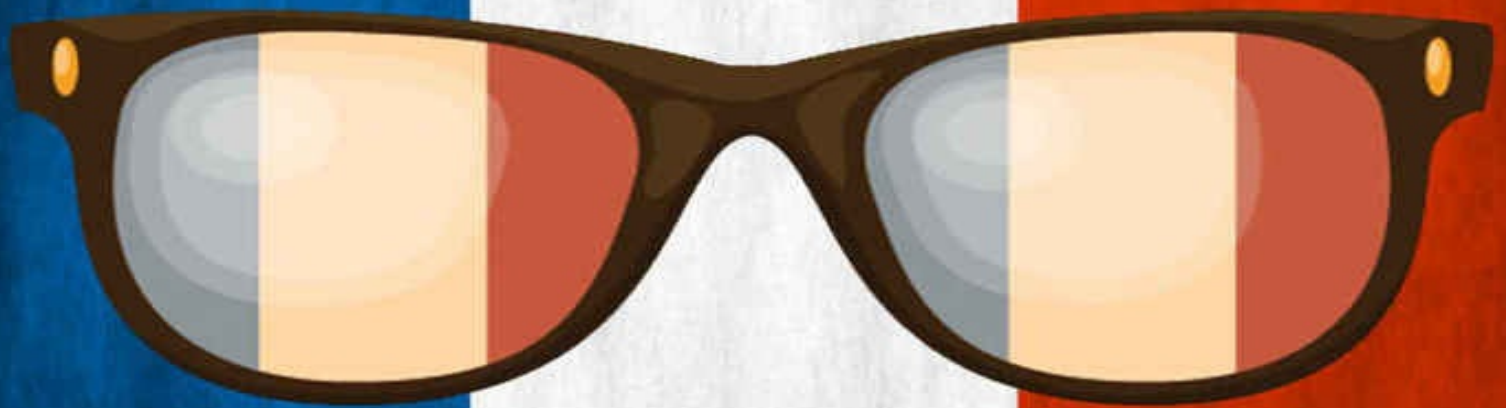


BOMAL EDITION

LEARN FRENCH



The Ultimate Crash Course
to Learning the Basics of French
In No Time

Jean Tesson

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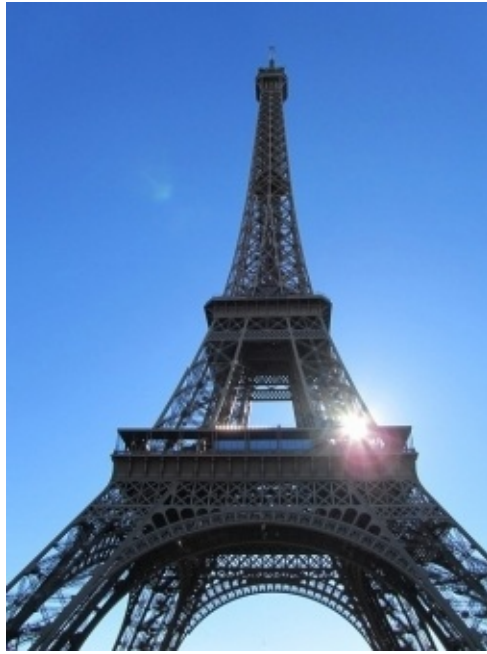


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Introduction

Learning the French language in a short time can be achieved with a little cheating. Having lived in France for over thirty-five years, what became obvious at the beginning of learning the language was that there are ways to get around all the complexity of the language by simply learning three verbs. These three verbs help you to be able to say something in present tense, past tense and future tense, without having to worry about all the intricacies of grammar. That will come later, though if you follow me on a journey through learning these, you will see that you can use them in any given circumstances and make yourself understood.

Add a wealth of words to your language ability and you suddenly find yourself able to converse with people and that's where you really start to pick up extra phrases and the nuances of the language. This first step toward speaking French will help you to quickly grasp that the French are willing to help you if you make that first effort to speak their language and too many visitors don't. Even as a worker in France, working for a foreign company, having the basics of the language helps considerably.

This book takes readers through the learning stages, showing them examples of how to distinguish the right p to use and then explains how that verb is used within the sentence structure. There are also vocabulary enhancing chapters as well as explaining the nuances of possessive pronouns and how these work.

With the basics that you learn from this book, you will be able to speak French and the book also takes into account that your accent may not be that special. In all sections, there is a phonetic explanation of how it should be pronounced, putting you ahead of others who are walking around with language books that don't give them this advantage.

Chapter 1 – Learning the Ropes on Pronouns

In the English language, you will be accustomed to using the following parts of sentences naturally and will need to learn them in the French language. These are essential and without them you will falter because they are basic words that you need to put into sentences to help them to make sense. In English these are: I, you, he, she, they and we.

Almost every sentence that you use will use one of these. In the French language, which one you use will determine the ending of the verb that you use. That's the doing word, but to a certain extent that happens in your own language. The French language is so complex that in our effort to help you learn French quickly, we are going to show you a shortcut that really does help. First you need to learn the basic words that were shown above.

I = Je – Pronounced as JHU

The Word “you” has two forms – one informal and used with children and friends and the other used more formally with strangers or with people you need to show respect to because you don't know them that well. The underlining on the pronunciation shows where the emphasis is given on the word.

You – to friends and children	Tu	Pronounced as <u>T</u> oo
You – to strangers and elderly people	Vous	Pronounced <u>V</u> oo

When talking to a group of people, even if they are friends, you revert to Vous instead of Tu simply because it represents “you” as a group of people rather than an individual.

When you are talking about men or women, you differentiate as follows:

He	il	Pronounced as <u>e</u> l
She	elle	Pronounced as e <u>l</u>

“They” in French is divided because you may be talking about a group of women or you may be talking about a mixture of males and females. If you were talking about a group of women, for example, you would say:

They	Elles	Pronounced as e <u>l</u>
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“They”, when you are talking about men or a group who are of mixed sex, you always use the male version, thus:

They	ils	Pronounced as <u>e</u> l
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So the question that you may be asking right now is how do you know the difference between a singular man and a group of men if the pronunciation is the same? The answer is simple because the verb that follows it will tell the listener whether this is a group or one person.

The last in this group of words that you need to learn is We

We	Nous	Pronounced as N <u>oo</u>
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You really do need to learn all of these off by heart, so take a little bit of time learning them because they will be used all of the time. Repeat the words out loud and listen to yourself. If the pronunciation is a little off, practice makes perfect.

In future chapters, we will demonstrate how each of these works with the verbs which are essential so that you can speak in past, present and future. This is a

quick way to learn to speak French because it's only these three verbs that you need to conjugate. All of the others simply follow what you are saying, as you will see.

Test yourself on each of the words that have been introduced and test your pronunciation covering over the phonetic words shown on the right of the above tables. Other words worth learning.

Me	moi	Pronounced <u>mwa</u>
Man	homme	Pronounced om
Woman	femme	Pronounced <u>fam</u>
Children	enfants	Pronounced onfon

Note that each of the last three would need to be prefixed with “the” and each case is different. “The” masculine is Le (luh)– “The” feminine is La – “The” plural is Les (lay).

Chapter 2 – The Three Essential Verbs

The verbs that are essential so that you can use them to denote past, present and future are as follows:

être - to be – which therefore makes things present.

- **Aller** – to go – which therefore makes things future.
- **Avoir** – to have – which therefore makes things past.

You need to learn to conjugate these verbs and it's vital that you do. Setting yourself the task of learning the conjugation is vital.

Etre (to be)

Je suis	I am	Juh swee
Tu es	You are (friends and kids)	Too ay
vous êtes	You are	Vooz ett
Nous sommes	We are	Noo somm
Il/elle est	He/she is	Eel ay – ell ay
ils sont /ells sont	They are/they are (feminine)	Eel sont Elle <u>sont</u>

So that's the first verb out of the way in simple terms that are easy to memorize. Remember to really pronounce the S on elle sont and ils sont because there is a very similar set of words which this can be mistaken for if you get it wrong. Ils

ont and ells ont sound pretty much the same if you don't emphasize the S in the first one and the O in the second one. This is because of a grammatical aspect called liaison. If a word is followed by a word beginning with a vowel, you pronounce the last letter of the first word, whereas in French generally you do not.

Avoir (to have)

J'ai	I have	Pronounced Jhay
tu	as	Pronounced too ah
Il/elle a	He/she has	Eel ah and ell ah
Nous avons	We have	Nooz avon
Vous avez	You have	Vooz avay
Ils/ells ont	They have	Eels/eels <u>O</u> nt

You really need to learn these by heart.

Aller (to go)

Je vais	I am going	Jhuh vays
Tu vas (friends and kids)	You are going	Too vah
Il/elle va	He/she is going	Eel/ell vah
Nous allons	We are going	Nooz allon
Vous allez (formal)	You are going	Vooz allay
Ils/elles vont	They are going	Eel/ell vont

So how can you use these verbs in a sentence? It's a little more complex than this but we will show you a few examples. You will need to learn the simple verb for each action and that will take a little time and you also need to increase your vocabulary as much as possible. For this exercise, let's introduce a couple of verbs: Jouer (play), aller (go), visiter (visit), écrire (write), parler (talk), danser (dance) This is enough to help us to form a sentence. Now we need all the words that join the sentences. These make sentences flow and are used in all languages.

- in, - dans
- but – mais
- at - à
- de - this means from, about or of
- sur – sous – on or under
- devant – In front of
- derrière – behind

To finish making a sentence, we also need objects, so let's learn a few of these. These are divided between feminine objects which use La, masculine which use

Le and plural which use Les (pronounced lay).

- La maison – the house
- Le jardin – the garden
- La campagne – the countryside
- Chez moi – At my house
- Chez Francois – At Francois' house

So try an exercise now to put the following English phrases into French, using the text that you have learned so far.

- I am in the garden
- She is in the country
- They are in the house
- He is in the house

Now try future tense.

- He is going in the garden
- The children are in the garden
- She is going to Francois' house

What about past tense

- He was in the house
- They were in the garden
- I was at Francois' house
- They were in the garden

These exercises show you how to use the three verbs to give the distinct impression that you are, you were or you will, and thus are cheats for fast French learning, but you need to learn a whole host of verbs to add to your sentences. ER verbs are the easiest ones. Try and get a dictionary that gives lists of verbs and try new sentences.

Chapter 3 – Learning to Ask Questions

In order to ask questions, you need to learn the words which obviously denote that you need information. These are shown below, again with the pronunciation and translations in this table.

Words used for questions

Where?	Où?	OOW
Who?	Qui?	key
When?	Quand?	con
How?	Comment?	common
Why?	Pourquoi?	pouquah

To use these, you will need to learn the words that go after each of them. For example if you were to use what you already know, all you can say is “where the house?” and that isn’t acceptable at all. You need to learn is and are at least.

- Is = est
- Are – sont

So now you should be able to construct the following sentences if we introduce a little more vocabulary.

- L’église = the church (note how l’ replaces le or la when the word begins with a vowel.
- Le magasin = the shop
- La Poste = the post office
- Le garage – the garage
- La boulangerie – the bakers
- Le Chef – the boss
- La fête – the party
- Le propriétaire – the owner
- La gare – the station

You can increase your own vocabulary by looking up words that you may need to use in your sentences. So now, with the words that you have you can make up the following sentences and speak them out loud:

Exercises in sentence structure

- Where is the bakery?
- Who is the boss?
- When is the party?
- Where is the post office?
- Who is the owner?
- Where are the children?
- Where is the station?

Why and how can often be used on their own, though one should never use Quoi without the Pour on the front of it, as this is quite rude and simple means “what?” It is much more polite to say “comment” if you want to say “what?”

With these you can play around a little and add more vocabulary which allows you to practice with your sentence structure.

Chapter 4 – Greetings and Salutations

It is vital that you learn greetings and how to deal with them because it opens up a dialogue with someone even if you are not that good at the language. It shows that you making the effort. The table below shows some popular greetings and in the right hand column you will see the phonetic pronunciation, though when you are writing the language, always use the correct French and never the phonetic. This is merely put into the table to help you to pronounce words correctly.

Greetings used on a regular basis

Greeting	What it means	Pronunciation
Bonjour	Hello!	Bonjoor
Comment allez vous?	Formal “How are you?”	Common vooz allay voo
<u>Ça va ?</u>	Things are going well?	Sa vah?
Bien, merci	All is well, thanks	Bee an marecee
Et vous?	And you?	Ay vous?

These are general greetings for every day of the week. In France, it's quite common in rural villages to say hello to people when you pass them. In cities, this would be impractical since there may be too many people. If you are visiting a café, you always greet the waiter by saying “Hello” before you order your drink as this is polite. It's the same on buses when you want to ask the driver something. You would open the conversation with “hello.”

Of course, you can add to the greetings a lot using modern French, although it's good to learn the correct way to greet someone. Usually a greeting is accompanied by a handshake or if greeting people that you know well, a kiss on both cheeks.

If you are going to ask how someone is in singular form, then of course the greetings above will suffice. However, the order of the words changes when you want to ask after someone else or want to change the number of people you are inquiring about. For example:

- How are the children?
- Would turn into
- Comment vont les enfants?
- How is your mother
- Comment va ta mere?

Notice that we use the word ta for the first time. This is because in French possessive pronouns use different words which are covered in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 – Possessive Pronouns

People who don't speak French find this a little complex. If you want to ask "Where is your mother?" the object of the sentence, *i.e.* the mother, is feminine, so the word **your** takes on a feminine stance. If you asked "How are her children?" the subject of the question is the children and this is plural. Now take this sentence; "How is your father?" and the subject of the conversation is masculine. In all these cases there is a different word used to denote YOUR and the table below will help you to see how this works.

Table of Possessive Pronouns

Possessor	Masculine words	Feminine words	Plural words
My	Mon	Ma	Mes (pronounced May)
Your (Personal)	Ton	Ta	Tes (tay)
Your (formal)	Votre	Votre	Vos (voh)
Her/his	Son	Sa	Ses (say)
Our	Notre	Notre	Nos
Their	Leur	Leur	leurs

Since all of these are pretty easy to pronounce repeat over and over the mon, ma, mes, ton, ta, tes, *etc.* until you understand the table and can remember them. Let's show you how these work.

My mother Mother is feminine, thus you would say **Ma**
mère My father Father is masculine so you would say
mon père My sisters In this case all plural is the same
mes sœurs As you can see this will apply in all cases where you personally are referring to something that is yours. It's important to get used to the masculine and feminine because errors in the possessive pronoun will be embarrassing. For example if you were to explain something about your brother, you actually make him sound feminine by using the wrong one.

You need a little more vocabulary here to practice writing out sentences and using the correct possessive pronoun. Try a few of these.

Le livre = the book La robe = the dress La cravate – the tie Les sandales – the sandals Les craies = the crayons Le stylo = the pen
La colle = the glue These are all le, la and les words, so you instantly know if they are masculine (le), Feminine (la) or plural (les). However, you may come unstuck when you don't know what gender the word is because it begins with a vowel, such as “l'amplificateur” (amplifier) but don't worry about that. If that

happens, revert it to being male as make takes precedence in the French language.

Now try to see what's missing in these and which possessive pronoun should be used.

My tie, my crayons, my pen, her pen, his pen, her tie, his tie, their pens.

All you need to do to get these correct is work out the gender of the object of the sentence and then apply the correct possessive pronoun.

Try to increase your vocabulary at all times. This includes learning the masculine and feminine to help you to say your sentences correctly. The French are very forgiving when you get the gender wrong as they understand the complexity of their language. However some words just don't sound right with a prefix of La while others don't sound right using Le. The only way to find out is to read up a list of nouns in your dictionary and keep increasing your vocabulary.

Chapter 6 - Using Numbers in French

At some stage you are going to need numbers in French. It's important to learn these off by heart and the system in French is quite complex.

- 1-UN
- 2-DEUX
- 3-TROIS
- 4-QUATRE
- 5-CINQ
- 6-SIX
- 7-SEPT
- 8-HUIT
- 9-NEUF
- 10-DIX
- 11-ONZE
- 12 – DOUZE
- 13 – TREIZE
- 14-QUATORZE
- 15 – CINZE
- 16 – SEIZE

After this you start to use ten seven, ten eight instead of seventeen and eighteen *etc.*

- 17 – Dix Sept
- 18 – Dix Huit
- 19 – Dix Neuf

Then you have your 20, 30, 40, 50, 60

20 = Vingt 30 = Trente 40 = Quarante 50 = Cinquante 60 = Soixante

The numbers in between all of the tens are simple but you need to remember when you say 21, 31, 41 *etc.* that instead of simply saying 20 or vingt un, you would say 20 and 1, thus vingt et un. All the other numbers are simply the number above and then the last number:

- 39 = trente neuf
- 42 = quarante deux
- 35 = trente cinq

Try these as an exercise in what you learned: 47, 61, 54, 48, 35, 43

Notice we only went as far as 60. This is for a reason. In the French language, the numbers from seventy onward become complex:

- Seventy = Soixante dix (or sixty ten)
- Eighty = Quatre vingt (four twenties)
- Ninety = Quatre vingt dix (four twenties and ten)

But you can add the number after each of these to represent the digits thus:

- Ninety one = Quatre vingt onze (four times twenty plus eleven)
- Ninety two = Quatre vingt douze (four times twenty plus twelve)
- Ninety three – Quatre vingt treize

You can see that they add the last two digits from the numbers 11-19 and then you get the next ten.

Try these because these get difficult after a while:

- 82

- 73
- 95
- 74

After that you need 100s and 1000s which are as follows:

- 100 – Cent
- 200 – Deux cents
- 300 – Trois cents
- 400 – Quatre cents

Etc.

A thousand is Mille.

- Thus 1300 = Mille trois cents
- 1343 = Mille trois cents quarante trois.

Try these exercises:

- 2458
- 3527
- 564
- 1982

Chapter 6 – Verbs Which Are Useful in Day to Day Life

Before you can speak any language, you need to have vocabulary and in French there are several kinds of verbs. In this section, we will deal with ER verbs because the conjugation of these verbs is straightforward and simple. Since you already know how to say, I am, I will and I have, you can cheat and simply tag a verb onto the end of those phrases to denote whether you mean present, future or past. Of course, the traditional learning will go much deeper than this, but these three verbs help you to be able to say an awful lot of things in a very short space of learning.

Regular ER verbs which will help you

Manger – to eat Habiter – to live Penser – to think Fermer – to close
Nager – to swim Montrer - to show Here are a few more. There are hundreds of regular ER verbs to learn so do look some up. In fact if you Google French ER verbs, you will find pages of them.

Détester – to detest Visiter – to visit Présenter – to present
What makes ER verbs so interesting to learn are the rules of conjugation for ER verbs. The ending will always be the same and the table below shows you how to alter the verb to suit whoever's point of view the verb is taking. For example I visit the post office would become Je visite la Poste but the table below will explain why.

Conjugation Table – Regular ER Verbs

Verb	I	You (friend)	You	He/she	They	We
Chanter	chante ^e	chantes ^s	chantez ^{ez}	chante ^e	chantent ^{ent}	chantons ^{ons}
Manger	mange ^e	manges ^s	mangez ^{ez}	mange ^e	mangent ^{ent}	mangons ^{ons}
Penser	pense ^e	penses ^s	pensez ^{ez}	pense ^e	pensent ^{ent}	pensons ^{ons}

That is very uniform conjugation and it happens on all Regular ER verbs, which makes it pretty simple to learn.

We need to introduce even more vocabulary for the next exercise.

Chansons rock = rock songs Le repas du midi – the midday meal
 Bien – very well Too much – de trop (pronounced duh troh) So
 now try to make up these sentences using the correct conjugation: I eat
 the midday meal I sing rock songs very well He thinks too much.

Chapter 7 – Speaking With Native Speakers

To improve in any language, you need to speak to natives or people who can speak that language. It's important because it helps you to pronounce the words correctly. There are several areas of pronunciation in French which are difficult and not natural to the English speaking person. I have listed some foibles that may catch you out and how to pronounce different parts of a word, looking out for things that native speakers would not say:

ll or double L in French is generally not pronounced and makes a Yuh sound. It's very much like in Spanish where this creates a unique sound. There are a few exceptions, though not that many. If you see a word with LL then try out pronouncing the word taking care to pronounce the LL part of the word as YUH.

ER – many English speaking people pronounce this in the same way as they would at home when ER is used on the end of a word. It doesn't work because the way that this is pronounced in French is AY. Thus, the word Supermarcher – which is the French for supermarket would be pronounced Sooper-marshay.

The vowels are pronounced very differently from the way that we pronounce them in English. The soft vowels in the French language are E and I, while the harder sounding vowels which use the front part of the mouth are U, O and A. If you were to ask a native speaker of French to pronounce the letters of the alphabet, you would not understand what was being said because the pronunciation is so different from what you are accustomed to. Thus, speaking to a native will help you considerably to start to understand the nuances of the way that pronunciation is used.

For example, listening to people speak, you will pick up words that are used often and can look them up in your dictionary and add them to your vocabulary.

It's vital to keep a record of the words so that you can use them in the future. Having heard them and learned what they mean from your dictionary, you should be able to add them to what you want to say.

One of the best dictionaries to buy to help you to speak with local people is one which not only shows you what a word's literal translation is, but one that gives you examples of putting the word into sentences. This is vital and if you can find out, this will help you to increase your usage of the French language. The one that I used when I came to live in France was Harraps and that explained all of the words in detail, giving me examples that I then went on to use when talking to people.

While you will hear a certain amount of slang when talking with French people, bear in mind that if you speak to reasonable people, you should get a grasp of day to day use of French. What is meant by that is that perhaps you are not going to get perfect examples of good French in a busy bar at night, but if you were to talk to people in a café by day, you may be less likely to encounter too much *largo* or slang. The age of people that you talk to will matter as well.

Conclusion

This book has covered such a lot of territory, but of course, your experience cannot be complete without learning more and more by talking to people. The French language is extremely complex. I have shown you how you can use three verbs to help you to get by because if you use these and conjugate them correctly, you can add a verb after the conjugation and you don't need to work on that verb like you did on the first one. Let me show you an example: JE VAIS – that's perfectly correct for I am going

JE VAIS ALLER – Now you add the ER verb ALLER which means to go and suddenly your sentence takes on more sense and means I am going to go but you didn't have to conjugate the verb Aller to make perfect sense as you have already conjugated it using the three verb system explained earlier in the book.

Read through the book several times and learn more vocabulary, because you will need to in order to really enjoy the experience of speaking French. You will learn more and more words as your experience grows. In fact, sometimes words will come seemingly from nowhere but what's happened in these cases is that your subconscious has heard these words being used and you have them stored in your brain. When the right time came, you spoke them and it is amazing just how much you can store in your mind and keep for future use.

This book deals with the basics of getting there fast, but remember that the language is complex one and that even children in French schools have great difficulty learning all the nuances. There are items you assume to be feminine which turn out to be masculine and that messes up the conjugation a little. Then you have two forms of saying “You” and the dilemma of knowing which to use, although you will find that TU is softer than VOUS and you can associate the softer one to be used with close friends and children.

Once you get over your nervousness with the French language, you will find that it rolls off your tongue quite naturally and that you will enjoy the experience. It's enriching and helps you to see French life as it really is, rather than being an outsider looking in. You can participate with French and the French people, who are proud of their language, will be pleased that you tried and will help you to develop your skills.