

Fluent in French

The most complete study
guide to learn French



By Talk in French

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INTRODUCTION

You know as well as I do that learning French can be quite difficult. Adding to the degree of difficulty is the fact that, in each direction you look, you are bombarded with a deluge of French learning resources.

What is the best learning method to use?

Which will work best for your motivation type and level of learning?

Where exactly should you begin?

Throughout my years of teaching French, I have heard these dilemmas over and over again from hundreds of French learners. When not done properly, learning a new language can be *pull-your-hair-out* frustrating. When you do not know which way to look, it can be overwhelming at best and miserable at worst.

Even as I say this, you are probably wondering, *Out of the many available resources in the market and all of the different methods claiming to be the best way to learn French, why exactly should I pick this book?*

There are many things I could say about what this study guide is, but let me tell you what it is *not*.

It is NOT your usual run-of-the-mill study guide

I created this book specifically with learners like you in mind. When I first took up teaching French in 2008, I was amazed (and deeply troubled) by the dearth of good quality resources that resonate fully with different kinds of learners. Yes, there are plenty of good books on the subject, of course, but I was looking for something different. Something the average learner could relate to. Something not only beginners can use, but something everyone from different backgrounds and all levels can learn from.

Sounds ambitious? Probably. But if you cannot find the material that you are looking for, the best way to solve the problem is to create the material yourself. That is exactly what I did by coming up with this book.

This is a study guide designed and crafted with the needs of learners in mind, and the result of the years of conversations with French learners like you.

This is NOT a band-aid solution to learning the language

While there are no shortcuts or quick fixes to learning French, this book offers tried-and-tested tips that will help you navigate your way towards your goal. It provides practical advice on habit-creation and how to maintain your motivation, busts long-held myths about learning languages, shares brilliant ideas for improving listening skills and pronunciation, lists tips for

getting the best out of reading in French, and gives clear-cut guidelines for writing in French like an expert. This book is brimming with sure-fire ways to boost your French studies.

Learning French may not be easy, but this book will help you work your way around the pitfalls and difficulties of language-learning until you reach fluency.

This will NOT be a one-shot deal

The study guide is only the beginning – and it is the perfect starting point for you no matter which age bracket you belong to or what your background and level of learning are. When you purchase this book, you also get a special bonus – a step-by-step learning plan catering specifically to your individual learning needs. Think of it as something resembling a healthy meal plan designed for your nutritional requirements. As your go-to guy for learning French, I also have loads of other resources that you can use when you head over to my website, www.talkinfrench.com.

So, what are you waiting for? Let's get started!

Chapter 7 – Study Methods: Write Like An Expert in French

Being able to write in French is a great skill to have. It can be challenging to write because it requires active learning in which you have to generate your own grammatical awareness and be attuned to correct word order and sentence structure. This is a similar issue that makes speaking in a different language quite difficult. Reading and listening, on the other hand, are equally important but use a more passive brain process because the words and sentences are already created for you.

When you write in French, you are drawing upon things you have learned from all of your studies. For instance, when you write, you read over your work, speak it aloud, and listen to how it sounds. These following ideas will help you make the most of your writing skills and continually improve your written French.

The benefits of writing

Although writing may seem difficult and tedious to get right, it is a very important skill to have. Writing is used every day, more often than you may think. Think about how much you write each day in your native language - a daily reminder, an entry into your smartphone calendar, a text message, emails, and so on. These are all relevant examples of how you can use writing while learning French.

These informal ways of writing serve as an ideal alternative to speaking French. For example, if you do not have a conversation partner to practice speaking with in real time, you can send emails or text messages to a French learning partner and receive written feedback. This can often be easier to process and refer back to than oral feedback.

Write to Other People

As with improving your skills for speaking, having a network of native or fluent French speakers or other people learning French in your contacts is an invaluable learning tool. There are many ways you can connect with people and share written communication with them. Some ways include:

- If you meet French speakers or learners during your travels, exchange email details and write to each other in French.
- Check out websites such as iTalki or mylanguageexchange.com to connect with an online community of French learners and speakers.
- Have a look at forums you are interested in and write in French about topics you enjoy.
- Read blogs in French, leave comments, and ask someone to correct your French. You will be surprised how many people will be open to correcting you. Be sure to choose a popular article or a website with an active community.

Write to Yourself

Getting into the habit of writing in French on a daily basis will produce positive results in your French skills and help writing become a natural activity, rather than something you have to think strenuously about. A writing habit can be created by writing little things in French each day. It does not necessarily have to be full sentences -- just a few French words. This way, you are still familiarizing yourself with French vocabulary and committing the process of writing in French to your muscle memory.

Keep a journal

If you have a small notebook handy, each day write a few things that you did. It is best to write the date, day of the week, and month as a means to practice basic vocabulary. A journal does not have to be in-depth. Just write three bullet points about things you did during the day. Even keep a line free to write two or three emotions you felt through the day, again to practice basic vocabulary. Also, you can record details like how the weather was or what your favourite food was that day, and other small details about the day.

Write yourself daily reminders

If you are a person who needs a little help remembering what you need to do throughout your day, why not remind yourself in French and practice your writing and reading comprehension skills at the same time? Sticky notes are excellent for hand writing reminders. Smartphones are also fantastic. On most smartphones or tablets, you can add the French language to your keypad. When you open up your reminders or notes, change the language to French and type out your to-do list this way.

Change your calendar to French

Similar to giving yourself daily reminders, get in the habit of writing on your calendar, paper, or on the smartphone, in French. You can also do the same for a weekly schedule. Having these small things that you glance at regularly in French will help your brain switch languages and process things in French.

Write your shopping list in French

When you are getting ready for a big grocery shopping trip, write everything you need out in French. When you are just beginning with French, it might be best to write a bilingual shopping list so that you do not end up buying the wrong items at the store. As you progress and have a shopping list in just French, you will be training your brain to think in French and automatically translate when you are buying the items. Being able to look at a word in English and French and simultaneously understand both languages is an excellent skill to have.

Read, Then Write

When you read something in French, you are paying attention to the word order, use of verbs or adjectives around a subject or object, different tenses, and expression and syntax. All of these things help to make a better writer, as well.

When you read something you really connect with and enjoy in French, try writing it as well. It is best to copy out writing using the old-fashioned pen and paper method, rather than typing it on a computer. This is because writing turns into muscle memory and you invariably pay more attention to the letter formation, use of accents and contractions, as well as the composition of the sentence.

When you copy something, you also fill your mind with ideas to use in your future writings. For example, if there is a line from a song you find really catchy, you can paraphrase this and reuse it one day in an essay topic or letter when writing French.

Copying out writing is a good idea also because it involves reading or listening to something first. If you have come across something during your reading and listening activities that caught your attention, keep them handy to copy out. Some ideas might include:

- Song lyrics you really like
- Passage from a book you enjoyed reading
- Inspirational and motivational quotes
- A recipe you want to try
- Information about a topic you like, such as sports or animals

Write, Then Speak

Speaking is a really important part of the proofreading process. When you re-read your writing, you are checking for grammar mistakes and spelling typos. But when you do this through speaking, you are also attuning your ears to the flow of the writing and how it sounds verbally.

When you are reading over your writing, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are the sentences too long? Should a comma be used, or a full stop to create two sentences?
- Have I used liaisons where they need to be?
- Have I missed any contractions?
- Do all the genders match? Remember to listen for feminine word endings when they need to be used.
- Do the ideas in my text flow together?
- Is the word order with nouns, verbs, and adjectives correct?

Learn 'Real' French Writing

As opposed to highly structured and formal writing in French, 'real' French writing deals with conversational and colloquial expressions that would be used in writing emails to friends or family. This is similar to speaking conversationally using authentic French phrases, rather than formal expressions from a textbook.

Idioms

These are small sayings that are used in everyday speech. Idioms provide some humour and light-hearted relief in writing. The tricky thing with idioms is that they do not translate directly into English, which is something important to keep in mind. Here are some examples of just how indirectly French idioms translate into English.

French idiom	English meaning	Direct English translation
Faire la tête	To sulk	<i>To do the head</i>
Être sans voix	To be speechless	<i>To be without a voice</i>
Manger sur le pouce	To grab a bite to eat	<i>To eat on the thumb</i>
Être soupe au lait	To be quick-tempered	<i>To be a milky soup</i>
Ne rien faire de ses dix doigts	To be lazy	<i>To do nothing with one's ten fingers</i>
Faire l'andouille	To do something ridiculous	<i>To make the sausage</i>
Chercher la petite bête	To look for something to complain about	<i>To look for the little beast</i>

Abbreviations

Just like English, the French language has abbreviations and ways to shorten words. These can be confusing to a non-native speaker, but learning a few can help make your writing flow better and sound less formal. These are also good to keep in mind for reading, in case you stumble across some letters that you are not sure the meaning of. Some examples of these, with English equivalents, include:

French abbreviation	Full French expression	English meaning
c-à-d	C'est-à-dire	That is, I mean
CB	Carte-bleu, carte bancaire	Debit card, bank card
Cie	Compagnie	Co. (company)
CP	Cours préparatoire	First grade (primary school)
DAB	Distributeur automatique de billets	ATM cash dispenser
É-U	États-Unis	United States of America
H	Heure	Hour – telling the time
SVP	S'il vous plait	Please
TGV	Train à grande vitesse	High speed trains
W-C	Water closet	Bathroom

How to Enhance Your Writing

Once you have a strong grasp of the grammar and syntax of sentence composition, the next step is writing in

length. Whether you are writing an essay, a letter, a memoir, or just some of your thoughts, you can enhance your writing by keeping in mind some of the following tips.

Connectives

These refer to words used throughout your writing to connect ideas together. Connectives are generally best used to replace words such as 'and,' 'then,' or 'because'. Keeping a list of connectives available to refer to when writing will help you enhance the piece you are working on. Some handy connectives to keep in mind for French writing are:

French	English
Après	After
Puis / suivant	Next
Avant	Before
Souvent	Often
Aussi	Also
Ainsi	Thus
Parfois	Sometimes
Donc	Therefore
Alors	So
C'est pourquoi	That's why
Pour	In order to
En fait	In fact

Sentence openers

Having a collection of sentence openers to refer back to will make your writing much more engaging. Rather than opening every new sentence or paragraph with 'and then' or 'I think,' try some other more interesting ways to begin. Some ideas for sentence openers in French include:

French	English
D'habitude	Usually
Normalement	Normally
Le week-end	On the weekend
Il y a un an	A year ago
L'année dernière	Last year
A mon avis	In my opinion
Il faut	It is necessary
Quelquefois	Sometimes
Heureusement	Fortunately
De temps de temps	From time to time
Malheureusement	Unfortunately
Malgré	Despite

Keep sentences short

When you are writing in a foreign language, it is important not to overload a sentence. If you attempt to write a long sentence, you are at risk of making more errors and getting jumbled up in the length of it. Instead, always try to break a sentence down into smaller parts. For example, look at this sentence:

Demain, il fera beau et je voudrais/ j'aimerais vraiment aller à la plage parce que j'adore nager.

(Tomorrow, it will be sunny and I really want to go to the beach because I love swimming a lot.)

Instead of having so many ideas in the one sentence, it can be easily broken down and made easier to both read and write. For example:

Demain, il fera beau. Je voudrais/ J'aimerais beaucoup aller à la plage. J'adore nager.

(Tomorrow, it will be sunny. I really want to go the beach. I love swimming a lot.)

Accept feedback and constructive criticism

When you complete any piece of writing, it is important to get feedback on it. Whether you obtain feedback from your French teacher or use a social network contact like a friend also learning French, it is an important part of improving to have objective feedback. When someone else reads your work and proofreads it, they notice minor details that you may have overlooked which can be changed to make the work better. Always remember that feedback and constructive criticism helps you grow as a French learner and these should be taken in a positive light. There is always room for improvement and mistakes and errors are the best way to develop your writing skills in another language.

You can also use websites like <http://lang-8.com/>, italki or any penpal website to improve your French writing.

Chapter 7 Review

Writing in French can be considered quite an intimidating feat to accomplish, especially for new learners of the language. Chapter 7 identified writing tips that might help you on your quest to learn the language, such as:

- Write to other people in French. This could be people you meet in real life or through the internet.
- Write to yourself. You can start a journal where you jot down a few French sentences each day, or you can also use French in your daily reminders, personal calendar, to-do list, or even in your shopping list.
- Arm yourself with a handy list of French idioms, acronyms, and connectives, and learn to pepper your writing with those.

End of this sample. You can buy this product [here](#).

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