

Easy French Conversations

A simple system to learn French efficiently
and have easy and relaxed French conversations



Angel Pretot
French learning coach

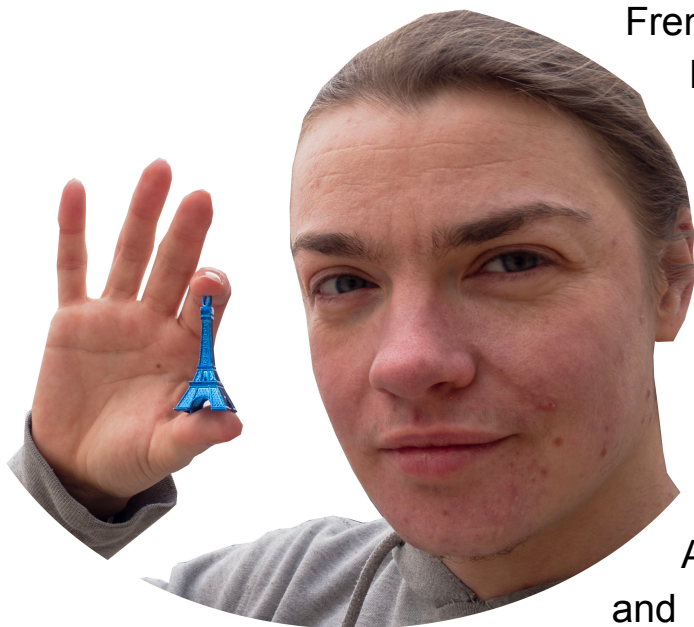
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About the author:



French learning coach Angel Pretot helps English speakers learn French fast and become fluent.

He sees learning French has a personal growth journey.

Learning this new language is much more about becoming an upgraded, French speaking version of yourself than stuffing words in your head.

Angel works with CEOs, diplomats and other professionals who need their French skills up-to-speed *now*.

Born and raised in France, he has learned five languages to fluency, including English and holds a master's degree in French language didactics. He has been helping students learn French since 2004 and shaping the “online French learning coach” profession since 2016.

You can find out more about how Angel can help you learn French and enrol to study with him online at frenchfluency.net.

A French speaking You

Are you trying to learn French or are you becoming a French speaker?

Say these sentences out loud to see how they feel.

“I’m trying to learn French”

Vs

“I’m becoming a French speaker.”

Can you feel the difference?

When I do it, the first sentence feels a bit unsure, a little bit like hard work and a significant chance of failure.

The second sentence feels like undergoing a transformation, it feels a lot more certain and maybe comes with some goose bumps.

How does it feel for you?

Use this space to jot down your notes:

“I’m trying to learn French” feels like:

“I’m becoming a French speaker.” feels like:

Real life action: If “I’m becoming a French speaker.” feels any better than “I’m trying to learn French.”, start saying it instead. Whenever you feel like saying “I’m trying to learn French”, say instead “I’m becoming a French speaker”. If that sounds silly to you or you’re not ready for it yet, at least remove “*trying*”. “I’m learning French” sounds a lot more empowering than “I’m *trying* to learn French”, because you remove the possibility of failure.

The vision (Don’t skip this step!)

You picked up this ebook because you have a vision. Maybe the vision is a bit fuzzy still, but somehow, you can see yourself speaking French in the future. This vision is the most important element of your French study.

With the next exercise, we will make sure that this vision is crystal clear so you can bring it to life using the strategies in this book. Make sure you do these exercises thoroughly as they can determine the success or failure of your French study.

You are becoming a French speaker. Take a deep breath and imagine the future version of you who has completed this transformation and now speaks French. See yourself, maybe a few months or a year older, going about your life (everyday if you live in a (partially) French speaking environment or while traveling) and using the French language each time you need to.

The following questions will help you imagine it more clearly. Write down your answers in as many details as possible.

As you go through this visualization exercise, also pay close attention to your thoughts, especially contradicting ones. They will come in handy in the next exercise.

In the future, you can speak French whenever you need or want to. Think of as many answers as possible but stay realistic. Don't make things up just to fill out the questions. It has tone a very plausible picture of your future life. If a question really has no answer for you (maybe you don't need to read or write in French, and that's ok), just skip it. You can also go through the prompts several times, as you'll likely need/want to speak French in different contexts.

As you are speaking French...

...where are you?
(think work, travel, family time, holidays etc.)

... who is you with?

.... what are you doing?

... what are you speaking about?

... how does your pronunciation sound? Is it easy to understand you?

.... what does your accent sound like? What does it say about you?

Note: a light accent that's easy to understand is often perceived as charming and/or as a sign of courage (you've successfully learned a foreign language!) by natives.

.... what is the intended outcome of the conversation?

(it could be anything from getting a meal to strengthening relationships with a friend to getting some work done with a coworker, to closing a deal with a client)

... what documents in French are you reading?

(ranging from a restaurant menu to emails or reports at work)

... what are you writing in French?
(emails, reports, notes to coworkers, maybe love letters?)

... who are you writing to?

... for what purpose are you writing?

... how good is your writing? Does it have to be flawless to fulfil its purpose, does your reader care if you make mistakes?

Keep your answers to this exercise, they will be useful for a later exercise in this ebook.

As you were going through this visualisation exercise, did you have any contradicting thoughts?

Maybe you even skipped ahead because these thoughts were making the visualisation uncomfortable.

Now is the time to give it another try. Write any contradicting thoughts you had/have below.

This space is just for you so write anything that goes through your head, even if it sounds silly or overtly mean. If it goes through your head, it's worth putting it here (and dealing with it in the next exercise).

Here are some contradicting thoughts that my students have shared with me (you are really not alone with this!)

“This will never happen”, “I will never be able to speak French this well”, “I will be able to read but not speak”, “I can never be really fluent”, “I will never understand the natives when they speak at regular speed”, “People would judge me if they knew how little I understand”.

Now is the time to write these down. We will need them for the next exercise.

It all starts with your mindset

At least 95% of French learning happens in your brain. I'm leaving 5% for your ears and your phonatory organs (your mouth, tongue, vocal cords etc. - all the body parts you use to speak) and I think that's being generous. Really, your brain does almost all the work.

It follows that, if you want to learn French successfully, you will have to make your brain and your mind work with you, not against you. This is why your mindset is so crucial to learning French.

All the contradictory thoughts you wrote in the previous exercise are signs of your mindset working against you. This is why we wrote them. Their impact is critical and they need to be addressed.

By the way, don't beat yourself up. Everyone has them (otherwise I wouldn't have given them so much attention in this ebook - duh) and it's a really normal part of any growth process.

If you beat yourself up, it will only get worse. So just go through the process and avoid judging yourself as much you can. Everything you are experiencing here is very very normal.

The goal of your brain is to keep you alive, not to help you grow or make you happy. For your brain, the comfort zone is the safest place and it will do everything it can to keep you there. Even if that involves talking you out of learning French because "what's the point of trying? you could get hurt somehow."

This is the continual obsession of any normal human brain: avoid getting hurt at all costs.

Unfortunately, if you want to grow into the next version of you (for example, one that speaks French you need to get out of your comfort zone (by definition).

So you want your brain to help you do that. This means you have to convince it that it's 1) possible (this is the purpose of the next exercise) and 2) safe (we'll work on this in a later part of this ebook)

The good news: once you get the hang of this exercise, you can apply it to anything in your life, not just learning French. No matter what you want to do, if it's outside of your comfort zone and your brain is saying some mean stuff to you, you can apply this process successfully.

Repeat the following steps for any recurring negative thought or limiting belief you have.

Step 1: Write down the negative thought or belief.

(If you have followed the instructions, you already have a few written down from the previous exercise).

Step 2: Can you think of where this belief is from?

This step is not compulsory but it can help you find out that your thought or belief comes from someone else who didn't know any better and is not rooted in reality.

Maybe you draw that conclusion after an unhappy experience.

Maybe it came from an adult who told you something when you were a child, and you accepted it as the truth because why would an adult lie to you?

Maybe they weren't lying, they just didn't know any better (and now is the time to let it go). It can also be that what they said wasn't related to French learning at all. For example if you were told as a kid that you are stupid (a sadly common story), this could translate now as overall low self-esteem and a belief that you can never learn to speak French well enough - even though it is absolutely not a reality.

Here's a concrete example: my mother was told by her primary school teacher that she would never succeed in anything and would end up "collecting trash cans like her father" (my grandfather was a farmer, and he worked as a dustman on the side for a while - no shame in that, but that teacher clearly thought there was.)

My mother is a midwife now, and her daughter (my sister) is a primary school director. She gets to boss that kind of judgemental teachers around. Not too bad for a family bound to trans-generational trashcans collecting. Really, some adults just don't know what they're talking about.

Step 3: Decide what you would rather believe instead.

For example

—> I can never speak fluent French.

Becomes

—> I can learn to speak French as well as I want.

Step 4: Collect evidence that supports your new belief.

For example, supportive evidence for "I can learn to speak French as well as I want." could be examples of people you know who have learned to speak foreign languages well (I've learned five, just sayin'), or examples of things that you have already learned successfully (like skills for a new job, or hobbies). Be as specific as you possibly can. Write the names of the people you know who disproved the beliefs. Write details of when and how you did things that disprove the belief yourself.

Here are some examples of wide-spread limiting beliefs, along with reasons to believe the opposite instead, to get you started.

Note: These beliefs have all been shared with me by my students. If you have any belief that isn't listed here, please send me an email at

angel@frenchfluency.net to share it with me. Bonus points if you also share the evidence you have collected against this particular belief (if you can't find any, it's okay, I'll do it for you in a future article/post/video)

➡ I will never be fluent / I can never speak as well as a native

✓ This is a wide-spread belief that natives are somehow superior and you should strive to be like them, even though you can never reach this ideal. Now, what's that for a losing proposition?

First, there are countless people who have reached fluency in one or several foreign languages (five for myself), these people are no smarter than you and you can do it too.

Second, there are countless natives who have a very bad level in their own language. I'm sure you know native English speakers who speak or write terrible English. Being a native is not an official proof that you speak well, contrary to popular belief. And not being a native does not mean that you are doomed to terrible language skills forever. (Unless you believe it.)

➡ I will never speak well enough to have meaningful conversations

✓ For some reason we believe that speaking about meaningless topics, like the weather, is easier than having meaningful conversation. The content of language learning books reflect this belief as these books try to make you learn meaningless topics first.

This should come as a relief to you: the opposite is true. Our brain learns with emotion. Strong positive emotions are what cause us to learn faster as we seek to have more of these positive emotions. So, you will learn much better if you tackle the topics that matter to you and it should be easier for you to have meaningful conversations than meaningless one. This is one more reason why you should select what you learn carefully, like I shared in yesterday's email.

➡ I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak to natives

✓ This fear comes from the idea that mistakes are bad. We have this idea from a school system that used to punish us for making mistakes, instead of encouraging us to try new things. As a result we are now afraid to try and don't make progress because of this.

Just remember that 99% of natives will be thrilled that you even *try* to speak their language, and you'll most likely collect a lot of compliments.

➡ I will be able to read but not to carry a full conversation

✓ This belief comes from outdated teaching methods that used to prioritize written language over spoken language. Some schools still use these because it's much more convenient to make 30 students write at the same time than speak at the same time. You just need to make sure that the way you study focuses on speaking, that you learn the right things (what we saw yesterday) and that you practice regularly and you'll be able to carry a full conversation in no time.

➡ Why can't I speak/ learn French? I'm just stupid

✓ You're definitely not stupid. My guess is you have had many successes in life (take a second or two to think of them). The reason why you can't speak/learn French (yet) is because you lack the strategies (including how to get rid of the limiting beliefs that hold you back) that will make it possible for you. If no one has taught you how to do it, it's normal that you don't know. This has nothing to do with how smart you are.

➡ Learning a language is easy for children and hard for adults.

✓ Like every belief, this one is a self-fulfilling prophecy - maybe even more so, because

1. The fact that children learn 'more easily than adults' is mostly due to the fact that children don't have as many limiting beliefs as

adults have (more on that in a sec).

Another thing to take into account is that the child also doesn't have as much pressure as you do. All they want to do is play. Not get a job, talk to their in-laws or run a board meeting. Dealing with pressure is a bit of a different topic, which I'll cover later in this ebook.

2. Your belief that it will be harder for you (due to observing this situation) self-actualises and perpetuates the situation.

We have a really vicious circle here, which isn't likely to stop anytime soon if we don't dismantle it.

Many fascinating studies have been made about how easy it is to implant beliefs in children's heads, which will then cause them to succeed or fail at a given task.

If you tell your young child that they can't communicate or play with another child because that child speaks a different language, most likely your child will stay away from that other child and not communicate indeed.

But if you say nothing, your child will go out, play, make friends and exchange bits of language with the other child. If they stay together long enough, they'll end up learning each other's language and the parents will be in awe of "how easy it is for them".

The truth is that, if we were to strip off all limiting beliefs, and enjoy a playful and pressure-free learning environment (like a sandbox!) adults can learn much faster and more easily than children because:

- ✓ Adults have a good grasp of their own language, which makes it easier to understand what's similar or different in the new language.
- ✓ Adults have preexisting learning experience and maybe even strategies that they know work for them.
- ✓ Adults have general knowledge which they can use to build knowledge of the new language more easily
- ✓ Adults can read and research better ways to learn.
- ✓ Adults can write, take notes and review them, which makes it easier to build long-term memory
- ✓ Adults normally have a longer attention span than children and the ability to set goals and follow-through. Even if they struggle with this, they can also learn how to improve and find tricks to make it work.
- ✓ Adults have a more solid identity and do not easily form *new* limiting beliefs.

As an adult and a reader of this book, once you keep your beliefs in check (hopefully this chapter has allowed you to do that), and you enjoy a relaxed learning environment (what we'll see in a later chapter), you get to learn French really fast because you can harness all the advantages that adults have (listed above), and you can cultivate the best possible mindset.

The best mindset you can have.

This is how children and natives see it (or rather, that's what they'd think if you'd prompt them to think about it)

- ✓ learning and speaking French is natural.
- ✓ they have no doubt that they will be able to speak French too, since it is natural.
- ✓ they do not believe that they have to learn a given amount of words or master grammar in order to be able to speak French. They just speak.

Now I understand that this mindset may be very far from the way you see things now.

Reading the rest of this ebook and embracing the processes I share here will definitely help. As you will start to see how learning French can feel natural and easy for you, as a non-native adult.

Even then, it can take some time to strip off limiting beliefs, and most likely, you will have to follow the previous process several times.

Do not lose hope or give up. Every time you contradict your limiting beliefs with some logical thinking and sound evidence of the opposite, you win against your brain who wants to keep you safely in your comfort zone.

“Thank you for sharing”

Here is a magic mindset trick that I have learned from T. Harv Eker:

Remember that your brain is only trying to keep you safe. Your brain is a bit like a parent or grand-parent who didn't notice that you have grown and is trying to keep you from using the knife, as if you were 4 years old still. Its advice is well-intentioned but outdated.

When your brain offers you a negative thought, you can acknowledge the good intention and disregard the actual advice by saying “Thank you for sharing”, and just go on doing what you were doing.

This is an amazing pattern interrupter. Your brain is used to having those thoughts on repeat (Gabrielle Bernstein calls this “being in the loop”) and does not expect hearing a kind but firm response.

When you say (or rather think) “Thank you for sharing”, your brain won’t know what to make of it and the “loop” will stop. Just try it.

Whenever it starts again, say “thank you for sharing” again. Stick with it and you’ll see: it just works. The more you do it, the less you’ll have to do it in the future.

Studying what matters

How your brain learns

One limiting belief we saw in the previous chapter is that it's easier to speak about a meaningless topic like the weather than about a personal topic that is meaningful to you. It's really not.

You probably remember this from your school days: boredom is the biggest enemy of learning. Who wants to learn boring things?

Unless you are passionate about the weather for some reason (maybe you are a meteorologist?) or the weather is relevant to a project you have (I can see how your day at an amazing beach in Nice would be ruined by a thunderstorm), this kind of topics is on top of the list of the irrelevant stuff that you should just ignore.

Even if you plan on practicing outdoors activities in a French speaking country in the future, you can delay learning about the weather until it actually becomes relevant.

Think of it, would you rather learn to say "it's sunny"/ "it's raining"/ "it's snowing" with no connection to a reality, or tell the story of when you were camping under a hail storm so intense that your tent got completely destroyed and you had to rent a a mobile home to finish your stay (this actually happened to me and my family when I was a teenager).

Obviously, telling this kind of story is a lot more complex, but it's also a lot more fun and a lot more relevant to your life.

Fun and relevance are the two things you need to be looking for when selecting what you learn about.

Relevance because you just don't want to waste your time and effort on useless things.

And fun because it makes it so much easier to learn.

At its core, our brain has only two goals: avoid pain and gain pleasure. It's just how we're wired and we can't change it. We can only learn to manage it and harness it to make learning easier for ourselves.

You can push yourself through some pain in hope to gain pleasure later (delayed gratification), but it will drain you. You can only do so much of this until your brain just sabotages you somehow. That's when you find yourself scrolling through social media or procrastinating in some way.

This means that it is a lot easier for you to learn what is fun and relevant to your life (even if it's more complex) than to learn what is useless or boring (even if it looks more simple at first)

Make your French learning experience easier by adding some fun to it.

Here are some ideas:

- Read or watch content in French about your favourite hobbies (there are French Youtube channels about almost every topic you can think of and these can be very useful when you are learning French - more about this in the next part of this ebook)
- Learn to speak about what makes you happy, such as your hobbies or your loved ones.
- Gather some small wins: make easy sentences about yourself (self-expression is a great way to give your brain some pleasure) rather than about some neutral topic. Say "I like eating fish" rather than "the cat likes eating fish" (unless you are talking about your own cat which you love to talk about!)

How to learn only what is relevant

Go back to the notes you took when you did the “vision” exercise earlier in this ebook. This should give you a lot of input regarding what is relevant for you to learn.

In my 1-1 coaching, I use a systematic process to define what my client needs to practice. After listing all the topics that my client needs/wants to learn to speak about (basically doing the “vision” exercise very thoroughly), I write them in a grid like the one on the next page. This becomes my client’s French learning plan, which we then practice diligently session after session.

You can fill this grid now for yourself. Each line is intended for a topic of conversation or a particular situation in which you need/want to use the French language. You do not need to fill all the lines, you can leave some blank.

Likewise, your list isn’t set in stone. If it turns out that you have forgotten a situation or topic, just add it. If a situation or topic isn’t relevant after all, just remove it.

Your French learning plan:

Your French-speaking situations and topics	1*	2*	3*	4*

Using this grid will ensure that you focus on the 20% of the things you could learn which is really relevant to you. This will considerably reduce the amount of words and sentences you feel you “have to learn” while at the same time saving you from the “fear of missing out” that you might experience when deciding not to learn a particular word or phrase. *“What if you need it later?”* —> If something doesn’t fit in this grid, you know you can safely ignore it.

The four columns on the right are intended for self-evaluation of your level. Indicate how well you can do with each topic or situation by checking the corresponding column.

*This is the meaning of each column:

How well can you use the French language in this particular situation? /
How well can you speak about this particular topic in French.

- 1- Not at all! I have no idea how to do that in French.
- 2 - I can try. I suck at it. But at least I can get started.
- 3 - I can do it, but it's quite uncomfortable.
- 4 - I can do it easily. No problem at all.

Column 4 corresponds to fluency, as the definition of fluency is “the ability to do all the things you need/want to do in French without friction or problem”. When all the ticks are in the fourth column, congratulations, you're fluent!

This grid is a real game changer for your French study.

I recommend evaluating your level right after you have filled the grid and then do it once a month to track your progress.

It is very gratifying to see how much you have progressed as the ticks move towards the fourth column.

When you use this grid to track your French learning, another magic thing happens.

Because the words, phrases and grammar rules you learn can be used in different situations, practicing one situation or topic, and thus moving

its tick to the right, will cause some other ticks to move towards the right as well.

For example, let's say that two things you want to do in French are "order a drink at a bar" and "order dinner at a restaurant".

Once you know how to order a drink very well, you already have a good clue of how to order dinner as well (same words and sentences, you just need a little more food vocabulary), so you can move that tick from column 1 "I have no idea how to do that in French", to column 2 "At least I can get started", even if you haven't practiced ordering dinner at all.

So, don't count all the squares that you "have to go through" and get discouraged. It actually moves a lot faster than you think.

How to practice

Once you know what you need to learn thanks to the grid in the previous chapter, all you need to do to actually learn is to practice the situations and topics you have selected.

In this part we will deal with two kinds of practice, passive practice and active practice and how to make them really easy for you so you can make a lot of progress fast.

Passive practice

To understand the importance of passive practice, you need to know that learning the language around you is a natural function of your brain, even and especially if you are not paying attention.

There are loads of studies about “peripheral perception”, but here is the gist: your brain can perceive a lot more than what you are focusing on. You just don’t notice it, because you are focused on something else, but you do take it in subconsciously. What you learn subconsciously can get really useful when it shows up during conversations.

The reason why we don’t speak foreign languages is because they are foreign. But when you surround yourself with a new language, even if you know none of it at first, little by little your brain starts accepting it as a part of your reality, it stops being foreign and it starts feeling natural to you.

That is to say, unless it is blocked out by some limiting beliefs (yet another reason to get rid of these!).

When you do a lot of passive practice, you will likely have this experience: While having a conversation in French, you will just make

some sentences that you have never made before, but somehow you'll just know how to make them. When that happens it feels like "wow, where did that come from?". It comes from all the time you have spent with some French language in the background while doing something else.

Does that sound appealing?

Here's how to create a passive practice

Step 1: Brainstorm a few topics or activities that are fun for you.

It just works better if you pick things that you would already love to hear about in English. When something gives you pleasure, your brain will want more of it. You can trick your brain by mixing some French language in a topic that it already likes. When you do this, your brain will transfer the pleasurable feeling of that topic to the French language too. (It's particularly useful if you have mixed feelings about French, which could cause you to progress more slowly.)

Do you like watching movies? What type?

Do you have a particular hobby, like cooking, or gardening, or anything else?

Make a short list of those.

Step 2: Look for resources in French that corresponds to this list, such as French movies of your favourite kind, French music you like or French podcasts or youtube channels. It might take some googling around, but there are French YouTube channels about almost anything you can think of.

When I work 1-1 with clients, I always make a personal list of resources for them which they can use in their passive practice. Try and find a few

French resources that you like. Do not worry about understanding them. You do not need to understand anything during your passive practice. It's better if you have an abundant stack of resources you like, so you always have something ready to go.

Step 3: Watch or listen to these resources everyday. You don't need to understand any of it or even pay any attention to it. You can have these resources in your car, in the background when you cook, clean, workout or do anything that doesn't require your full attention and focus.

The key to a successful passive practice is actually not to care about it. As soon as you care and try to understand it, you will activate your conscious brain and that's the one who also offers all the limiting beliefs to you. So, keep your conscious mind for your active practice (coming up next in this ebook) and keep this passive practice fun and carefree.

If you are watching a movie or a video and not doing anything else at the same time, I recommend doing it as passively as you can.

If you are tired, it's actually a good thing, as you are less likely to use your conscious mind during the practice. Just chill out and let the language wash over you.

It's also ok to activate the subtitles (wether in English or in French) if that helps you. Careful with the autogenerated subtitles though, they aren't always good.

Active practice

Active practice is typically the scariest part of learning French.

Even though confronting your limiting beliefs at first might have made you feel uncomfortable, you'd certainly agree that everything in this ebook so far is rather chill and easy to implement.

And you might be thinking, ok but so far we aren't really speaking French, we're only sort of preparing for it (and you'd be right!).

Actually speaking French is where the anxiety shows up.

I feel you. And I think it's worth taking a moment to acknowledge the anxiety and deal with it properly. This way you will be able to speak French with a lot less anxiety, which is what this ebook is all about - Easy French Conversations

If you are afraid or nervous about speaking French, the first 'solution' you think of may be to "just get over it".

This is not what I'd recommend.

First, it's really hard to do. It's a case where you would push yourself through some pain in hope to get pleasure later - and you know that your brain doesn't really enjoy it, especially if it perceives the current pain as greater than the future pleasure. Knowing what's immediate is always perceived as more important, the chances of your brain rolling with this over the long run are very low.

Besides, in some cases, pushing yourself through a French conversation that you aren't ready for can have some negative consequences, whether it's a bruised ego (like someone laughing at you or asking you to speak English instead) or not being able to communicate and ending up with a misunderstanding and the associated consequences (increased costs, delays, failure of a project, you name it.)

In extreme cases it can get pretty bad. For example, a few plane crashes have been traced back to a misunderstanding between pilots and control tower agents, some of which didn't speak English well.

Even if you don't face repercussions in real life, a failed interaction can end up reinforcing your limiting beliefs rather than helping you overcome them. Our brains are wired to focus on the negative (an annoying feature known as "negativity bias"), so we are more likely to see the one thing that went wrong than the ten things that went right. Your brain's conclusion might be "see? I told you you can't speak French", even if, rationally, you did amazing 90% of the time.

So, if you know it's just a little apprehension and it will be over as soon as you "jump in", "just getting over it" is a valid solution. But in all other cases, or if you're not sure, I'll recommend trying the next option instead.

If you are feeling anxious, stressed out or afraid, don't shut down your feelings with a "just get over it." It won't the feeling disappear and can make you feel even worse over the long run.

Instead, follow these steps to manage and decrease these feelings.

Step 1: Take a moment to acknowledge what you feel.

Give it a name: anxiety, fear, shyness, stress - whatever sounds right for you.

Taking a moment to acknowledge feelings rather than run from them has the immediate impact to make them feel manageable.

If you have a thought associated with it, you might want to run the process to overcome negative thoughts and beliefs in part 2 of this ebook.

Else, move on to step 2.

Step 2: What are you afraid of?

Fear, anxiety and stress are feelings associated to expecting bad things to happen.

So, which bad things are you expecting?

You might be afraid of

- ➔ making mistakes (which you perceive as a bad thing)
- ➔ feeling embarrassed for some reason
- ➔ being mocked or ridiculed
- ➔ unwittingly offending someone
- ➔ not being understood (or not understanding the other person) and feeling bad about yourself.
- ➔ something else? All the fears above are really common among French learners, but there could also be a fear that's specific to you. If so, make sure you acknowledge it as well.

Step 3: Look at these fear and check if they appear rational to you.

If you are afraid of people laughing at you, is it really likely to happen?

If you are afraid of making mistakes, would making mistakes be a bad thing? Often we are our own worst critique, and French speakers are more likely to encourage you than make you feel bad about your mistakes. Of course, this also depends on the people.

You are the only person who can know if these fears are rational or not. Still, it's worth going through the list once and see if some of the items are just not very rational, so you can have peace of mind about these.

Step 4: Decrease the pressure + protect yourself against the expectations that are indeed likely to happen.

What you need to be able to speak French without anxiety is to decrease the pressure linked to the situation.

There are two ways to decrease pressure linked to any situation.

1-Practice this situation a lot.

Have you every started a new job which you didn't know how to do? Chances are, you felt stressed or anxious when you started. But as you kept doing this job day after day, it eventually became your new normal and you weren't anxious about it anymore.

The same thing works with speaking French. If you practice a particular French speaking situation enough time, your experience will allow you to feel relaxed in this particular situation.

Remember earlier when I told you to select what matters and learn only that, with the grid? This is another reason to do it. You want to select what's relevant and then practice it so it becomes a no-brainer.

Now, of course, to do that, you need to start at some point. So you'll need to find a way to overcome the initial anxiety.

That's where the second option comes in handy

2-Practice in a low-pressure, supportive environment.

If you are just getting started with speaking French (in general, or in a particular situation), you want to practice these skills in a low-pressure, supportive environment.

This can mean practicing with a supportive coach or teacher (make sure they are actually supportive and you enjoy working with them before you do it) or with a friend, loved one, language exchange partner, or anyone that will be supportive and encouraging.

✓ First, practicing with a supportive partner will ensure that nothing bad can happen, neither in your outer life (negative consequences), nor in your inner life (reinforcing a disempowering pattern, feeling judged etc).

Second, having someone to cheer you on as you slowly string your sentences together will help you:

✓ feel more confident about your ability to learn

✓ overcome your limiting beliefs (every successful practice is a new piece of evidence to add to your stack of evidence against your limiting belief)

✓ make visible progress

✓ eventually become able to perform in the actual situation with much more ease.

For all these reasons, all of my coaching is strongly focussed on creating this positive, encouraging space where you can practice safely and improve at their own pace.

I have noticed that offering a student all the space they need results in much better French skills in a shorter span of time. A relaxed learner just performs better.

The practice sessions

Preparing for the session

Got your supportive learning partner, teacher or coach? Now is the time to prepare for your practice session.

You can pick the topic (from your grid on p22) ahead of the session and think about what you know of this topic already. You can also write a list of questions to ask to your teacher or partner (I recommend to all my clients that they write down their questions in between sessions)

Or you can also just jump right in, if you are having an informal conversation.

In all cases, make sure you have your grid from p22, and a notes-taking device (wether digital or a good old pen & paper).

Setting expectations

Before or right at the beginning of the session, communicate with your partner about what you want to learn and how you want to learn it.

This will ensure that both of you are on the same page and that you'll have a successful session.

Share things like:

- what topic you are practicing
- If you want your partner to correct you
- Who takes the notes etc.

During the session

Here are some simple tips to make the most of your session

- Avoid meeting in a busy place where it will be hard to hear each other. Make sure the environment is quiet enough to support your learning experience.
- Be fully present. Turn of your phone or any distraction.
- Take notes, or have the other person take notes for you, making sure you can keep the notes later. You will want to write down all the new vocabulary and sentence structures you come across
- Have fun! The whole point of this whole process is for you to have easy French conversation so now is the time to feel as relaxed as possible and enjoy all the preparation you have had.
- Keep the notes at the end so you can learn the new vocabulary before the next session.

In-between sessions: learn the vocabulary

Shortly after your practice session, you will want to process the new vocabulary, so you can learn it.

If you do not learn vocabulary in-between session, you will progress much slower, as you will have to relearn a lot of the same things session after session.

Here is the best way to learn new vocabulary

Step 1: Choose ONE system that works for you.

You can choose between a vocabulary notebook, a flashcard app, physical flashcards or even sticky notes that you stick around your home. Pick your favourite system and stick to it. If you notice that it doesn't work, you switch to another one, but make sure you have only one at a time. In my experience, having more than one system is confusing and introduces unnecessary friction.

Step 2: After each session, select the vocabulary that is relevant for you.

Remember that your brain can only learn so much at once, so make sure that you learn the most relevant things first.

Do not put more than 10 words per day into your system (so, if your practice session gives you 50 new words which you want to keep, then you'll have to write them over 5 days). There is no minimum here. If on some days you have no words, just enjoy the day off and stick to learning the words you have previously gathered.

If you are not sure if a word should be kept or discarded, discard it. If the word was useful after all, it will show up again and you can then put it in your system. If it doesn't come back, then it was truly not useful.

If you still tend to put too many words in your system, and have a hard time memorising them use the "this is so helpful filter".

The “this is so helpful” filter.

During my coaching sessions, my favourite thing to hear is “this is so helpful”. When my student says “this is so helpful” about something they are learning, I know I’m teaching the exact things that they need to learn now: the words and sentences that will make a difference in their actual life.

You can use this idea to filter your new words and the content that you learn in general. If you look at something, do you think “this is so helpful”? If yes, learn it. If not, discard it.

Trust that if & when it becomes helpful later, you’ll see it again and grab it then.

Often we think that we should learn as much as possible. The goal of this method is actually the opposite: learn as little as possible, while making sure that everything you learn is incredibly helpful.

Step 3: Review the words daily

This is the key to fast progress. Once you have selected the words that truly matter and put them in your system, review them everyday until you know them by heart.

This is what will allow you to make more and more elaborate sentences during your practice sessions.

Step 4: Occasionally trim your system

Once you know some words by heart, you can safely remove them from your system. This will ensure that the amount of words you have to review doesn’t get out of hands.

That’s it! Rinse and repeat.

The more you practice in your supportive environment, the more confident you will feel when the time comes to speak French in real life.

Afterword

There you have it. The complete system to learn French and have easy and relaxed French Conversations, as I have refined it over my 15 years of teaching and coaching and now use it with my many one-on-one coaching clients.

I hope that you will use some -or even all!- of the processes in the book and that this will help you boost your French skills.

I would love other about your progress! Send me an email at angel@frenchfluency.net to share your French learning story with me.

If you have enjoyed this ebook, I encourage you to visit frenchfluency.net for more articles, videos courses about learning French with easy and efficient processes like the ones outlined here.



I look forward to hearing from you!

Angel Pretot,
Your French learning coach