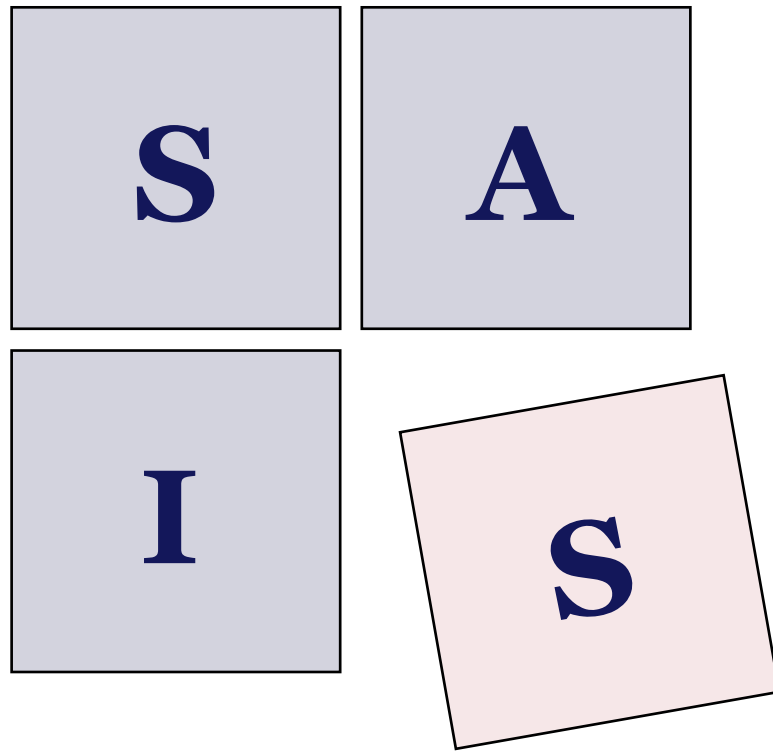


The Ultimate Guide to Learning French **with Apps**

New apps appear every day, but the principles of French learning are timeless. **Master these key principles** and you'll make any app work for you.



Angel Pretot
French learning coach

What you'll find in this guide:

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About the author



Angel Pretot is the premier French learning coach. He works online with English speakers from all over the world, helping them learn French fast and become fluent. You can work with him in his 1-1 program [the French Transformation](#), join a global community of French learners in his group program [the French Fluency Accelerator](#) or [check out his special courses here](#).

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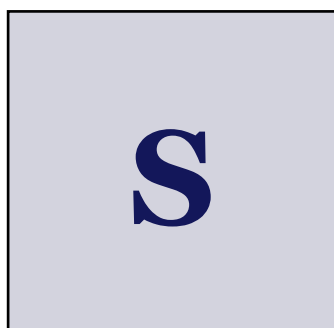
[groups/frenchfluency/](#)

Learn French in 4 steps: the SAIS process

No matter what tool you use to learn French, apps, books, classes or even just immersion, any successful learning journey consists in repeating these 4 steps, consciously or unconsciously. If you understand this process, you can make informed choices about the tools you use. These choices will make the difference between becoming fluent in a few months, and staying stuck forever.

Helping you make better choices is what this guide is all about.

Note: some of these steps can happen simultaneously.

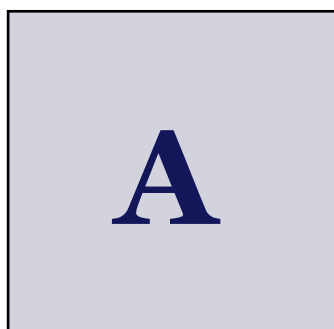


Step 1: Selection

“Content beats method every time” - Tim Ferriss, author of *The 4-hour workweek*.

What you learn is much more important than how you learn. You can become fluent very fast, if you learn only what's relevant, and don't waste your time with the 80% of the French language which you don't need.

The catch? What's relevant to you is not the same as what's relevant to another learner. **It is critical to select only what *you* need to learn.**



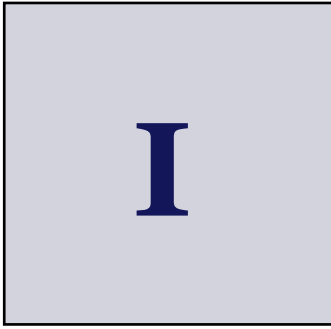
Step 2: Activation

Once you have selected what's relevant, you need to activate these items, one at a time. Items can be vocabulary words, grammar patterns, or complete tasks such as “ordering a coffee”.

To activate an item, you need to bring conscious attention to it, for example by learning a grammar structure, writing vocabulary words, practicing with another person, etc.

This works because once an item has been activated, your RAS (Reticular Activating System - a brain system we all have) will look for this item in your environment and reinforce your learning every time it finds it.

Activation is what makes Immersion efficient.



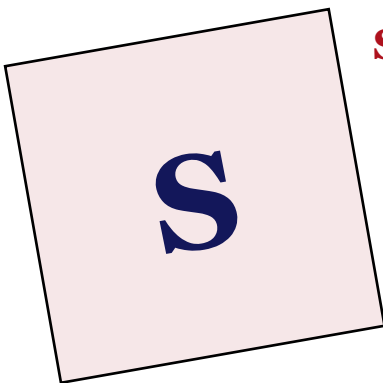
Step 3: Immersion

Your brain is designed to learn the language(s) that are around you. This is how you learned your native language as a child.

That's why it is critical to include daily immersion in your French learning practice. I call it the daily French bath. You can use any video or audio content of your choice. Podcasts, YouTube, songs all work very well. Reading in French can also be part of your immersion practice, if you enjoy it.

You don't need to understand what's being said. Your RAS will work its magic regardless. It shouldn't take much time either. **Just keep some French in the background** when you're cooking, driving, working out, etc.

Students often resist this steps because they believe that if they don't understand all that's being said, then it's pointless. This is just not true. Babies don't understand what's being said around them at first. Immersion is what helps them understand. If you don't understand much in your daily French bath at first, it's normal. Just stick with it for a while (it costs nothing and takes no extra time!). Your mind will be blown at how much you understand after a few weeks.



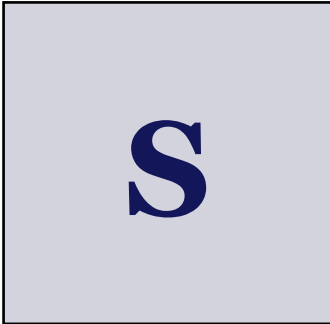
Step 4: Safe Practice

Step 1-3 are designed to get you to understand French. If you complete them successfully, after a few months you can understand French very well - but you might still not be able to speak French. This is where Safe Practice comes into the picture.

If your goal is to speak, the only way to get there is to actually speak. Many students give up here because they are afraid to speak. I get it, it's genuinely scary. This is why this step is called "Safe Practice", and not just "Practice". The best way to start speaking in French is to know that you are in a safe, supportive environment. It is critical to practice with people who will support you and help you, and not judge or mock you. In my coaching programs, I put a strong emphasis on providing a supportive space for the students because being judged or belittled is the fastest way to block your progress. Unfortunately this happens frequently in many classes around the world. **Make sure the people you practice with are patient and supportive.**

How apps fit in with the SAIS process

Every app will at least *try* to complete one of these steps. Some may address more than one.



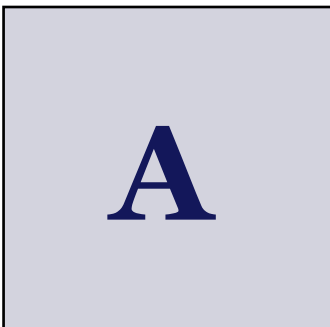
1) Selection

As I mentioned, your success with learning French depends on how well the learning material is selected. Unfortunately, as far as I know, there is no app that helps you with selecting what is relevant for you.

This is why so many apps ‘don’t work’. They hit the first hurdle, and then the rest of the race is slow and painful. However, **if you intentionally add this step** of the

process before you use any app, **you will multiply the effect of any app you use afterwards.**

You can use your Fluency Worksheet (in [your free French Fluency Starter Kit](#)), or my courses [The French Life Launchpad](#), [The French Fluency Accelerator](#), or have me do it for you ([Your Roadmap to Fluency](#) or [The French transformation, 1-1 coaching program](#)) to complete this step.



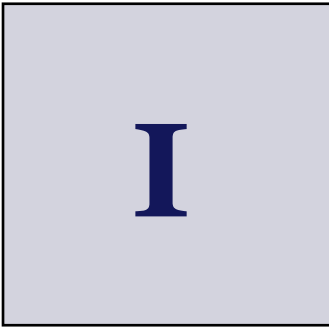
2) Activation

Most apps will include some form of activation. Because Activation is achieved as soon as you bring conscious attention to a word, structure or activity, there is no wrong way to activate language elements - the only risk here is to activate the wrong elements, because of inappropriate or inexistent selection (see above).

If you have selected the right content for you, you now know what to activate.

Any app that includes grammar and/or vocabulary (duolingo, busuu, flashcard apps like Anki, Quizlet, Memrise etc.) will allow you to activate elements of language. The key here is to **be ruthless** about what you allow the app to ‘activate’ for you. **If an app wants you to learn things that are irrelevant** and doesn’t give you a way out, **ditch it**. For example, duolingo gives you a compulsory path that you have to take before moving to the next unit. This causes many students to waste a lot of time.

If you use a flashcard app, prefer to **make your own decks** with the words you need, rather than using decks made by other people.



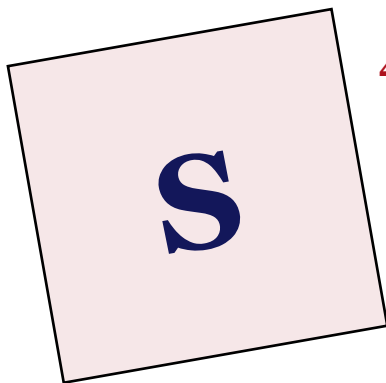
3) Immersion

Some apps like FluentU are specifically designed to help you learn French with real life content they select. These apps are not typically free.

A good way to get unlimited immersion for free is to use the apps you already have: YouTube, Podcast apps and Netflix all include thousands of hours of French content. The key here is to chose content that you would also watch, if it was in

English. Do you like crime series? Lupin will be a good choice. Do you enjoy cooking? Youtube has dozens of cooking channels in French.

Even your regular social media feeds, which you already use can provide immersion - make sure to **follow French accounts**, and keep interacting with them. The algorithm will make sure to give you a fresh stream of French immersion every day.



4) Safe Practice

Many apps, such as italki or hellotalk **will put you in touch with natives and/or teachers to practice**. They often claim that this is the right way to learn French and that you will get fluent rapidly with them.

As you already know, practice is just one of 4 essential steps to become fluent. So, it won't be enough on its own, but now you know how to add the other 3!

Besides, here are a few things to keep in mind:

These platforms thrive on having many users. This means that they often have no vetting process whatsoever. When they do, their vetting process is often based on degrees or whether the person is a native speaker, not on how good they are at making you feel safe and supported, which, as we saw, is the critical element.

So, vetting your teacher or language partner will be your job. You can find amazing people on these apps, and you can also make distasteful encounters. **Finding the right person can be time-consuming**. In the module "Having meaningful conversation" in the [French Fluency Accelerator](#), I share a process to attract the right person easily.

If you have more money than time, and you are looking for a good teacher or coach to speed up your learning, **these platforms won't be the best place**.

It's difficult for professionals to showcase their expertise efficiently and make a decent living on such a platform. For this reason, competent teachers and coaches often leave those platforms and turn to social media to share their knowledge and attract students, like I did. (see page 2 for links). Therefore, **it could be easier for you to find and vet your teacher on Youtube or Instagram** than on dedicated platforms.

5 questions to choose the right apps

So you have found a new app. Should you use it? If so, how, and how much? To find out, answer these questions.

1) Where in the SAIS process does his app fall?

You now know that you need to fulfill all 4 steps of the SAIS process to learn French successfully. Which step(s) does this app address? Does it introduce you to new words or grammar (activation), does it put you in touch with French content (Immersion), does it allow you to contact speaking partners (Safe practice)?

2) How does this app fit into my existing practice?

What do you currently do to learn French? How does this app improve your practice?

On the one hand, your practice needs to address all 4 steps of the SAIS process. On the other hand, if your practice is too complex, you probably won't be able to stick to it very long.

The key is to create a practice that addresses all 4 steps while being lean and efficient.

So, do you really need a new app? Does the app fill a gap in your practice? Would the new app address your needs (within the 4 steps) better than another tool you currently use? If so, integrate the app in your practice, and give up on any tool that is no longer serving you.

If you do not have a French learning practice currently, make sure to answer question 5.

3) Are the content and concept of the app aligned with my goals?

As we saw previously, most apps "fail" because they do not address the first step, Selection. You need to make sure that the new app teaches you what you really need to learn, and does it in a way that works for you. You might need to try out the app for a while, to make sure.

If you find that your French is not improving, do not blame yourself. It's more likely that the tools you are using are not efficiently addressing the four steps. So, do not try harder at learning with tools that aren't working for you. Replace them.

5) Are the app's tactics serving me?

Apps need users to keep existing. In order to attract and retain their users, they are willing to use any trick they can. Most apps use gamification to keep the users engaged. Gamification consists in making the app feel like a game.

As the user, you are more likely to keep using the app if it feels easy and fun - but is it helping you learn, or are you just playing a little game on your phone?

Gamification can be your best friend but also your worst enemy. If you are learning what you need to learn and having fun, more power to you! This is amazing. The more pleasure you feel while learning, the faster your brain will learn.

However, no amount of gamification can help you if your practice doesn't appropriately address the four steps. What's worse, gamification can literally get you addicted (see the book "Hooked" by Nir Eyal, or the documentary The social dilemma on Netflix for more about this issue).

I have a bone to pick with duolingo and similar apps because they pretend to help you learn French, and, next thing you know, you have used the app for months without making any actual progress - because the app tricked you into playing a game, instead of successfully learning with the four necessary steps.

To avoid this, make sure any app you use is teaching you the material that you need to learn (selection) and that your practice includes all four steps.

This likely won't be fulfilled with just one app, but that's ok. **Now you know how to choose all the tools you need - and how to mercilessly ditch the time wasters...**

5) Which other resources do I need, besides this app, to fulfill all 4 steps of the SAIS process?

Resources can be apps, but also books, videos, audios - and people. Take a moment to make sure that all 4 steps are currently addressed in your practice. If a step is not fulfilled, find a resource to address it.

If you don't have a practice yet, and are considering getting started with a particular app, make sure you build a practice around this app to include all four steps, as outlined in this guide. **This will make the difference between being fluent a few months from now, or having made little or even no progress.**

 **Congratulations!** 

You took the time to read this guide until here (most people won't!) and you're now much closer to being a fluent French speaker!

Take a moment to celebrate and make sure you **check the resources on the next page for your next steps!**

Wait, there's more!

This guide is part of [The Free French Fluency Starter Kit](#). Did you already download the other resources?



Free weekly classes, live on Youtube



10 Steps to Fluency (Checklist)



Open your Mind to French (Guided Meditation)



The Fluency Worksheet. (Mini-course)



25 Legit French YouTube channels. (ebook)



Vocabulary Magic (pdf guide)



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