

Preparation work - starting **A-LEVEL FRENCH** at SHSB

Previous Y12 students have told us that they wished they had known about some of the things they could have done over the summer to make the start in September easier for them. Here are their (and our) top recommendations.

1. **Make small changes to the way you use technology and social media.** Put the menu on your favourite game, or even the settings on your phone, in French, for a week. Find a French youtuber / Instagram account to follow (eg. Squeezie - don't expect to understand it all, but start by reading the comments). Look at the French most-played lists on Spotify, and listen to a bit of Stromae or Indila with the lyrics. Put the French subtitles on whatever English things you watch on Netflix. Try watching some French series too (try the trailers for Lupin, or Athena, or Ganglands) – try the same scene with English subtitles, and then French subtitles.
2. **Delete your translator app.** If you used one at GCSE, you need to delete it. A-Level is about learning to use the level of language available in your head to express your thoughts, and simplifying what you want to say until you can say it. A translator is the single biggest drawback you will face at A-Level. It will actively stop you making progress. Delete it now. Once you stop using it, you will start to learn much faster.
3. **Engage with the news.** Read the English news at bbc.com and read longer passages on current affairs, so you get used to people expressing more than a superficial opinion on big issues. A-Level will ask you questions about controversial/political issues and it's a lot easier if you've thought about them in English (most people haven't.)
4. **Engage with the news: Part 2 – in French.** Try France24.com. Just look at the headlines each day for a week. Can you see which headlines match stories you've already read about in English? (this is another reason why keeping up with the news even in English helps.)
5. **Make yourself a MEMRISE account and use it.** Just five minutes a day over the summer would enlarge your vocabulary by several hundred words. Search for a French AS or A-Level course, recap higher level GCSE vocab or join the new group you'll be using in Sept here at : <https://app.memrise.com/group/526856/>
You will be shown how to use this in September, and we use this for all the course's vocab learning – get a two-month head start.
6. **Learn to love grammar.** (Or at least not hate it.) At GCSE you can get by with just learning phrases by heart and re-using them. For A-Level you need to know how to express what you are thinking, and that means you have to be able to adapt language, change it, and become more fluent. You need to learn the rules – that's grammar. If you have got by so far on an 'instinctive' level – if you have French family for example, or if your previous school/teacher didn't do grammar notes – it's time to learn the rules. Try the main tenses at: <https://www.languagesonline.org.uk/French/VerbBuster/VerbBusterIndex.htm>
Ten minutes at a time recapping some of the main tenses. Look at the rest of the Grammar section if you get a chance. Write a few notes, learn a few of the common irregulars. You can't study A-Level French without a good grasp of the grammar.

That's it. The course goes by very quickly – you will be sitting your first interim exams to determine your predicted grades very soon – so starting now and giving yourself even a casual 6-week headstart can make a big difference. You'll be a lot more relaxed in September knowing you've done everything you can!