late. If you are Spanish, however, you will be used to dining much later. Your own cultural reference points will inevitably influence your experiences in French culture.

This section has hopefully demonstrated to you that food and meals are important cultural touchstones in Paris, central to the way people socialise. Of course, this isn't exclusive to Paris – as you will now find out.

3 French regional food cultures

Beyond Paris, many French people place a great deal of importance on food – much like the British often resort to talking about the weather, French people will chat about what they had for dinner the night before, or what they're thinking of cooking that evening. And although the pace of modern life has certainly affected how people eat, preparing food and taking time to enjoy it remains important.

Because the geography of France is so varied – from the coast of Brittany in the West to the mountains of the Vosges, the Jura and the Alps in the East – most regions boast an impressively diverse menu. From bouillabaisse (a fish soup from Provence) to choucroute (a dish of sauerkraut, sausages and pork, popular in Alsace), there are dozens of dishes and drinks to try when visiting a new region. Some regional specialities, such as foie gras or champagne, have become internationally famous.



Figure 5 French foods

Activity 2 French dishes

 Allow about 5 minutes

Many French dishes are popular all over the world. Here are some well-known regional specialities, with only the first word given. See if you can match them up.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Discussion

Have you ever tried any of them? Here's some information on which part of France each dish comes from:

Moules marinières: from the coast of Northern France, near Calais and Dunkerque.

Quiche Lorraine: from the North East, near Metz and Nancy.

Bœuf bourguignon: from the Burgundy region, near Dijon.

Crêpes Suzette: from Brittany, near Brest, Lorient and Rennes.

Ratatouille niçoise: from the South coast, near Nice.

Fondue savoyarde: from the Savoie region in the Alps, near Annecy and Chambéry.

Gratin dauphinois: from the South East, near Grenoble.

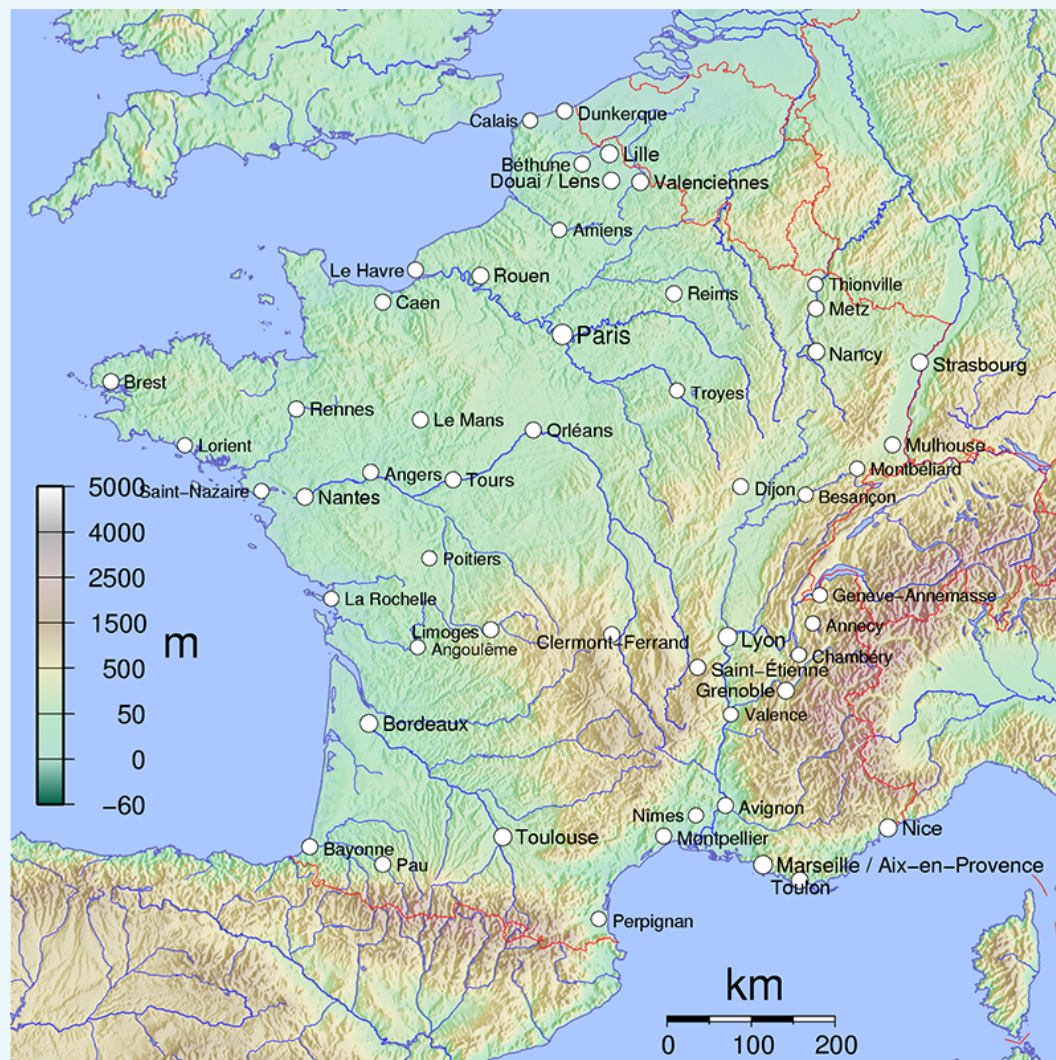


Figure 6 Map of France

How much do you know about the regions and towns of France? When you take a beginners' French course, you will learn more about the geography of the country, and the many vibrant regions and towns it contains. And this extends beyond just France. Look at Figure 8 to see how varied French landscapes can be.



Figure 7 Clockwise from top left: Brittany, the French Alps, fields in Central France, the tropical forest of Martinique

Some of these photos may have surprised you – particularly the French Caribbean island of Martinique. The next activities will show you how far from Europe some French territories are.

4 French overseas territories

The knowledge of geography you'll develop as a learner of French will help you to understand a range of cultural references and idiomatic phrases. One example of this is that mainland France (or *la Métropole*) is often referred to as *l'hexagone* (the hexagon). This is because, as shown in Figure 9, you can roughly draw the six-sided shape over the map of France. *L'hexagone* is a phrase used frequently on French news – and now you'll know why when you hear it!

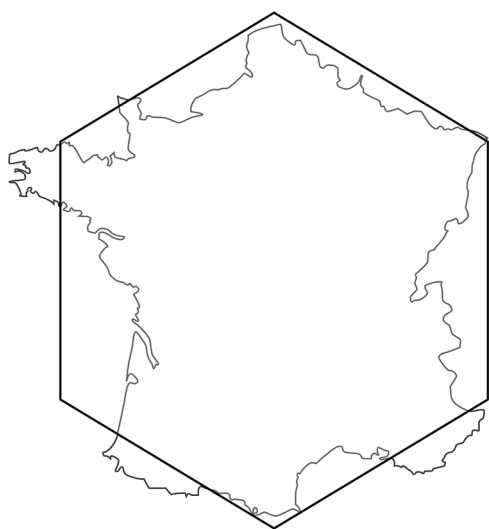


Figure 8 *L'hexagone*

However, it's important to recognise that referring to France as *l'hexagone* leaves out some important parts of the country. The island of Corsica (*la Corse*), situated further south in the Mediterranean sea, is absent from this description of the mainland.



Figure 9 *La Corse*

L'hexagone also excludes overseas territories which are governed, to a greater or lesser extent, by France. The term *l'outre-mer* describes all of the French territories located outside mainland France.

The *départements ou régions d'outre-mer*, or DROM, have the same administrative status as any other *département* or *région* in metropolitan France. At time of writing this course, there are five DROMs: Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Caribbean, French Guiana (*la Guyane française*) in South America, and Mayotte and Réunion in the Indian Ocean. The links between DROMs and mainland France are strong, and the inhabitants of DROMs are represented in the French Parliament in Paris. Guadeloupe, Martinique and Réunion are themselves popular tourist destinations for residents of mainland France.



Figure 10 A beach in Guadeloupe

The other French overseas areas – known as *collectivités d'outre-mer* (COMs) and *territoires d'outre mer* (TOMs) – have more autonomy from metropolitan France, meaning that to varying degrees they're self-governing. In 2022, these territories include: Saint-Pierre et Miquelon in the North Atlantic, Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin in the Caribbean, Nouvelle-Calédonie (New Caledonia) and Wallis-et-Futuna in the southwest Pacific, Polynésie française (French Polynesia) in the Pacific, and *les Terres australes et antarctiques françaises* (French Southern and Antarctic Lands) in the Antarctic. Some COMs enjoy considerable autonomy. New Caledonia, for example, can pass its own laws. The status of some territories as governed by France is disputed in some parts of the overseas territories. New Caledonia, for example, was granted special status in 1998 under the Nouméa Accord. This agreement between the local parties and the French State required a later independence referendum. At the time of writing this course, three have been held (in 2018, 2020 and 2021), with each vote confirming New Caledonia as part of the French Republic. This situation continues to develop – if this interests you, you might want to do some further reading.



Figure 11 French around the globe

5 Quebec

There are many French territories around the world, but the majority of French language speakers actually live in other countries. One of the largest French-speaking communities is located in Quebec.



Figure 12 Montréal (left), Québec city (right)

Le Québec is the largest of Canada's provinces. Its capital is Québec City, but the city with the largest population is Montréal. French is the official language in the province; it's the mother tongue of about 80% of the population, and around 95% of the total population are able to speak it. Overall, there are 8 million speakers of French as a first language across Canada (23% of the population), and a further 6 million (18%) who are French and English bilingual speakers (Government of Canada, 2019).

Quebec was a French colony settled on territory inhabited by native Americans and Inuits. In the 16th century, the French explorer Jacques Cartier encountered what he named *Terre Neuve* (Newfoundland), and then explored and mapped the St. Lawrence river which flows through Quebec. The names 'Canada' and 'Québec' were taken from local words: Iroquois *kanata* and Algonquin *kebec*. In the 18th century, the French and British crowns went to war over borders and territories in Canada, and France ceded Quebec to the British Crown in 1763. Quebec remained French-speaking, but after this direct French influence ceased, the French spoken in Quebec and the variety spoken in France evolved along slightly different paths.

There are only minor grammatical differences between French as spoken in Quebec and France. They share most but not all vocabulary, and pronunciation does occasionally differ. If you have been learning the French spoken in France, you will easily be understood in Quebec. Indeed, you will receive a warm welcome for travelling such a long way to practise the language that they love! But plan your travel carefully, because winters in Canada are long and cold – as a result, the *Québécois* (people of Quebec) really know how to celebrate in the summer with street and outdoor festivals.

The *Québécois* form a large French-speaking community, but you will see in the next section that the largest is found on a different continent.

6 Francophone Africa

The presence of the French language in Africa is a legacy of French colonialism, a painful historical era which was recognised as a crime against humanity by French President Emmanuel Macron in 2017 (France24, 2017). It is therefore not surprising that it's a source of tension, and the French language has been rejected in some parts of Africa where it was previously more commonly spoken. For example, French is spoken but is not an official language in the three North African nations which were once governed by France: Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

As it stands currently, 59% of the people who speak French as their main language on a daily basis around the world are located in Africa (OIF, 2018), and this is increasing due to the high birth rate and population growth in francophone countries in Africa. It has been predicted that 85% of the world's French speakers could be located in Africa, principally in sub-Saharan Africa, by 2050. Most African people speak French alongside another language, e.g. Arabic in North African countries or Wolof in Senegal. And while French is associated with France's colonial impact on the continent, it is nonetheless seen as an important shared language, with the majority of French speakers in Africa wanting their descendants to be French speakers too. If you would like to find out more about French on the African continent, you may wish to do some independent further reading – there's a BBC article from 2019 linked in the References section at the end of this week that can get you started.



Figure 13 A school in Kpevego, Togo

Africa, then, is a continent where the population is truly multilingual, with French being one of the languages shared by speakers with diverse backgrounds and a variety of first or second languages. By becoming a learner of French, you will join their ranks as a budding polyglot and develop a link to countless new cultures.

7 La Francophonie

It's clear by now that French is spoken all over the world, by people with hugely different cultures, and often more than one main language. The term *la francophonie* refers to the areas of the world where French is spoken. Here are some key statistics about the French language's place in the world (auf.org, 2019):

- The French language is the fifth most spoken around the world (after Chinese, English, Spanish and Arabic).
- Around 60% of the people who use French on a daily basis live on the African continent.
- French is an official language in 32 states and governments, and an official language in most international organisations.
- French is the language of education (at school or university) for over 80 million people from 36 countries and territories.
- French is learned as a second language by over 50 million people.
- French is used widely by international media, on French channels like TV5Monde, RFI or France24, but also Euronews, BBC News, the Chinese channel CGTN, and the Russian channel RT.
- French is the fourth most commonly used language on the Internet.

In much the same way that dozens of countries, being former territories of the British Empire, have joined together through the Commonwealth of Nations, an organisation was formed in 1970 to bring together nations who share French as a language. Today this institution is called the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF), commonly referred to as *la Francophonie*. (Note that this official organisation is written with a capital F – it's different to the earlier concept of *la francophonie*, with a small f.)

The OIF brings together 57 French-speaking member countries, in order to share cultures and economic goals. Every four years since 1989, it has organised the Francophone Games, *les Jeux de la Francophonie*. Thousands of athletes from member nations (as well as a few associate member nations and observer nations) travel to participate in various sports – like a French-speaking Olympic games. In addition to the sporting events, this is a celebration of the diversity of the participating nations, and there are competitive cultural events in disciplines such as song, poetry and dance.

There are strong economic links between countries within the OIF, especially in the creative industries, due to the shared French language. These countries export and import cultural products to each other. This includes newspapers and books, films, visual art, video games, music and musical instruments, as well as jewellery, craft and design products.

This week has introduced a plethora of French-speaking communities around the world. Throughout your studies you'll become progressively more acquainted with a diverse range of countries. Courses and study materials often focus on the more local areas: if you're studying in the UK, you will probably learn more about the French-speaking countries in Europe; if you're based in America, you will probably learn more about French-speaking parts of Canada. But in any case, you will see that learning French as a language used within specific cultures, and learning about their way of life, geography or history, will make it a lot more interesting to learn alongside vocabulary and grammar, and will give you greater motivation to keep going!

8 Top tips

This week, Aisha, Helen and Stephen talked about the importance of learning about French-speaking cultures while studying the language, and some of the cultural knowledge that particularly intrigued them. Here's what they said.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 Is it important to learn about the cultures of French-speaking countries alongside the language? Why?



9 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 6, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

[Week 6 practice quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab, then come back here when you've finished.

10 Summary of Week 6

Well done for completing Week 6!

This week you've been discovering how much can be gained from learning French, besides a knowledge of vocabulary and grammar and the development of your language skills. Being able to speak some French will be your passport to enjoying a wealth of new cultural experiences. Even with very limited French, you will be able to greet people, introduce yourself, and simply show your willingness to engage with other people on their own terms, and find out more about their communities and their way of life.

You should now be able to:

- recognise some of the cultural monuments and customs for which France is famous
- identify some overseas French territories
- discuss the French-speaking province of Quebec in Canada
- understand why French is a growing language in Africa
- describe how French is spoken across each continent on the planet.

Next week, you will continue to explore French-speaking cultures, by reflecting on cultural differences and how they influence people's behaviours and expectations. You will learn about 'intercultural communication competence', and how you can develop this as a learner of French.

You can now go to [Week 7](#).

Week 7: Communicating across languages and cultures

Introduction



Figure 1 Communicating across cultures

Welcome to Week 7! So far in this course you have been looking at what learning French involves, including grammar, pronunciation and language skills. In Week 6, you also got a taster of the wealth of cultural knowledge you will acquire as a learner of French. By now you have realised that there is so much more to communicating than just knowing the language.

This week, you will continue reflecting on this, focusing more specifically on the skills that learners of French develop to help them communicate across languages and cultures. You will see that knowing a bit more about the French-speaking country you are visiting, even if you are not fluent in French, can go a very long way to helping you fit in and communicate. You will find out about intercultural communication skills, and about translation skills.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- explain some differences in forms of address between French and your own language
- talk about some 'do's and don'ts' when visiting France
- explain what is meant by intercultural competence
- recognise how translation skills are an important part of learning French
- understand that translation requires intercultural awareness and context sensitivity to convey meaning accurately.

1 Greeting people

In Week 6 you read about the wealth of cultural content that you'll discover as a learner of French, and you came to understand that learning French is about much more than learning language skills. What you will acquire, however, is not just cultural knowledge – it is also about behaviours and attitudes.

When you learn French, you will learn about expected behaviours and common attitudes in some countries where French is spoken. You will become aware of differences in social behaviours, and will thus develop 'intercultural competence'. This means you'll understand the importance of communicating with others in a way that is appropriate, beyond speaking their language.



Figure 2 Social greeting

The way people greet each other is a good example of a behaviour that can be different in different cultures.

Activity 1 Your greeting etiquette

 Allow about 5 minutes

Imagine that you are hosting a guest from a francophone country. It is their first time visiting your country. They would like to find out how they are expected to greet people when they first meet them. What advice will you give them? Make some notes in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

If you are based in the UK, you would probably explain to your guest that the most common greeting upon meeting somebody is a handshake, and that they should introduce themselves using their first name, as greetings tend to be fairly informal. You might add that very close friends might exchange a kiss instead of shaking hands. You could also mention that in more formal settings, they could hear 'How do you do?' (or a similar phrase) as a greeting, and that they should not answer the question but simply also respond 'How do you do?'.

If you come from a different part of the world, the expected behaviour when meeting people for the first time could be very different.

In France, there can be a fairly high degree of formality on display when people greet each other: people shake hands when they greet others, and when they leave them. This social rule is followed by men and women, young and old. This applies to business settings in particular, where you would be expected to shake hands with everybody present upon arriving and leaving.

Among good friends and relatives, instead of shaking hands, people often kiss each other on both cheeks. Two men from the same family will kiss too. Two male friends might shake hands instead. Kissing is not a universal habit in all French-speaking countries, so it's always best to ask for advice. Similarly, French Muslims may not exchange kisses as often as other French people do.

Formality and courtesy will be shown in the way people address each other in France. It is expected that '*Monsieur*' or '*Madame*' will be used. To say 'hello', you would therefore either say '*Bonjour Monsieur*' or '*Bonjour Madame*' unless you were close friends; to say 'thank you', you would use '*Merci Monsieur*' or '*Merci Madame*', etc. If you visit France, you will notice this if you listen to exchanges in public places, like shops. In a work setting, many colleagues will use '*Monsieur*' or '*Madame*' and last names. If you ever interact with business partners or customers in France, it is a good idea to keep your language and greetings formal until you are invited to use first names.

Such degrees of formality and courtesy are reflected in the French language too. There are two different words for 'you' in French, *tu* (which is informal) and *vous* (which is formal). As *vous* is more formal than *tu*, it's used when the speaker wishes to address the listener respectfully; this may be due to differences in age or perceived status, or in more formal situations when meeting someone for the first time. *Tu* is normally used among friends and relatives, and when talking to children. Teenagers and young adults, between themselves, will tend to use the *tu* form from the outset.

In the next sections, you will look more closely at the language used in business settings, and communicating across cultures.

2 Behaviour expectations at work

If you're planning to use your French skills for work, it will be very useful to find out about cultural differences in business settings too. This may not be something that is taught in all beginners' French courses, but if it's relevant to your goals, you should keep an eye out for opportunities to explore this topic further. In this section, you will get a flavour of what attitudes and expected behaviours are like in France. Do keep in mind that things will be different in other French-speaking countries.



Figure 4 Business etiquette

What many international business people notice when working with partners or customers from France, especially if they come from a British or North American background, is the higher degree of formality in relationships at work in France. This is manifested, for example, through more formal dress (like suits and ties being the norm for men). Formality and hierarchy are also marked in several ways linguistically: through the use of formal titles (e.g. *Madame la Directrice*), last names rather than first names (e.g. *Monsieur Beaupin*), and *vous* rather than *tu*. There is often a strong sense of hierarchy, with team leaders or managers being somewhat detached from the team, and decisions being made at the top.

High professionalism and courtesy are expected, and displaying these behaviours will yield trust and respect. Punctuality is valued. Hard work is also expected, but without tipping over into excessive workaholism. Indeed, keeping clear boundaries between the professional and private spheres is considered to be important too. This can be seen in the way conversations are held over meals. Formal business lunches and informal lunches with colleagues are commonplace, and are a way of developing relationships between partners and colleagues. The conversation is likely to keep personal lives well separated from business discussions.

There are also differences in communication styles between people from different cultures. For example, people from France will generally have a much more direct communication style than British people. It is acceptable to state very directly that you disagree with an idea in France (e.g. by stating '*je ne suis pas du tout d'accord*' meaning 'I completely disagree') whereas the norm in Britain is to make very indirect statements to indicate disagreement (with phrases such as 'this is interesting' or 'this could be something to look into', which are often used to express conflicting views). Other different behaviours such as making more direct eye contact, and more physical contact, can also be observed. You may have noticed the latter if you have ever observed the behavioural differences between French and British politicians at international summits.

Activity 2 Your business etiquette

 Allow about 10 minutes

What are the business behaviour expectations in your own culture? How different are they to the expectations in France as described here? You could think about the following aspects:

- degree of formality and courtesy
- sense of hierarchy
- communication style
- attitude to punctuality and time management
- mixing of private and professional spheres.

If you aren't particularly involved in business culture, you can adapt this to your own circumstances, and think about relationships and interactions between people in any formal environment.

Reflect and make some notes in the box.

Provide your answer...

It is worth noting, of course, that many variations will be found from the behaviours and expectations described here. Degrees of formality will change depending on the culture of specific businesses, how close the relationship between colleagues might be, and simply due to personal differences. And some middle ground will be reached between cultures too – French companies that frequently do business internationally tend to adapt their own culture and behaviour to match that of their partners. They will, however, appreciate it if those partners make an effort to understand and adopt French business customs.

3 Intercultural communication skills

This week you've been learning about the effect of cultural differences on attitudes in the workplace. As a learner of French, you will become more attuned to the differences between French-speaking countries and your own culture. But there's a bigger picture here: through your studies, you will also develop a more open attitude to cultural differences in general. Getting used to communicating with people from different cultures – whether or not you speak their language, or have any prior cultural knowledge – is valuable. These particular skills are often referred to as 'intercultural communication competence'.

Intercultural communication skills are useful in any social situation involving people from different cultures, and they're highly valued by employers in all multicultural contexts. Transport or hospitality industries might immediately come to mind, as employees will communicate with tourists from all over the world. But think more broadly and you'll find applications for these skills in many other fields: nurses caring for patients from all over the world; teachers with pupils from a range of backgrounds; charity workers helping out refugees; sales people with international customers; scientists cooperating with researchers around the globe.

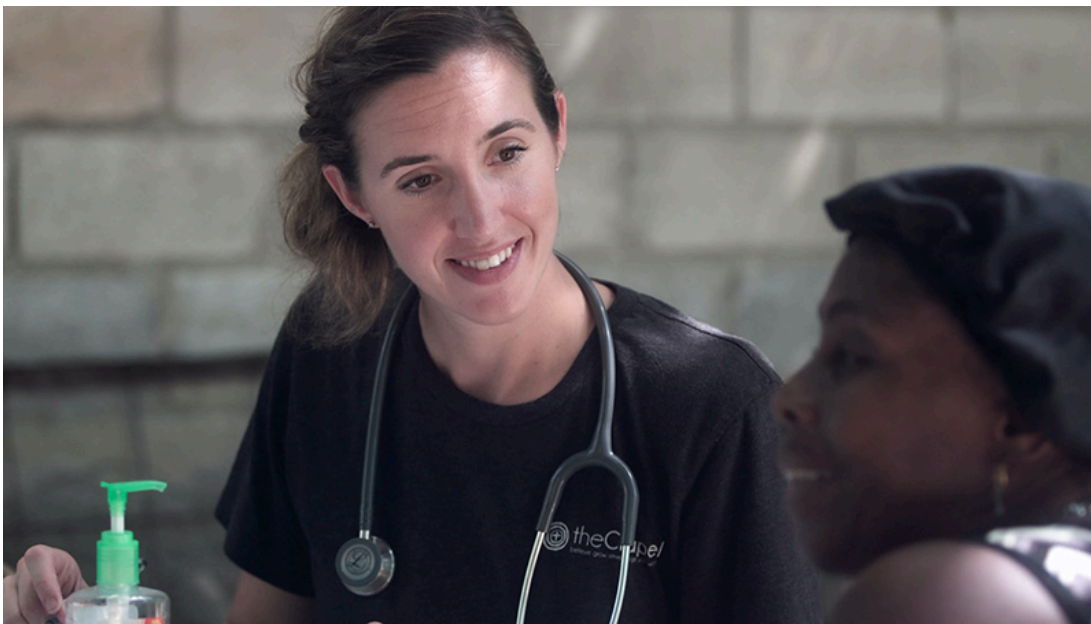


Figure 5 Intercultural communication in medicine

Activity 3 Interaction across cultures

 Allow about 10 minutes

Can you think of situations in your private or professional life in which you interact with people from different cultures? This could be at work, at school or university, while on holiday, volunteering with a charity, or any other context in your own life. Reflect on the potential differences in your cultural backgrounds and behaviour expectations. Do you think increased awareness would impact these interactions at all? Make some notes about your reflections.

Provide your answer...

Developing intercultural communication skills will mean being able to keep an open mind when meeting new people, and not being fazed when they behave differently. You will also be able to pre-empt possible conflicts in communication. For example, if through learning French you have become aware that French people tend to have a more direct communication style, then when you are confronted with a customer who speaks their mind very directly, you will be able to reflect on the situation and understand that no offence was meant by your interlocutors. If you are a nurse, you may encounter patients whose understanding of personal space differs from yours; your intercultural awareness will allow you not to misinterpret this as a breach of respect. If you are a teacher, a new pupil who's recently arrived from a different country may address you less formally than expected; if you have developed intercultural communication competence, you will be more likely to know how to react to the situation.

Language learners mostly acquire intercultural communication skills implicitly, by observing and reflecting on what they learn and getting used to different perspectives and ideas. They cultivate an appreciation of and respect for other cultures, are aware of different communication styles, and develop a natural ability to react to situations involving cultural differences with empathy. They are also able to reflect on their own behaviours and beliefs and to adjust to others', and generally display openness, curiosity and flexibility. This group of skills is a key reason why linguists are regarded as highly employable, even for jobs which do not directly involve using another language.

4 Translation

In this section you'll learn about translating language and translating culture. Knowledge of French-speaking cultures, and reflection on language and culture differences in general, are important when you're translating from one language to another. Indeed, translation skills are another set of skills that you will develop as a learner of French. Of course, it takes years of practice to become a translator, but as a beginner you will nevertheless start developing basic knowledge and skills related to translating. This section will give you a flavour of what that is like.

4.1 Translating language

Translation is both a tool which can aid people learning a new language (by using their first language as a reference point), and a valuable subject-specific skill developed over time.



Figure 4 Translation

An activity earlier in Week 3, involving the French words for colours, introduced translation as a language-learning approach for remembering equivalent words in two languages. Remember the recommended strategies for vocabulary flash cards with the English and French on each side. In a beginners' French course, you can expect to complete activities which involve translating short phrases or sentences from and into French, to help you learn and memorise them. Try the activity below for an example, and to recap some earlier learning.

Activity 4 Vocabulary test

 Allow about 5 minutes

Can you remember some of the words you learnt in the first few weeks of this course? Translate the phrases below into English (or into your own language) to check your memory. See what you can recall before revealing the answers.

1. *Le vélo bleu.*
2. *La chaussette noire.*
3. *La maison rouge.*
4. *L'arbre vert.*

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Here are the translations in English:

1. The blue bike.
2. The black sock.
3. The red house.
4. The green tree.

Now, see if you can translate the following into French.

1. The green apple.
2. The yellow table.
3. The black dog.
4. The red book.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Here are the translations in French:

1. *La pomme verte.*
2. *La table jaune.*
3. *Le chien noir.*
4. *Le livre rouge.*

For all phrases, check that you used:

- the correct vocabulary
- the correct article, i.e. *le* for masculine words and *la* for feminine words
- the correct form of the colour adjective.

For example, in translating the first phrase, check that you remembered to use the feminine article *la*, and the feminine form of the adjective *vert*, which is *verte*.

As you progress further in your studies, you will learn more complex structures and engage with more authentic content, and you will soon come to realise that translation is more than a learning tool – it's a sophisticated skill in its own right.

One important aspect of translation is that languages do not match up perfectly. French can't be translated word-for-word into English, or any other language. The ultimate goal is to translate meaning, not just words. There are often contexts where a good translation involves using different words or phrases to produce the equivalent meaning in the target language. Try the next activity to explore this idea.

Activity 5 Retaining meaning in translation (1)

 Allow about 5 minutes

Have a look at the following sentences. What do you notice about the differences between the word-for-word English translations, and those which more accurately convey the meaning? Make some notes about your observations, then read the discussion.

French sentence: *J'ai 40 ans*

Word-for-word English translation: 'I have 40 years'

Accurate English translation: 'I am 40'

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The word-for-word translation shows you that in French, the verb equivalent 'to have' is used to give one's age, whereas in English the verb 'to be' is used (with forms like: I am, you are, she is, and so on). A second difference is that the number is followed by the word for 'years' (*ans*) in French, whereas in English you don't need to use it. If you did choose to use it in English, you would need to add 'old', as in 'I am 40 years old'.

So, as you can see, different languages use different structures to express the same meaning, and translation can be very useful in highlighting these variations between languages. Here is another typical example, but this time it's an idiom – a culturally-specific phrase where the meaning is not literal but relies on the use of imagery.

French sentence: *Il pleut des cordes*

Word-for-word English translation: 'It rains (some) ropes'

Accurate English translation: 'It's raining cats and dogs'

The nouns here – the French *cordes* and the English cats and dogs – do not refer to actual ropes or animals, of course. This example shows you that idioms are language-

specific, and need to be translated by equivalent idioms. A word-for-word translation would be completely meaningless.

Another good example of this is how French and English refer to something being very unlikely. In English, people will talk about 'when pigs fly', while in France, people will say *quand les poules auront des dents*. Translated literally, this refers to 'when hens have teeth'.

Idioms can be great fun to learn. If you're interested, you could look up more French ones: try finding the meaning of *être dans la lune*, or *avoir du bol*.

Idioms are a good insight into how culture is intricately linked to language. As a result, while translation skills will certainly involve a strong structural understanding of the language, good cultural knowledge is required too. As a learner of French, you will become more and more adept at recognising cultural references and converting the underlying meaning. You will reflect on this further in the next section.

4.2 Translating culture

The previous section showed how languages cannot be translated word-for-word, and that cultural knowledge is integral to a meaningful translation. This section's activities will explore this further.

Activity 6 Retaining meaning in translation (2)

 Allow about 5 minutes

As you did in Activity 5, read each sentence below: the French sentence, the word-for-word translation into English, and the more meaningful translation. Make some notes about your observations below, then reveal the discussion.

French sentence: *Ma fille a 11 ans. Elle est en 6ème.*

Word-for-word English translation: 'My daughter is 11. She is in 6th.'

Accurate English sentence: 'My daughter is 11. She is in Year 7.'

Provide your answer...

Discussion

This example shows the differences in how classes, forms or year groups are defined between cultures. In the French secondary school system, years are counted backwards, from *classe de 6ème* for 11-year-olds, *5ème* for 12-year-olds, and so on, until *1ère* for the penultimate year of secondary school for 16 year-olds, and *terminale* for the final year.

By contrast, in England the counting starts in primary school, with Year 1 being for 5-year-olds, counting up to Year 13 for the final year. A Year 7 student in England will start the school year aged 11. Note that the terminology varies between different Nations within the UK, which shows how culturally specific some translations need to be. In Scotland, for example, the equivalent would be P7 (this illuminates further

cultural differences, as pupils in Scotland leave primary school a year later than their English counterparts).

If you are not British, how would you need to translate this example to produce a meaningful equivalent to *classe de 6ème* in your culture?

Now, it's time to have a go at producing a short translation. In the next activity, you will be given a sentence in French, and a word-for-word translation. Think about how you would translate it into English (or into your own language), thinking carefully about any underlying cultural references that might be relevant to the translation.

Activity 7 Retaining meaning in translation (3)

 Allow about 5 minutes

Look at this French sentence and its word-for-word translation, then try and produce your own culturally informed translation into English (or your own language). Are there multiple options? If so, briefly explain them.

French sentence: *J'ai mis l'enveloppe dans la boîte aux lettres jaune.*

Word-for-word translation: 'I have put the envelope in the letterbox yellow.'



Figure 6 A postbox in France (left), A postbox in Great Britain (right)

Provide your answer...

.....
Discussion

There are several aspects you might have considered here.

You may have noted the need for language/grammar amends in the word-for-word translation. For example, the placement of the adjective 'yellow' (it should be used before the noun 'letterbox'), or use of the preposition 'into' rather than 'in'.

Looking at Figure 5, you might've noted a cultural consideration: the sentence mentions a yellow letterbox because that is the main colour of the post office brand in France, and hence the colour of postboxes in France. The second photo shows you that postboxes in Great Britain are red. There are contexts where it would therefore be appropriate to change the translation and to use the colour 'red' instead of 'yellow'. This would depend on whether you were aiming to make the translation culturally relevant to the source language and culture (French and France) or to the target language and culture (e.g. English and Great Britain).

As a learner of beginners' French, you will not be far along the track to becoming a highly skilled translator – not yet, anyway! But you will gradually become more attuned to differences in language structures and cultural references, and better equipped to reflect on those differences. This aptitude for openness and reflection is common among language learners.

5 Top tips

This week, Aisha, Helen and Stephen spoke about intercultural communication skills, and whether they've made use of the skills developed through their studies (aside from actually speaking French). Here's what they said.

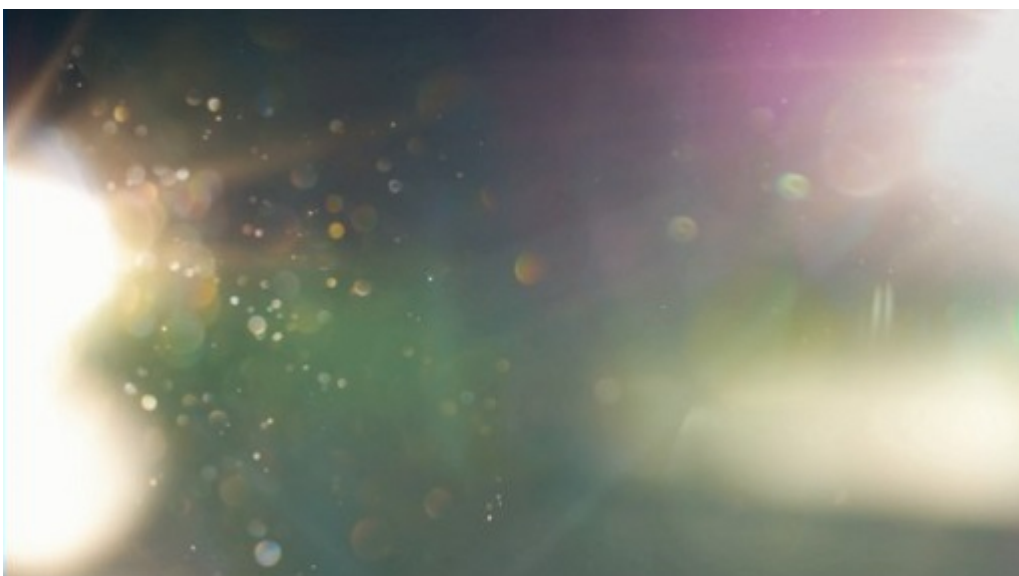
Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 What are your top tips for developing intercultural communication skills?



Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 Besides actually speaking French, have you been able to make use of any other skills developed through your studies?



6 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 7, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

[Week 7 practice quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab, then come back here when you've finished.

7 Summary of Week 7

Well done for completing Week 7!

This week, you have been looking at aspects of learning French that go beyond the study of words, grammar and pronunciation.

You have learned about the potential differences in etiquette you may experience: the gestures, attitudes and behaviours seen in everyday life and business settings. You have seen that when you learn French, you develop intercultural competence – increasing your sensitivity to the subtleties of acceptable behaviour/language, and recognition of cultural differences. You've also reflected on how this knowledge is used to develop competent translation skills.

You should now be able to:

- explain some differences in forms of address between French and your own language
- talk about some 'do's and don'ts' when visiting France
- explain what is meant by intercultural competence
- recognise how translation skills are an important part of learning French
- understand that translation requires intercultural awareness and context sensitivity to convey meaning accurately.

You are nearly at the end of this eight-week course! Is there anything you want to look back at before you move on? In the final week, you will be pulling everything together and looking ahead. You will consider where learning French may lead you in the future, and what your next steps should be.

You can now go to [Week 8](#).

Week 8: Get ready!

Introduction



Figure 1 Get ready

Welcome to Week 8 – the final week of this course! By now, you should have a much clearer idea of what learning French involves, and the challenges and rewards that your studies will present.

This week, you are going to start getting your plans into firmer shape. You will do this by reflecting on the work you have been doing over the last seven weeks and considering your next steps. Thinking about the aspects of language learning that you will enjoy the most, as well as what you might find challenging, will be good preparation for moving ahead. You will also receive some helpful tips for effective study habits, like making time for your learning, developing confidence and creating opportunities for practice.

At the end of this week, you will take the final quiz required for you to gain the course badge. The quiz covers Weeks 5 to 8, so if there's anything you'd like to revise, do feel free to go back over any of the previous weeks at any point.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- understand some of the challenges commonly faced by learners of French
- determine some strategies for finding the time and space to learn French
- understand what constitutes successful communication

- plan the next steps of your French language learning journey.

1 Why do I want to learn French?

In Week 1, a number of reasons for choosing to learn French were discussed. Figure 2 shows the broader categories for these reasons again.

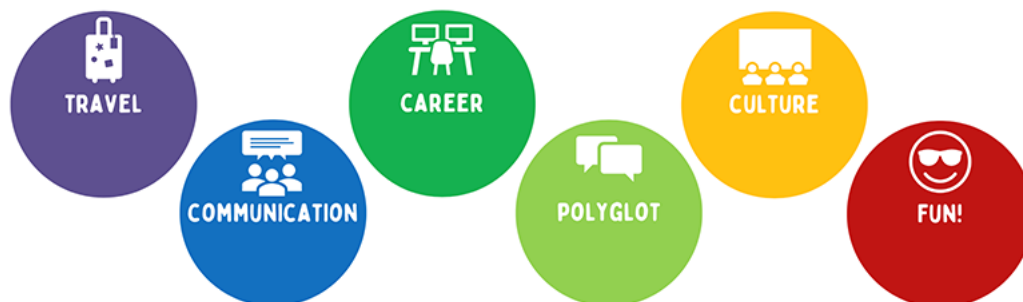


Figure 2 Reasons for study

Since then, you have found out a lot more about what learning French is like, and about the type of things you will learn in a beginners' French course. Has that changed your view about the French language and about why you might want to learn French? Reflect on this in the next activity.

Activity 1 Your views on study

 Allow about 5 minutes

Take a few minutes to review the reasons above (in Figure 2), and rank them in order of importance for you personally. You can note your feelings in the box below. At the beginning of this course, did your reasons for wanting to learn French differ to these categories? Has this course influenced your reasons, or your thoughts on learning French generally? Note down anything relevant.

Provide your answer...

2 What will I enjoy the most?

Throughout this course, you've considered various aspects involved in learning beginners' French. The precise content you study will vary by the course you take, but you will certainly learn the basic French vocabulary and grammar necessary for communication in a range of everyday situations. For example, you'll most likely learn how to:

- introduce yourself, greet other people, and talk about yourself and your family
- express which foods you like and dislike, and order and pay for food and drink
- ask for directions and describe places, and make travel arrangements
- describe daily routines, work and studies
- discuss hobbies and holidays, and organise holiday accommodation in French
- interact in common locations like shops, or at the doctor's
- talk about events in the present and the past.

You will practise recognising and producing new sounds, which will help to develop your listening and speaking skills – handy in situations like the above. You will learn more about French-speaking cultures, developing your intercultural communication skills, as well other interpersonal skills that are highly valuable for life and work. You will also do some translation along the way. As you progress in your learning (to courses beyond beginners' level, and/or real-life use of your French) and consolidate your skills, your increasing vocabulary and knowledge of grammar and structure will enable you to communicate in a wider range of situations.

Regardless of subject or study level, there will always be aspects that are more relevant to your personal goals, and parts that you will enjoy more than others. Reflect on what you'll enjoy about studying beginners' French in this next activity.

Activity 2 What will you enjoy?



Allow about 10 minutes

Take a few minutes to think about which aspects of a beginners' French course you are likely to enjoy the most, and which ones will be more relevant to your personal goals. Make some notes in the box.

Provide your answer...

3 What challenges will I face?

This course has put a lot of emphasis on the benefits of studying French, and you've just thought about what you expect to enjoy most. Keeping these positive elements in mind will help you stay focused on the big picture as your French improves day by day. It's very important though, that you also consider the challenges you may encounter from time to time. If you do some forward planning before embarking on your learning journey, you'll be well prepared to overcome any possible obstacles.

So, what will be the main challenges as you start to learn French? These will often be quite specific to your particular circumstances – perhaps a few things come to mind immediately. Consider them further in the the next activity.

Activity 3 Your challenges

 Allow about 10 minutes

Take a few minutes to think about the personal challenges you might encounter in learning French. These may be things that crop up beforehand, like the task of finding the right course for you. Perhaps your family circumstances, or work, or other obligations will present challenges. Or this could relate to aspects of the study itself, and your own specific concerns about learning and practising a new language.

Make some notes about these challenges in the box below.

Provide your answer...

The next few sections will discuss three significant challenges encountered by practically everyone learning a language. They are:

- difficulty in finding time to study
- insecurity with getting things wrong
- not having the opportunity to practise what you learn.

You will now consider these challenges in more detail, and receive some practical tips for tackling and overcoming them.

4 Finding time to learn French

‘How will I find the time?’ is a question that prospective students will usually ask themselves at some point. This section will help you think about the best ways to make time for you.

Was ‘becoming fluent’ one of your motivations for learning French? Or maybe obtaining a degree in the language? These are really great ambitions, but it’s important to realise as a beginner that becoming fluent in any language does not happen overnight. This level of success comes with commitment over a number of years. Of course, your ambition might be gaining conversational French skills rather than obtaining qualifications – this is a fantastic goal that will nevertheless require time and effort. The good news is that whatever your goal may be, you’ll develop the competency to ‘get by’ in French relatively quickly. What’s more, you will notice your clear progress developing over time. Of course, if you aren’t aiming to become a perfectly fluent speaker, you will learn enough French to meet your goals in a shorter period of time. What you need to do is consider the likely timeframes for meeting your goals, and plan accordingly.

The most important thing to remember is that language learning is a marathon, not a sprint. You will build your skills piece by piece, over the long term, through much practice and repetition. Did you ever ‘cram’ just before an exam when you were at school? Perhaps you had a list of historical dates, or set of mathematical formulas, and you went over them again and again, in the hope they’d be fresh in your mind for a while. Unfortunately, that will not work with French! (It may not have worked with the subject you were studying either!)



Figure 3 A marathon, not a sprint

Here’s another way of thinking about this learning journey. Imagine a young relative is desperate to learn to drive, because she wants to visit friends in a far away town. She has her provisional licence. Would you accompany her on the motorway for a practice journey? Apart from this being illegal, what other reasons would you give for saying ‘no’? She needs to realise that driving skills are accomplished with time, understanding and practice. Likewise, you wouldn’t take a novice skier straight to the top of a black run, or

take somebody who can't swim into the deep end of the pool. Learning a language is similar.

Perhaps you've had some similar learning experiences before. Use the activity below to explore this.

Activity 4 Strategies for success

 Allow about 10 minutes

Think back to something you've achieved which required time and effort (e.g. passing your driving test, gaining qualifications, learning an instrument, joining a sports team, starting yoga classes). What was this experience like? Consider these questions.

- What difficulties did you face?
- How did you control your environment to help you successfully complete the task?
- What strategies did you develop to be successful?

Provide your answer...

So, given that you'll need to dedicate time to your learning, what will be the best method of study for you? There are various options available: an evening class; a distance learning course (like those offered by The Open University); French language books, mobile applications and online resources. Or a combination of all of these! They each have potential advantages and disadvantages, so you should consider your preferences.

Focus, discipline and motivation will be important tools in commencing your studies and staying committed to them, whichever method of study you choose. Keep that original motivation in mind as you decide how you'd like to study.

Finally, share your plans with friends and family. Support and encouragement from those around you goes a long way. Often it's sticking with language learning over a long period of time that is the hardest thing of all. This is not necessarily because you lose interest and want to give up – it's because unexpected things happen in life. You need to factor in other demands that could crop up, in your social life, at work, or other personal commitments. Consider this as you plan your method of study and your allocation of time, and think about the ways you might draw on your support network to help you succeed.

To summarise:

- learning French takes time, but you can learn enough to get by quickly
- learning French is a marathon, not a sprint, and 'little and often' is the best way to learn a language
- choose the method of study that suits you best
- plan your study time to fit your circumstances, and share your aims with your friends and family.

5 Having a go – not aiming for perfection

One of the key goals in learning French is being able to communicate effectively with others (even if your goals do extend much further to developing perfect knowledge of French vocabulary and grammar). While you will need a certain level of grammar and vocabulary knowledge to achieve this, it's useful to remind yourself that ultimately you're aiming to understand others, and to be understood. You may well use the wrong gender or the wrong tense sometimes as you try to get your point across, but that won't matter so long as the other person understood what you meant. Effective communication will be measured by your successful interaction in French, not by how accurate your grammar is. Here's a situation that demonstrates this.

Imagine yourself at a train station in France. You need a train ticket to travel to a nearby town. If you have an exchange in French that ends with you buying the correct ticket, then you were 100% successful in communicating in French. This remains true even if you made some errors as you spoke or failed to understand some of the words used by the ticket clerk.

**GETTING MORE INFORMATION ACROSS
WHILST MAKING SOME ERRORS
IS MORE SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION
THAN CONVEYING VERY LITTLE
INFORMATION IN PERFECT FRENCH**

Figure 4 Successful communication

As a learner, it's crucial to keep in mind that the most important thing is having a go. This matters in your learning journey, because you need to get comfortable with trying your French out from the very start. Down the line, you'll find the best preparation for using your skills in a real situation – for example, in an actual train station in a francophone country – was having practised consistently in a 'safe' situation, i.e. as part of your French course. Whichever method of study you choose – an evening course with a teacher and other students, an online course with virtual tutorials, or independent learning – you will need to practise speaking up and using your French as you learn. You will find ideas and inspiration for doing this in the final sections.

To summarise:

- being understood is more important than producing perfect sentences
- successful communication is about getting things done in French, not about grammar
- always have a go and try using your French.

6 Creating opportunities to practise French

Never forget that learning a language means learning a new way to communicate, so you should seek out as many ways of communicating as possible. If you enrol on a course with a group of other people, see if you can find someone to work with you, a 'study buddy' that you can keep in contact with and meet occasionally for practice.

Think of the different skills you will be developing as you learn French: reading, listening, writing, speaking. Reading and listening can be considered 'passive' skills; you may be able to read a dialogue in French and understand a good deal of it, or get the overall gist when listening to some spoken French. Writing and speaking, on the other hand, draw on 'active' skills; you are producing the words and structures yourself, from memory. When you are speaking, you may be doing so spontaneously or without a script. You can prepare yourself for this challenge by working with another French learner. Each time you learn a new structure or new set of vocabulary, practise it with your study buddy. Keep your own set of written notes too, and keep practising the new structures and vocabulary so they become more and more familiar.

If the study buddy approach doesn't appeal to you right now, don't worry! It's understandable to feel a bit shy – talking in another language can feel awkward. It's still important to work on your active language skills though. If you have a pet, try talking to them instead. Animals are excellent listeners, and they won't criticise you for your accent! And if your home is pet-free, perhaps you have a friendly pot plant or cactus that can step in. The aim here is to produce language out loud, by whatever means you feel comfortable.

Nowadays we have a huge range of technology at our fingertips, which can come in very handy when learning another language. Aside from all the language apps that are available (which may well be worth investigating), it's quite simple to record yourself and play it back on most devices, so make the most of that too. Hearing recordings of ourselves is another thing we often dislike, but it's useful to try and overcome this feeling early on. By doing this, you can start listening critically to what you say and how you say it.

Finally, seize every opportunity to communicate next time you visit a French-speaking country. Keep a positive 'can do' attitude and try out what you know. Don't worry if you don't get everything exactly right. You will feel pride in your progress when you convey what you want to say successfully, and you will go from strength to strength.

To summarise:

- you are learning a communication skill, so communicate whenever you can!
- use technology to aid your learning
- have confidence and try your skills when you visit a French-speaking country.

Activity 5 Address your challenges

 Allow about 10 minutes

Think about how you might put this into practice. You considered the challenges you'll encounter earlier this week – now it's time to think about ways of tackling them. Here are some questions to consider.

- How will you address the challenges that you have identified this week?
- How will you make time to learn French?
- How will you make sure you always have a go?
- How will you create opportunities for practice?

Provide your answer...

7 Where will my French take me?

Becoming proficient in French is a fantastic challenge! It will take you on a fascinating journey as you learn many aspects of the language, and find out a lot more about cultures around the world. You will learn new things about your own language too, and have plenty of opportunities to reflect on your own culture(s) and to make comparisons.

There will be many other personal gains too. In Week 1, speaking a language was described as being like a 'special power', hidden from sight but valuable.



Figure 5 Skills and benefits associated with language learning

Research has shown a huge range of benefits associated with learning French, and languages in general. Activity 6 will examine this a little more.

Activity 6 Where can French take you?

 Allow about 10 minutes

Read a few short quotes from various reports below (you might be interested in investigating them further – links can be found in References), and think about whether anything here links in with your aspirations.

French is one of the three languages the most in demand by UK employers.
(CBI, 2019)

French is one of the world languages that affords its learners one of the highest financial 'language bonuses'.
(*The Economist*, 2014)

[Languages] are important for productivity, trade and business; literacy and skills; community and social cohesion; soft power; culture; diplomacy; defence and national security; public services; health and wellbeing; cognitive capacity; social mobility; and equality of opportunity.
(The British Academy, 2020)

Employers say that they value competence in specific languages, but also the analytical, linguistic, literacy and communication skills acquired through language learning, and the intercultural agility that enables people to work across different cultures and countries.

(The British Academy, 2020)

In many sectors [...] including the tourism and hospitality sector, [...] employees with language skills and/or with a mindset of cultural agility provide a better service; in the creative industries such people are more open, confident, and adventurous in collaborating across cultures on a creative project.

(The British Academy, 2019a)

Being bilingual (or multilingual) is generally agreed to improve an individual's cognitive flexibility, mental switching and ability to multitask.

(The British Academy, 2019b)

There is a strong positive correlation between creative flexibility, fluency, originality and foreign language learning.

(The British Academy, 2019b)

Now look more closely at yourself. Think about these questions and make some notes.

- Where do you see yourself in, say, five years' time, with the ability to speak French?
- Did you relate to any of the quotes you've just read?
- Which of the skills mentioned would you value the most?
- Is there a particular job or activity you would like to use your French language skills for?

Provide your answer...

8 Get ready

You can prepare for learning French in so many fun and creative ways. Make a miniature French-language area at home and fill it with all things francophone. Try a recipe from a French-speaking country at home and invite your friends and relatives. Find some French language music or watch a film in French (in the original version with subtitles if you can), or browse French newspapers and magazines.

Think about the topics that are personally relevant to you – it's a good idea to expand your knowledge independently in these areas. If you're taking up French for professional reasons, you may be more interested in studying the economies of the French-speaking countries you might do business with, or their behaviour expectations in the workplace. If you're a sports fan, you might want to find out more about French-speaking teams in the sport you follow, or learn about other popular sports in French-speaking countries. If you're a musician, you could get acquainted with the French-speaking music scene.

There are plenty of resources you can use to familiarise yourself with just about any aspect of French-speaking culture. As a starting point, you could try some of the following French publications:

lemonde.fr (news)
courrierinternational.com (news)
parismatch.com (news and celebrities)
elle.fr (fashion and entertainment)
lesinrocks.com (rock/pop music and culture)
sciencesetavenir.fr (science)
lequipe.fr (sport)
lire.fr (reading and literature)
avivremagazine.fr (architecture and design)

The following are French radio stations:

franceinter.fr
franceculture.fr
rtl.fr/direct
europe1.fr
rfi.fr

For French TV and radio news, try:

francetvinfo.fr

For music:

francemusique.fr (classical)
nrj.fr (popular music)
mouv.fr (rap and urban music)

These suggestions are limited to French media, but with some quick research you will easily find more from other French-speaking countries.

Browse a few pages or listen for a few minutes. See what you recognise – can you guess the meaning of any news headlines, or interpret the chorus of a song, or just follow a conversation? Surround yourself in the sound of the French language, be curious, and have a go at noticing.

If you are more confident and extroverted, you will probably enjoy 'having a go' and want to practise repeating the sounds, words or phrases you pick up. If you are more quiet and shy, you might find it more enjoyable to read written material and look up the new words. We're all different, and we all bring our own strengths and preferences to the table when we're learning. There is something for everyone to enjoy in learning French.

Now, for the final activity this week, you'll think of a few things you can start doing right now to get you started on your learning.

Activity 7 Start your learning!



Allow about 10 minutes

Think back to all the activities you've been doing over the last eight weeks, and write down three concrete actions you can take to kick off your French learning journey. Perhaps you could seek out and watch a French film each week, or start buying a French newspaper. You could look at your work/life schedule and make some practical decisions about how you'll fit in your French learning. You could look at the courses and resources available and decide which would suit you best. Or – if you're feeling very brave – just book a holiday in Montreal!

Provide your answer...

9 Top tips

This week, Aisha, Helen and Stephen talked about their final study tips, particularly around managing your time, and what they've achieved by studying French. Here's what they said.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 How did you make time for studying French? Do you have any advice for this?



Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 What did you achieve by studying French?



10 This week's quiz

It's now time to complete the Week 8 badged quiz. It is similar to the previous quizzes but this time, instead of answering 5 questions, there will be 15, covering Weeks 5 to 8.

Remember that the quiz counts towards your badge. If you're not successful the first time, you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

[Week 8 compulsory badge quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab, then come back here when you've finished.

11 Summary of Week 8

Congratulations, you've successfully completed this course!

Hopefully you've found the material interesting and inspiring, whatever your initial motivations for studying it. Maybe you were wondering whether French was a language you'd be interested in learning; we hope that by now, the answer is a resounding 'yes!'.

If you'd always wanted to learn French but weren't sure what'd be involved or whether you could manage it; we hope that you've realised that there's something for everybody in learning French, and you can tailor your studies to suit you.

Or if you chose to study this course as preparation for a beginners' French course you've already signed up for; we hope that the content, activities and advice in this free course have helped you to prepare for your studies effectively.

In any case, we wish you every success and enjoyment in your learning journey. Or, to put it in French:

Bonne chance, et bonne continuation!

Next steps?

Where will your journey of discovery take you next? To build on this course's learning, here are some of the resources on offer at the Open University:

- You might like to study the OU's introductory French module: L102 Introduction to French studies (beginning in October 2023).
- If you're interested in some shorter flexible study in French (and/or Chinese, Italian, German, Spanish or Welsh!), check out our short courses in the [Open Centre for Languages and Cultures](#). The beginners' French course on offer is [Beginners French 1: eh oui!](#)
- Ready to take the next step and undertake more formal study? Take a look at the language degrees on offer, including [BA \(Hons\) Language Studies \(Q30\)](#), [BA \(Hons\) Business Management and Languages \(R55\)](#), [BA \(Hons\) Law and Languages \(R56\)](#).
- Study a language alongside other subjects, with our [BA \(Hons\) Open degree \(QD\)](#).
- Study for higher education qualifications like a [certificate](#) or [diploma](#) (such as a [Certificate of Higher Education in Language Studies \(T21\)](#), or [Diploma of Higher Education in Language Studies \(W41\)](#)).
- If you're already registered to study French at the OU: you'll find further information and resources on your subject website, which you can access through your StudentHome page.

Tell us what you think

Now you've come to the end of the course, we would appreciate a few minutes of your time to complete this short [end-of-course survey](#) (you may have already completed this survey at the end of Week 4). We'd like to find out a bit about your experience of studying the course and what you plan to do next. We will use this information to provide better online experiences for all our learners and to share our findings with others. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

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Week 1

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Acknowledgements

This free course was written by Elodie Vialleton, with contributions from Kate Fairbairn.

Week 1

Figure 3: Service d'information du Gouvernement (SIG) gouvernement.fr

Figure 4: Belgium, from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Belgium.svg;
Chad, from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Chad.svg; drawn by SKopp; Luxembourg, from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Luxembourg.svg; drawn by SKopp; Senegal, from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Senegal.svg; Original upload by Nightstallion

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Week 3

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Figure 8: Engin_Akyurt; Pixabay; Open University

Week 5

Images

Figure 2: Valentin B. Kremer / unsplash

Audio

Audio 1: David Greck; LaSontotheque.fr / <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>

Week 6

Images

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Activity 1: Eiffel Tower: John Towner on Unsplash; les bouquinistes: Roman Kraft / unsplash; Notre Dame: Marcel Strauß / unsplash; The Louvre: Julian Hochgesang on Unsplash; The Pompidou: Denys Nevozhai on Unsplash; The Arc de Triomphe: Rodrigo Kughnarski on unsplash; The Sacre-Coeur: Francisca Monteiro on Unsplash

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Figure 3: Didier Provost / unsplash

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Week 7

Images

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