



LISTENING



Possible activities:

- Watch films and write a review or notes (just watching passively won't help your language as much as doing something productive as well). You can search Netflix or Amazon Prime for "French language films" or "French language TV" and you can even rent French films on YouTube.
- Watch French TV online – certain French TV channels stream live online or have an archive of videos from some of their programmes available to watch – try watching the news in French regularly and using the News Grid in this booklet to help you make notes
- Listen to online radio
- Listen to French music – YouTube is a great source of French music and you can normally find a version with subtitles to sing along! (or at least follow the lyrics on screen)
- Try www.lyricstraining.com for a fun way to improve your listening skills with French music

10 hints when listening in a foreign language:

1. Listen to a DVD, audio CD or online streamed video/audio whenever possible.

Although viewing live TV can be fun and helps train your ear, using recorded material presents two major advantages: you have a much greater choice of subject and you can Pause and Replay the material.

2. Think about the subject before you start. Make a list of words and phrases you expect to hear, and tick them off (bingo style) as they come up.

3. Listen actively – always have a pen and paper handy to note interesting vocabulary etc.

4. Take notes in French. When listening to normal speech you do not have time to translate everything. Working only in French will train your brain to think in French.

5. Don't worry if you can't understand everything. Concentrate instead on what you do understand.

6. The first time, listen to the whole item without stopping. This will give you a better understanding of the overall context before concentrating on more precise details.

7. For more detailed work, concentrate on quite short sections, e.g. a single news item.

8. Pause and Replay recordings when these features are available.

9. If a transcript is available, try not to look at it until the end of your listening activity. Use it after listening to find any unknown vocabulary.

10. Enjoy it! Try finding something that you love watching or listening to that you are more motivated to keep coming back to. Having French music or radio on in the background while you're doing something else is a great way to keep up your exposure to the French language.





READING



Possible activities:

- Search the internet for things you are interested in (try www.google.fr for better results)
- Read novels, magazines, newspapers
- Most French newspapers have a free online version as well as a mobile app
- Keep vocabulary lists and look up new words when reading something in French
- If you are researching something for another subject, try using the French Google to search for the topic in French first

10 hints when reading in a foreign language:

Before Reading:

1. Look at the title, introduction and contextual clues such as pictures. What do you think the text is about? Finding a topic you are interested in means you are more likely to persevere with it.
2. Make a list of any relevant vocabulary you can think of.



First Reading:

3. Read the text once without stopping – some of the meaning will become clearer as you read through it.

Second Reading:

4. Underline words and expressions you don't know. Don't look them up immediately.
5. There should be one main idea per paragraph. Summarise each paragraph in one sentence.

Vocabulary:

6. Don't look up every word.
7. First look at the context – do you need to know this word to understand the overall meaning? (*Often a rough idea is enough e.g. a type of tree, a positive or negative emotion etc.*)
8. Try to guess the meaning: is it a noun/adjective/verb? Is it similar to a word in English?
9. Choose a maximum of 10 words or expressions to look up in a good dictionary. Try to select vocabulary with a common theme to help you remember it.
10. Instead of simply writing the meaning of a word in English, try to include new vocabulary in a sentence in French to demonstrate its use in context.

WRITING



Possible activities:

- Translations
- Summarise in your own words a text you have read or a film/news item you have seen
- Writing a letter to a penfriend/magazine editor/employer
- Use new vocabulary in a sentence
- Whatever type of activity you are doing, make vocab notes. Use index cards, keep a vocab book, use Memrise or anything that works for you, but make sure you are learning vocabulary regularly. You should keep a record of vocabulary you have learned – why not use an unused notebook as a Vocabulary Learning Log?

10 hints when writing in a foreign language:



Before starting to write:

1. What is your purpose in writing (*e.g. to inform/to persuade/to request*)?
2. Who is your intended reader? Are you writing a letter to a penfriend or a formal article? Keep an appropriate tone throughout your writing.
3. Who is your intended reader? Will your writing interest them?

While writing:

4. Will you address your reader directly in the second person (*e.g. writing to a penfriend*)? If quoting, will you use reported speech or direct speech?
5. When recounting events, are you going to use the present tense for greater immediacy (*e.g. describing the plot of a film*) or a past tense (*or past tenses*)?
6. Write directly in French without drafting in English first – translating is harder than writing!

Checking your work:

7. Are your ideas well-organised and linked in a logical structure?
8. Are you being repetitive? Is there another way of saying something?
9. Have you written concisely or could you communicate your message effectively using fewer words?
10. Check your verb endings, tenses and forms. Have you been consistent in your use of tenses? Use your grammar notes or workbook to remind yourself of verb endings – you can also use the conjugation tool on WordReference to look up verb tables. Check adjectival agreements, gender, accents, spelling and word order.



SPEAKING



Possible activities:

- Practise speaking with other members of the class over the phone or Face Time.
- When reading, read the text aloud to yourself first, or if you have the transcript to something you are listening to, read along to check your pronunciation.
- Record yourself speaking in French to work on your pronunciation – your teacher can give you feedback on audio recordings as well as written work.
- After watching the news, write and record your own script for the news items you have seen.

Other ways to develop speaking skills:

- Listen actively to authentic speech. Note in particular the little words and expressions that are used to link ideas, start sentences, give opinions, change the subject etc.
- Repeat phrases or whole sentences when listening, attempting to imitate exactly the pronunciation, intonation and speed of the original. Record yourself so you can compare.
- When there is a transcript available, mark where stresses fall, then after listening several times read the whole script aloud, again trying to mimic the original.
- Don't be afraid to talk aloud, either to yourself or as a recording. Let go of your inhibitions.
- Although it is important to work on your pronunciation in order to be understood, never be ashamed of your accent and don't be afraid to make mistakes – most people make mistakes even when talking in their own language.
- Many problems of understanding are actually caused by poor intonation or misplaced stress. When listening and repeating, pay particular attention to the rise and fall of the voice and stressed syllables and words.





GENERAL TIPS



Vocabulary:

- When you come across a new word, try to deduce its meaning from context or from the structure of the word.
- Does the word appear in other sentences which may help you work out the meaning?
- You are more likely to remember something you've worked out for yourself – try to resist rushing straight for the dictionary
- Try a monolingual French dictionary first – can you work out the meaning from its definition in French?
- Keep track of new vocabulary:
 - French/English
 - French/French definition
 - Colour-coding for masculine/feminine or adjectives/verbs
 - New sheet/page for different topics
 - Example sentence using the word/phrase in context
- Learn vocabulary regularly:
 - Look, cover, write, check
 - Find/Create a course on Memrise

Dictionaries:

- Familiarise yourself with the abbreviations used (*e.g. adv for adverb, vi for intransitive verb etc.*) and be aware of the function of the word you are looking up
- To ensure you have found the right word, look it up the other way round (French-English, English-French)
- Take note of genders of nouns and types of verbs
- WordReference is an excellent online bilingual dictionary and has a free mobile app

Grammar:

- Familiarise yourself with grammatical terms in French and English. This will help you when learning about a new grammar point or looking up particular types of word in a dictionary.
- There are many websites available with online grammar practice – a quick Google search will provide you with hours of independent study.
- Don't be ashamed of completing 'beginner level' grammar activities – it is always good revision and can help improve your accuracy.

Useful Resources



Watch...

TELEVISION

- If you have Netflix or Amazon Prime, try searching for “French language films” or “French language TV”. Many English language films/programmes also have a French audio or subtitle option
- <http://www.tv5monde.com> Watch this channel to gain access to the latest episodes of all of their TV shows. They also have a French language learning section at <http://apprendre.tv5monde.com> where you can watch clips and answer comprehension questions on what you have seen with accompanying grammar exercises.
- <https://www.tf1.fr/programmes-tv> You need an account to watch videos from this channel but signing up is free and just requires an email address and a French postcode (use 44400 – this is where Mr Farrell used to live!). You can then access a variety of series on their ‘Replay’ section.
- <https://www.6play.fr/> This is another popular French TV channel. This is also available as an app to download (6play). Not all programmes are available outside of France but there is still a good selection of things to watch.
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/tv/> The BBC website has some useful links to French TV programmes online as well as tips for how to get the most out of it.

FILM

- As well as those available with subscriptions like Netflix, there are also a range of French films available to rent, buy or view for free on YouTube, or of course you can order a DVD online. Here are some film suggestions you may like to try:
 - La Haine
 - La Vie en Rose
 - Intouchables – the original version of the recent American re-make: The Upside
 - Amélie
 - Les Choristes
 - Les 400 coups
 - Bienvenue chez les Ch’tis
 - Au Revoir les Enfants

INTERNET

- www.youtube.com Search for videos on topics that interest you and see if you can find any channels to subscribe to. YouTube is also a great research tool and there are lots of informative videos in English on things like French politics, culture or geography.
- <https://www.1jour1actu.com/> This site aims to explain the world to French children, one question at a time. Because it is aimed at children, the videos are short, full of pictures to

help the explanation and relatively accessible – though they do talk quite fast, but you should be able to slow the video down if you need to.

Listen...

RADIO

- Listening to French radio is a great way to expose yourself to more French easily. Have it on in the background while you are doing something else!
 - Radio France (www.radiofrance.fr)
 - Europe 1 (www.europe1.fr)
 - Le mouv (www.mouv.fr) (this is the French equivalent to Kiss FM or Capital)
 - Europe 2 (www.europe2.fr)
- Download an app to stream a whole range of French radio stations. My particular favourite is called “France Radio” which offers hundreds of different stations to choose from. It also has a ‘sleep timer’ so you can play it as you go to bed and it will turn off automatically after a set period of time.

MUSIC

- Look up current French artists in the French music charts and listen to some of their music on YouTube. The suggested videos down the side or underneath are often a good way of discovering new music – and don’t forget to ask others for their recommendations.
- www.lyricstraining.com Use this website to listen to French music while improving your listening skills. Listen to a song with the accompanying YouTube video and fill in the missing words in the lyrics underneath. There are 4 difficulty levels and two settings – multiple choice mode or typing mode.

OTHERS

- Don’t forget that many language learning websites including BBC bitesize have specific listening materials aimed at school-age learners. If you bought a GCSE revision guide this should have links to listening passages. Rather than completing GCSE style comprehension questions, why not use the audio files in a different way – try to transcribe the passage you are listening to in French.
- <https://www.newsinslowfrench.com/> This podcast is also available as an app – just search for ‘News in slow French’. Although you need a subscription to access all material, there is a section for free content which contains a new podcast each week.

Read...

NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

- <http://www.lefigaro.fr/> Like many French newspapers, Le Figaro is available to read online. You don’t have to read the full paper cover to cover, just try to find one article that grabs your attention.

- <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/french/learn-french-news/> This blog post contains a bit more information about 6 of the most popular French newspapers with links to the online versions of each one.
- <http://www.20minutes.fr> This is a more light-hearted newspaper which covers gossip as well as global news stories. There is also a video section <https://www.20minutes.fr/dossier/video>
- www.l-eco.fr This is a news site aimed at young people. There are many different sections including Internet and Mobile Technology, Education, Science and Wildlife, Culture and Sport.
- For the latest gossip and to catch up on the most recent celebrity fashion trends try www.elle.fr

OTHER WAYS TO READ

- Change the language on your phone to French – eventually you will be reading in French without even realising it (and it's a great way to get a head-start on the technology topic)
- Set your default internet search engine to www.google.fr instead of the English version.
- Use a different search engine such as <http://fr.yahoo.com/>. Setting this as your homepage will make you read French every time you log on and it will become an easy part of your daily routine.
- Keep your own vocabulary log. Have an entire exercise book or notebook dedicated to this that you have with you every time you read, watch or listen to something in French.

Surf...

OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES

- <http://zut.languageskills.co.uk/advanced/year12.html> The Language Skills website is free after 4pm and has a great section dedicated to A-level learners with videos, grammar, vocabulary and lots more
- www.memrise.com – invaluable for learning French vocabulary. The site is designed in such a way that if you stick with it and use it regularly, reviewing past vocabulary items as well as learning new vocabulary, it automatically sticks in your long-term memory
- <http://wikipedia.fr/> Use the French version of Wikipedia when researching topics. It makes picking up the vocabulary much easier! Bear in mind though that anybody can edit Wikipedia so don't take everything you read as fact! Still a good starting point though.
- www.wordreference.com A really useful online dictionary. Don't forget to use the conjugate tool for online verb tables too!
- <http://www.gouvernement.fr/> The French government website
- www.twitter.com If you haven't got a Twitter account, I would suggest signing up for one. Start by following Emmanuel Macron (@EmmanuelMacron). Because of the character limit, you never have too much to read!
- <http://french.about.com/> A website in English for all things French – including very clear, concise grammar explanations.