

French Language Kit



Expressions - Grammar - Online Resources - Culture



Introduction

Whether you plan to embark on a new journey towards learning French or you just need a basic reference booklet for a trip abroad, the Cactus team has compiled some of the most helpful French expressions, grammar rules, culture tips and recommendations. French is one of the most important languages in the world, and as such is extremely popular with Cactus language learners. Spoken by 220 million people across France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, many African countries and other parts of the world, French will not only enhance your travel experiences but will also enable you to indulge in the rich culture, literature, history and gastronomy of French speaking countries. Not only that, but French is in high-demand in the professional world, increasingly so in Africa. Learning French is the beginning of an exciting adventure that is waiting for you!



The Cactus Team

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Essential Expressions

Hello	Bonjour (<i>bohn-zhoor</i>)
Goodbye	Au revoir (<i>oh-reh-vwar</i>)
Please	S'il vous plaît (<i>see voo play</i>)
Thank you	Merci (<i>mehr-see</i>)
Yes	Oui (<i>we</i>)
No	Non (<i>nohn</i>)
Excuse me/sorry	Excusez-moi/désolé(e) (<i>ehk-kew-zay mwah</i>)
My name is...	Je m'appelle (<i>zhuh mah-pehl</i>)
What is your name?	Comment vous vous appelez? (<i>kohn-mahn voo voo zah-play</i>)
Nice to meet you	Enchanté(e) (<i>ohn-shahn-tay</i>)
Where do you come from?	Vous venez d'où?
I come from Great Britain/America	Je viens de Grande Bretagne/des États-Unis
How are you?	Ça va? (<i>sah vah</i>)
Where is...?	Où est...? (<i>oo es...</i>)
I would like (2 bottles of water)	Je voudrais (deux bouteilles d'eau)
How much is that?	C'est combien? (<i>say comb-bee-en</i>)
How do I get to...?	Comment aller à...? (<i>co mo alay ah</i>)
I don't understand	Je ne comprends pas (<i>zhuh nuh kohn-prahn pah</i>)
I'm sorry, I don't speak French	Je suis désolé(e), je ne parle pas français...
Do you speak English?	Parlez-vous anglais? (<i>pahr-lay voo ahn-leh</i>)



Grammar and Numbers

Indefinite articles

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	un cahier	des cahiers
Feminine	une table	des tables

Possessives

	Masculine singular	Feminine singular	Plural
1st person	mon père	ma mère	mes parents
2nd person	ton père	ta mère	tes parents
3rd person	son père	sa mère	ses parents

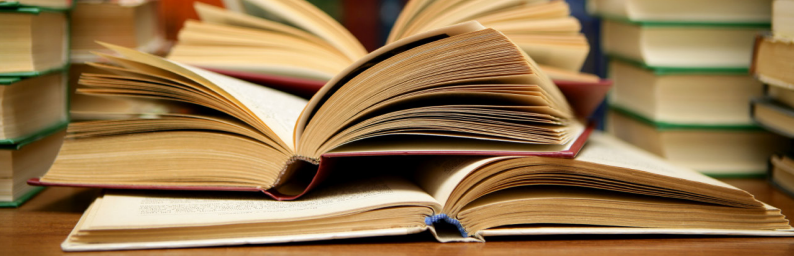
Definite articles

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	le boulevard / l' arbre	les boulevards / arbres
Feminine	une table / l' église	des tables / églises

Note: Always use the definite article **l'** before a noun starting with a vowel.

Numbers

0	zéro	10	dix	20	vingt	200	deux cents
1	un	11	onze	21	vingt et un	300	trois cents
2	deux	12	douze	30	trente	400	quatre cents
3	trois	13	treize	40	quarante	500	cinq cents
4	quatre	14	quatorze	50	cinquante	600	six cents
5	cinq	15	quinze	60	soixante	700	sept cents
6	six	16	seize	70	soixante-dix	800	huit cents
7	sept	17	dix-sept	80	quatre-vingts	900	neuf cents
8	huit	18	dix-huit	90	quatre-vingt-dix	1000	mille
9	neuf	19	dix-neuf	100	cent		



Useful Verbs

Avoir (to have)

Present

j'**ai**
tu **as**
il **a**
nous **avons**
vous **avez**
ils **ont**

Present perfect

j'ai **eu**
tu **as eu**
il **a eu**
nous **avons eu**
vous **avez eu**
ils **ont eu**

Imperfect

j'**avais**
tu **avais**
il **avait**
nous **avions**
vous **aviez**
ils **avaient**

Pluperfect

j'**avais eu**
tu **avais eu**
il **avait eu**
nous **avions eu**
vous **aviez eu**
ils **avaient eu**

Future

j'**aurai**
tu **auras**
il **aura**
nous **aurons**
vous **aurez**
ils **auront**

Future perfect

j'**aurai eu**
tu **auras eu**
il **aura eu**
nous **aurons eu**
vous **aurez eu**
ils **auront eu**

Être (to be)

Present

je **suis**
tu **es**
il **est**
nous **sommes**
vous **êtes**
ils **sont**

Present perfect

j'ai **été**
tu **as été**
il **a été**
nous **avons été**
vous **avez été**
ils **ont été**

Imperfect

j'**étais**
tu **étais**
il **était**
nous **étions**
vous **étiez**
ils **étaient**

Pluperfect

j'**étais été**
tu **avais été**
il **avait été**
nous **avions été**
vous **aviez été**
ils **avaient été**

Future

je **serai**
tu **seras**
il **sera**
nous **serons**
vous **serez**
ils **seront**

Future perfect

j'**aurai été**
tu **auras été**
il **aura été**
nous **aurons été**
vous **aurez été**
ils **auront été**



Useful Verbs

Manger (to eat)

Present

je mange
tu manges
il mange
nous mange**ons**
vous mange**ez**
ils mangent

Present perfect

j'ai mangé
tu as mangé
il a mangé
nous avons mangé
vous avez mangé
ils ont mangé

Imperfect

je mange**ais**
tu mange**ais**
il mange**ait**
nous mang**ions**
vous mang**iez**
ils mang**eaient**

Pluperfect

j'avais mangé
tu avais mangé
il avait mangé
nous avions mangé
vous aviez mangé
ils avaient mangé

Future

je manger**ai**
tu manger**as**
il manger**a**
nous manger**ons**
vous manger**ez**
ils manger**ont**

Future perfect

j'aurai mangé
tu auras mangé
il aura mangé
nous aurons mangé
vous aurez mangé
ils auront mangé

Finir (to finish)

Present

je finis
tu finis
il finit
nous finissons
vous finissez
ils finissent

Present perfect

j'ai fini
tu as fini
il a fini
nous avons fini
vous avez fini
ils ont fini

Imperfect

je finissais
tu finissais
il finissait
nous finissions
vous finissiez
ils finissaient

Pluperfect

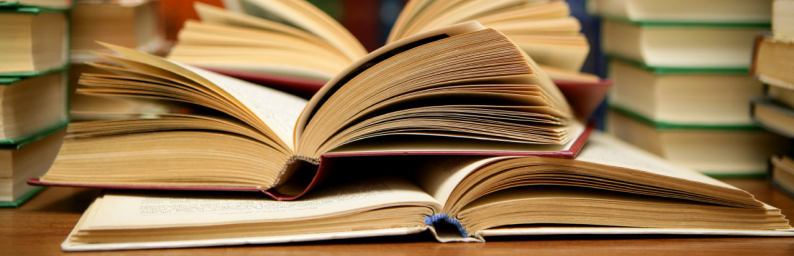
j'avais fini
tu avais fini
il avait fini
nous avions fini
vous aviez fini
ils avaient fini

Future

je finir**ai**
tu finir**as**
il finir**a**
nous finir**ons**
vous finir**ez**
ils finir**ont**

Future perfect

j'aurai fini
tu auras fini
il aura fini
nous aurons fini
vous aurez fini
ils auront fini



Useful Verbs

Dire (to say)

Present

je **dis**
tu **dis**
il **dit**
nous **disons**
vous **dites**
ils **disent**

Imperfect

je **disais**
tu **disais**
il **disait**
nous **disions**
vous **disiez**
ils **disaient**

Future

je **dirai**
tu **diras**
il **dira**
nous **dirons**
vous **direz**
ils **diront**

Present perfect

j'ai **dit**
tu as **dit**
il a **dit**
nous avons **dit**
vous avez **dit**
ils ont **dit**

Pluperfect

j'avais **dit**
tu avais **dit**
il avait **dit**
nous avions **dit**
vous aviez **dit**
ils avaient **dit**

Future perfect

j'aurai **dit**
tu auras **dit**
il aura **dit**
nous aurons **dit**
vous aurez **dit**
ils auront **dit**

Faire (to do)

Present

je **fais**
tu **fais**
il **fait**
nous **faisons**
vous **faites**
ils **font**

Imperfect

je **faisais**
tu **faisais**
il **faisait**
nous **faisions**
vous **faisiez**
ils **faisaient**

Future

je **ferai**
tu **feras**
il **fera**
nous **ferons**
vous **ferez**
ils **feront**

Present perfect

j'ai **fait**
tu as **fait**
il a **fait**
nous avons **fait**
vous avez **fait**
ils ont **fait**

Pluperfect

j'avais **fait**
tu avais **fait**
il avait **fait**
nous avions **fait**
vous aviez **fait**
ils avaient **fait**

Future perfect

j'aurai **fait**
tu auras **fait**
il aura **fait**
nous aurons **fait**
vous aurez **fait**
ils auront **fait**



Online Resources

There are so many free online resources that it is sometimes difficult to know which ones to use, and to identify which ones are good. Cactus has carefully assessed the wide range of free language learning resources available online to provide you with a selection of our most recommended, useful and reliable sources of information for learning French. These can be used as a helpful support to language learning whilst taking one of our face-to-face French courses.

Dictionaries

WordReference is a popular bilingual dictionary, and combines its own dictionary with the long-established Collins dictionary. WordReference also includes a handy French verb conjugator and a forum where users can get help with French language related questions.

Reverso is a well-established online bilingual dictionary. It includes an English-French dictionary, along with other handy tools such as a translator and spellchecker.

The **CNRTL** host the dictionary of the Académie Française, the French language regulator. Its monolingual French dictionary includes all the officially recognised French words. In French only.

The **Dictionnaire Electronique des Synonymes**, hosted by the university of Caen, France, is a helpful online French synonyms dictionary. In French only.

Pronunciation

Forvo is a free and comprehensive pronunciation guide maintained by native speakers around the world. It includes the pronunciation of more than 3 million words in 325 languages.



Online Resources

Vocabulary

Memrise is a popular website and mobile app which enables you to memorise French vocabulary. It is a great and fun way to learn new vocabulary in addition to your language course.

Quizlet is a fun and simple website and mobile app which will help you develop your French vocabulary using flash cards.

Cram has a large list of flash cards to help you learn new French words. It also has a mobile app, so you can memorise French vocabulary anywhere anytime.

Language Guide is a project helping French language students to build their vocabulary using an image and sound dictionary.

Mobile app

Duolingo is a fun mobile app which offers a comprehensive series of vocabulary, pronunciation and translation exercises. It is a great way to practice what you learn during your French evening courses while on the go.



Take a Language Holiday

Taking an immersion course abroad is a very efficient way to quickly improve your French language skills. Not only it will increase your confidence in speaking French, but it will also be a unique opportunity to discover and experience the culture of a French-speaking country and practice French with native speakers on a daily basis. Cactus has teamed up with the best language schools across the world to offer you a first-rate language learning experience.

France

The most popular language holiday destination among Cactus French learners, France is also a country with a rich history, culture, and gastronomy. Cactus offers immersion courses in various settings including large and bustling cities such as Paris and Lyon, mountain destinations such as Annecy and Chamonix, and sunny coastal destinations such as Antibes, Biarritz and Montpellier.

Canada

Cactus offers French immersion courses both in Montreal and Quebec.

The Caribbean and the Indian Ocean

If you prefer to study French in a more exotic location, the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Caribbean, and Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean are waiting for you. You will have the opportunity to discover colourful and rich creole cultures, and stunning beaches and natural landscapes.

Switzerland

French is spoken in the western part of the Confederation. If you want to learn French while enjoying Swiss chocolate, breath-taking alpine landscapes and picturesque towns, then Switzerland is for you! Cactus offers immersion courses in Lausanne.



Cultural Differences

Every culture has its specificities, and as fascinating as they can be, not knowing them can prove surprising and challenging when travelling. To help you blend into the local culture and make the most of your time in France, we have listed some of the most striking cultural differences you should be aware of, along with some helpful tips.

Eating times

Whereas it is common in the UK to have dinner at 6pm, the French tend to eat later, usually around 8pm, and sometimes later. As a result, it can be challenging if your stomach is not used to waiting longer for dinner, but you will enjoy even more your three course meal in a French restaurant.

Coffee

If you want to get the best service from the waiter and know which variant of coffee to order, then there are a few words you should know. Simply saying 'un café s'il vous plaît' will get you a small cup of coffee. If you prefer to have a larger one, you should ask for 'un café allongé'. Should you want a coffee with milk, then ask for a 'café crème'.

Greeting friends

Last but not least, most British people will feel out of their comfort zone when faced with what the French call 'faire la bise', that is, greeting someone with kisses on the cheek. 'La bise' is only done in informal and friendly situations. To complicate things, the number of 'kisses' varies from one place to another. In Paris or on the French Riviera, two kisses is the norm, but in other areas, it may be three or four.



French Culture Recommendations

Books

The French literature is widely recognised as one of the most significant in the world and there is a variety of genres you can choose from to practice French. It is almost impossible to make an exhaustive list of books to read when it comes to French literature, but we would certainly recommend these for those who are learning the language:

- **Le Petit Nicolas**, by René Goscinny: these children's short stories depict an idealised childhood in 1950s France.
- **Vingt mille lieues sous les mers**, by Jules Verne: a classic science-fiction adventure novel, which takes place in a submarine. The book was well ahead of its time when it was written in 1870, as submarines did not exist yet.
- **Les Aventures de Tintin**, by Hergé: this series of Belgian comic albums follows the adventures of Tintin, a young reporter and adventurer, and his companions Capitaine Haddock, Professeur Tournesol, and his witty dog Milou.
- **L'Étranger**, by Albert Camus: if you are looking for an adult book yet easy-to-read, then you should probably try this philosophical novel, set in French Algeria.

Music and Films

The Lumière brothers are often considered as the inventors of cinema, and since its apparition, the French film industry has been thriving. There are many French films you should watch, but as a new learner we would recommend popular and easy-to-understand films such as:

- **Amélie Poulain** (2001): a romantic comedy film set in Montmartre, Paris, telling the story of a young woman who tries to change the lives of those around her for the better.



French Culture Recommendations

- **Intouchables** (2011): one of the most popular contemporary French films. Based on a true story, it follows the friendship between a young man who just spent six months in prison and a Parisian quadriplegic aristocrat who hired him as a caregiver.
- **L'Auberge espagnole** (2002): the film portrays a French student studying in Barcelona as part of the Erasmus programme and sharing a flat with other Western European students. L'Auberge espagnole has become emblematic of the generations of European exchange students.

Music-wise, there are many songs with French lyrics you could listen to in order to practice your listening skills. Depending on your preferences, you may be more interested in French rap or instead in rock. Listening to easy-to-understand songs will prove more efficient for beginners and elementary French learners. Here are a few we picked up for you:

- **La Tribu de Dana**, by Manau: a catchy song based on Celtic history.
- **Aficionado**, by BB Brunes: a rock song which will help you catch new words.
- **Sous le ciel de Paris**, by Yves Montand: a classic 1950s French song.
- **Un autre monde**, by Téléphone: a popular rock song from the 1980s.

Food

French cuisine is renowned across the world and is very varied, as each region of France made its contribution. As a result, it can be hard to decide which dish to choose from, but we thought you should taste these:

- **Crêpes de sarrasin (Buckwheat Crêpes)**: in Brittany, crêpes are made with buckwheat flour and filled with anything you can dream of.



French Culture Recommendations

- **Blanquette de Veau:** a classical veal stew where the meat is not browned, accompanied with carrots, rice and a creamy sauce.
- **Sole Meunière:** a simple yet flavoury fish dish. A white wine, such as a Sancerre, will be ideal with this buttery and lemony recipe.
- **Hachis Parmentier (Shepherd's Pie):** another easy to prepare yet delicious and filling dish.
- **Piperade:** a specialty from the French Basque country, similar to the Provençal ratatouille, but with more onions and peppers.
- **Cassoulet:** this duck and beans stew originating from Southwestern France is popular across the entire country.
- **Bouillabaisse:** this saffron-flavored fish stew is emblematic of Marseille, France, and will be a success among seafood lovers. It will be well accompanied with a white wine or a rosé from Provence.
- **Tartiflette:** a popular potato dish originating from the French alps and made of melted cheese and lardons.
- **Baba au rhum (Rum baba):** a delicious rum-soaked dessert.
- **Tarte Tatin:** a classic of French desserts. Usually made of apples, the fruits in this tart are caramelised.
- **Eclair au chocolat (Chocolate éclair):** another classic French pastry with chocolate cream filling which you will find in every bakery in France.
- **Profiteroles au chocolat (Chocolate Profiteroles):** these are tasteful choux pastries filled with vanilla ice cream, on which hot chocolate sauce is poured.
- **Madeleines:** delightful small sponge cakes from Northeastern France. They are well-known for being Marcel Proust's favourites.



Start Learning French

With so many language learning options available ranging from evening classes to online courses, it is often difficult to know where to start your French language learning journey. It's important to assess which type of language course or combination of courses is the most appropriate for you. To help you make the right choice, the experts at Cactus have compared the benefits of each alternative and provided a comprehensive list of language learning options to get you started.

Language Holidays: Immersion courses are an excellent way to learn and practice French on a daily basis while discovering the local culture. For more information about our language holidays destinations, please see page 10.

Group Evening Courses: Evening classes in the UK are ideal if you want to learn French after work or your studies. They will help you learn French quickly in a sociable environment and they offer excellent preparation for a language holiday abroad, as they will enable you to understand the basics of French prior to your trip.

Private Tuition: If you can't fit a group language course in your schedule or you prefer to study in your own time, one-to-one French classes are the perfect solution. Cactus offers both face-to-face and Skype French language lessons. In addition to this, we also offer [online French lessons](#) in collaboration with our partner Frantastique.

TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language): Living abroad is a dream that many long for, and it is often said to be the best way to achieve fluency in a foreign language. For fluent English speakers, one of the easiest ways to live abroad is by teaching English as a Foreign Language. You can become an English teacher abroad by taking a TEFL course with Cactus. We offer CELTA and Trinity Cert TESOL preparation courses across the world, including in France. For more information about TEFL courses and advice on how to become a TEFL teacher, please visit our dedicated [website](#), or email us at info@cactustefl.com.

Visit our websites

Language Holidays

cactuslanguage.com

UK Group Evening Courses

languagecoursesuk.co.uk

Private Tuition

cactuslanguagegetraining.com

TEFL

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