Guaranteed to get you talking

**Fast Talk**

**French**

- **Fast, fun and easy-to-use**
  Essential phrases to meet all your travel needs

- **Ask for advice**
  How to get local recommendations

- **Get your message across**
  Easy-to-use pronunciation guides

- **Language secrets uncovered**
  Expert tips to boost your confidence

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**3RD EDITION**
Published May 2013
First Published May 2004

**lonelyplanet.com**
UK £2.50
USA $5.99

**ISBN 978-1-74179-481-6**

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Contents

Before You Go 4

Chatting & Basics 9

Sightseeing 52

Airport & Transport 24

Shopping 57

Accommodation 32

Entertainment 63

Eating & Drinking 38

Practicalities 66

English to French Dictionary 75

French to English Dictionary 84

Index 92
Many visitors to France get around without speaking a word of French, but just a few phrases go a long way in making friends, inviting service with a smile, and ensuring a rich and rewarding travel experience – you could discover a cozy vineyard off the tourist track, experience a sublime meal, or grab that great shopping bargain.

PRONUNCIATION TIPS

The sounds of French can almost all be found in English, and if you read our coloured pronunciation guides as if they were English you’ll be understood.

★ The few sounds that do differ from English include the throaty r (a bit like a growl) and ew (said as the ‘ee’ in ‘see’ with rounded lips). Note also that zh is pronounced as the ‘s’ in ‘pleasure’.

★ French has nasal vowels (pronounced as if you’re trying to force the sound ‘through the nose’). English is similar to some extent – eg when you say ‘sing’, the ‘i’ is nasalised by the ‘ng’. We’ve used nasal consonant sounds (m, n, ng) after the nasal vowel so you can produce the sound with confidence.

★ Syllables in French are, for the most part, equally stressed – as English speakers tend to stress the first syllable, try adding a light stress on the final syllable of French words to compensate.

MUST-KNOW GRAMMAR

The structure of French holds no major surprises for English speakers since the two languages are quite closely related.
French has a formal and informal word for ‘you’ (vous voo and tu tew respectively). When talking to someone familiar or younger than you, use the tu form. Phrases in this book use the form that is appropriate to the situation. Where both forms can be used, they are indicated by pol and inf respectively.

French has masculine and feminine forms of words, eg beau/belle bo/bel (beautiful), indicated in this book by m and f respectively.

Verbs have a different ending for each person, like the English ‘I do’ vs ‘he/she does’. You’ll still be understood if you use the dictionary form of a verb in all contexts.

Sounds Familiar?
Many French words are part of the English vocabulary – thanks to the Norman invasion of England in the 11th century, some estimate that three-fifths of everyday English vocabulary arrived via French. You’ll recognise café, déjà vu, rendez-vous, cliché ...

Fast Talk French
Don’t worry if you’ve never learnt French (français fron-say) before – it’s all about confidence. You don’t need to memorise endless grammatical details or long lists of vocabulary – you just need to start speaking. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort. And remember that body language and a sense of humour have a role to play in every culture.

“you just need to start speaking”

Even if you use the very basics, such as greetings and civilities, your travel experience will be the better for it. Once you start, you’ll be amazed how many prompts you’ll get to help you build on those first words. You’ll hear people speaking, pick up sounds and expressions from the locals, catch a word or two that you know from TV already, see something on a billboard – all these things help to build your understanding.
1. What are the opening hours?
Quelles sont les heures d’ouverture?
kel zon lay zer doo-vair-tewr
French business hours are governed by a maze of regulations, so it’s a good idea to check before you make plans.

2. I’d like the set menu, please.
Je voudrais le menu, s’il vous plaît.
zher voo-dray ler mer-new seel voo play
The best-value dining in France is the two- or three-course meal at a fixed price. Most restaurants have one on the chalkboard.

3. Which wine would you recommend?
Quel vin vous conseillez?
kel vun voo kon-say-yay
Who better to ask for advice on wine than the French?

4. Can I address you with ‘tu’?
Est-ce que je peux vous tutoyer?
es-ker zher per voo tew-twa-yay
Before you start addressing someone with the informal ‘you’ form, it’s polite to ask permission first.

5. Do you have plans for tonight?
Vous avez prévu quelque chose ce soir?
vo zha-yay pray-veh kel-ker shoz ser swar
To arrange to meet up without sounding pushy, ask friends if they’re available rather than inviting them directly.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrases</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cool!</td>
<td>Génial!</td>
<td>zhay·nyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No worries.</td>
<td>Pas de soucis.</td>
<td>pa der soo·see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sure.</td>
<td>D'accord.</td>
<td>da·kor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No way!</td>
<td>Pas question!</td>
<td>pa kay·styon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just joking!</td>
<td>Je plaisante!</td>
<td>zher play·zont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too bad.</td>
<td>Tant pis.</td>
<td>tom pee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a shame.</td>
<td>Quel dommage.</td>
<td>kel do·mazh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's up?</td>
<td>Qu'est-ce qu'il y a?</td>
<td>kes keel ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well done!</td>
<td>Bien joué!</td>
<td>byun zhoo·ay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not bad.</td>
<td>Pas mal.</td>
<td>pa mal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>