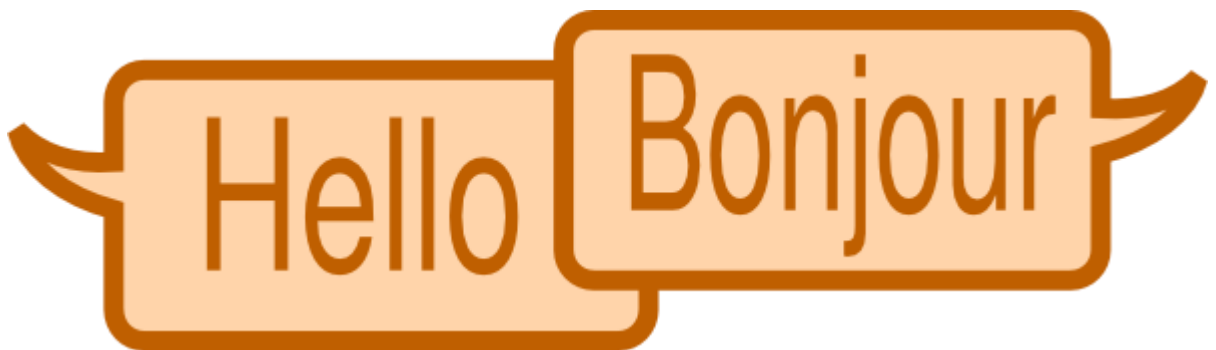




GCSE FRENCH FOUNDATION TRANSLATION PRACTICE MATERIALS



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Translation: English–French Strategies

There are some different strategies to consider when you are translating from English into French, partly because you will be able to understand the text you see so you don't need to try to work out any meanings before you start. However, most people would consider that translating into French is more difficult.

When you have a passage or sentence to translate into French, read the whole thing through once. Then work sentence by sentence or phrase by phrase bearing the following strategies in mind.



Grammar

Verbs

- Read the English carefully to make sure you have identified which tense needs to be used in French. Look for clues such as time markers to help you.

Yesterday I went swimming. → perfect tense needed

Tomorrow I'm going to go shopping. → future tense needed

But remember that to say you have been doing something for a certain length of time in French, you use *depuis* + the present tense, when you would use the perfect tense in English. Don't let this catch you out!

I have been learning Spanish for four years. *Je parle espagnol depuis quatre ans.*

- Think carefully about the verb forms you need. Who is the subject of the verb (who is doing the action)? Is it more than one person? Make sure you know your verb endings. For the perfect tense, check you have used the correct auxiliary verb (*avoir* or *être*) and a past participle.

She arrived late.

Elle est arrivée en retard.

Remember that with verbs using *être* in the perfect tense, the past participle must agree with the subject of the verb.

- Look out for reflexive verbs in French as these aren't always obvious from the English.

I get up at 8 o'clock. *Je me lève à 8 heures.*

- Remember that French uses infinitives when English uses words ending in '-ing'.

I like **playing** squash. *J'aime jouer au squash.*

- You might have to use modal verbs, so look out for 'can', 'must', 'should', 'allowed to' and remember that these verb forms are followed by the infinitive in French.

You **can** do watersports. *On peut faire des sports nautiques.*

- Look out also for 'could', 'had to' and 'was allowed to', which will mean you need to use modal verbs in the imperfect tense.

- Look out for 'would' in the English. This will indicate that you need the conditional in French.

Nouns and adjectives

- Gender, articles and adjectival agreement and position are also really important when you are translating nouns into French.

She has a **big** house.

Elle a une grande maison.

He was wearing **black** gloves. *Il portait des gants noirs.*

I saw two **grey** mice.

J'ai vu deux souris grises.

Remember that you must add an **-e** to most adjectives when they describe a feminine noun, **-s** when they describe a masculine plural noun and **-es** when they describe a feminine plural noun.

Time phrases

- Learn common time and frequency phrases so you always have them ready to use: yesterday (*hier*), today (*aujourd'hui*), tomorrow (*demain*), every day (*tous les jours*), etc.

Useful little words

- Build up your bank of vocabulary with useful little words, which you are likely to need in your translations, for example: intensifiers (quite – *assez*, very – *très*), quantifiers (a lot of – *beaucoup de*, a little – *un peu de*), conjunctions (but – *mais*), because – *parce que*), prepositions (on – *sur*, near – *près de*).



Word order

- You need to think carefully about word order when you are translating into French. Remember the rules for adjectives, object pronouns and, to a lesser extent, adverbs:

Adjectives

I bought some **black** shoes. *J'ai acheté des chaussures **noires**.*

Most adjectives, including all colours, come **after** the verb they describe.

Object pronouns

I saw **him** yesterday. *Je **l'**ai vu hier.*

The pronoun *l'* comes **before** the verb and, in the perfect tense, before the auxiliary verb.

Adverbs

I **also** like rugby. *J'aime **aussi** le rugby.*

Adverbs often come **after** the verb in French, even when they come elsewhere in the sentence in English.



Translation skills

- Be careful with words which we miss out in English but which must be there in French, and vice versa.

I watched TV yesterday. *J'ai regardé **la** télé hier.*

The word for 'the' must be used in French.

On Saturdays she does her homework. ***Le** samedi elle fait ses devoirs.*

No word for 'on' here in French.

I want to be **a** doctor. *Je veux être docteur.*

Remember that you don't use an article with jobs in French.

- Avoid translating word for word when you translate into French. It is often not possible to do this. Be particularly careful with the continuous present in English, which cannot be directly translated into French – remember, you just need the present tense in French.

I **am** studying French at university. *J'**étudie** le français à l'université.*

No word for 'am/is/are' with 'studying' in French.

Similarly, you cannot translate the imperfect tense in French word for word.

I **was** crossing the road / I **used to** cross the road. *Je **traversais** la rue.*

No separate word in French for 'was/were' or 'used to'.

The same is true for 'will' in the future tense and 'would' in the conditional: they are not separate words in French.

They **will arrive** at 6 o'clock.

*Ils **arriveront** à six heures.*

I **would prefer** to play football.

*Je **préfèrerais** jouer au foot.*

- We are sometimes a little lazy with our written English, but French does not allow this.

The man I know... *L'homme **que** je connais...*

In English a more correct way to say this would be 'the man whom I know', and *que* is needed here in French. So bear this in mind when translating into French.

- When you are asked to translate from English into French, you might need to look carefully at the sentence or part of the sentence which comes **before** the one you are translating.

The house which we bought is too small.

***La maison** que nous avons achetée est trop petite.*

La maison is at the start of the sentence but because it is feminine, you need to add an extra *e* on the past participle *achetée* and the adjective *petite*.

- If you don't know how to say something in French, don't panic! Try to think of a synonym, a similar word, or another way to say it using vocabulary that you **do** know.
- Check your spelling, accents and grammar!
- If you have time, it is a good idea to try to translate what you have written back into English, to see if it really does match the translation you were asked to do.



As you are working through the translations on the following pages, try to avoid using translation software, lots of which is available online. Although online dictionaries can be helpful for individual nouns, there is no guarantee that any online translation service can provide you with a correct answer in any context. Don't just accept the first answer you find!

Theme 1: Free time, self, family and friends

Translation: English–French Identity and culture



Look at this sentence in English and its French translation. Try to see how the translation was made.

My favourite hobby is roller-blading because it is exciting.
Mon passe-temps préféré est le roller parce que c'est passionnant.

Note that because 'favourite' is an adjective, it comes after the word it describes in French, even though it comes before the noun in English. Note also that 'it is' and 'it's' are the same thing, but both would be translated here by the French *c'est*.

Now look at this sentence:

I prefer windsurfing because I like water sports.

This sentence asks you for 'I prefer' in the present tense, which is easier since it does not need to agree. 'Windsurfing' is a noun so it will need the correct definite article (*le* or *la*) in French to show its gender. 'I like' should be easy since you use this word all the time. However, with 'water sports' you will need the word for 'the' to show that it is plural and you will also need to change the word order to 'sports' + adjective (*nautique*), which will need to agree with the noun (*sports*).

So, the translation will be:

Je préfère la planche à voile parce que j'aime les sports nautiques.



1 Complete the translations of these sentences. The first four have been partially translated to help you.

1 I go to the cinema with my friends.

Je vais au cinéma

2 He likes documentaries because they are interesting.

Il aime les documentaires

3 My sister is lazy and chatty.

Ma sœur

4 Every Saturday I go shopping in town.

Tous les samedis

5 In my family there are five people.

6 You can go swimming at the sports centre.

7 He doesn't get on well with his parents.

8 Cathy played football yesterday but unfortunately her team lost.

9 I would like to go windsurfing because it's fun.

10 I listened to music on my mobile because it's easy.

Theme 2: Home town, region, travel and tourism

Translation: English–French

Home, town, neighbourhood and region
travel and tourism



Look at this sentence, which needs to be translated.

I like going on holiday to Spain.

You will probably know *J'aime*, *vacances* and *Espagne*, but the words 'going' and 'to' might cause problems. Here, 'going' in French would need to be an infinitive after *J'aime* – remember that in English we might also say 'I like to go'. The word for 'to' with a feminine country (most countries are feminine in French) is *en*, so the translation of the sentence would be:

J'aime aller en vacances en Espagne.

Now look at this sentence.

She lives in a small town.

In this sentence, the grammar is quite simple – you just need one verb in the present tense. However, notice that the subject of the sentence here is 'she', so you need to make sure you use the third person he/she ending of the verb here. You also need a different word for 'in' – when you talk about countries, etc. you use 'en', but for other locations you need 'dans'.

You need to think about the vocabulary as well. You will need to remember that *petit* (small) is one of the few adjectives which come *before* the noun being described. You must also remember that *la ville* (town) is a feminine noun, so the adjective needs to agree with the noun.

The correct translation is:

Elle habite dans une petite ville.



1 Translate these sentences into French. The first four have been partially translated to help you.

1 He prefers travelling by car.

Il préfère _____

2 Usually I spend my holidays in France.

D'habitude je passe _____

3 In my village there isn't a cinema.

Dans mon village _____

4 My friends often go skiing in Switzerland.

Mes amis font _____

5 In my town you can visit an historic castle.

6 There are lots of tourists in summer.

7 We normally travel to Portugal by plane.

8 Last year I went to New York to celebrate my birthday.

9 I would like to visit Australia because it's hot there.

10 There is nothing for young people in my region, so it's boring.

Theme 2: Social and global issues

Translation: English–French

Social issues and global issues

1 Translate these sentences into French. The sentences have been started and there are tips to help you.

1 We must save energy.

On doit _____

'Save' might be 'economise' in English.

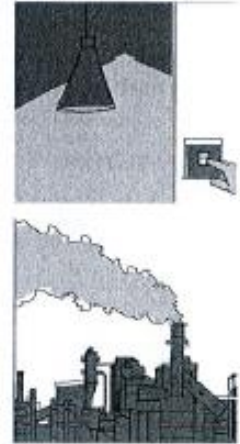
'Energy' will need an article because it is a noun.

2 Factories cause pollution.

Les usines _____

The verb will be plural.

'Pollution' will need an article.



2 Translate these sentences into French. The first four have been partially translated to help you.

1 Our planet is in danger.

Notre planète _____

2 Pollution is a serious problem.

La pollution est _____

3 I like to help animals.

J'aime _____

4 Our climate is warmer now.

Notre climat _____

5 I think that fair trade is important.

6 There is a big music festival in Montreux.

7 I would like to eat more healthily.

8 It is important to protect the forests to help wild animals.

9 Tomorrow I am going to start an online campaign against poverty.

10 Hunger is a big problem in Africa and governments should do more.

Theme 3: School and school life

Translation: English–French My studies and life at school / collège

1a Complete the translation of this sentence.

Lessons **start** at half past eight.

_____ à huit heures et demie.

Remember that you will need to start with 'the lessons', as in French you can't just have the word 'lessons' alone.

Don't forget to make the verb plural.

b Correct this translation.

There is a football club after school.

Il y a un foot club après collège.

★ Remember that there will be an extra word somewhere in the French, and that word order might be an issue here.



2 Translate these sentences into French. The first four have been partially translated to help you.

1 My favourite subject is drama.

_____ est l'art dramatique.

2 I like French because it's useful.

J'aime le français parce que _____.

3 You cannot wear trainers at my school.

_____ dans mon collège.

4 The teachers are funny and intelligent.

Les professeurs _____.

5 There is a break which lasts 20 minutes.

_____.

6 I am good at maths.

_____.

7 Last year I went on a school trip to the museum.

_____.

8 I am going to go on a school exchange next summer and I hope to visit Paris.

_____.

9 I get a lot of homework in science and I hate that.

_____.

10 My English teacher gets on my nerves because he is strict.

_____.

Theme 3: Jobs and future plans

Translation: English–French

Education post-16 and jobs, career choices and ambitions

1a Translate this sentence into French.

I want to work in a bank. _____

Which gender is bank?



- Try splitting the sentence into three parts as this can help you focus more closely:
I want / to work / in a bank.
- Think about which irregular verb you need for 'I want' and decide on the correct form.
- What part of the verb is 'to work'?



b Now translate this sentence into French.

Next year I would like to find a job.

Try and use one set expression for each of these phrases.

2 Translate these sentences into French. The first four have been partially translated to help you.

1 I would like to get married.

Je voudrais _____

2 My friend works in a supermarket.

_____ dans un supermarché.

3 I don't want to work in an office.

_____ travailler dans _____

4 I would like to be a dentist.

Je voudrais _____

5 Next year I am going to study biology.

6 I intend to go to Canada.

7 My brother is going to go to university in September.

8 In the future my ambition is to visit my aunt in Australia.

9 I hope to get married and have a son and a daughter as I like children.

10 I work in a clothes shop with my friends at the weekend.

