

**French
GCSE**

General Introduction

Welcome to your GCSE French course!

This course is designed for students tackling the GCSE French examinations set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). The course is not designed for complete beginners – it assumes that you have some experience of the French language, probably a basic knowledge from school days. Don't worry, however, if this was some time ago! The first few lessons of the course are designed to remind you of the basic 'building blocks' of the French language and to prepare you for the GCSE-style exercises in the rest of the course.

AQA combined two old examination boards, NEAB and SEG, and amalgamated their respective syllabuses.

Modern Languages at GCSE

This course is designed to meet the aims and objectives set for GCSE language study. It will enable you to:

1. develop the ability to understand and use French effectively for purposes of practical communication
2. develop the ability to use French both imaginatively and creatively and to understand French used both imaginatively and creatively
3. develop an understanding of the grammar of French
4. develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning
5. offer insights into the culture and civilisation of French-speaking countries and communities
6. encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a positive approach to other cultures and civilisations
7. develop students' understanding of themselves and their own culture
8. provide enjoyment and intellectual stimulation

9. form a base of the skills, language and attitude required for further study, work and leisure
10. promote skills which have a wider application such as information technology and learning skills (e.g. analysis, memorising, drawing inference).

The GCSE examination requires you to find things out for yourself. This course can help you in that direction, but it cannot provide all the answers for you. You learn French by reading, writing, speaking and listening to as much French as possible, and there are no short cuts. This course will give you hints on how to gain experience in each of these areas, but it cannot do the experiencing for you.

The course will hone your knowledge of French idiom and grammar in preparation for the GCSE French examination, enabling you to aim for a high grade. But, more importantly, it will familiarise you with the various skills and tasks required in specific situations, as dictated by your syllabus. Concentrating on the AQA syllabus, it provides useful practice in AQA examination formats. This will be clear from the organisation of the lessons.

How to Use the Course

The OOL French course consists of a set of printed lessons and an accompanying cassette. The course is divided into four modules. The first module tackles the basics of the French language, and the other three modules deal with the four skills required for the GCSE examination: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Within each module you will find a number of lessons, which contain explanations and activities to get you thinking about and using the language as much as possible. At the end of many of the lessons there is a tutor-marked assignment (TMA). You should send your answers to these assignments to your tutor, who will return them to you with comments, marks and a set of 'model' answers.

Course Structure

The course is arranged as follows:

Module One: Preliminary Lessons

Introduction

Lesson One:

- (a) Definite articles and gender: masculine nouns, feminine nouns
- (b) Indefinite articles
- (c) Plural forms
- (d) The verbs *avoir* and *être*
- (e) Asking a question in French
- (f) The negative of verbs
- (g) The present tense of *-er* verbs
- (h) Vocabulary study

Lesson Two:

- (a) Adjectives and their correct use
- (b) Possessive adjectives
- (c) Verb study: present tense of *-ir* verbs
- (d) Two useful irregular verbs: *faire* and *aller*
- (e) Vocabulary study

Lesson Three:

- (a) More complicated adjectives
- (b) Nouns with irregular plural forms
- (c) Further study of the present tense: *-re* verbs
- (d) Asking questions: further study
- (e) Vocabulary study

Lesson Four:

- (a) Position of adjectives
- (b) Demonstrative adjectives
- (c) Reflexive verbs
- (d) Prepositions
- (e) Object pronouns
- (f) Vocabulary study

Lesson Five:

- (a) The imperative
- (b) Further study of *à* and *de* + definite article
- (c) *de* in expressions of quantity
- (d) the future tense
- (e) Vocabulary study: adverbs

Tutor-marked Assignment A

Lesson Six:

- (a) The imperfect tense
- (b) Disjunctive pronouns
- (c) Object pronouns
- (d) More question forms
- (e) Vocabulary study

Lesson Seven:

- (a) Negative forms
- (b) More negative forms
- (c) The perfect tense
- (d) Making the perfect tense with *être*
- (e) Prepositions used in questions
- (f) Vocabulary study: conjunctions

Lesson Eight:

- (a) Further work on the perfect tense
- (b) Common irregular verb forms in the perfect tense
- (c) The perfect and imperfect tense used together
- (d) Relative pronouns *qui* and *que*
- (e) Comparison of adjectives
- (f) Revision topics

Lesson Nine:

- (a) Negative forms with the perfect tense
- (b) The agreement of past participles
- (c) The pluperfect and how to use it
- (d) Vocabulary study: *s'asseoir* or *être assis*? Action and states!

Lesson Ten:

- (a) The conditional tense: formation and use
- (b) Modal auxiliary verbs used with the conditional
- (c) Relative pronouns: further study
- (d) Vocabulary study: impersonal verbs

Tutor-marked Assignment B

Module Two: Reading Comprehension Skills

Introduction

Lesson Eleven: Everyday Notices

Lesson Twelve: Newspapers, Magazines and Brochures

Lesson Thirteen: Entertainment, Notes and Short Letters
Tutor-marked Assignment C

Lesson Fourteen: Travel, Daily Routine, and Eating Out

Lesson Fifteen: Bookings, Sightseeing and Newspapers

Lesson Sixteen: Travel Information and the Media

Lesson Seventeen: Longer Texts
Tutor-marked Assignment D

Module Three: Writing Skills

Introduction

Lesson Eighteen: Lists and Messages
Tutor-marked Assignment E

Lesson Nineteen: Notes and Postcards
Tutor-marked Assignment F

Lesson Twenty: Form Filling and the Completion of Letters
Tutor-marked Assignment G

Lesson 21: Simple Personal Letters
Tutor-marked Assignment H

Lesson 22: More Complex Writing Tasks;
Tutor-marked Assignment I

Lesson 23: Other Complex Writing Tasks
Tutor-marked Assignment J

Lesson 24: Higher Writing Tasks
Tutor-marked Assignment K

- Lesson 25: Final Preparation for the Writing Test
Tutor-marked Assignment L
- Lesson 26: Practice Written Examinations
Tutor-marked Assignment M
Tutor-marked Assignment N

Module Four: Speaking and Listening Skills

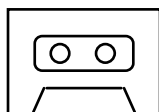
Introduction

- Lesson 27: Listening and Speaking Basics
- Lesson 28: Everyday Transactions
- Lesson 29: Tourist Situations
- Lesson 30: Narration and Giving Information
Tutor-marked Assignment O
- Lesson 31: Practice Oral Examination
Tutor-marked Assignment P

How to Use the Cassette

The cassette which accompanies this course is designed to be used with some of the exercises and tests in Module Four: Speaking and Listening Skills. Side One of the cassette contains exercises which will help you to develop your skills in understanding spoken French and to increase your confidence in speaking the language. Side Two consists of a past NEAB (AQA) listening test, which will give you valuable practice in the skills required by this part of the examination.

The exercises and activities in Module Four which require you to listen to the tape will have the following symbol in the margin:



Additional Study

Although the OOL course is a self-contained study guide, no one book or course could completely prepare you for the GCSE examination. The examination is designed to test your ability to use and understand French in many different situations, and to enable you to gain insights into the culture and civilisation of France and French-speaking countries. It is impossible to gain this type of understanding from a set of lesson notes alone.

You should therefore try to read as widely as possible in the French language. Magazines, newspapers and short stories by modern authors are all excellent ways of extending your knowledge and understanding of French. National Tourist Office brochures printed in French also provide useful material. When reading this extra material, try to get the general sense of the text without using a dictionary. If you have time, go back and note new and useful vocabulary and phrases.

For listening practice it is also a good exercise to check on what language programmes are available on radio and TV – useful oral practice may also be found in this way. The BBC will send you a brochure of their language programmes on request. You can also borrow multimedia or audio courses from your local library. No extra practice is ever wasted in language study!

If you can arrange a stay in France sometime during the final six months of your preparation, so much the better. Even a day trip to France can give you some very handy real-life experience, provided you make the most of it!

Another idea to consider is attending a French conversational class. This would help you to gain confidence when working alongside others and would give you the chance to compare your progress with other students preparing for the same examination. Through college notice boards you may also find there are French students wishing to exchange conversation (where you take turns practising French and English). This is a very cheap and useful way of effectively getting one-to-one tuition, thereby improving your skills and vocabulary.

Speaking and listening tests performed well help to balance out any problems experienced in the writing tests!

There are also a number of good books and audio courses available in bookshops and libraries, which would help you to widen your vocabulary and gain extra practice. You would also benefit from having a good book on French grammar.

The AQA Syllabus (3651)

This course is designed to meet the requirements of the National Criteria for GCSE examinations in French and so is appropriate for the GCSE exams set by all boards. It is, however, designed particularly to assist candidates taking the examination set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) (syllabus 3651).

The AQA examination is particularly suitable for people studying by open learning because of the way speaking is assessed. While some boards ask the teacher to assess speaking skills throughout their course of study (very difficult for open learners), with AQA your speaking skills may be assessed during a single oral examination at the end of the course.

The details of the syllabus will be explained in more depth below. The syllabus is invaluable as a reference tool, as it lists all requirements in great detail and provides very useful lists of vocabulary and linguistic structures. Don't be put off by the long lists, by the end of the course it won't look so daunting!

You should be sure to acquire your own copy of the syllabus, either via the AQA Publications Dept or from the website www.aqa.org.uk.

The syllabus can be purchased from

Publications,
AQA, Aldon House,
39, Heald Grove,
Rusholme,
Manchester
M14 4NA (tel: 0161-953-1170)

or downloaded from www.aqa.org.uk/qual/pdf/AQA3651WSP.pdf.

As you approach the examination, it will also be helpful to purchase and tackle past papers from AQA.

Using the Internet

All students would benefit from access to the Internet. You will find a wealth of information on all the topics in your course. As well as the AQA website (www.aqa.org.uk), you should get into the habit of checking the Oxford Open Learning site (www.ool.co.uk) where you may find news, additional resources and interactive features as time goes by. If you have not already done so, you may register for your free copy of *How to Study at Home*, our 200-page guide to home learning, or enrol on further courses. Put it on your Favourites list now!

Syllabus Details: Assessment

The AQA French syllabus is divided into two 'tiers of examination': **Foundation** and **Higher**. Foundation covers grades G to C; Higher covers grades A* to D. It is generally agreed that a grade B at GCSE is equivalent to a good pass in the old 'O' level examination and a grade C is the absolute minimum if you want to go on to 'A' level. This course is designed for students aiming for grades A*–D.

The examination is split into four components: **Listening, Speaking, Reading** and **Writing**. There are separate Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing tests for both Foundation and Higher, as follows:

Tier	Targeted Grades	Components	Time (mins)
Foundation	G-C	Listening	30
		Speaking	8-10
		Reading	30
		Writing	40
Higher	D-A*	Listening	40
		Speaking	10-12
		Reading	50
		Writing	60

Not only are the Higher tests longer (note their duration in minutes above), but they require a wider vocabulary and more flexibility. There will be more varied styles of language and some unpredictability.

In the past, students aiming for the Higher tier had to take both Foundation and Higher level exams. In other words, in order to gain the highest grades, you had to take eight papers; a Foundation and a Higher level test in all four assessment areas. However, this is no longer the case. In the AQA examination, you only take one paper, either Foundation or Higher, in each assessment area.

Each test (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) carries equal weighting, so it is important to bring all the skills to the same level.

One of the key skills assessed is your ability to understand, and use appropriately, the French language in all its forms. A wide variety of styles, from slang to literary narrative, will be introduced to all three areas of the examination, and you will have to be able to deal with the material appropriately. Throughout your studies you should think about the style of material with which you are presented, and respond to it in an appropriate way. This means that when learning new vocabulary or phrases you must be aware of its exact meaning and nuance. You should know whether it is slang or good 'correct' French. Pointers will be given in the course, but you should always check new vocabulary in the dictionary.

Topic Content

The examinations will mainly cover everyday situations which a visitor to France might face while interacting with French people. Most questions will be set in French, and this will be reflected in the assignments you will find in the Oxford Open Learning course. You are expected to be able to talk about yourself and to state your preferences and opinions.

AQA provides a list of topics (grouped under the title 'Themes and Topics') which may appear in any examination. You'll see from the list below that practically *all* the 'everyday' topics of conversation that you can think of might arise in your examination. There are also some more abstract topics, such as 'The environment'. The material in this course covers a lot of these topics, but, as we mentioned earlier, you will have to gain extra exposure to French to cover *all* eventualities. Refer to the syllabus if you want to make sure you have covered all the topics in detail.

The topics listed in the syllabus are as follows:

AQA Themes and Topics

1) My World

- 1A Self, Family and Friends
- 1B Interests and Hobbies
- 1C Home and Local Environment
- 1D Daily Routine
- 1E School and Future Plans (up to age 18)

2) Holiday Time and Travel

- 2A Travel, Transport and Finding the Way
- 2B Tourism
- 2C Accommodation
- 2D Holiday Activities
- 2E Services

3) Work and Lifestyle

- 3A Home Life
- 3B Healthy Living
- 3C Part-Time Jobs and Work Experience
- 3D Leisure
- 3E Shopping

4) The Young Person In Society

- 4A Character and Personal Relationships
- 4B The Environment
- 4C Education
- 4D Careers and Future Plans (post age 18)
- 4E Social Issues, Choices and Responsibilities

This course was prepared with the generous assistance of the former Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (now AQA) and a number of NEAB specimen questions are used by kind permission.

Study Tips

Use of Bilingual Dictionary

Dictionaries cannot be used in the examination. This should not stop you, however, from learning how to use one efficiently. A bilingual dictionary is undoubtedly a valuable tool when used carefully, and can aid comprehension and improve accuracy.

To get the best out of your dictionary, you must start to use it straightaway. Familiarise yourself with its entry system and various abbreviations. Look through the whole dictionary to see what information it offers: it may have a useful grammatical section, for example. Remember to double-check new words in both French and English sections of the dictionary to get a better understanding of the word and its uses.

What sort of dictionary should you buy? A pocket dictionary may be useful when travelling, but for studying purposes you will need a good medium-sized bilingual dictionary. If you're thinking of taking your studies further than GCSE, consider purchasing the large Collins/Robert dictionary, which is recommended to 'A' level and university language students.

AQA's Student Guide

AQA publishes a student guide to their French GCSE specification, containing lists of vocabulary, information on grammar and tips on exam technique and use of dictionaries. It can be downloaded from the AQA website: www.aqa.org.uk/qual/pdf/aqa3651wsg.pdf

Vocabulary Book

A good way of improving your French vocabulary is to keep a vocabulary book. In this book you should write any new words or phrases that you come across, together with their English translations. The action of writing down the vocabulary should help you to remember it, and your vocabulary book will prove a valuable revision aid.

Communication Strategies

AQA suggests a number of 'communication strategies' you can use in order to complement your core knowledge of French. They are explained in full in Section 7.4 of the syllabus (and in

the student guide). The basic idea of 'communication strategies' is to use all available information to aid understanding and communication. Clues can be found from the context, grammar and the formation and patterns of words.

Even if you learn all the vocabulary and linguistic structures laid down by the syllabus, there will still be unfamiliar language in the examinations, as they contain a great deal of authentic material. You will have to ignore some words and move on, swiftly dealing with others with the communication strategies. In this way you will be in a much better position to tackle all sorts of genuine French material, not only in the examination but in real life too! The overall emphasis of the syllabus is on *communicating* at all times even when the perfect word escapes you.

The relevance of these communication strategies to the skills required by each part of the examination will be discussed in the introduction to each module.

A Final Word...

Finally, I hope that passing GCSE is not your only motive for studying this course. Learning French should be fun! The more contact you have with French people and the French language, the more you should enjoy it. The tests set by the syllabus are not useless skills – they are all relevant to the challenges you would face if you were to travel or live in France. France is a beautiful country and French people are very friendly – with luck this course will help you to find this out for yourself.

Good luck, or *Bonne Chance!*

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