

**French
IGCSE**

General Introduction

Welcome to your International GCSE (‘IGCSE’) French course!

This course is designed for students tackling the IGCSE French examinations set by Edexcel. The course is not ideal for *complete* beginners and it will be helpful if you have some experience of the French language. But the first few lessons are designed to remind you of the basic ‘building blocks’ of the French language and to prepare you for the IGCSE-style exercises in the rest of the course.

This course provides preparatory exercises, etc, for the compulsory Speaking exam, but this component is often the biggest challenge for distance learners and the home-educated. Depending on your circumstances, it is advisable to find as many ways as you can of gaining practice in conversational French.



Oxford Open Learning

Modern Languages at IGCSE: Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this qualification are to enable students to develop:

- understanding and use of written forms of the target language, in a range of familiar and practical contexts, and for a variety of purposes
- understanding and use of the spoken forms of the target language, in a range of familiar and practical contexts, and for a variety of purposes
- the ability to communicate effectively in the target language through the written word, using a range of vocabulary and structures
- the ability to communicate effectively in the target language through speaking, using a range of vocabulary and structures
- a knowledge and understanding of the target language grammar and its practical application
- a knowledge and understanding of countries and communities where the target language is spoken
- positive attitudes towards modern foreign language learning
- a suitable foundation for further study of the target language, or another language.

The IGCSE 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.

How to use the Course

The OOL French course consists of a set of printed lessons and an accompanying CD. The course is divided into five modules. The first four modules tackle the basics of the French language and provide broad coverage of the five topic areas identified by the Edexcel specification. The fifth module extends this coverage to focus on speaking and listening skills.

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

| Lesson Title | Pearson Topic Area 2018 | Pearson Topic Area from 2019 |
|--|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Module One: About Me | | |
| 1. Who's at Home? | C | C |
| 2. Appearance and Personality | All | All |
| 3. Greetings | All | All |
| Tutor-marked Assignment A | | |
| 4. Family Life | C | C |
| 5. Nationalities, Countries, Jobs | A | A |
| Tutor-marked Assignment B | | |
| 6. Hobbies | E | E |
| 7. Joining Clubs | E | E |
| Module Two; Day to Day Life | | |
| 8. The Weather and Seasons | A | D |
| Tutor-marked Assignment C | | |
| 9. The Domestic Environment | C | C |
| 10. House and Home | C | C |
| 11. Towns and Regions | A | A |
| Tutor-marked Assignment D | | |
| 12. Daily Routine | C | C |
| 13. Mealtimes | C | C/E |
| 14. School and Future Plans | B | B |
| 15. Studying | B | B |
| Tutor-marked Assignment E | | |
| Module Three: Holidays and Travel | | |
| 16. Travel, Transport, Finding the Way | A | A |
| 17. Holiday Time and Travel | A | A |
| 18. Buying Tickets | A/D | A/D |
| Tutor-marked Assignment F | | |
| 19. Tourism | A | A |
| 20. Talking about Holidays | A | A |
| 21. Accommodation | A | A |
| 22. Holiday Activities | A | A |
| Tutor-marked Assignment G | | |
| 23. Keeping in Touch | D | D |
| 24. Lost Property | A/D | A/D |
| Module Four: Modern Life | | |
| 25. Emergency Services | D | E |
| Tutor-marked Assignment H | | |
| 26. Domestic Chores | C | C |
| 27. Healthy Living | E | E |
| 28. Part-Time Jobs, Volunteering and Work Experience | B | B |

Tutor-marked Assignment I

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 29. Entertainments | E | D/E |
| 30. Shopping | E | E |
| 31. The Environment | D | D |
| 32. General Revision and Conclusion | All | All |

Tutor-marked Assignment J**Module Five: Speaking and Listening Skills**

Module Introduction

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 33. Listening and Speaking Basics | All | |
| 34. Everyday Transactions | A | A |
| 35. Tourist Situations | A | A |
| 36. Narration and Giving Information | A/C | A/C |

Tutor Marked Assignment K

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|--|
| 37. Practice Oral Examination | All | |
|-------------------------------|-----|--|

Tutor Marked Assignment L

Appendix: Vocabulary

How to Use the Audio CD

The Audio CD which accompanies this course is designed to be used with some of the exercises and tests in Module Five: Speaking and Listening Skills. It should be possible to listen to this CD as long as you have an audio-CD player, or other compatible equipment. You will need to be able to stop and start the recording, rewind, etc. You may prefer to copy the contents of the CD on to an audio-tape (cassette) or MP3 player (amongst other possible media) and listen to that instead – it's up to you.

Section One of the CD contains exercises which will help you develop your skills in understanding spoken French and increase your confidence in speaking the language. Section Two consists of a past GCSE 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 CD will usually 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 IGCSE 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 Internet provides a wide range of resources. Language learning sites on the internet tend to start out as free resources and then become subscription-only later on. Some of the activities in this course are based on the websites listed below. Some are free; some may require a subscription. We cannot guarantee that you will be able to follow all links. Apart from the exercises we suggest you do, feel free to browse and practise at your own pace.

www.oye.languageskills.co.uk

www.languagesonline.org.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/French (UK only)

The Edexcel Specification (4FR0 in 2018 and 4FR1 from 2019)

This course is designed particularly to assist candidates taking the examinations set by Edexcel. This is the **Edexcel IGCSE** (International GCSE) syllabus/specification **4FR0** as set for the last time in 2018 and **4FR1** from 2019. There are no *significant* differences between the two, so this course caters for both possibilities.

There is a difference in the grading. In 2018, grades range from A* (best) to G (lowest). From 2019, they range from 9 (best) to 1. The new grade 4 is roughly equivalent to the old grade C. This does not affect your study.

The Edexcel examinations are particularly suitable for people studying by open or distance 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 Edexcel 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 specification, either via the Edexcel Publications Dept or from <http://www.edexcel.com>. Make sure you find one that is appropriate for your expected examination-year. If you download it, keep it safe and accessible in electronic form and look at it from time to time. As you progress through the course you should find the exam board's targets and procedures making increasingly focused sense to you.

As you approach the examination, it will also be helpful to download and tackle past papers from Edexcel. This will be dealt with as part of the course.

Grades Available

The IGCSE in French (and the equivalent qualifications in other foreign languages) comprise *three* external assessments years: Paper 1 (Listening), Paper 2 (Reading and Writing) and Paper 3 (Speaking). Each paper is targeted at grades A* to G (2018) or 9 to 1 (from 2019).

Students who fail to achieve grade G (or 1) will be awarded 'Ungraded'.

Summary of Scheme of Assessment

All three papers follow this pattern:

- Externally assessed
- Availability: June series

Paper 1: Listening**Paper code: 4FR1/01 (French IGCSE)****Overview of content: Topic Areas**

This paper assesses listening skills across *five* topic areas (from 2019):

- A. Home and abroad
- B. Education and employment
- C. Personal life and relationships (2018 = house, home and daily routines)
- D. The world around us (2018 = the modern world and the environment)
- E. Social activities, fitness and health.

Paper 1 is 25% of the total International GCSE

Assessment is through a 30-minute examination paper set and marked by Pearson, plus five minutes' reading time.

The total number of marks for the paper is 40.

Overview of listening assessment:

- The paper is assessed through an examination paper set and marked by Edexcel, lasting 40 minutes, plus 5 minutes' reading time.
- The total number of marks for the paper is 50.

Paper 1 represents 25% of the overall IGCSE qualification.

Paper 2: Reading and Writing**Paper code: 4FR1/02 (from 2019)**

Overview of content: 5 Topic Areas (as above).

Overview of reading and writing assessment:

- The paper is assessed through an examination paper lasting 1 hour and 45 minutes, set and marked by Edexcel (90 mins in 2018).
- The total number of marks for the paper is 80, with 40 marks for reading and 40 marks for writing (60/30+30 in 2018).

Paper 2 represents 50% of the overall IGCSE qualification.

Paper 3: Speaking**Paper code: 4FR1/03 (from 2019)**

Overview of content: 5 Topic Areas (as above).

This paper assesses speaking skills across five topic areas; however, sub-topics A3, C3, C5, D2 and E4 will *not* be assessed in this paper. The examination is made up of three tasks (A, B and C). Students will present and answer

questions on a picture. They will also discuss two different topics, chosen at random by Pearson from the 5 topic areas.

Overview of speaking assessment:

- 8-10 minutes
- The total number of marks for the paper is 40.

All questions in each paper will be in the target language (*i.e.* French). Students will be required to answer in the target language. Instructions will be in the target language and in English.

Paper 3 represents 25% of the overall IGCSE qualification.

Students must not use dictionaries for any of the examination papers.

Sub-topics (from 2019)

A. Home and abroad

- 1 Life in the town and rural life
- 2 Holidays, tourist information and directions
- 3 Services (e.g. bank, post office)*
- 4 Customs
- 5 Everyday life, traditions and communities

B. Education and employment

- 1 School life and routine
- 2 School rules and pressures
- 3 School trips, events and exchanges
- 4 Work, careers and volunteering
- 5 Future plans

C. Personal life and relationships

- 1 House and home
- 2 Daily routines and helping at home
- 3 Role models*
- 4 Relationships with family and friends
- 5 Childhood*

D. The world around us

- 1 Environmental issues
- 2 Weather and climate*
- 3 Travel and transport
- 4 The media
- 5 Information and communication technology

E. Social activities, fitness and health

- 1 Special occasions
- 2 Hobbies, interests, sports and exercise
- 3 Shopping and money matters
- 4 Accidents, injuries, common ailments and health issues*
- 5 Food and drink

*Sub-topics A3, C3, C5, D2 and E4 will *not* be assessed in Paper 3: Speaking.

The 2018 list is slightly different – please see specification 4FR0.

Detailed Content

Paper 1: Listening

Students are re Students are required to convey their understanding of spoken French through a series of listening tasks.

Students must be able to:

- identify and note main points
- deduce the meaning of words from context
- extract specific details
- identify points of view
- show some understanding of unfamiliar language
- recognise attitudes, emotions and opinions.

This paper will feature questions drawn from a variety of sources, which all relate to the topics. These sources should be considered as different contexts in which students can write and understand French. Specialist and/or technical French vocabulary or detailed specialist knowledge of the topics are not required.

Content: The listening examination lasts 30 minutes and is worth a quarter (25%) of the qualification. It consists of 40 marks.

This paper will consist of seven tasks, each based on a single recorded text.

Students will be given five minutes to read the questions before the paper begins and will be expected to respond to the questions as they listen.

Students will hear each text twice. Recorded texts may be in the form of short statements, monologues, and dialogues between two or three speakers. Where there are two or three speakers, the identity of each speaker will be clearly signposted.

Recordings and tasks will always be contextualised and, where appropriate, a purpose for the task will be identified.

The topics of the listening texts will be taken from a range of different situations, from both everyday life and academic contexts with which students will be familiar. One task type may be used with each listening text.

Correct spelling will not be a requirement as long as the student's response is comprehensible.

The examination will begin with shorter statements, which build into short paragraphs and longer conversations. Task types demand a variety of input from students and include multiple-choice, multiple-matching, note-taking, table-completion and gap-fill questions. We will give you practice in each of these.

Paper 2: Reading and Writing

Reading

Students are required to convey their understanding of written French through a series of reading tasks.

Students must be able to:

- identify and note main points
- deduce the meaning of words from context
- extract specific details
- identify points of view
- show some understanding of unfamiliar language
- recognise attitudes, emotions and opinions.

This section will feature questions drawn from a variety of sources that all relate to the topics. These sources should be considered as different contexts in which students can write and understand French. Specialist and/or technical French vocabulary or detailed specialist knowledge of the topics are not required.

Content: Students should spend approximately 52 minutes of the 1-hour and 45-minute exam on this section, which is worth 50% of the paper and 25% of the qualification. It consists of 40 marks.

This section will consist of five tasks, each based on a collection of short texts or a longer single text.

The literary text consists of a short extract from a text that may have been adapted and abridged from authentic sources to be appropriate to this level – from letters, short stories, novels or plays to contemporary and historical sources

Students will be required to read a range of authentic factual and non-factual written material of varying length, in different registers and contexts, and from different sources. These may include advertisements, short passages, letters, information leaflets, faxes, emails, website pages, and newspaper and magazine articles and literary texts.

Stimuli and tasks will always be contextualised and, where appropriate, a purpose for the task will be identified.

The topics of the stimulus texts will be taken from a range of situations, from both everyday life and academic contexts with which students will be familiar. A different task type may be used with each stimulus text.

The questions will require a combination of non-verbal responses and answers in French. In order to answer the questions, students will need to use a range of reading techniques such as skimming, scanning and in-depth reading for details. Grammatical accuracy will not be assessed in this section of the paper. Correct spelling will not be a requirement as long as the student's response is comprehensible.

Task types demand a variety of input from students and include multiple-choice, multiple-matching, note-taking, table-completion, gap-fill and short-answer questions.

Writing

Students need to draw on their knowledge of French language, grammar and lexis in selecting appropriate forms of words to complete sentences, and demonstrate an ability to manipulate French language in continuous writing. As part of their International GCSE, students should undertake regular writing activities.

This section will require students to:

- write for a variety of audiences, such as friends and acquaintances, teachers, family members, groups and professional bodies
- write using a wide range of grammatical forms and structures
- write using a wide range of relevant and appropriate vocabulary.

Students should spend approximately 52 minutes of the 1-hour and 45-minute exam on this section, which is worth 50% of the paper and 25% of the qualification. It consists of 40 marks.

Content: This section will consist of two writing tasks and a third grammar-based task.

The first writing task is short, and the student will be asked to write 60–75 words, including four prescribed words or short phrases.

The second writing task is longer than the first and contains an element of choice. The student will be able to choose from three questions that are drawn from different topics, and they will need to write between 130 and 150 words in response to the question, addressing four bullet points.

In the third grammar-based task students will be asked to change the words in brackets so that they correctly fit the sentences. This will involve the need to manipulate, for example, verbs and adjectives, into their correct word form.

Grammatical accuracy, punctuation and spelling will be assessed in this section of the paper.

There are small differences in the 2018 exam. Please refer to the specification.

Paper 3: Speaking (from 2019)

Content: Students are required to convey their understanding of spoken French through three speaking tasks.

Students must be able to:

- describe the contents of a picture
- describe possible past or future events related to people in the picture
- respond to questions about the picture and its related topic
- take part in a spontaneous conversation on two further topics.

In each conversation, students must develop their responses, show initiative, express and justify points of view and refer to past, present and future events.

The examination is made up of three tasks (A, B and C). The tasks must be conducted in consecutive order.

Task A (picture-based discussion)

The intention of this task is to enable students to speak about a situation or scenario with which they have some familiarity. **Candidates will have to select a picture before the exam.**

Students will select a picture from any sub topic area excluding sub-topics A3, C3, C5, D2 and E4. These will not be assessed in Task A.

Tasks B and C (conversations on topics)

The intention of Tasks B and C is to test students on two topics that have not been specifically prepared so as to test spontaneity of response. The teacher/examiner uses the randomisation grid provided by Pearson to determine which topic is to be examined in Tasks B and C.

Sub-topics A3, C3, C5, D2 and E4 will not be assessed in Tasks B and C.

Three distinct topics must be examined across Tasks A, B and C. The topic chosen for Task A must be different from the topic selected at random for Task B. The topic for Task C, also selected at random, will be different from both of the previous topics in Tasks A and B.

Preparation for the speaking test

Picture selection in Task A:

To ensure students have access to the full range of assessment criteria and the opportunity to score well in Task A, it is essential they select a picture that follows the guidelines below.

The picture **MUST** contain the following elements:

- people
- objects
- interactions

The picture must *not* contain any text that could support students in their responses. For examples of pictures, please see the Sample Assessment Materials document, which is available on our website. Teachers/examiners may not practise Task A with their students using the picture they will be using in the test. They may use other pictures on the same topic but they may not practise or rehearse using the candidate's chosen picture.

Notification of Task A focus: Candidates *must* provide a copy of the picture for the teacher/examiner in advance of the test.

Conduct of the speaking test

The assessment must be conducted entirely in French. Students must complete all three tasks in consecutive order. The assessment must be conducted in one continuous session.

Use of notes: Students must not take notes with them into the examination. However, they should bring their picture for Task A.

Timings of the tasks: The total assessment time is 8–10 minutes. Students are assessed on the quality of responses so the length of tasks is representative of their relative demand.

Assessment times for the tasks are as follows:

- Task A: 2 to 3 minutes
- Task B: 3 to 3 minutes 30 seconds
- Task C: 3 to 3 minutes 30 seconds.

Task C should continue without a pause or interruption from Task B. Tasks B and C should not exceed 7 minutes. Excess candidate material will not be assessed.

Recording: All candidates' speaking tests *must* be recorded. This is the responsibility of the examining centre. The centre should keep a copy of all recordings.

Randomisation grid: Based on the topic chosen for the picture-based discussion task, the teacher/examiner will use a randomisation grid to select the discussion topics for the first and second conversation (Tasks B and C). So if you've brought a picture linked to Topic D, say, the grid will give the examiner a random choice between Topics A, B, C and E for Tasks 2 and 3.

Instructions for Task A

Teachers/examiners must ask each candidate five questions in total (plus the allowed prompts – see below) There are five types of questioning which teachers/examiners must cover in the discussion and in the order listed below. Teachers must ensure they ask ONE question from each question type.

- **Question type 1:** A description of what you can see in the picture.
- **Question type 2:** Specific factual information about the picture; for example, select a person or persons in the picture and state what they are doing.
- **Question type 3:** Past or future hypothesis This question must ask the candidate to imagine a possible past or potential future event relating to the picture. This is the opportunity to support the candidate in using additional tenses and time frames.
- **Question type 4:** Opinions about the picture; this question elicits the candidate's opinions on the picture and the topic.
- **Question type 5:** Evaluation The teacher/examiner should elicit an evaluation from the candidate. This question will move away from the content of the picture and exploit the wider topic area.

Prompts: In order to enable candidates to develop their responses teacher/examiners are allowed to use prompts for questions. Only the following three prompts may be used.

1. Why (not)?
2. Anything else?
3. Is that all?

There must be no other supplementary questions and teacher/examiners must not deviate from these prompts.

Instructions for Tasks B and C

For each conversation teachers/examiners should:

- ask open questions
- ask questions at an appropriate level of the candidate's ability
- link the questions to the previous response as far as possible
- elicit a range of tenses (past, present and future), structures and vocabulary
- elicit opinions and justifications
- provide candidates with an opportunity to expand
- respect timings.

For examples of these questions, please see the Edexcel Sample Assessment Materials document.

Authentication of candidate responses: The teacher/examiner and the candidate must sign the declaration of authentication on the candidate cover sheet (see Appendix 6: Candidate cover sheet (Paper 3: Speaking)), confirming that the work is the candidate's own. Any candidate unable to provide an authentication statement will receive zero marks for the component.

Differences in 2018 exams

There are no significant differences. The one point to note is that the Paper 3 exam is divided, in theory into just *two* sections. But Section B still consists of two separate conversations and, overall, the test follows exactly the same pattern as in 2019 and later years. Please see the specification 4FR0 for full details.

Topic Content for the IGCSE Exams

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.

Edexcel 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, extra exposure to French (on your own active initiative) will further help you to cover *all* likely eventualities. Refer to the syllabus if you want to make sure you have covered all the topics in detail. If you or your tutor still feel you are 'thin' on any topic area, your tutor may well have further suggestions on resources for reading/listening, or otherwise, to boost and strengthen your knowledge, skills and confidence.

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.

Quite often, even what seem obvious words may not match one-for-one across two languages. You might for instance know, or discover, that *un jeu* = a game (as in *Les Jeux Olympiques*). So far, so good; and you might then not unfairly assume *un jeu de cartes* to mean 'a game of cards'. But French also uses this very phrase for a 'hand' (*i.e.* one game's worth of tokens held by each player), and indeed a complete set or 'pack' ~ a related concept, of course, but distinctly not the selfsame thing. French also has two distinct words for different styles of 'knowing', yet only one verb to cover what English distinguishes between 'wearing' and 'carrying'.

A lot of the time, of course, matters are much safer and more manageable than this; *un train* = 'a train', for instance. But then again, while *le pain* = 'bread', for French people this will perhaps conjure up a rather different shape, texture and taste. Meanwhile, English expresses 'clockwise' in 9 letters where French takes 7 words (arguably, even 8). Even the French word for 'short' (*court*) is longer than their word for 'long' (*long*), which on the face of it makes each language look equally silly ... !

Don't let these particular examples bother you unduly at this stage; they are simply offered to open up some of the issues which two-way checking, in a good dictionary pitched at a level that you're comfortable with, will help you tackle more confidently. You may also find that you are the kind of language learner who enjoys absorbing that kind of quirk; that such words stick in the mind precisely because they're odd or interesting for some reason; or perhaps that you pick up other words that happen to draw your eye while you are hunting for something else altogether in your dictionary. Either way you will be enlarging and enriching your language knowledge, and you never know when such discoveries might come in useful!

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 IGCSE, consider purchasing the large Collins/Robert dictionary, which is recommended to 'A' level and university language students.

Vocabulary Book and Word-learning Strategies

A good way of improving your French vocabulary is also to keep your own 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.

You should rule or fold neatly down the middle of each page so that the French words go on one side and the English down the other ~ always the same way round, whichever way you prefer. You can then cover up the English column periodically and see how many of the words you now recognise; and then test yourself the other way, into the target language.

Meanwhile both we and the exam board offer a full core vocabulary list. This appears in the target language only ~ so that you can fill in meanings yourself as you meet and recognise the words, rather than us ‘spoon-feeding’ you every single word (when in any case, a precise shade of meaning may vary depending on the context in which it crops up). There are also specific vocabulary lists attached to reading pieces and other tasks throughout the course. Rest assured that you will not be short of support in this frontline aspect of your language learning!

Somebody once likened language-learning to the process of making an omelette; you begin with a panful of swirly material that can’t be gripped and has little nutritional value. But as the heat comes up and goes on, bits and strands in it begin to harden. Perhaps you make your omelettes by ‘combing’ all the solid stuff together into the middle of the pan, so that what remains fluid trickles into a thin layer round the edge and cooks more quickly; or maybe you leave the whole thing flat to cook right across, but perhaps toss in a bit of interesting seasoning while that happens ~ herbs, diced pepper or mushroom, whatever. Either way you end up with a worthwhile, nutritious, flavoursome dish.

Learning a language can be like that: it may swirl awkwardly around you to begin with, and you may then tend it scrupulously or to some extent it may just come together of its own accord through exposure and absorption. It may well benefit from you adding or building-in interesting finds (like the seasoning; in this case, words or turns of phrase that you happen to come across and find worth remembering/including). Different people achieve it in different ways and styles!

Communication Strategies

Edexcel suggests a number of ‘communication strategies’ you can use in order to complement your core knowledge of French. 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.

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 Edexcel website (www.edexcel.com), 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.

Some of the course activities ask you to go online and access listening or video materials. To do this you will need to have Adobe Flash Player installed on your computer. This is free and can be downloaded at:

<http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer>

A Final Word...

Finally, I hope that passing IGCSE 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!

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