



10 Reasons to Learn French

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In many European countries, a second language is introduced in elementary school and a third language in middle school. Job applicants who are proficient in at least two languages will be at a distinct advantage in the global marketplace. When you know French, you can communicate in transactions occurring daily in French on every continent.

French is the first or second language in more than 55 countries and is spoken by 250 million people around the world, on every continent. Because French is a foreign language of choice for so many people in the world, knowing French will also increase your chances of communicating in a non-English speaking country. You can use French to develop international friendships as well as to communicate via the Internet, where French is the third most common language.

Some 40-50% of English vocabulary comes from French. The study of French will also enhance your grammar skills. As you develop greater skills in French, you also sharpen your skills in English.

French is always an official language used to announce events, winners and medals at the Olympic Games, including the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. In Canada, you can also follow hockey and baseball games in French. Automobile races (Montréal, Le Mans and Monte Carlo), horse racing (Longchamps), tennis tournaments (The French Open), and cycling (the Tour de France), engage fans around the world. When you know French, the international world of sports is open to you.

As you quickly realize when you look at the many foreign films available to buy or rent, France and Québec are among the most prolific producers of international films. The Cannes International Film Festival annually attracts the attention of the world when the best films, directors and actors are named. When you understand French, you don't need to rely on subtitles to enjoy a film.

In many scientific fields at the graduate level, many Canadian institutions require reading knowledge of French or German in order for scholars to be able to conduct research. France continues to be a leader and innovator in science and technology. Civil engineering (the “Chunnel” between England and France, the TGV – one of the world's fastest trains, the Viaduct of Millau – the world's highest bridge), aeronautics (the Airbus 350 and the Ariane Rocket – a Franco-European initiative), medical technologies (the isolation of the HIV virus), and telecommunications (fibre optics, the smart card,) are just a few areas in which the French are leaders. Knowing French can open the doors to graduate school and to important research.

Knowledge of a second language is essential in over 60 occupations. Canada is officially bilingual and requires labelling in English and French on all products. More than 2,400 French companies have subsidiaries in the U.S., and France is one of the largest recipients of Canadian foreign investments. France is also a world leader in the development of modern telecommunications, a market with explosive growth potential. The European Union, the second largest trading block in the world, recognizes French as an official language. Job opportunities abound with airlines, import-export companies, and other international businesses. French is also useful if you are thinking of working at the United Nations (where French is the second most widely-used language, after English) or for the Canadian Government. Here in Canada, when you know French, you could become a French teacher, an interpreter, a translator and so much more.

France is the most visited tourist destination in the world. Paris has been named by Fortune Magazine as one of the top ten “global cities”. When you speak French, you can be an educated tourist, ask for directions, get your own hotel room or tell a French friend about your own country.

Learning French will also increase your problem-solving skills and improve your memory, self-discipline and self-esteem. Because progress is very easy to measure, you can quickly take pride in your new abilities. Learning French can help you acquire a number of important skills.

People around the world are familiar with *Les misérables*, *The Three Musketeers*, *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*, *The Little Prince* and *The Stranger*. In fact, France has won more Nobel prizes for literature than any other country. The French are also admired for their great philosophers, such as Descartes, Pascal, Rousseau, Voltaire, Camus and Sartre. When you read French, you can enjoy these works and authors as they were originally written.