

## FRENCH BASIC TOOLS: What you need to get going!

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And so you have decided to learn French! Congratulations on undertaking this initiative which will be enriching, challenging, thought-provoking and fun. You have chosen well to study French at FIAF, New York's French cultural center. Make sure to take advantage of the wide range of FIAF's cultural programs and the Library, which will allow you to develop and enhance your classroom experience.

Please find below a listing of the suggested major tools that will help you get started on your way to French fluency. You will find in the Library a wide range of books that are destined for beginning language students.

### Le Centre d'Auto-apprentissage Jacques et Alexandre Leviant (CAA)

An entire area in the Library has been dedicated to language learners. The "CAA" is located in the rear of the library. Materials are color-coded based on level of French. Materials with a **green label** are for beginners, the **blue labels** are for advanced beginners, and the **yellow labels** are for intermediate students.

### A Bilingual Dictionary: Your first investment

The FIAF Library maintains a large collection of all types of bilingual dictionaries for your onsite use. They are located in the atlas stand across from the reference desk.

There is no such thing as the "best" dictionary: take a moment to look through these dictionaries and select the one with which you feel most comfortable. As a general rule, you will not need an expensive or elaborate dictionary to start: pocket dictionaries will suit the bill. A solid pocket edition will be your most useful investment, and can be purchased in any large bookstore for about. The most popular pocket bilingual dictionaries include:

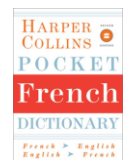
#### Larousse Pocket French/English English/French Dictionary

The French publisher Larousse sets the standard for French dictionaries, no matter what the size. The Larousse Pocket Dictionary is a good first dictionary for students of French. It is a very convenient size (it literally fits in your pocket), and has over 80,000 words. It has up-to-date coverage of contemporary French, the latest terminology, abbreviations, acronyms, and proper nouns, but does not have any verb conjugations.



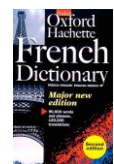
#### Harper Collins Pocket French Dictionary

This portable is compact yet does not sacrifice readability or content. The entries are colored blue, with black definitions, which makes finding a word on the page easy. The dictionary is also very comprehensive with over 70,000 translations, a word game section to help you learn French, and all-important verb-form primers in both languages.



#### The Pocket Oxford Hachette French Dictionary

This dictionary seems to appeal to business travelers and vacationers more than students, but that speaks to its usefulness, as it offers more headwords and translations than similarly-priced dictionaries. Each volume also includes a new correspondence section that provides many example letters, giving readers the tools to correspond with hotels, write letters to businesses, create their own résumés and more. A little larger than pocket size, but still handy.



## Verb books and guides: Your second necessary investment

The 28 tenses of French verbs are tricky and will demand some work on your part! But luckily there are some excellent verb guides out there to help you (and which, by the way, are used daily by French people too). The Library holds many copies that can be borrowed as well as reference copies for consultation in the Library.

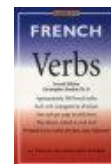
### 501 French Verbs: Fully conjugated in all the tenses

This verb "Bible" is a mandatory purchase for any student of French. It is a lifesaver, and will accompany you throughout your studies. It contains approximately 1,000 French infinitives, conjugated and set up one-per-page in alphabetical order. You will also find verb drills and tests as well as definitions of important grammatical terms, an index of irregular verb forms, lists of vernacular expressions and idioms.



### Barron's 301 French Verbs

Smaller than the above, this guide fits in your pocket and is thus handier for commuting and traveling. Approximately 300 most frequently used French verbs are presented, one verb per page, arranged alphabetically, fully conjugated, and identified by the English infinitive form.



### Teach Yourself French Verbs by Marie-Therese Weston

Similar to the above, but this book contains example sentence for the more common tenses. It also includes translations of these sentences.



### Bescherelle 1: La Conjugaison Pour Tous

The French equivalent to these books is the famous "red book", beloved of all French students. It provides tables of conjugations of all 85 tenses and moods for some 12,000 verbs. It is beautifully typeset in colors and is visually appealing. Small, compact and invaluable, perhaps it should be an investment in your future, as you will keep it forever. Bescherelle also publishes "Grammaire pour tous", but it is all in French, so will not be useful to you as of yet.



### FIAF's own Verb Wheel!

The FIAF Verb Wheel shows 40 irregular French verbs. The wheel shows all six "persons" for six verb tenses: Présent, Passé Composé, Imparfait, Futur, Conditionnel, et le Subjonctif présent. Irregular conjugations are indicated by a bold font. The verb wheels may be purchased at the Library for \$5.



## A good grammar book: Your third useful investment

A solid reference book to French grammar is very useful to help you clarify points that are presented in the communicative approach of the Alliance Française classroom situation...and which need a bit of demystification. It is suggested you use a simple, straight-forward introductory book that will strive to present the material in the clearest fashion. The Library maintains a wide range of grammar books for all levels, but here are some of the favorites of beginning students:

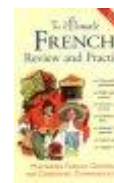
### French verbs and the Essentials of Grammar by Simone Oudot

This concise, two-in-one book provides a complete guide to French verbs and a compact guide to the fundamentals of grammar for advanced-beginning and intermediate students of French.



### The Ultimate French Review and Practice: Mastering French Grammar for Confident Communication by David M. Stillman

This book is the solid self-contained source for the essentials of French grammar. It includes exercises (all with answers provided), culture notes, examples from newspaper advertisements, and a section on idiomatic usage. It may be a bit advanced for absolute beginners.



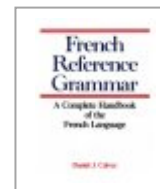
## Schaum's Outline of French Grammar by Mary E. Coffman Crocker

This book contains a particularly clear presentation of verbs.



## French Reference Grammar: A Complete Handbook of the French Language by Daniel J. Calvez

A clear and precise presentation of grammar, often used as a grammar textbook in universities. Indexed in both French and English, this reference work is for all levels of students, including self-learners, who either need to or wish to review constantly the essential French grammar structures, with examples, details, exceptions, and many tables, which organize and present each grammatical element.



## Essential French Grammar by Seymour Resnick

A very simple and basic text for key grammar points for beginners



## Multimedia materials: Modern and fun, but unfortunately, nothing as rich as your teacher!

Multimedia materials (CDs, CD-ROMs, and DVDs) can be used to highlight and stimulate your language learning experience. But *caveat*: they are only supplementary tools, and cannot in anyway replace a dedicated, skilled teacher and the communal experience of the classroom situation. They are also rather expensive, so it is suggested that you consult the multimedia materials available on site and for loan in the Library. Another problem is that they range widely in quality, going from the serious to the downright gimmicky.

Some favorites are the French in Action DVDs and the Pimsleur Series.

**And lastly, don't forget.....**

### Useful Docs

Found on the library's website (<http://www.fiaf.org/library/learning.shtml>) these documents (like this one) give you useful information on how to better your language learning experience.

These include:

- French Language-learning Resources on the Web
- French Dictionaries on the Web
- Welcome to the Centre de Ressources
- Official Certification Diplomas (DELFI / DALFI)
- Learning French with Cinema

### Homework Central

Located in the reading room, just across from our DVD collection is our new all-in-one homework station. Here, you can find French or bilingual dictionaries, grammar usage guides, verb conjugation handbooks, specialized dictionaries, and much more to help you excel in your language classes here at FIAF.