



The little booklet to acquire French

Step by step guide



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Edited by Ben Bois

What if you could understand French
easily, without struggling ?

What if you didn't have to learn French
words by heart ?

What if you could speak French
spontaneously without any anxiety?

Ben & I are thrilled to start this French
journey with you. We are here to help you
acquire French naturally. Indeed, French or
any other languages can be acquired
naturally and effortlessly.

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Chapitre

1

Knowing the why

First of all, before you kick off your amazing French journey, you must ask yourself why?

- *Why are you attracted to French?*
- *Why do you want to understand French?*
- *Why do you want to speak French?*
- *Why do you want to acquire French?*

Understanding the "why" behind your journey is crucial for **motivation** and **direction**. When embarking on acquiring French, knowing your purpose or motivations will provide a sense of **clarity** and **drive**.

When you're aware of why you're pursuing a goal, it offers motivation and helps you stay focused during challenges or setbacks. Because trust us, there will be highs and lows in your journey! At some point in your journey, you will feel you are not progressing or you will think you can't speak French properly yet! This is when remembering **why** you started this journey will make you want to **move on!**

Knowing your reasons for acquiring French, whether it's for personal enrichment, career advancement, cultural

appreciation, travel, or communication, gives your efforts **meaning** and helps you remain **dedicated** to achieving your objectives.

Some reasons to start acquiring French may include:

- Personal interest in French culture;
- enhancing career prospects;
- travelling to French-speaking countries;
- broadening your perspective through language;
- connecting with French-speaking friends or family.

Your why could also be as simple as Lauren's:

« My sister suggested that I think about doing something that was just for me, that was fun and outside of my career. I began to ask myself, "What is it that you used to love doing before you became a mother?" I thought about it, and what came to mind was, "French!" Although, practically speaking, I don't feel that I have any particular need to acquire French (I'm not planning a career change involving the use of French, moving to a francophone country, or even planning to travel any time soon), I simply enjoy it! »

Take the time to pause and think about it. Having a clear understanding of why you want to become fluent in French will keep you **focused** and **motivated** throughout this journey.

Do you know **why you want to acquire French**? Let's start!

Chapitre

2

*How does language
acquisition work?*

Forget about memorizing vocabulary lists and their translations, learning grammar rules, verb conjugation tables, and syntax. It doesn't work!

Now let's go back in time... Do you remember when you started to speak your native language? You probably don't because it was a long time ago but we bet you didn't learn vocabulary by heart. Did you learn how to conjugate a verb in the past tense ?! You didn't do that and yet you were able to **first understand** your native language, then **think** in it, and finally **speak** it **spontaneously**.

This is called the language acquisition process and **your brain is wired** to go through this process **with no effort**.

When you were young, you acquired your native language naturally. At first, when you were a baby, you couldn't speak, but your parents and the people around you spoke a lot. They talked to you although you could not respond. They also talked around you, amongst themselves. You didn't understand everything, but little by little, by

listening to the people talking to you and around you, you **subconsciously understood** more and more words and phrases. And one day, you could **understand everything!** Was it painful ? Did you study your native language ? Not at all ! It was a **painless process** because it happened subconsciously **with no effort**.

The people taking care of you talked to you slowly. They made gestures for you to understand. They talked to you in an **understandable and clear manner**.

For example, your mum asked you:

- *Do you want to drink?* And she also showed you your little cup. Maybe your mum repeated the question several times in different way:

- *Are you thirsty? Do you prefer to drink water or milk?*

You could understand what she was asking you about but probably you could not understand every word, every detail. Probably you couldn't respond to your mum yet.

Still it was OK and your mum didn't force you to understand everything. She didn't push you to answer back to her in a perfect way. Your mum knew it was going **to take time** for you to understand and then to

speak. She kept on talking to you in a **comprehensible and pleasant way**.

It was only after several years in your early life, when you were maybe two, three, four years old or even older, that you started speaking. You didn't speak fluently! You started saying words like « Dad » or « Mum », then phrases like « I want to eat. »

To understand, then think and finally speak in your native language took a lot of time. It took you many hours, and even years of listening and understanding. But eventually, now you speak fluently in your native language. Words and full phrases come out of your mouth naturally.

Let's say that when you were six years old, you were then fluent in your native language. If we calculate that you were exposed to your native language eight hours a day from age one to six:

8 hours x 7 days/week x 52 weeks x 5 years =
over 14 500 hours

Imagine fourteen-thousand hours to achieve fluency, but not complete fluency! At the age of six, you probably still didn't know how to use the passive form if you spoke English:

- The cat was chased by the dog.

If you spoke Russian, you were probably not able to use the entire case system yet.

(See Bill Van Patten's book – While we're on the Topic BVP on Language acquisition, and Classroom Practice p 37-38)

It's the **exact same process** for French or any other languages. **Your brain is wired** to acquire any languages following the exact same process. Only now, you already know your native language (and maybe other languages) and **you can read**. These are big bonuses to acquire French faster than your native language.

Lauren (who enjoys French) kept on sharing:

« I started watching your videos and was so surprised, relieved, and excited when you said that French

could be acquired naturally **without stress** and in **an enjoyable manner** not by learning/studying, but instead by “acquiring” it through a significant amount of comprehensible input. This information was life changing for me!

As a result, in addition to watching many of your YouTube videos, I shoved all of those grammar books back in the drawer for the moment, and joined your French Learners Community in order to finally “acquire” the French language. Every day since I have been thoroughly enjoying myself exploring your website and YouTube videos and acquiring French through listening and through reading your content. In fact, I work part-time and I can’t wait to finish my “real” job in order to get to your materials afterwords. Your suggestion to **enjoy the journey** of acquiring French really resonated with me as well, because I am acquiring French for no practical reason other than simply to **enjoy the process**. »

Chapitre

3

*A blessing in disguise
(Un mal pour un bien)*

Learning a new language, especially after a negative experience at school, can feel like navigating a maze blindfolded. Your journey into French may have begun with the echo of those dreary classroom lessons, where conjugations, grammar rules, and vocabulary lists were memorized but never truly understood.

Yet, as daunting as it sounds, language acquisition doesn't have to be this agonizing. Once you enter the world of **optimal input**, it is a real game-changer. Instead of rote memorization and grammar drills, you start a **natural, pain-free** approach that revolves around **understanding, immersion, and enjoyment**.

This pain-free, simple approach will transform your French experience from an arduous task into a **joyful adventure**.

It is **simple and easy**. Remember these 3 letters U-T-S

U - Understand

T - Think

S - Speak

In French, it translates to these 3 letters C-P-P which you can recall as *C'est Pépé ! (It is Pépé!)*

Un pépé is a French term that refers to « a grandpa » or « an elderly man » in English. So when you are acquiring French, you can imagine your grandpa or an elderly man who inspired you and repeat the sentence to yourself:

- *C'est Pépé !*

C - Comprendre

P - Penser

P - Parler

Je dois d'abord comprendre le Français sans effort pour penser en français pour finalement parler français naturellement.

I first need to understand French with no effort to think in French to finally speak French naturally.

Ready?! Follow those 3 steps and you will **become fluent** in French.

Chapitre

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Step 7:
Understand French

The comprehensible input approach to acquiring French emphasizes **understanding the language in context** rather than focusing solely on memorization and grammar rules.

By **immersing yourself** in comprehensible input, which includes reading, listening, and engaging with material that is **just beyond your grasp**, your brain gradually adapts and starts to **make sense** of the language naturally.

Just as toddlers absorb language by observing and understanding contextual cues, you immerse in content slightly above your current proficiency level, allowing you to **make connections** and **derive meaning** without the need for direct translation.

Like toddlers, you acquire French naturally when content is **abundant, interesting, engaging,** and **comprehensible**, fostering an **organic understanding** of grammar, vocabulary, and cultural nuances over time.

Here are our simple guidelines to start your French

journey **the easy way**.

- **Listen Actively:** Engage with **comprehensible** French content. Start with **simple** stories or **stories you know already** in your own language. When you are a beginner, start by watching stories.

Watch stories that are presented at **a pace suitable for your comprehension**, ensuring you understand the content while **gradually absorbing** vocabulary and grammar in context.

Your focus is on **comprehension** rather than stressing over vocabulary memorization or grammar rules, making it an engaging and effective way to acquire a language. You should **be captivated**, making the language acquisition process **enjoyable** and **accessible**.

- **Use Context:** Start with simple, engaging content or stories that **you enjoy**. These should be **slightly above** your current level to gradually expand your understanding.

- **Repetition:** Listen or read focusing on overall comprehension without worrying about every word. But if you don't enjoy a story or if it gets boring, then move on to another story.

Repetition does not mean repeating the same story over and over again until you know the whole story by heart! Repetition means you get **abundant input**.

Abundant input refers to a **plentiful** and **extensive** exposure to French stimulus, allowing for a **rich and copious flow** of information. Try to be exposed to a vast array of materials, texts, or audiovisual resources to **immerse yourself** deeply and consistently, fostering comprehensive understanding and acquisition. This abundance aids you in **grasping** the nuances, vocabulary, structures, and natural flow of the language.

Bilal asked us:

« Right now I watch the video once. Make flash cards for the words I don't know. Read the text 10 times.

Listen to the audio 10 times on its own. Then watch the video again before I move on to the next chapter or section. I feel like this is taking a toll on me and I dread this method. In your opinion, am I doing too much? »

Instead of pushing yourself to repeat the content excessively, try to watch a story with a **focus on understanding the context**. Listen and read through the content repeatedly, not with a set number in mind, but until it starts feeling **familiar** and **understandable**.

Additionally, try to **vary** your acquisition routine. Instead of repeatedly watching the same video, **explore** other complementary resources. Read and listen to other stories, listen to songs, read easy books written for French learners.

Here are some cues:

- Read and listen to other stories at your level. If you are a beginner, explore the [81 Baby Stories available](#).
- [Listen to our audiobooks](#). These are French readers specifically written for French learners.

- [Explore our diaporamas](#). You can follow songs' lyrics or learn about a true story or tradition.
- If you are short on time, [watch our one minute videos with subtitles](#). That way, you are still exposed to French input daily.
- **Use Tools:** Leverage translation sparingly for unknown words or phrases to maintain flow and comprehension.

Dr Beniko Mason who developed the Story Listening method to help her Japanese students acquire English, explained in her paper entitled “Optimal Instruction” in May 13, 2023:

*« It is not necessary for listeners to completely understand every word. It may be enough that they have the **feeling** that they understood the story. The input can contain a little “noise”. If the story is **compelling**, they may not even notice the incomprehensible parts, the “noise”. »*

[Read, listen and watch about who Dr Beniko Mason is in French.](#)

You don't have to check in a dictionary what every single word means in a story. It is very tedious and boring. **It is OK** if you just have a feel for a story as long as the story is compelling to you. You are **so interested** in what is happening in the story that you even forget the story is in French!

This is **optimal** to acquire French **subconsciously**, with **no effort**!

You don't know what to hear or read? We have your back! The [Baby Stage](#) includes 31 videos with transcripts, audio and glossaries to make French become **clear to you**.

Each video is a simple captivating story to make you understand French with no effort. You then move to the [Infant Stage](#) with 30 videos telling you more compelling stories to **deepen your French understanding**.

Kick off your French journey ! Start to understand French now and remember to **relax & enjoy**!

Trust your brain will do the job! Once you understand what you hear and read, the language is stored in your brain **forever**.

Trust the process. It worked when you were a toddler and you acquired your native language that way so it works for French too!

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Step 2:
Think in French

Thinking in French is a **pivotal stage** in language acquisition that naturally follows comprehension. When you understand French well, your brain gradually shifts from translating words or phrases from your native language to **forming thoughts directly in French**. This transition signifies a **deeper level of familiarity** and **fluency**.

Thinking in French enhances your ability to **express ideas**, form sentences more naturally, and improve overall communication skills. It eliminates the need for constant translation, allowing for **quicker** and **more intuitive language processing**, which is fundamental for then speaking French effortlessly and spontaneously.

Here are our simple guidelines to transition to thinking in French **the easy way**.

But remember this comes **after step 1 of understanding French**. Once you can understand the [Baby and Infant Stories](#) with no effort, you can try to follow these guidelines.

Don't try them too early on in your journey because it will be painful. Your goal is to have a **painless** journey!

- **Reflect and Retell:** Once you read and listened to a story and you understood it, you can try to reflect on the content. You can try to retell the story or the main ideas in your own words in French. **Do not worry about making mistakes**, it is part of the process. Let your ideas **flow** in your brain. The more you hear and read French content, the more you understand, the more French will flow in your brain.

- **Visualize in French:** Associate new vocabulary with **mental images or concepts** rather than translating them back to your native language.

- **Practice free writing:** practice **continuous, unrestricted** writing without concern for grammar, spelling, or coherence.

Use free writing to **generate ideas and express thoughts**, allowing you to **freely explore your mind**

without self-criticism. In the context of thinking in French, free writing entails **jotting down** thoughts, ideas, or sentences in French without worrying about correctness or structure.

This practice helps you to **immerse** in the language, encouraging the brain to think in French, aiding in the **internalization** of vocabulary, grammar structures, and the overall **fluidity** of expression. It is an effective way to develop a **natural thought process** in French and improve language proficiency.

Don't know what to write about? We've got you! Follow the [Teen Stage, a series of 31 videos for intermediate learners](#). Each video goes with transcript, audio and glossary. Each video gives you a prompt and model to start free writing about yourself.

Paula shared:

*« I find myself spontaneously **spurting out** " elle/il est ne pas content!" when I see someone unhappy or "c'est un problème" when I have to wait in line and I'm in a hurry. Don't know why but my mind just **switches***

to French in my brain. This never happened before. I even think or say it the words with the same story telling enunciation as Alice! C'est bizarre mais ça fonctionne. »

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The silent period

The silent phase in language acquisition refers to a period when learners **absorb** and **process** the new language **without actively speaking it**. This phase might occur at the beginning of your French journey or at various stages during the process.

It's crucial to respect this phase because during this phase, you are internalizing the language rules, structures, and vocabulary. You are building a **mental framework** and **foundation** for French.

Silence allows you to feel comfortable and **secure** in your understanding before you express yourself verbally. It's a crucial step in **building confidence** in speaking French.

The pressure to speak too early can cause anxiety or fear of making mistakes. Allowing a silent phase helps alleviate this stress, creating a more supportive environment for acquisition.

In the silent phase, you get to **observe** native speakers, **listen attentively**, and **absorb** the language's sounds and nuances. This observational phase contributes

significantly to later speaking abilities.

This phase allows your brain to **process** the new language **subconsciously**, forming connections and patterns that will aid in fluency.

Respecting the silent phase in your French journey is essential because it sets the **groundwork** for **confident** and **natural language production** in the future. It provides you with the necessary time and space to internalize French at your own pace, ultimately leading to becoming fluent.

Noam Chomsky, known for his work in linguistics, wrote:

« The fact is that if you have not developed language, you simply don't have access to most of the human experience, and if you don't have access to experience, then you're not going to be able to think properly. »

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7

Step 3: Speak French Spontaneously

Speaking French is **the last step** in your journey. It is the **ultimate goal** of comprehension and proficiency. When you can speak French fluently and spontaneously, it demonstrates that you've **internalized** the language to a remarkable extent.

Stephen Krashen who introduced the acquisition-learning hypothesis, wrote in 1985:

« Speaking is a result of language acquisition and not its cause. »

[Read, listen and watch about who Dr Stephen Krashen](#) is in French.

Speaking naturally in French signifies that **you've successfully passed through various stages** of language acquisition: comprehending, thinking, and finally expressing yourself in French.

Speaking indicates a comprehensive understanding of the language's grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, facilitating

effortless communication and interaction in everyday situations. It's **the ultimate manifestation** of language acquisition, reflecting a **profound connection** with the language and culture.

Here are our simple guidelines to finally speak French **the painless way**.

Remember this comes **last**. You speak when **you feel ready** to speak. If you are anxious to say a word in French or if you struggle expressing your ideas out loud because you are translating in your head, this means you are not ready to speak yet.

You need to be able to **think in French to speak French**.

- **Gradual Practice:** Start speaking aloud by mimicking what you've listened to or read. Initially, focus on **pronunciation** and **rhythm** rather than accuracy.

- **Read out loud:** Reading out loud is an effective way to start speaking French without having to think about

what you want to say. It is great to **build confidence** in speaking.

When you read aloud, you're not only **engaging** your eyes but also your ears and mouth, reinforcing pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation. This practice helps in **familiarizing yourself** with the sounds and patterns of the French language.

Moreover, speaking aloud aids in the **muscle memory** required for proper articulation. It enhances your ability to verbalize French words, phrases, and sentences, making you more **comfortable** and **confident** in the language.

Over time, as you repeatedly practice reading aloud, your fluency and pronunciation improve, **boosting** your overall confidence to speak French **in various contexts**.

[Watch my 3 steps to read aloud with ease.](#)

You can read out loud our [Adult Stage stories](#). They tell you about the History of France: the fascinating lives of kings, queens as well as amazing events and battles.

- **Create Opportunities:** Engage in small, low-pressure conversations, even if it's just with yourself, in French. Our live events help you to just do that. You get to read and discuss stories with other fellow learners. You get to laugh together and you feel inspired to keep speaking French!

[Watch some of our live sessions.](#)

Chapitre

8

Words of encouragement

Remember, it's crucial to **make your French experience enjoyable** and not get discouraged by mistakes. Embrace gradual progress and aim for **consistent exposure** to French content.

Trust your brain will do the job! Once you understand what you hear and read, it is stored in your brain forever. **Trust the process.** It worked when you were a toddler and when you acquired your native language so **it works for French** too!

Embrace the 3 steps to acquiring French U-T-S

Understand

Think

Speak

C'est Pépé !

Comprendre

Penser

Parler

Je dois d'abord comprendre le Français sans effort pour penser en français pour finalement parler français naturellement.

I first need to understand French with no effort to think in French to finally speak French naturally.

Alissa asked us:

« How much input do you recommend each day to advance fast in the language ? I guess that is individual but still maybe you have some sort of guidelines. »

Becoming fluent in French depends on being exposed to **optimal** input. **Input alone is sufficient** to become fluent in French.

The amount of daily input can vary based on your schedule, but **consistency is key**. Aiming for **regular** exposure, **even if it's a short duration daily**, contributes significantly to **progress**. While there's no fixed guideline, striving for around 20-30 minutes of

focused interaction with French content daily can be a great starting point.

The **more consistent** you are hearing and reading French, the **more progress** you will notice in **the long term toward fluency**.

Remember the journey itself is incredibly rewarding and should be **enjoyable**. Your main emphasis is on **comprehension**, as understanding forms the **foundation** for language acquisition.

Here is Chris' routine:

*« I came to your website with **no prior knowledge** of French. All that I have learnt is from both you and Ben.*

I listen to the Baby Stage with Alice telling a story while drawing and then listen to Ben reading the story below. I then read the story silently in my head. I work my way through all 31 videos in this way before moving on to the Baby Stage Stories.

I listen to each story and then try to read it silently in my head. Once I have completed all of the stories, I then move on to the Infant Stage and then the Teen Stage using the same method as described previously. Upon completion of the Teen Stage and Teen Stage Stories, I then return to the Baby Stage and begin the process all over again. I believe that repetition is important.

*I have remained **silent** up until now as many advocates of this theory recommend a silent period. I have just begun the Baby Stage again, only this time I am now trying to read the stories out loud and I also intend to continue on to the Adult Stage once I have completed the Teen Stage again.*

*Comprehensible Input Theory is not a gimmick. I have experienced the **magic of this powerful process** first hand. In my opinion, all that is required is an excellent teacher, repetition, **a calm mind** and a **commitment** to daily input. »*

This approach is about creating a **relationship with French** that's anything but arduous. By immersing yourself in optimal input, you're crafting an **authentic connection** with the language.

This journey isn't about learning language skills; it's about **discovering** a new way of thinking, expressing, and interacting with a **vibrant world of French culture and communication**.

What are you waiting for? Make real progress in French and gain:

CLARITY: progress step by step through stages and make French become clear to you.

COMMUNITY: keep yourself accountable through the most caring and invested community.

TRANSFORMATION: feel empowered. Be fluent in French. Transform yourself and get a new soul.

Happy French acquisition!

Warning!

You are free and independent to choose and to do what works best for you. This is not a method. This is not a checklist. This is a **natural process** which is **human**. And we humans, are all different and unique. Something might not work for you and work for your friend or colleague.

However, you must **trust the process** ! It worked when you acquired your native language, so it works for French too. You must trust that **you acquire French when you understand what you hear and read**.

For even more inspiration, [watch our Motivation Break videos on YouTube](#). They are in English.

The little booklet to acquire French

Step by step guide by Alice Ayel

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The book was created using free and open-source software:

- Linux – operating system
- LibreOffice – word processing
- Inkscape, Gimp – graphics
- font families:
 - Fira
 - Latin Modern Roman
 - Milkshake
 - Queen of Heaven

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C'est Pépé!

