



FRENCH GCSE EXAMS INFO

At the end of November, all Year 11 students will be sitting mock exams for listening, reading (with translation into English) and writing (with translation into French).

Specification at a glance

This qualification is linear. Linear means that students will sit all their exams at the end of the course.

Theme 1: Identity and culture

Theme 2: Local, national, international and global areas of interest

Theme 3: Current and future study and employment

Assessments

GCSE French has a Foundation Tier (grades 1–5) and a Higher Tier (grades 4–9). Students must take all four question papers at the same tier. All question papers must be taken in the same series.

Paper 1: Listening

What's assessed

Understanding and responding to different types of spoken language

How it's assessed

- **Written exam: 35 minutes (Foundation Tier), 45 minutes (Higher Tier)**
- **40 marks (Foundation Tier), 50 marks (Higher Tier)**
- **25% of GCSE**

(Each exam includes 5 minutes' reading time of the question paper before the listening stimulus is played.)

Questions

Foundation Tier and Higher Tier

- **Section A – questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally**
- **Section B – questions in French, to be answered in French or non-verbally**



Paper 2: Speaking

What's assessed

Communicating and interacting effectively in speech for a variety of purposes

How it's assessed

- Non-exam assessment
- 7–9 minutes (Foundation Tier) + preparation time
- 10–12 minutes (Higher Tier) + preparation time
- 60 marks (for each of Foundation Tier and Higher Tier)
- 25% of GCSE

Questions

Foundation Tier and Higher Tier

The format is the same at Foundation Tier and Higher Tier, but with different stimulus questions for the Photo card and different stimulus materials for the Role-play. The timings are different too:

- Role-play – 15 marks (2 minutes at Foundation Tier; 2 minutes at Higher Tier)
- Photo card – 15 marks (2 minutes at Foundation Tier; 3 minutes at Higher Tier)
- General conversation – 30 marks (3–5 minutes at Foundation Tier; 5–7 minutes at Higher Tier)



Paper 3: Reading

What's assessed

Understanding and responding to different types of written language

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 45 minutes (Foundation Tier), 1 hour (Higher Tier)
- 60 marks (for each of Foundation Tier and Higher Tier)
- 25% of GCSE

Paper 3: Reading

Questions

Foundation Tier and Higher Tier

- Section A – questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally
- Section B – questions in French, to be answered in French or non-verbally
- Section C – translation from French into English (a minimum of 35 words for Foundation Tier and 50 words for Higher Tier)



Paper 4: Writing

What's assessed

Communicating effectively in writing for a variety of purposes

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour (Foundation Tier), 1 hour 15 minutes (Higher Tier)
- 50 marks at Foundation Tier and 60 marks at Higher Tier
- 25% of GCSE

Questions

Foundation Tier

- Question 1 – message (student produces four sentences in response to a photo) – 8 marks
- Question 2 – short passage (student writes a piece of continuous text in response to four brief bullet points, approximately 40 words in total) – 16 marks
- Question 3 – translation from English into French (minimum 35 words) – 10 marks
- Question 4 – structured writing task (student responds to four compulsory detailed bullet points, producing approximately 90 words in total) – there is a choice from two questions – 16 marks

Higher Tier

Paper 4: Writing

- Question 1 – structured writing task (student responds to four compulsory detailed bullet points, producing approximately 90 words in total) – there is a choice from two questions – 16 marks
- Question 2 – open-ended writing task (student responds to two compulsory detailed bullet points, producing approximately 150 words in total) – there is a choice from two questions – 32 marks
- Question 3 – translation from English into French (minimum 50 words) – 12 marks

TOPICS:

The specification covers three distinct themes. These themes apply to all four question papers.

Students are expected to understand and provide information and opinions about these themes relating to their own experiences and those of other people, including people in countries/communities where French is spoken.

3.1.1 Theme 1: Identity and culture

Theme 1: Identity and culture covers the following four topics with related sub-topics shown as bullet points:

Topic 1: Me, my family and friends

- Relationships with family and friends
- Marriage/partnership

Topic 2: Technology in everyday life

- Social media
- Mobile technology

Topic 3: Free-time activities

- Music
- Cinema and TV
- Food and eating out
- Sport

Topic 4: Customs and festivals in French-speaking countries/communities

3.1.2 Theme 2: Local, national, international and global areas of interest

Theme 2: Local, national, international and global areas of interest covers the following four topics with related sub-topics shown as bullet points:

Topic 1: Home, town, neighbourhood and region

Topic 2: Social issues

- Charity/voluntary work
- Healthy/unhealthy living

Topic 3: Global issues

- The environment
- Poverty/homelessness

Topic 4: Travel and tourism

3.1.3 Theme 3: Current and future study and employment

Theme 3: Current and future study and employment covers the following four topics:

Topic 1: My studies

Topic 2: Life at school/college

Topic 3: Education post-16

Topic 4: Jobs, career choices and ambitions

TOP REVISION SITES

Learning another language at GCSE can be very rewarding, particularly if you get the chance to use your language skills abroad or in your future career. However, it can be challenging to master the skills that you need to pass your French GCSE, particularly when it comes to the listening and vocabulary skills that need to be practiced regularly. Luckily, there are some great language learning resources online that can help you to prepare for your exams.

1. The [BBC Bitesize website](#) is a great resource, particularly for revision. It can help you with your reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, and it has some useful tests and mock exams to help you to prepare for each section.

2. The BBC has also produced [some other French resources](#) that can be useful when you are preparing for your GCSEs. You can follow one of the short courses or just pick the resources that focus on topics on your syllabus. The videos are a particularly useful feature if you want to practice your listening skills, but there are also some good quizzes and games that will allow you to test your knowledge. You can also find some interesting links to French websites featuring news and interviews, which can provide you with useful listening experience.

3. [GCSE.com](#) has some useful tips on how to tackle each section of the exams, as well as some useful pages recapping tenses, verbs and adjectives. If you want to review these concepts or boost your study skills, this is a useful place to start.

4. If you want to test yourself, [the S-cool website](#) has some good revision resources that will help you to learn actively. Rather than just giving you notes to review, the site encourages you to answer questions as you study so that you know how well you are doing. There is also a section on study skills to help you prepare for the different sections of the exam.

5. [French in a Click](#) has some good resources designed with the GCSE curriculum in mind. The core vocabulary section and the interactive dictionary are particularly useful, but there are also plenty of games and guidance for the different topics you will cover in class.

6. [Target Language](#) is useful if you want to review a particular topic or work on your vocabulary. There are 80 different levels, from basic phrases to the simple future tense, which you can use to revise what you have learned.

7. Many of the revision sites feature games or quizzes that allow you to test your language skills, but there are also a few useful sites that focus mainly on these kinds of activities rather than on teaching topics covered in the exams. Working these into your study plan can be a good way of keeping your language skills active. [Jeu de l'oie](#) has games suitable for various skill levels, while [Polar FLE](#) lets you take part in a murder mystery. You use your reading and listening skills to follow the story, testing yourself with various activities along the way.

8. [Phonetique](#) can be a useful site if you want to improve your listening skills. The site is all in French, but you should be able to navigate it even if you can't understand everything. You can find some useful tools here to help you to understand the sounds that make up the French language. The tests to see how well you can differentiate between closely related sounds or phonemes is particularly useful as it will help to improve your listening and pronunciation skills.

9. [Memrise](#) can be a useful revision tool, particularly for a language course. Some of the material is a little too easy for GCSE level, but there are some good learning resources here that can help you to master the vocabulary you need to use in your exams. The site is set up to encourage you to practice regularly, so it can be a useful way to fit a little bit of revision into your day.

10. Practicing your listening skills can be a good way of familiarising yourself with French and preparing for your exams, so websites like [France 24](#) that stream French news channels can be useful resources for GCSE students. Even if you don't follow everything that's said, simply hearing the language as it is spoken, and picking out the bits that you do recognize, can help you to improve your skills.

Your books and files, Flash Academy App, linguascope.com and duolingo are other great resources.