

Transition from GCSE to A level French

You are thinking of studying French at A level and you are wondering what you should be doing over the summer to put you in the best position to start the course.

The **accuracy of your spoken and written language** is one of the pillars of success at A level. This is entirely logical since if you lack accuracy you will not be understood. It is therefore important that you can use to high degree of precision the following:

- Present tense including the numerous common irregulars.
- The perfect tense, with both 'avoir' and 'être'
- The imperfect tense and how it is contrasted with the perfect tense
- Pronouns, especially direct and indirect object pronouns
- Adjectival agreements, including irregulars and compound adjectives
- How to use negatives
- How to ask questions

The best grammar books at this level are:

- Help Yourself to Advanced French Grammar by Thaila Marriott and Mirielle Ribiere
- Action Grammaire! by Phil Turk and Genevieve Garcia Vandale
- Grammaire progressive du français by Maria Gregoire and Odile Thievenaz

It would be a good idea to buy one of these and use it. The key to exercises is normally available too.

You also need to be aware of **what is happening in the French speaking world** and the perspective that French speaking countries have on international events. You can do this with:

- TV 5 Monde, available online or as an App on your phone. It has programmes from across the world in French, sometimes with subtitles as an option

- France Télévisions: some of the national TV channels, online.
- Newspapers: Le Monde, Libération, L'Ouest France

- Radio: RTL is available online as an App with regular updates sent to your phone

Understanding spoken French can be challenging even for the best at A level. Why not try to get up to speed by listening to music or watching films? The best artists to look for will be: Stromae, Coeur de Pirate, Francis Cabrel, Céline Dion, Zaz, Chimène Badi. They may not be your favourites but sing along to them, alone, as loud as you can! Or *Les Misérables, en français*, which is the original.

If you have access to Netflix, there are some good things to watch. There is *Engrenages*, shown on the BBC as *Spiral*, a very realistic police series set in Paris, but please do not repeat some of the language you will hear.

You could also sign yourself up to the newsletter from L'Institut Français de Londres.

Literature is part of the A level course but there is no need to start reading any of the set texts at this point.

Bonnes vacances à vous tous!