

# THE FRENCH LEARNING ROADMAP

## Your Path to Speaking with Confidence

*Created exclusively for Comme une Française newsletter subscribers*

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### How to Use This Roadmap

This roadmap is designed to give you clarity on your French learning journey. Rather than overwhelming you with complex steps, it provides a clear path forward based on your current abilities and personal goals.

#### Three Simple Steps:

1. Identify your current position on the map
  2. Choose your destination based on your personal goals
  3. Follow the suggested path and tools for your stage
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### STEP 1: FIND YOUR STARTING POSITION

Before planning your journey, you need to know where you are. Answer these simple questions honestly to determine your current position on the French learning map:

#### Understanding Spoken French:

- ☐ I can recognize basic greetings and simple phrases
- ☐ I can follow slow, clear conversations on familiar topics
- ☐ I can understand the main points of clear speech on familiar matters
- ☐ I can understand extended speech and TV shows without too much effort
- ☐ I can understand native speakers speaking at normal speed in most situations

**Speaking French:**

- ☐ I can use basic phrases and introduce myself
- ☐ I can communicate in simple, routine tasks requiring direct exchange of information
- ☐ I can connect phrases to describe experiences, events, and basic opinions
- ☐ I can interact with a degree of fluency that makes conversation with native speakers possible
- ☐ I can express myself fluently without searching for expressions

**Your position on the map:**

- Beginner's Valley: 0 - 2 checkmarks total
- Intermediate Plateau: 3 - 6 checkmarks total
- Advanced Peak: 7 - 10 checkmarks total

**STEP 2: CHOOSE YOUR DESTINATION**

Unlike academic language learning, your success is defined by meaningful real-life goals. Select 1-3 specific experiences you want to achieve:

**Social Connections:**

- ☐ Have a 5-minute conversation with a French speaker without switching to English
- ☐ Tell a simple story about my day or a memorable experience
- ☐ Make small talk comfortably with French neighbors or acquaintances
- ☐ Participate actively in a group conversation with French speakers

**Travel Experiences:**

- ☐ Order food and ask questions about the menu with confidence
- ☐ Navigate transportation and ask for directions entirely in French
- ☐ Have meaningful conversations with locals about their region
- ☐ Handle unexpected situations (like lost luggage or schedule changes) in French

**Cultural Enjoyment:**

- ☐ Understand the main plot of a French film with subtitles
  - ☐ Enjoy a French film without subtitles
  - ☐ Read a simple French book or news article
  - ☐ Understand French humor and cultural references
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## STEP 3: YOUR PATHWAY FORWARD

### BEGINNER'S VALLEY

**Focus Areas:**

- Essential greetings and everyday phrases
- Basic grammar structures (present tense, simple questions)
- Core vocabulary (200-500 most common words)
- Pronunciation fundamentals

**Weekly Practice Plan:**

- Monday: Learn 5 new practical phrases
- Tuesday: Practice pronunciation of difficult sounds
- Wednesday: Have a 2-minute conversation (even with yourself in the mirror)
- Thursday: Listen to slow French audio for 10 minutes
- Friday: Review what you learned this week
- Weekend: Watch a short YouTube video in French with subtitles

**Recommended Tools:**

- Listen & Repeat exercises from Comme une Française
- "Progressive du Français" A1 book by CLE International
- Simple flashcards for essential vocabulary (physical or app-based)
- French radio for beginners ("Journal en français facile" on RFI)

**Signs You're Ready to Move Forward:**

- You can introduce yourself and share basic personal information
  - You can understand simple directions and everyday requests
  - You're comfortable with basic present tense conjugations
  - You can ask and answer simple questions about familiar topics
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**INTERMEDIATE PLATEAU****Focus Areas:**

- Expanding vocabulary related to your interests and daily life
- More complex grammar (past tenses, future, conditional)
- Building conversational fluidity
- Understanding normal-speed speech on familiar topics

**Weekly Practice Plan:**

- Monday: Read a short article in French
- Tuesday: Watch 10 minutes of a French TV show
- Wednesday: Have a 5-minute conversation in French
- Thursday: Learn 10 new words related to a topic you enjoy
- Friday: Practice describing your day or week in French
- Weekend: Try a 15-minute all-French activity (cooking from a French recipe, etc.)

**Recommended Tools:**

- "Exercise Your French" course for regular practice
- Intermediate-level podcasts (Coffee Break French, French Pod 101)
- French TV shows with French subtitles
- Children's books and "documentaires" in French
- Weekly conversation practice with another learner

**Signs You're Ready to Move Forward:**

- You can have 10+ minute conversations without major pauses
  - You understand most everyday conversations at normal speed
  - You can express opinions and feelings with some nuance
  - You can use past, present and future tenses comfortably
  - You rarely need to ask people to repeat themselves in familiar contexts
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**ADVANCED PEAK****Focus Areas:**

- Nuance and natural expression
- Cultural context and references
- Regional accents and expressions
- Complex grammatical structures
- Specialized vocabulary for your interests

**Weekly Practice Plan:**

- Monday: Listen to a French podcast or radio show
- Tuesday: Read French news or a chapter from a French book
- Wednesday: Have a 15+ minute conversation entirely in French
- Thursday: Study idioms or cultural expressions
- Friday: Write in French (journal entry, email, etc.)
- Weekend: Immerse in French media or culture for 30+ minutes

**Recommended Tools:**

- Authentic French media (newspapers, TV, podcasts)
- French literature or non-fiction related to your interests
- Conversation exchange with native speakers
- French Conversation Club or similar practice groups
- Travel to French-speaking regions (if possible)

### Signs of Success:

- You can follow group conversations with multiple native speakers
  - You understand humor, idioms, and cultural references
  - You express yourself naturally without mentally translating
  - You can handle unexpected situations completely in French
  - You enjoy consuming French media almost as comfortably as in English
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## COMMON OBSTACLES & SOLUTIONS

### The Formal-Informal Divide

**Problem:** Textbook French vs. how people actually speak **Solutions:**

- Listen to authentic, casual French conversations
- Learn common contractions (j'sais pas, t'as, etc.)
- Practice with YouTube videos showing everyday conversations
- Focus on understanding context over individual words

### The Confidence Canyon

**Problem:** Freezing up when speaking despite knowing the vocabulary **Solutions:**

- Practice speaking to yourself daily (even 2 minutes helps)
- Create a "script" for common situations before you need them
- Remember that making mistakes is the only path to improvement
- Start with "safe" conversation partners (other learners, patient natives)

### The Pronunciation Maze

**Problem:** Struggling with French sounds and being understood **Solutions:**

- Focus first on sounds that impact meaning (u/ou, nasal vowels)
- Record yourself speaking and compare to native speakers
- Exaggerate mouth movements at first to train muscles
- Regular Listen & Repeat practice (even 5 minutes daily)

## The Vocabulary Valley

**Problem: Forgetting words or using outdated expressions Solutions:**

- Learn vocabulary in context rather than isolated lists
- Focus on words relevant to YOUR life and interests
- Use spaced repetition (review words at increasing intervals)
- Create mental associations or stories for difficult words

## The Listening Swamp

**Problem: Understanding native speakers speaking naturally Solutions:**

- Start with slower audio and gradually increase speed
- Use French subtitles (not English) when watching videos
- Train with various accents and speaking styles
- Practice "gisting" - understanding the main idea even if you miss details

## YOUR PERSONAL LEARNING SCHEDULE

Use this simple template to create your own weekly French learning routine. Remember, consistency beats intensity! Even 10 minutes daily is better than 2 hours once a week.

### My Weekly French Schedule:

Day	Activity	Time Commitment	Resources Needed
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			



## TRACKING YOUR PROGRESS

Every month, revisit your new abilities you've gained. Celebrate each step forward!

### This Month's Goals:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### What I've Accomplished:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Next Steps on My Journey:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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***Bon voyage sur votre chemin d'apprentissage du français !***

***Géraldine Lepère***