

Why Study French?

With French, you can ...

1. Communicate with French speakers around the world.

- French is spoken by over 300 million people on 5 continents as a first or second language. It is estimated there could be over 700 million speakers by 2050.
- French is the only language with English taught as a foreign language in every country.
- French has the status of official language in 29 countries and governments world-wide and is used in over 50 countries/territories officially or unofficially.
- About 2 million people in the US speak French or French Creole in the home.
- 9.6 million people speak French in Canada, where French is one of two official languages.
- Six million people in America speak French fluently as a second or foreign language. (Some estimate this number to be as high as 11 million people.)
- There are 96 million French speakers in Africa alone.
- New York, California, Texas, and Florida have joined Louisiana, Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire as the main centers of French in the US.
- French is the 6th most widely spoken language in the world, and it is widely used on the internet.

2. Boost your academic skills.

- The richest source of vocabulary in English comes, not directly from Latin, but from French.
- Since at least one out of three words in English has been borrowed from French (some say as much as 50%), students studying French will improve their scores on comprehension of reading texts and vocabulary on standardized tests, such as the ACT and the SAT.
- French has been valued for its words with precise definitions. It was this reason that the founding member countries of the United Nations found it useful to work both in English and in French.
- Knowing French enriches language usage in English in many domains, e.g., legal, administrative, political, architectural, artistic, culinary, aeronautical, and engineering terms.

3. Become proficient (able to use the language) more quickly than with most world languages.

- French is among the languages that require the least amount of instructional hours in order for an English speaker to reach a high level of speaking proficiency, according to the Defense Language Institute.
- It requires approximately 720 hours (5 contact hours a day) for a mature learner to reach an advanced level of speaking proficiency in French; whereas, after 1,000 hours a student of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean may only reach a low level of speaking proficiency.
- Having studied French, the learner can more easily develop proficiency in other languages.
- French is a good choice for native speakers of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese because of their common roots in Latin.

4. Increase options for undergraduate and graduate studies.

- There are many French-speaking countries where French learners can study abroad: there are 630 French-language universities and more than 350 French faculties worldwide.
- Researchers, particularly in science, technology, medicine, business, and history, have an edge on their competitors when they can read studies in the original language, i.e., French, without having to wait for a translation. Not all research is translated into English.
- Most graduate schools require knowledge of at least one foreign language, and French is a popular choice for many fields of study.

5. Connect your future to cutting-edge fields in science and technology.

- French-speaking countries have been at the cutting edge of medical research in field such as, HIV virus research, medical genetics (the Human Genome Project), and reconstructive surgery.
- French-speaking countries are on the cutting edge of scientific discoveries and technological innovations: for example, nanotechnology, nuclear energy, voice compression, fiber optics, microchips, video gaming, commercial satellites, aerospace technology, and high-speed rail services.

6. Invest in your career.

- French speakers are in demand in banking and finance, international market analysis, diplomacy, hotel management, international trade, journalism and media, aviation, national security, education, translation and interpretation, health care, customer service, tourism, and law enforcement.
- Knowing French can be a plus in getting a job or advancing in one's field.
- French is an official language of our largest bilateral trading partner, Canada.
- The US is the leading investor in France. Over 3,700 American companies operate in France.
- France is the second largest investor in the US.
- Among foreign countries doing business in the US, France employs the 3rd largest number of Americans.
- France is the world's 5th largest economy and Europe's 2nd largest market.

7. Benefit more from travel experiences.

- French is an influential language spoken and understood in our own hemisphere. Over 33 million people in the Americas know French. Some destinations include Quebec, New Brunswick, St. Pierre and Miquelon, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Haiti, St. Martin, French Guyana, Maine, and Louisiana.
- Most major American cities, including New York, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston, have an active French community, which organizes numerous Francophone and Francophile programs and events. The largest French cultural network, the Federation of the Alliances Françaises, has over 100 chapters in the US and Puerto Rico. (There are over 1,000 chapters found in 136 countries around the world.)
- Every continent offers French-speaking destinations, which are enjoyed more when the traveler can interact with the local residents in their language.
- France is world's most frequent tourist destinations, with 83 million tourists each year.

8. Enjoy special leisure-time activities.

- In the US, half of the foreign films watched and 30% of the foreign books read are in French.
- French and Quebec films have experienced international recognition and are shown in the US. French film production (500 films a year) ranks number 2 in the world
- French is always an official language used to announce events and winners at the Olympic Games.
- Sports enthusiasts can follow their favorite events and athletes in a number of sports popular in the French-speaking world. Examples are:
 - cycling in the Tour de France and Paris-Brest-Paris;
 - tennis in the French Open;
 - horseracing at Longchamps;
 - motorcycle racing and Formula 1 automobile racing, 24 Heures du Mans;
 - Formula 1 automobile racing, Monaco's Grand Prix;
 - off-road racing in the Rally Dakar;
 - baseball and hockey matches against Canadian teams.

9. Appreciate Francophone contributions to world culture.

- France has won more Nobel Prizes for literature than any other country in the world and is one of the top producers of international films.
 - The impact of French speakers on literature, philosophy, and the arts (music, painting, sculpture, film, photography, theatre, dance, cuisine, fashion, and architecture) is particularly noteworthy.
 - American history is replete with allusions to the presence of the French and French-Canadians on this continent and across our country. These references to people and events have been imbedded in the local, regional, and national culture of the US.
- .
- The French came first to the New World as explorers in the 16th century. Later, in the 17th and 18th centuries, they undertook hunting and trading with Native Americans *as coureurs des bois*, (runners of the woods) and *voyageurs* (travelers and explorers). The names of Champlain, Cartier, La Salle, Marquette, and Jolliet (a French-Canadian trader) are readily identified with the period of exploration of North America. The French established successful settlements in North America (New France) and the Caribbean, and added to the cultural life of the American colonies as they evolved in the 17th and 18th centuries.
 - The American Revolution is also remembered for the contributions and military exploits of the French, such as Lafayette, Fleury, Rochambeau, and De Grasse.

10. Understand a variety of world perspectives.

- French is spoken in more than 50 countries/territories in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa.
- Knowing French enables one to understand and appreciate cultural diversity, which will not only enhance one's competitive advantage abroad and help maintain political and security interests, but also promote a better understanding of cultural diversity within the US.
- With a knowledge of French, one will be able to work toward global consensus and peace and participate in humanitarian efforts, since French is an official language or a working language in many international agencies and organizations, including:

African Union
Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie
Amnesty International
Council of Europe
Doctors without Borders
European Court of Justice
European Tribunal of First Instance
European Union
International Labor Bureau
International Olympic Committee
International Red Cross
Interpol

NATO
Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Press Room at the European Commission
UNESCO
Union of International Associations
United Nations
Universal Postal Union
World Health Organization