

LEARNING MADE EASY



French

WORKBOOK

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Learn to read, write,
and speak French

Grasp basic grammar
concepts

Get a handle on
key vocabulary

Laura K. Lawless

Virtual French Teacher
LawlessFrench.com



French Workbook

by Laura K. Lawless

for
dummies
A Wiley Brand

French Workbook For Dummies®

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2022946533

ISBN 978-1-119-98203-6 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-119-98205-0 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-119-98204-3 (ebk)

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Introduction

French is one of the world's great languages. It's a native language on five continents, and it's one of the most common languages in the world. Millions of people in more than 30 countries speak it as a native language, and millions more like you want to learn it because of school, work, travel, or cultural understanding — or simply because they just love how it sounds.

The French take their language pretty seriously, and the **Académie française** (or *French Academy*) has assumed the role of protecting the language's purity for more than 350 years — although not everyone listens to the Académie. French is a working language of many major international organizations, so if you're looking for a job with the United Nations, the International Olympic Committee, the International Red Cross, or Interpol, for example, understanding and speaking French gives you an additional language to wow 'em with in the interview.

Regardless of whether you're planning to do business in France or Quebec, prepping for a trip to French-speaking Africa, trying to pass that next exam, or just looking for ways to impress the love of your life, this book can help you figure out how to speak, write, and understand French.

About This Book

French Workbook For Dummies is a combination reference book and workbook for people new to the French language. It's not a textbook, and you don't have to read it from cover to cover or in any particular order. Just take a look at the Table of Contents at the front of

the book or Index at the rear to find the grammar point you want to understand or practice, and then flip to that page. The Appendixes offer quick-reference ways to look up unfamiliar French words, conjugate verbs, and remember details such as which verbs need **être** in the **passé composé**.

I divided the book into six parts, with each part broken into chapters on related topics. From using the present tense, to remembering the past, to looking forward to the future, I explain all about French verbs. I also talk about adjectives and adverbs, questions and negation, greetings and social niceties — everything you need to know to communicate effectively in French.

Not only do you read about French in this book, but you use it, as well. The self-contained chapters are divided into sections and include plenty of examples and practice exercises to make sure you understand what you've just read. The Answer Key at the end of each chapter lets you check yourself as you go.

Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book as easy to use as possible, I use certain conventions throughout:

- » I **bold** all the French words so that you can spot them immediately.
- » I provide English translations in *italics*. I also italicize English terms that I immediately follow with a definition.
- » Per French writing conventions, I precede question marks and all other two-part punctuation marks —

exclamation points, *guillemets* (French quotation marks — « **Bonjour !** »), colons, and semicolons — with a space.

- » Before each set of practice exercises, I provide an example in Q&A format to show you how to complete the task.
- » When a practice question has more than one correct answer, I provide the most common one.
- » The Answer Key at the end of each chapter provides the solutions to the practice exercises throughout that chapter.

Foolish Assumptions

I wrote this book with the following assumptions about you in mind, dear reader:

- » You're new to the French language.
- » You have little to no knowledge of French grammar.
- » You're looking for practice questions to test yourself and help cement your understanding, or to ensure that you score well on your next French quiz or exam.
- » You want to learn French in order to travel to French-speaking countries or communicate with French-speaking friends and family.

Icons Used in This Book

Like all *For Dummies* books, this one uses icons to indicate certain kinds of content. You can see them in the left-hand column throughout the book. Here's what they mean:



TIP

I use this icon to alert you to info that can save you time and frustration.



REMEMBER

This icon points out important concepts that you need to store in the back of your mind because you use them regularly.



WARNING

This icon highlights potential pitfalls to becoming truly familiar with the French language.



DIFFERENCES

This icon lets you know about key points of difference between French and English, or the varieties of French found in different countries.



PRACTICE

This icon pops up at the beginning of every practice exercise so that you know it's time to put your skills to the test.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the abundance of information and guidance related to embracing French that I provide in this book, you get access to even more help and information online at Dummies.com. Check out this book's online Cheat Sheet by going to www.dummies.com and

searching for *French Workbook for Dummies Cheat Sheet*.

Where to Go from Here

French Workbook For Dummies is organized to let you read only what you want to read. Take a look at the Table of Contents (at the front of the book) or the Index (at the back), pick a topic, and go! Or you may want to start in [Chapter 1](#) to figure out how to say *hello* (spoiler alert: the most important word you can know) and *good-bye*. Want to give orders or talk about the past? Then flip to [Part 4](#). It's up to you!

No matter how you choose to read this book, I'm confident that it can help you get comfortable with French. Of course, don't let your practice end with the exercises here. Write to a French pen pal, visit French websites and social media, stream foreign flicks, attempt conversations with your French-speaking friends, or try to translate song lyrics into French while you're stuck in traffic. And when you have a grammar question, come back here and look it up. Pretty soon, the thoughts running through your head may take on a decidedly French flair.

Bon courage ! (*Good luck!*)

Part 1

The Building Blocks of French

IN THIS PART ...

Get familiar with the most important word in French (**bonjour !** *hello!*).

Pick up some tips on working with the parts of speech and correctly using a bilingual dictionary.

Introduce yourself to nouns, gender, and number, which provide the foundation for grammatical agreement.

Use French possessives and demonstratives like a pro.

Express yourself with numbers, times, and dates so that you can get to where — and when — you need to go.

Chapter 1

Getting to Know You

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Starting off on the right foot with a greeting
 - » Introducing yourself and others
 - » Being polite
 - » Using the right subject pronouns
-

Bonjour ! (*Hello!*) and welcome to the most important chapter in this book and in your entire French language journey. Knowing how to greet people in French is more than just understanding that **bonjour** means *hello*; in fact, this simple word is vital to making sure that all of your interactions start off on the right foot.

In addition to sharing the different French greetings, I explain how to introduce yourself and others, offer tips on being polite, and describe the differences between subject pronouns.

French Greetings

As a kid, you might have been told that *please* is the magic word, but in French, it's definitely **bonjour** (*hello*) or an equivalent greeting (depending on the time of day and your relationship to the person you're talking to). In this section I cover the three primary French greetings that you need to be familiar with.

Hello



DIFFERENCES

In English, it's perfectly normal not to say "hello" in some situations. For example, when approaching a stranger for directions, English speakers are likely to say "excuse me" rather than "hello." In France, however, not using a greeting like **Bonjour** (*Hello*) to start a conversation is considered very rude. Any conversation — even a short one — simply can't begin without **bonjour** or another greeting. In a situation where you need to start with **Excusez-moi** (*Excuse me*), it's important to then add a greeting before anything else or you run the risk of being ignored or given a frosty look followed by a pointed, "Bonjour" in return.

Appropriate French greetings include

- » **bonjour** (*hello*): The greeting commonly used in the morning and afternoon, with anyone and everyone. The French language spoken in France doesn't have specific terms for *good morning* or *good afternoon* — **bonjour** is used for all of these. In comparison, Canadian French does have a different term for *good morning*: **bon matin**.
- » **bonsoir** (*good evening*): As opposed to **bonjour**, which means *hello*, *good morning*, and *good afternoon*, **bonsoir** means *good evening*. I can't give you a definite time when you should switch from **bonjour** to **bonsoir**, but a good rule of thumb is either 6 p.m. or when the sun starts to set, whichever is earlier. You can also take cues from the people around you. If you're in a room full of people all saying **bonsoir** to each other at 3 p.m., you can either be a rebel with **bonjour** or just go with the flow and say **bonsoir**.

» **salut** (*hi*): Informal — you can and should use **salut** only with friends, family, and kids, at any time of day.



PRACTICE Mind your manners! Decide which greeting is most appropriate with each person at the time given.

Q. Your cousin at 11 a.m.: _____

A. Salut (*Hi*)

1 The mail carrier at 8 a.m.: _____

2 A friend at 3 p.m.: _____

3 Your boss at 9 a.m.: _____

4 Your brand-new neighbor at 7 p.m.: _____

5 A waitress at 12:30 p.m.: _____

6 Your preschooler son's friend at 8 p.m.:

7 Your daughter at 1 p.m.: _____

8 A cashier at 6 p.m.: _____

9 Your spouse at 10 p.m.: _____

10 The plumber at 10 a.m.: _____

How are you?

Many English speakers say, "How are you?" to anyone and everyone, even when they don't expect an answer or assume it will be an automatic, "Fine." For the French, it's just the opposite: They ask the question only when they expect and care about the response. If you casually ask a French cashier or bank teller how they are, for example, you're likely to get a puzzled look in return.

Comment allez-vous ? means *How are you?* and is formal and/or plural, meaning you should use it when talking to either

- » A person with whom you use respectful language
- » More than one person

When talking to just one person with whom you use **tu** (see the section "[Tu or vous: The second person](#)," later in this chapter), you can use any of these more informal versions to ask *How are you?*

- » **Comment vas-tu ?**
- » **Comment tu vas ?**
- » **Comment ça va ?**
- » **Ça va ?**

All of these questions mean basically the same thing — *How are you?* — but grammatically, they're a bit different.

To answer any of the questions that begin with **Comment**, you can give a real response, such as **Super, bien sûr, je suis à Paris !** (*Great, of course, I'm in Paris!*), or you can say something non-committal, such as **Bien** (*Fine*) or **Très bien** (*Very good*). In addition, you can answer with **Ça va** (*Fine*).

In contrast, **Ça va ?** literally means *Is it going (well)?* So, in addition to any of the responses just mentioned, you can answer with a simple **Oui** (*Yes*) or **Non** (*No*).

You can also use **Ça va ?** when addressing more than one person with whom you use **tu**, such as your children or a group of friends.



TIP

You absolutely could have a conversation in French that consists of just two words repeated as questions and answers:

- **Ça va ?** (*How's it going?*)
- **Ça va, ça va. Ça va ?** (*Fine, fine. How's it going?*)
- **Ça va.** (*Fine.*)

However, you're more likely to have a few extra words thrown in:

- **Ça va ?** (*How's it going?*)
- **Ça va, merci. Et toi, ça va ?** (*Fine, thanks. And you, is it going well?*)
- **Oui, ça va bien.** (*Yes, fine.*)



PRACTICE

Do you want to know how I am? Decide whether you should use **Ça va ?** with each of these people and circle your answer.

Q. A banker Yes No

A. No

11 Your daughter Yes No

12 Your new neighbors Yes No

13 A waitress Yes No

14 Your brother Yes No

15 A group of friends Yes No

16 A cashier Yes No

Won't you tell me your name?

When meeting someone for the first time, in addition to saying **Bonjour** (*Hello*), the two parties need to exchange names, or at least have someone else do it for them.

You can ask someone's name by saying either **Comment vous appelez-vous ?** or **Comment t'appelles-tu ?** (*What is your name?*). Your choice here depends on whether you're talking

- » Formally or to more than one person. (**Comment vous appelez-vous ?**)
- » To one person with whom you'll use **tu**. (**Comment t'appelles-tu ?**)



TIP

You may be tempted to think that you should always say **Comment vous appelez-vous ?** — after all, by definition, you're talking to someone you don't know, so **vous** would seem to make sense. But that's not the only criterion for using **vous**. See the section "[Tu or vous: The second person](#)," later in this chapter, for the full explanation.

You can answer the question *What is your name?* with any of the next four phrases. With the first two responses, you can provide your first name or your full name:

- » **Je m'appelle ...** (*My name is ...*)
- » **Je suis ...** (*I am ...*)

These next two phrases are more limited:

- » **Mon nom est ...** (*My name is ...*): Can only be used when you give your full name
- » **Mon prénom est ...** (*My first name is ...*): Can precede only your first name

You can introduce someone else with the following phrases (which both mean *I'd like to introduce you to ...*):

- » **Je vous présente ...**
- » **Je te présente ...**

You can also say

- » **Il s'appelle ...** (*His name is ...*)
- » **Elle s'appelle ...** (*Her name is ...*)
- » In an informal situation, simply **Voici ...** (*This is ...*).

If necessary, you can include a title in front of the name:

- » **Monsieur/M.** (*Mr.*)
- » **Madame/Mme** (*Mrs.*)
- » **Mademoiselle/Mlle** (*Miss*)



PRACTICE

What's in a name? You're at a conference with your partner, Shay. You meet a woman whom you don't know and run into your friend Marc. Fill in the blanks with the correct introduction. (**Note:** You can use each phrase only once if at all. I marked out *Je m'appelle* because it's the answer to the example question.)

- Elle s'appelle
- Il s'appelle
- Je m'appelle
- Je te présente
- Je vous présente
- Mon nom est
- Mon prénom est

Q. You: Bonsoir Madame. Comment vous appelez-vous ?

A. Woman: **Je m'appelle Agathe Anam.**

17 You: Bonsoir Mme Anam. _____ Laura.

18 _____ mon ami Shay, et

19 Shay, _____ Mme Anam.

20 Shay: Bonsoir Mme Anam. _____ Shay Lavee.

21 You: Ah, salut Marc ! Est-ce que tu connais cette dame ? _____ Mme Anam.

Using Other Social Niceties Appropriately

Although **bonjour** (*hello*) is the most important social nicety, it isn't the only one. You also need *please*, *thank you*, *you're welcome*, and *good-bye*.

Saying please, thank you, and you're welcome

You have two ways to say "please," based on — you guessed it! — whether you use **vous** or **tu** with the

person:

» **s'il vous plaît**

» **s'il te plaît**

Merci means *thank you*, and you can make it stronger by adding **beaucoup** (*very much*).

You're welcome is **je vous en prie** or **je t'en prie**. You'll also hear **de rien** (*it was nothing*), but this response can seem ungracious.

Parting ways

There are quite a few different expressions you can use when leaving, such as

» **au revoir** (*good-bye*)

» **bonne journée** (*have a nice day*)

» **bon/bonne après-midi** (*have a nice afternoon*)

Note: The word **après-midi** can be either masculine or feminine with no difference in meaning

» **bonne soirée** (*have a nice evening*)

» **bonne nuit** (*good night*)

» **à bientôt** (*see you soon*)

» **à plus** (*see you later*)

» **à la prochaine** (*until next time*)

Note that the last two farewells are slightly informal.