

## Doing better in GCSE French

This guidance is for teachers working with students who are predicted to be grade D/C on the GCSE exams. It is intended to support teachers in helping these students to achieve a grade C. The advice offered may also be useful to other teachers and in turn to many other students.

By the time students come to revise for their GCSEs they have covered most of the syllabus in lessons. Revision is not about doing those lessons again but about reminding students of what they have covered and learned and revisiting any aspects which remain unclear in their minds.

An important element of subject revision lessons is to provide students with the opportunity to learn, practise and refine revision techniques. In this way individual students will discover for themselves those techniques which are personally most effective. In addition, you can provide focused feedback, not just on the subject material, but also on the techniques. Using lessons just to complete or review past test papers is unlikely to be an effective strategy for helping D/C students to improve. Neither is giving students unstructured lesson time 'to revise' since many of these students are not very good at revising although they may well give the impression of industriously getting on with their work.

Remember to link your planned French revision with any whole-school programme and with advice that students may be receiving in their other subjects.

Further information and advice on helping these students revise and prepare for their exams can be found towards the beginning of the *GCSE booster pack* in the section 'GCSE booster: guidance for teachers and school leaders on using the materials'.

### Using the subject guidance leaflets

There are two leaflets for French. One is for you, the teacher; the other is for students.

It is envisaged that you will use these flexibly to suit your own circumstances. The student's leaflet can be photocopied and given to targeted students. Go through the leaflet with them. Encourage them to annotate it, and explain how your subject revision programme will fit with and support the students' own revision programmes and the advice on their leaflet.

Use the teacher's leaflet to plan your revision programme, covering those topics and aspects which you have identified as most relevant to the students. Encourage the students, at intervals during the revision programme, to use the traffic light system on their leaflet to assess their confidence in each aspect and to check with you those which remain difficult.

A number of revision activities are suggested in the teacher's leaflet, but plan your revision programme to suit your own students. Using specific revision activities is less important than planning to use a range to ensure that your lessons retain variety and that you offer students opportunities to work in their preferred ways.

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To achieve a grade C in GCSE French your students need to be able to show that they can do all of the following, not just by chance, but because they understand and are confident in what they are doing.

What students need to be able to do	What this means to them	How you can help them improve
<p><b>1</b> Remember important information from all topics in French whether in listening, speaking, reading or writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing some of the big ideas in language learning, such as how words change to become plural, gender and/or tense</li> <li>• Being familiar with vocabulary and structures from the full range of topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure that students have a complete set of notes for each topic, either their own or from a revision guide</li> <li>• Show them how to read each topic and then briefly write on cards the main structures and vocabulary (not just nouns but common adverbs, adjectives and verbs)</li> <li>• Use some lesson time to demonstrate and practise this skill; students can use these cards for further revision later</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to practise language from the prescribed range of topics, not just easier ones like food and drink, clothes and classroom objects</li> <li>• Help students make a list of key words for each topic and write meanings for any they are unsure of; use paired work in which one student tests another on meanings and common spellings</li> <li>• When revising a noun or adjective encourage students to give its plural or feminine form as appropriate</li> <li>• Make connections explicit, e.g.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>-té</i> in French is the equivalent of <i>-ty</i> in English (<i>société</i> = society)</li> <li>– in word families such as <i>eau/mer/rivière/lac</i> or <i>beau/beauté</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use 'spider diagrams' to help them build links</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b> Recognise, pronounce and spell basic cross-topic words such as days of the week, months of the year and higher numbers for prices and weights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing or speaking clearly enough to be readily understood by a French speaker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have prompts on display and use them in lessons to practise spelling and pronunciation as a class or in pairs</li> <li>• Make students aware of liaison (e.g. <i>trois-enfants</i>) which can lead to confusion in listening (<i>trois/treize enfants</i>). (Most exam boards will accept higher numbers in figures.)</li> <li>• In listening avoid pausing the tape too often, so that students hear enough language on which to practise their strategies; encourage simple note taking in French and talk about spellings</li> </ul>

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<p><b>3</b> Know when (and when not) to use English (or another language) to guess unfamiliar words</p> <p>Know how to use knowledge of grammar to understand a text</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying some common words which are similar in French and English (e.g. <i>concentration, orange</i>) and some which are not (e.g. <i>jambon</i> doesn't mean <i>jam</i>)</li> <li>Knowing some common words which have several meanings (e.g. <i>temps</i>)</li> <li>Recognising that e.g. in <i>Les garçons jouent au football</i> there are three ways of telling that there is more than one boy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide texts, perhaps from the Internet or from magazines etc.</li> <li>Demonstrate, and let students practise and discuss, strategies for guessing unfamiliar words, checking their ideas in a dictionary</li> </ul>
<p><b>4</b> Expect the foreign language to make sense</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using logic in responding to questions, e.g. recognising that <i>Il est allé en France en 2005</i> or <i>La température sera de 30°C</i> et <i>il neigera</i> are not likely to be correct answers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide some possible/impossible sentences for students to decide the feasibility</li> <li>Organise opportunities for students to work in pairs to produce sentences and test each other; these sentences can also be adapted to give practice in tense recognition</li> </ul>
<p><b>5</b> Know and be able to use the French alphabet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spelling aloud in French words such as their own name and address or other proper place names</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Another opportunity for paired work: one of the pair gives the other a word to spell out</li> </ul>
<p><b>6</b> Recognise (and use) synonyms (words with similar meanings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying and understanding in a passage key words which have similar meanings (e.g. <i>rapide/vite</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give students a list of words and expressions and ask them to pair up the synonyms, or to decide whether a pair of words or expressions mean the same or different; they could then make up their own examples to test each other</li> </ul>
<p><b>7</b> Find the key points in a range of written texts and respond appropriately</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying the main points and specific details of a text and working out meanings of some unfamiliar words or phrases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage students to highlight or underline key points during reading time, and discuss in pairs</li> <li>Give opportunities to work with advertisements, pictures, magazines and Internet-based texts and encourage students to collect their own</li> <li>Encourage students not to jump at the first recognisable item without reading the whole text carefully, e.g. noticing <i>tennis de table</i> not just <i>tennis</i></li> <li>Give practice in reading instructions carefully and ensure that they respond precisely (e.g. <i>it's going to rain</i> not just <i>the weather will be bad</i>) to all parts of the task; discuss with students their evidence for their answers, so that they understand that random guesswork is often unsuccessful</li> <li>Point out that a good answer may require more than one word</li> <li>Provide a list of symbols used in the examination and let students test each other on their meanings</li> <li>Accustom students to a range of layouts and fonts (e.g. italic) frequently used in the examination</li> </ul>

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<p><b>8</b> Frame questions in speaking and/or writing tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking as well as answering common questions (e.g. <i>Qu'est-ce que/combien/comment</i>) without confusion between them, e.g. between <i>quand</i> and <i>où</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise small-group practice and discussion of role plays requiring questions; provide regular practice in responding to a range of progressively more open questions</li> </ul>
<p><b>9</b> Cope with less predictable situations in speaking tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predicting what is likely to happen in the course of role plays according to their settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use flow charts or gap-filling tasks to allow students to discuss how they might respond, depending on what they hear, e.g. if the waiter says, <i>Je n'ai pas de chocolat</i>, then we could say, <i>Alors je prends une limonade</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>10</b> Recognise and give opinions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding, expressing and justifying opinions in writing and orally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a list of expressions for giving opinions and ask students to decide whether they are 'for' or 'against'; point out that people are unlikely to be simultaneously for and against something</li> <li>Use a card game where students pick e.g. a sport and a facial expression; they then think of as many different verbal expressions and reasons for that opinion as possible</li> </ul>
<p><b>11</b> Understand and use common adverbs and prepositions appropriately, especially for directions and time phrases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the difference between <i>à</i> and <i>de</i> in expressions such as <i>de 8 heures à 10 heures</i>; the difference between <i>à gauche</i> and <i>à droite</i>, <i>dernier</i> and <i>prochain</i>; the significance of negatives such as <i>je n'ai pas joué au football</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use gap-filling exercises to practise choosing the correct adverb or preposition and true / false tasks to give practice in negatives, especially with auxiliaries (Some students may need help in telling right from left in English)</li> </ul>
<p><b>12</b> Know how to manipulate verbs accurately in present, past and future tenses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowing at least the present, perfect and future (<i>aller</i> + infinitive) tenses of common regular and irregular verbs in as many persons as possible (not just <i>je</i> forms)</li> </ul> <p><b>This is fundamental to achieving a grade C</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowing in particular the present tense of <i>avoir</i> and <i>être</i> for the formation of the perfect tense and of <i>aller</i> for the immediate future; discriminating between <i>à</i> and <i>a</i>, <i>est</i> and <i>et</i>; giving simple opinions in each tense</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make sure students have detailed notes (their own or possibly from a revision guide) on these aspects</li> <li>Give opportunities for regular practice in recognising and using these verb forms in a range of persons</li> </ul>
<p><b>13</b> Produce an accurate, succinct and coherent piece of writing, whether for coursework or a terminal examination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding that exceeding the word limit for an exam question risks greater inaccuracy and lack of clarity</li> <li>Using paragraphing to deal with all aspects of the task and using pre-learned expressions from the topic only as relevant</li> <li>Manipulating accurately and personalising the language of any stimulus rather than copying it out verbatim</li> <li>Checking carefully that verb endings match their subjects and that adjectives agree with their nouns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give practice in writing in a range of genres: factual and more imaginative</li> <li>Model open-ended tasks to show students how to use verbs and to write sentences, including opinions, in a range of tenses; provide opportunities for students to practise these skills, perhaps in pairs to check each other</li> </ul>

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To achieve a grade C in GCSE French you need to be confident in all these areas.

(Use the code in the second column to say how well you think you are doing: G - green, very confident; O - orange, not fully sure; and R - red, not very confident. Ask your teacher about anything you colour red.)

Can I?		What can I do to improve?
Remember important information from all the topics I have been studying whether in listening, speaking, reading or writing.	<input type="radio"/> R <input type="radio"/> O <input type="radio"/> G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make certain that I have a complete set of notes.</li> <li>• Read each topic and then briefly write its main structures and vocabulary on cards.</li> <li>• Use these cards for further revision later.</li> <li>• Learn words in 'families' - for example, <i>thé/café/limonade</i>.</li> <li>• Look for patterns in words - for example, <i>société = society</i>.</li> </ul>
Remember basic words which can come up in any topic or task - for example, spellings of days, months and seasons and numbers.	<input type="radio"/> R <input type="radio"/> O <input type="radio"/> G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practise these spellings and pronunciation with a partner and test each other.</li> <li>• Make a poster or set of cards to help me remember.</li> </ul>
Use English to help guess new words. Use what I know about grammar to help answer questions. For example, <i>Les enfants jouent au football</i> must be plural.	<input type="radio"/> R <input type="radio"/> O <input type="radio"/> G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find a French advertisement on the Internet and see how many new words I can guess. Check them in a dictionary.</li> </ul>
Speak and write French which always makes sense.	<input type="radio"/> R <input type="radio"/> O <input type="radio"/> G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use common sense to check answers I have written. For example, <i>Il est allé en France en 2005</i> can't be right as it means <i>He went to France in 2005</i>.</li> </ul>
Remember the French alphabet and pronounce the letters correctly.	<input type="radio"/> R <input type="radio"/> O <input type="radio"/> G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practise with a partner, spelling out loud in French my name, my address and my town.</li> </ul>
Recognise (and use) different words which mean the same thing - for example, <i>vite</i> and <i>rapide</i> .	<input type="radio"/> R <input type="radio"/> O <input type="radio"/> G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make up pairs of words with similar meanings and test a partner.</li> <li>• Use a dictionary or textbook to check.</li> </ul>

Can I?		What can I do to improve?
<p>Find the key points in advertisements, brochures etc.</p>	<p>R O G</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Highlight or underline key points</b>, then discuss with a partner whether they are key.</li> <li>• <b>Don't jump at the first word I recognise. Read further so that I don't miss something important.</b></li> <li>• <b>Be precise:</b> If it is <i>raining</i>, don't just write <i>bad weather</i>.</li> </ul>
<p>Ask as well as answer questions. Deal with unexpected events in a role play.</p>	<p>R O G</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Learn the difference between <i>qu'est-ce que</i> (what), <i>combien</i> (how many/much), <i>comment</i> (how), <i>quand</i> (when), <i>où</i> (where).</b></li> <li>• <b>Go through my role-play notes and work with a partner to make flow charts to plan what to say.</b></li> </ul>
<p>Follow people's opinions when I hear them and give my own opinions with reasons for them.</p>	<p>R O G</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take turns with a partner: one says the name of, for example, a sport, and the other says what they think of it and why.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Understand and use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>time phrases</b> - for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>de 8 heures à 10 heures</i> (from 8 o'clock to 10 o'clock),</li> <li>- <i>samedi dernier</i> and <i>samedi prochain</i> (last Saturday, next Saturday);</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>directions</b> - for example, <i>à gauche</i> (left) and <i>à droite</i> (right);</li> <li>• <b>sentences</b> which have <i>ne ... pas</i> in them.</li> </ul>	<p>R O G</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Work with a partner to practise:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- telling each other what times places around my town are open;</li> <li>- talking in French about days last week or next week;</li> <li>- giving directions to places around my school.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Write some true/false questions</b>, some with <i>ne ... pas</i>, and test a partner.</li> </ul>
<p>Describe present, past and future events in writing and orally. Produce simple but accurate and well-organised written coursework or examination work.</p>	<p>R O G</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use my notes to learn present, perfect and future tenses of common verbs.</li> <li>• <b>Learn more than just the 'je' forms so I can talk about as many people as possible.</b></li> <li>• Write clearly.</li> <li>• Keep to the word limit.</li> <li>• Use a new paragraph to complete each task in the question.</li> <li>• Don't just copy words from the question. Put in some of my own.</li> <li>• Check that words match - for example, <i>Les enfants sont fatigués</i>.</li> </ul>