

# UPGRADE *your* FRENCH



SECOND EDITION

MARGARET JUBB

# U P G R A D E

Do you want to increase your chances of getting a top grade in your French exams? Or are you just keen to refresh your knowledge of French grammar and vocabulary? *Upgrade your French* offers a complete thirty-day revision programme that is guaranteed to bring results. In the countdown to your exams simply spend between thirty minutes and an hour a day with this book, and see your mark upgrade!

This short revision guide focuses on three key strategies for upgrading your exam results:

- eliminating basic errors and slips of the pen
- increasing and consolidating your vocabulary
- improving the style and quality of your French

This new edition has been fully revised and contains a new introduction discussing the differences between written and spoken French, as well as a new chapter on comparatives and superlatives.

*Upgrade your French* is an ideal resource for A level students, undergraduates and anyone with a good knowledge of French seeking to improve the quality of their written French fast.

**Margaret Jubb** is Senior Lecturer in French at the University of Aberdeen.

#### ALSO OF INTEREST:

*Upgrade your German*  
ISBN 978 0340 806623

*Upgrade your Italian*  
ISBN 978 0340 809662

*Upgrade your Spanish*  
ISBN 978 0340 761861

Cover photo © Photowood Inc./Corbis

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
[www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)

an informa business

ISBN 978-1-138-42730-3



9 781138 427303

UPPER ADE  
YOUR FRENCH  
SECOND EDITION • JUBB  
Routledge

# **Upgrade your French**

Second Edition

Margaret Jubb

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN



**Routledge**

Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2002 by Hodder Arnold  
This second edition published in 2007  
By Hodder Education

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

First issued in hardback 2017

Copyright © 2007, Margaret Jubb

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

A catalog record for this title is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 13: 978-0-340-94313-7 (pbk)

ISBN 13: 978-1-138-42730-3 (hbk)

Typeset in 10/12 pt Formata by Charon Tec Ltd (A Macmillan Company), Chennai, India  
[www.charontec.com](http://www.charontec.com)

# **Upgrade your French**

Second Edition

# Dedication

To the memory of my mother

# Acknowledgements

My first thanks are to Elena Seymenliyska, Arnold's Commissioning Editor for Modern Languages, who invited me to write this book, and who has been an invaluable source of advice and support throughout. I am also indebted to my students in the French Department at Aberdeen University, who have worked through my material in its various drafts and have helped to make it more user-friendly. Last, but by no means least, I should like to thank Jennifer Bellanger and Isabelle Gourdin for the care with which they have checked the whole text, and John Roach for his help in resolving a number of troublesome queries. For any remaining inaccuracies and infelicities, I am of course entirely responsible.

For the second edition of this book, my thanks are due to Bianca Knights and Tamsin Smith at Hodder for editorial support and advice. I am also grateful to Roger Ravet and Sophie Watt at the University of Aberdeen for their careful reading of the new material.

Margaret Jubb

The author and publisher would like to thank the following for permission to use copyright material in this book: Presses Universitaires de France: *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, LXXX (1986), p. 149. See Day 5: 18–23.

# Contents

Dedication	vii
Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	1
<b>Day 1:</b>	Agreement of verb and subject 5
<b>Day 2:</b>	Reporting speech 11
<b>Day 3:</b>	The present tense 17
<b>Day 4:</b>	Statistics and numbers 23
<b>Day 5:</b>	Adjective agreements 29
<b>Day 6:</b>	Comparatives and superlatives 35
<b>Day 7:</b>	Alternatives to adverbs 43
<b>Day 8:</b>	Use of articles 49
<b>Day 9:</b>	Quantifiers 55
<b>Day 10:</b>	Use of tenses with <i>si</i> 61
<b>Day 11:</b>	False friends and Anglicized spelling 67
<b>Day 12:</b>	Past tenses 73
<b>Day 13:</b>	Expressions of time 79
<b>Day 14:</b>	Agreement of past participles 85
<b>Day 15:</b>	Pronominal verbs 91
<b>Day 16:</b>	The passive 97
<b>Day 17:</b>	Alternatives to the passive 105
<b>Day 18:</b>	Personal pronouns 111
<b>Day 19:</b>	The negative 117
<b>Day 20:</b>	Inversion of subject and verb 123
<b>Day 21:</b>	Relative pronouns 131
<b>Day 22:</b>	The infinitive and present participle 139
<b>Day 23:</b>	Logical connectors 147
<b>Day 24:</b>	Modal verbs 153
<b>Day 25:</b>	Sentence openings 161
<b>Day 26:</b>	Conjunctions 167
<b>Day 27:</b>	Highlighting and emphasis 173
<b>Day 28:</b>	Verb constructions 179
<b>Day 29:</b>	Accents, elision and capitalization 185
<b>Day 30:</b>	Test: Key points 191
Progress Chart	194
Answers to Exercises	195
Bibliography	211
Index	213



# Introduction

## AIMS OF THE BOOK

If you are likely to get very high marks in your French language examinations, this book is not for you. It is not aimed at high-flyers, but at students in all years of their degree programmes who need to improve their performance. It offers you a thirty-day revision and consolidation course to work through on your own with exercises that will take between half an hour and an hour per day. If you follow it conscientiously, you will improve your level of performance significantly, hence the title, *Upgrade your French*.

It is not realistic to expect to learn very complex and subtle aspects of the French language for the first time just before examinations and when you are working on your own. Instead, this book focuses on three key areas where you can make a real difference:

- spotting mistakes and correcting errors/oversights on key grammar points;
- making a conscious effort to improve the style of your French;
- making a conscious effort to use more adventurous vocabulary and avoid Anglicisms.

In order to maintain interest and concentration, a day spent working on a key grammar point is followed typically by a day focusing more on matters of style or vocabulary, though grammar can rarely be avoided entirely! In fact, consolidation of the previous day's work has been deliberately built into the programme, so ideally you should follow the order of the book in order to gain the maximum benefit from it.

## GETTING THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK

The idea is to complete one unit per day over a period of thirty days. You will find that you absorb the material better if you work steadily in this way, rather than trying to race ahead and do two or three units per day. If you want to do more language revision each day, then vary your activities by doing some other work of your own, e.g. going over vocabulary lists, revising verbs, looking over corrected work, working on past papers, or, perhaps best of all, reading a French newspaper or book.

Each day's work from this book should take you no more than an hour. If you find you haven't finished in that time, it's probably better to stop anyway and go back to it later when you feel refreshed. When you have finished, check your work against the answer key at the back of the book, and count your total of correct answers out of 30. If you have full marks, well done. If you got less than 20/30, you should do the section again, but not immediately. Give yourself at least an hour before going back to it. If you got between 20 and 29 out of 30, you should look

back at where you went wrong the next day before you move on to the following section. Make sure you understand why you went wrong before you do move on.

As well as doing the exercises and checking your answers, you should note down as you work through each section any vocabulary or idioms which were unfamiliar to you. Always list nouns with their gender and verbs with their irregularities and dependent prepositions (where applicable). You should also use the references to grammar books given at the end of each section to look up any points on which you need fuller explanation. The brief explanations given in this book do not aim to give exhaustive coverage. They focus instead on points which are known from experience to cause many students recurrent problems. Experience was reinforced in this case by the analysis of a sizeable sample of past students' examination papers. You will find that some of the errors from the sample have been included in the book as exercise material for you to correct.

The most important thing, though, is that you learn to correct your own work. You will know more precisely when you have finished working through *Upgrade your French*, if you don't know already, where your major problems arise. Bear all this in mind and if you know, for example, that in a stressful examination situation, or even when writing under less pressure, you are liable to miss adjective agreements, then try to leave time to check your written work specifically for this.

### APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

Time permitting, it is always a good idea to check your work over a number of times, looking separately each time for a particular feature, e.g.

- checking the gender of all the nouns;
- use of articles;
- checking all the adjectives/past participles for agreement;
- checking all the verbs for correct tense, formation and agreement with the subject;
- checking the pronouns (direct/indirect object);
- checking all the relative pronouns;
- checking the verb constructions (active/passive) and use of prepositions where applicable.

You can expand/contract this list to suit your particular needs. Pay particular attention to checking the last few sentences of your work where flagging concentration can cause slips to occur. You should find that methodical checking in this way enables you to remedy many errors for yourself and to avoid losing marks unnecessarily for things which you have overlooked in the heat of the moment.

### WRITTEN AND SPOKEN FRENCH

Bear in mind that there are many differences between the formal written language at one extreme and the informal spoken language at the other. You may be confident and fluent in casual conversation, but your formal writing may still not be as polished and accurate as it could be. For example, many verb endings and adjective

agreements are completely silent, but they must not be overlooked when you write. In informal speech, you will be accustomed to forming the negative simply by placing **pas, personne** etc. after the verb, but you must also remember to place **ne** before the verb when you write. You also need to pay careful attention to spelling and to more minor points, such as the use of accents, elision and capitalisation. The odd slip may not be too serious, but general carelessness will make a bad impression and detract from the professional appearance of your writing.

However, good formal writing is not characterized simply by the absence of basic errors; it should also demonstrate a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structure, a much wider range than you would normally use in informal speech. First you should banish all colloquial expressions such as **plein de** (for **beaucoup de**) and you should also avoid the overuse of very basic vocabulary, such as **dire** (see Day 2). Draw on your reading, try to convert the words you can recognise passively into ones that you use actively, and above all ring the changes on common expressions such as **beaucoup** (see Day 9).

In informal speech, direct word order (subject, verb, complement) is the one most generally used, even in questions, but in formal written French, subject-verb inversion is far more common than you might imagine, and not just in questions (see Day 20). Try to make more use of this yourself and to vary your sentence openings as well (see Day 25). In writing and in formal speech it is also important to structure your ideas clearly by making effective use of logical connectors (see Day 23) rather than a series of clauses loosely linked by **et ... et**. Above all, be adventurous in your French; don't be so afraid of making errors and losing marks that you limit yourself to a narrow range of vocabulary and monotonously simple constructions. Good luck!

#### UPDATE FOR THE SECOND EDITION

In response to feedback from readers, the new section above on Written and Spoken French has been added to this Introduction to the second edition of *Upgrade Your French*. A new unit (Day 6) on Comparatives and superlatives has also been included. The remaining days have consequently been renumbered, and the old Day 29 has been deleted in order to keep the total to 30.

Margaret Jubb

Aberdeen

November 2006



# Key points: Agreement of verb and subject

DAY  
1



As in English, verbs in French agree with their subject in number (singular/plural) and person. This may seem a very obvious elementary point, but it is one which is all too easily overlooked when you are under pressure in an exam. It is important first of all to remember that many French verb forms which sound the same as one another are written differently.

## I First-/third-person singular

Pay careful attention to the difference between first-person and third-person singular endings, for example, in the present tense (see also Day 3) of regular **-ir** verbs (**je finis, il finit**), semi-regular **-ir** verbs (**je dors, il dort**), **-re** verbs (**j'attends, il attend**) and irregular verbs (**je peux, il peut**), and in the imperfect and conditional tenses of all verbs (**j'avais, il avait; j'aurais, il aurait**). Watch **avoir** and **être** particularly, since they occur so frequently, being used to form compound tenses of other verbs.

Complete the sentences below with the verbs in the appropriate form of the present tense.

1 - 2 J' \_\_\_\_\_ (**attendre**) cinq minutes et puis je \_\_\_\_\_ (**partir**).

*I'll wait for five minutes and then I'm leaving.*

3 - 4 Elle \_\_\_\_\_ (**vouloir**) que je reste plus longtemps, mais je ne \_\_\_\_\_ (**pouvoir**) pas.

*She wants me to stay longer, but I can't.*

5 - 6 Elle ne \_\_\_\_\_ (**rougir**) de rien; elle ne \_\_\_\_\_ (**comprendre**) pas que cela m'étonne.

*She has no shame; she can't understand why that should surprise me.*

Rewrite the sentences below in the first person singular.

7 - 8 **Quand elle était plus jeune, elle avait les cheveux longs.**

*When she was younger, she had long hair.*

9 - 10 **S'il avait pris le train de 9 heures il y serait arrivé à temps.**

*If he had caught the 9 o'clock train, he would have got there in time.*

## II Third-person singular/plural

The distinction between third-person singular and plural endings also requires particular attention, because in many cases the two forms sound the same. It is easy to make a mistake when the verb is some distance away from its subject, particularly if another noun intervenes. For example:

**Le taux d'inflation dans ces pays varie énormément.**

[The inflation rate in these countries varies enormously.]

Be particularly careful with relative clauses. Make sure that the verb in the relative clause agrees with the subject of the relative clause and not with the subject of the main clause. For example:

**La petite avait des parents qui travaillaient toute la journée.**

[The little girl's parents worked all day.]

Note that mistakes are frequently made with the present tense of **-er** verbs (**varie/varient**) and with the third-person singular/plural endings of the imperfect and conditional tenses (**-ait/-aient**).

Complete the sentences below with the verb in the third-person singular or plural form as appropriate.

- 11 La qualité de ces produits \_\_\_\_\_ (être) tout à fait exceptionnelle.**

*The quality of these products is quite outstanding.*

- 12 Elle aimait lire des romans qui la \_\_\_\_\_ (faire) rêver.**

*She liked to read novels which made her dream.*

As a final note on this point, watch out for nouns which are plural in French but whose equivalent in English is singular (or vice versa) and make sure that the verb agrees appropriately. For example:

**Les informations passent à vingt heures.**

[The news is on at 8 p.m.]

**Ses recherches portent sur les complications de l'hypertension.**

[His/her research is concerned with the complications of high blood pressure.]

**Son pantalon fait des poches aux genoux.**

[His/her trousers are baggy at the knees.]

Complete the following sentences with the appropriate form of the verbs given.

- 13 Ce pantalon vous \_\_\_\_\_ (aller) très bien.**

*Those trousers suit you very well.*

- 14 Les renseignements fournis dans le texte \_\_\_\_\_ (être) inexacts.**

*The information given in the text is inaccurate.*

### III Two or more subjects linked by *et*

Where one verb has two or more individual subjects, remember to make the verb plural. For example:

**Le Président et le Premier Ministre se sont rencontrés hier.**

[The President and the Prime Minister met yesterday.]

**L'introduction et la conclusion sont à refaire.**

[The introduction and conclusion will have to be rewritten.]

Be especially careful where a first-person subject is combined with a third-person; the verb must be first-person plural. For example:

**Mon ami et moi partons en vacances demain.**

[My boyfriend and I are leaving on holiday tomorrow.]

Complete the following sentences with the verbs in the appropriate present tense form.

- 15 L'écrivain et sa femme \_\_\_\_\_ (aller) collaborer à la production de ce film.**

*The writer and his wife are going to collaborate on the production of this film.*

- 16 Son intelligence et sa perspicacité \_\_\_\_\_ (être) vraiment remarquables.**

*His intelligence and insight are truly remarkable.*

- 17 La France et l'Allemagne \_\_\_\_\_ (se rapprocher).**

*France and Germany are beginning to enjoy better relations.*

- 18 Mes parents et moi \_\_\_\_\_ (aller) assister au mariage.**

*My parents and I are going to attend the wedding.*

### IV Impersonal verbs

Remember that if you are using verbs such as **exister**, **manquer**, **rester** or **se trouver** impersonally, the verb must be third-person singular. Contrast the following impersonal and personal uses of these verbs:

**Il manque deux dossiers.**

[Two files are missing.]

**Deux dossiers manquent.**

**Il existe plusieurs modèles.**

[Several styles are available.]

**Plusieurs modèles existent.**

English speakers often try to use the impersonal verb **il s'agit de** with a personal subject. e.g. to translate 'this book is about . . .' they use **\*ce livre s'agit de . . .** This is an impossible construction and must never be attempted. Always use this verb in the third person singular with impersonal **il** as its subject. For example:

**Dans ce livre il s'agit de . . .**

[This book is about . . .]

## Dans ces articles il s'agit de . . .

[These articles are about . . .]

Rewrite the following sentences using the impersonal verb indicated.

**19 Deux parts de gâteau restent. (rester)**

*Two pieces of cake are left.*

**20 Tous ces films traitent à peu près de la même histoire. (s'agir)**

*All these films deal with more or less the same story.*

## V Problems with collective nouns

Thinking in English is the great danger here. Whereas singular collective nouns, such as council, family or government, may take either a singular or plural verb in English, in French there is no choice; they must take a singular verb. For example:

**Le gouvernement a décidé d'introduire un nouveau projet de loi.**

[The government has/have decided to introduce a new bill.]

You should note, however, that the situation is different if the collective noun in French is followed by **de** + plural. In such a case, the verb may be singular or plural, but is more usually plural. For example:

**Un groupe d'étudiants attendaient (or attendait) devant la porte.**

[A group of students was/were waiting outside the door.]

There is no choice with **tout le monde**; you must always use a singular verb. For example:

**Tout le monde s'accorde à reconnaître la justesse de cette décision.**

[Everyone acknowledges that this decision is correct.]

Decide whether the verb in the following sentences should be singular or plural.

**21 Le conseil municipal a décidé/ont décidé de lever le couvre-feu.**

*The town council has decided to lift the curfew.*

**22 La famille de Jean-Claude est/sont originaire(s) de Corse.**

*Jean-Claude's family come from Corsica.*

**23 Tout le monde sait/savent que c'est couru d'avance.**

*Everyone knows that it's a foregone conclusion.*

**24 Un groupe de musiciens répète/répètent pour le concert.**

*A group of musicians is rehearsing for the concert.*



## VI Quantifiers

The usual pattern is for **la plupart, (un grand) nombre de, beaucoup de** to take a plural verb, agreeing with the usually plural complement. For example:

**La plupart des étudiants ont réussi à leur examen.**

[Most of the students have passed their exam.]

But occasionally, if a singular complement is involved, a singular verb will be needed. For example:

**La plupart de la cathédrale a été reconstruite.**

[Most of the cathedral has been rebuilt.]

Fractions, such as **la moitié**, when they are followed by a plural complement, take a plural verb. For example:

**La moitié des étudiants ont échoué.**

[Half the students have failed.]

But if the complement is singular, the verb will also be singular. For example:

**La moitié de la classe était absente.**

[Half the class was absent.]

Percentages are usually followed by a plural verb. For example:

**33% des mariages se terminent par le divorce.**

[33% of marriages end in divorce.]

Decide whether the verb in the following sentences should be singular or plural.

**25 La moitié des étudiants s'est inscrite/se sont inscrits une semaine à l'avance.**

*Half the students registered a week in advance.*

**26 La plupart des Hollandais parle/parlent plus d'une langue.**

*Most Dutch people speak more than one language.*

**27 60% des professeurs se déclare satisfait/se déclarent satisfaits de leurs conditions de travail.**

*60% of teachers say that they are happy with their working conditions.*

**28 La moitié de la classe a/ont échoué.**

*Half the class has failed.*

**29 Beaucoup de ses livres est/sont illisible(s).**

*Many of his/her books are unreadable.*