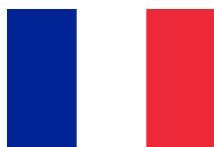


French A Level Study Skills



Content:

Worksheet	Title	Skills
1	Effective note taking: taking notes in language lessons	Adapting note-taking techniques from the native speaker classroom
2	Effective note taking: listening to languages (outside of the classroom)	Listening to learn: active listening skills; where students might go to listen to a language in their own time
3	Effective research: planning	Planning your research; scheduling a research report/essay in order to meet a deadline
4	Critical thinking	Critical thinking; not taking anything for granted; reading critically; evaluating an argument
5	Academic writing: referencing your sources	Accurate referencing using the MLA referencing style; avoiding plagiarism; creating a bibliography
6	Academic writing: use of language for AS/A Level – 5 golden rules	Academic writing; interpreting the question; quality of written language; getting the structure right; focusing on accuracy
7	Organising yourself: where does all the time go?	Time management: a self-assessment worksheet
8	Examiner's tips	How to succeed in all four skills

Taking notes in French language lessons

As part of your A Level studies, taking notes accurately and efficiently is a valuable skill which helps you learn more effectively and achieve a higher grade. This is, of course, true for any subject, but is particularly important when learning French. With its focus on productive skills, learning a language inevitably demands an enormous amount of concentration. Recording new vocab and phrases is an essential part of your learning, and note taking is a vital skill when completing a listening or reading activity in class – or in the exam.

- 1 Consider how you currently take notes in French language lessons.
 - a) Why do you need to take notes in your French language lessons?
 - b) How do you take notes in French? How do you adapt your note taking strategies for working in a second language rather than in your native language?
 - c) Discuss with a partner how you take notes: do you have any tips you can share with each other?

You can choose from a variety of methods that can be adapted for your own note taking:

■ **Truncated abbreviations**

Using the first few letters of the word (but use enough letters to avoid confusion with a different word):

manif – (la) manifestation

occ – (l')occupation

indis – indispensable

■ **Consonants skeleton**

Retaining the consonants or key consonants of a word:

mnfstn – (la) manifestation

ocptn – (l')occupation

indspsbl – indispensable

■ **Formatting**

The Cornell method of note taking can be adapted to suit language learning. Originally designed for lessons where there is a large amount of information to be noted down, the Cornell method teaches you to format your notes in a particular way to aid learning and revision. For French, you can retain the same framework for your notes, but simply use the structure for a different purpose.

<p>Narrow column: note down key vocab, gender, useful phrases, grammar points</p>	<p>Wide column: for the main body of your notes</p>
<p>Summary: summarise the main learning points for each page of notes and on the last page, the main points of the lesson</p>	

As with all classroom notes, it is useful to review them within 24 hours of your lesson and amend or expand as you see fit. Check all new language in your dictionary and review the pronunciation and intonation as well. Make a recording of the new vocab item on your smartphone or tablet if that helps you remember it.

■ **Colour coding**

Using different colours to highlight different features, for example:

- genders
- regular/irregular verbs
- tenses
- adverbs

Tip!

Research has shown that students who take notes in a native language class with ease find the transition to a second language context more challenging, often failing to adopt the same strategies of shortened forms, abbreviations or icons. This will, of course, get easier with practice. As an interim measure, and to get used to working in a different language, adopt only one of the above techniques at a time to see how it works for you.

Listening to French (outside of the classroom)

At A Level, we're expected to become more independent learners and actively broaden our knowledge and consolidate our learning through wider reading. As a language student, you have to expand this principle to include wider listening as well. No doubt, your teacher encourages you to listen to French radio or watch French language films. But what exactly are you meant to do and how can you make the most of this learning experience?

Tips for active listening

You may have heard about 'active reading' or 'reading to learn'; when it comes to learning a second language, you also have to develop your 'active listening' skills, particularly when you are listening in a more relaxed environment away from the classroom, and yet still want to learn.

Listen for a purpose

In order to maintain your focus on listening, it is worth creating a real reason to listen. You could, for example, listen for:

- a) Pairs of vocab (e.g. opposites like *moderne/ancien* or comparatives *plus riche que/moins riche que*)
- b) Language items that rhyme
- c) Words with the same sound but different spelling/meaning (e.g. *soi/soie* or *pois/poids*)

Create questions

If background information is available to provide context for the listening extract (e.g. a TV guide listing), work out some questions for yourself before you listen. By listening, you'll then be able to answer them. Even if you don't know what you'll be listening to, you can choose from a set of generic questions that you can use again and again:

- a) What can I learn about French society and culture by watching/listening to this extract?
- b) What factual information is there that I can recall at the end of the recording?
- c) How does the use of language reflect French culture/beliefs/values/attitudes?
- d) Are there items of new vocab/phrases that I haven't come across before?
- e) Is there any other aspect of the use of language that is new to me?
- f) When watching a video: are there any other paralinguistic clues, e.g. body language, that will help me understand the language more effectively?

Predict what will come next

If you are listening to a digital recording or watching a video, pause the extract occasionally. Ask yourself what is likely to happen or be said next. By predicting, you create a real reason to listen carefully to check whether you were right.

Make notes

Making notes will help you focus on listening actively, although this may not always be practical, for example if you're listening to a podcast while walking or on the bus. You

should at least aim to make a note of new vocab together with its pronunciation and intonation if you are serious about broadening your use of French language.

2 Where do you find good sources of French audio extracts to listen to away from the classroom? Note them down so that they can be shared with others in your class.

a) websites

b) apps

c) radio stations

d) French films/DVDs

Effective research

Research represents an essential part of your A Level studies and characterises how you need to work more independently. Of course, by making more of the research opportunities you have, you can work towards getting a higher grade in your final MFL exam.

What has been your experience so far of research? What do you think makes a 'good' piece of research?

Planning your research

Getting your research done in the time available is sometimes the biggest challenge. To avoid missing your deadline, planning your research is critical.

It is worth identifying the different tasks involved and planning for how your research fits into your essay writing in order to meet the final deadline. Use this template to help plan out your research.

	Task	What this might involve	How much time will it take?	Date required
1	Planning	Do you need to involve others? Will this add to the time you need?		
2	Research	Talking to the librarian Online searches Reading resources Taking notes Keeping records of your research Filtering out any redundant information		
3	Collating evidence	Evaluating the evidence Reviewing your notes Summarising your views		
4	Drawing up an essay plan			
5	Drafting a report/essay	Writing out a first draft		
6	Rewriting and editing	Rewriting your report/essay and improving it		
7	Finalising	Proofreading Checking all is as it should be		

Critical thinking in French

One of the most important elements of critical thinking is being able to identify and evaluate information and data, and then go on to create your own logical, reasoned arguments and conclusions. In French, you may have to evaluate arguments and opinions, but you will also need to review resources and be able to read the work of others with a critical eye. Your own writing needs to show you can create a reasoned argument and that you can justify your own point of view logically.

You will need to think critically in A Level French in these scenarios:

- Evaluating information you use in your own writing
- Reviewing sources critically
- Reading the work of your peers and others with a critical eye
- Creating a reasoned, fluent argument in your own writing where you can justify your own logical point of view.

Reading critically

Take more time to read work in French. Engage actively with the text, noting unfamiliar vocabulary as you go along. Make sure you understand the main arguments being conveyed by the text before you form your opinions.

Questions you should ask yourself:

- What is the author's main argument?
- Can it be backed up?
- Is there a different perspective not considered by this work?
- Am I convinced? Why/why not?

Being critical of your own work

Writing in a second language can be difficult, and it is therefore even more important to think critically about your work. Use these questions as a guideline when evaluating your French writing:

- Did I fulfil the task?
- Do I say what I wanted to say?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of my writing?
- Have I presented a logical argument?

Remember that rewriting is the best form of writing! Developing a critical eye requires detachment, and you must be open to not just changing a word or two, but the entire piece of work.

Referencing your sources in French

Referencing your sources in academic writing is essential, because:

- It offers your reader the guarantee that you have taken a range of other published work into account when writing your report/essay
- It provides supporting evidence for your work, and helps to substantiate your arguments
- By referencing other people's work, you avoid plagiarism by acknowledging that someone else's words are not your own
- You direct your reader where to go should they require more information on any aspect of your report/essay.

In this respect, you are following academic best practice – something that you will be expected to do if you move into higher education or into work within a research environment.

- 1 When you use any system of referencing, it's important to understand the following key terms. Match each term with its relevant explanation.

Plagiarism

Citation

Bibliography

- a) A comprehensive list of all the documents you consulted throughout your research; this might include books, audio-visual material, or online resources.
- b) A 'signpost' which quotes or highlights another person's work in the main body of your text.
- c) The act of passing off someone else's work as if it were your own – either consciously or accidentally.

Four steps to accurate referencing

- 1 When you take notes as part of your research, keep an accurate record of all your sources so that you can refer back to this list when you need to compile your bibliography.
- 2 If you need to refer to another person's work, identify it with a citation in the main body of your essay.
- 3 Record your sources in a bibliography (sometimes called a reference list) at the end of your report.
- 4 Decide on your style of referencing and apply it consistently throughout the same piece of work.

- 2 There are different types of sources you can reference in an academic essay/assignment. Think of as many different types of resource you might reference for French as you can.

Print	Digital	Audio	Visual	Other

- 3 Think about online sources such as websites.
- a) Which websites do you think might be most suitable for you to reference in an academic essay/assignment for French?
- b) Are any types of website less suitable for using as a source and referencing in your academic writing?

Which style of referencing to use?

The style of referencing you use will depend on your subject area or the type of resource you are referencing. Many referencing styles were originally created when the sources were all print; they have had to evolve to refer to different media over time.

The Modern Language Association (MLA) referencing style is often used for Humanities subjects, and particularly when writing about languages and literature. Check with your teacher if you are in any doubt as to which style to use.

The MLA uses a minimalist style of referencing and aims to keep references as brief as possible. For book sources, you should place a page reference in brackets in the main body of your text after you refer to your source. Where you have not signalled the author's name in your sentence, you would need to state this using their family name only in the brackets, too.

For example:

I will make a reference to the author's family name and how she expressed her concerns (918). Another reference simply refers to a piece of work/research and no name is signalled in the text (author's family name, 522).

If you want to refer to more than one work by the same author, then you need to use the title (or a shortened form of it to distinguish it from the others) in italics in the brackets, too.

In the bibliography (or list of cited works) at the end, full details are given for each author in alphabetical order:

[Author's family name], [initial of author's given name], [*published title of source in italics*], [edition number (if not the first)], [place of publication], [publisher], [year of publication].

If you are requested to use another referencing system – and sometimes a university will have their own preference – you will have to research how to use it.

Using quotations

For short quotations, usually of less than four lines, you should include these in the main body of your text, using “double quotation marks” to enclose the quote. You would then follow the style directions above for citing the work.

If the quotation is longer than that, then you should probably set the quoted text as an indented separate paragraph. There is no need to use quotation marks using this format, but you should follow the same style directions for citing the work at the end of the quotation as well.

You can also use the following conventions when including quotations:

...	an ellipsis	when you choose to omit some of the quotation and simply use the first and last few words instead
[]	square brackets	when you use your own words as part of the quotation
[sic]	Latin, literally ‘so’, ‘thus’	when you want to reproduce the original form of the quotation even if it is misspelt or might appear to be an error

Use of language for French A Level

Five golden rules

1 Interpret the question wisely

Sometimes when you approach a question, whether it's an essay question or a short or extended answer question in your exam, you need to approach it like a detective. Initially, you're on a trail to decipher what is being asked of you; then you have to produce a logical response upon which you'll be judged.

- If it doesn't make sense to you straight away, then revisit the question. It's unlikely not to make sense in practice.
- Identify the main topic under discussion, then any sub-topics that might need referring to.
- Answer the question given, not the question you think is being asked, or the one that you would like to answer! Assignment questions are frequently interpreted by students as a 'tell-all opportunity' when you simply pour onto the page everything you know about that topic.
- Determine what the key words are asking you to do: those words that influence how you answer the question.

- 1 Here are some key words often used in questions for MFL essays or that you might incorporate as part of a research project. Match each key word with its relevant explanation.

State or Define

Describe or Explain or Discuss

Outline

Analyse

Assess to what extent

Consider

Justify

- A You will need to communicate the main points but not necessarily go into detail. You might just use bullet points for this sort of short answer.
- B You need to give details about the existence of an issue and explain how and why it happens in that way. It's likely you'll need to make reference to some theory.
- C You need to precisely explain something, usually only requiring a short answer.
- D You need to say what you think about something having reflected upon it. You will need to support your thinking with evidence as well as points of view which might run counter to your own.
- E You will need to make a case for an idea or point of view which will involve also exploring opposing points of view.
- F You need to examine the issues methodically and in detail and try to explain a number of points of view with supporting arguments, then go on to interpret how the issues might be interrelated.
- G You need to reflect on an issue or problem and evaluate to what extent it might be said to be true, while also taking any weaknesses or strengths of the argument into account.

2 The quality of your language matters

As a student of French for some years, you will know to what extent you have to be aware of accurate spellings and the correct use of grammar in your writing. Of course, this is equally important whether you're writing in French or in English. Above all, when writing in French, try not to focus on thinking in English and then translating your thoughts into French.

- A common mistake is the use of Anglicisms when writing in French. As an alternative, try to think and write like a native speaker. You will only achieve this if you spend plenty of time outside of lessons watching French films/television, listening to podcasts or the radio and reading the French press. A recent examiner's report for A Level French found that students had used a number of Anglicisms such as *amenable* (*sic*), *véritable* (where candidates incorrectly used it to mean 'correct') or *massif* (where they misused it to mean 'enormous').
- While you want to display a sophisticated use of the French language, you should avoid confusing your reader by trying too hard to translate a complex sentence from English to French. It might be better to concentrate on conveying your points clearly rather than overcomplicating your text so that your meaning is unclear.
- A missing or incorrect accent may well be seen as a spelling mistake. Because we rarely make use of accents in English, some students tend to 'devalue' their importance in French – yet a missing accent could leave your reader in doubt as to what you intended to communicate.
- Although using abbreviations might save time, you must make sure they are always clear and that you write them in the French way (e.g. *TVA* not *VAT*). Any 'accepted' abbreviations, acronyms or shortened forms should usually be written out in full, at least the first time.

- 2 Find six 'false friends' that you would want to avoid misusing in a French exam. Write out the French word as well as the correct English equivalent. An example is given as a model:

librairie bookshop

3 Get the structure right

Whether you're writing a brief response, an extended answer, or an essay question, you need to make sure you get the structure of your answer right. As a general rule, organise the information and your findings logically. After all, your structure should reflect the logic of your response – you might need to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of a particular situation and then arrive at a thoughtful conclusion, for example. You also need to use an appropriate style of writing and register for the situation (for example, you might need to express yourself objectively rather than subjectively and use a more formal tone rather than an informal one).

4 Provide variety in your use of language

3 Find the missing words from the box below to complete this text:

fixed	communicate	repetition	imperfect	logical
indiscriminately	remember	tenses	repetition	

Whether you are writing in French or in English, your modern languages essay will usually seek to _____ your opinions, your experiences or perhaps your findings from research. Irrespective of the language of your essay, it will be important that you prove you have a good grasp of vocabulary. You should avoid _____ of key words, for example. You may find this process much easier in English, but for your French writing, you will have to prepare a number of different ways for saying the same thing. For example, the words 'good' and 'bad', or 'problem' or 'advantage', or 'young people' are likely to come up many times.

Similarly, do ensure you adopt a suitable _____ of 'linking' words – those phrases that join up different statements or paragraphs in your extended response. For example, *en revanche*, *cependant*, *néanmoins*, *par contre* ... To go a step further, you could also learn some _____ phrases that will help you construct a _____ piece of text. They obviously have to be used with judicious caution (sprinkled _____ through your text won't necessarily sound authentic).

For example:

quant à _____ as for, regarding
il paraît donc évident que ... it appears therefore clear that
il faut donc rappeler que it is necessary therefore to _____

You should also include a wide range of _____ when writing in French. Appropriate use of the subjunctive (for example, *quoiqu'il y ait beaucoup d'avantages ...*), and the conditional (*j'aurais horreur de voir mes parents si ...*), not forgetting the _____ (*si je faisais un stage, je pourrais...*) will really help prove how well you have mastered French grammar.

5 Work on your accuracy

Whether you're writing in French or in English, you should carefully proofread your work before you give it in. Proofreading amounts to more than simply 'reading your text again'. You need to systematically read through it and focus on one element for checking at a time. Inevitably, you may need to re-read a few times, checking for something different each time.

- 4 Create your own 'tick list' of five items you know you should check before handing in a piece of written work. (Everyone will have a different answer, because we all have our own 'weaknesses' we need to work on.)

For example:

- 1 Agreement of direct object pronouns

Never be afraid to use your dictionary; as well as checking your spelling, it can help you improve your vocabulary range. **Always** confirm you've selected the right word in French (in the English–French section) by cross-referring in the French–English section. For example, if you looked up the meaning of 'persistent', you would find *persévérant* or *obstiné* – both giving you a different nuance of meaning. Checking in the other half of the dictionary helps ensure that you arrive at the intended translation. Of course, if you use a monolingual dictionary, you will have to decipher the correct meaning using the target language which encourages you to broaden your use of the French language.

Organising yourself

Why do I never have enough time?

When you get to the sixth form, working independently is an expectation. And that requirement is not going to change, whether you're going into employment or continuing with more study. You're now expected to organise yourself to arrive on time, with the right equipment, to meet deadlines, stay focused on your MFL studies, and achieve the right balance between your studies and your social life. Evidence from research suggests that being organised will even get you better results.

- 1 How do you rate your own organisational/time management skills? Carry out this self-assessment activity to help you understand your own skill level. Find the response that best matches your own attitude. When you've completed the questionnaire, calculate your score and read the appropriate evaluation.

- 1 How often do you miss the start of lessons?
 - a) Never
 - b) Occasionally
 - c) Frequently
- 2 How often do you miss a deadline for homework?
 - a) Seldom
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Often
- 3 How often does your homework take longer than expected?
 - a) Hardly ever
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Regularly
- 4 How often do you work after 10.00pm in the evening?
 - a) Hardly ever
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Regularly
- 5 When you're given some homework, do you immediately record the deadline in your planner?
 - a) Always
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Seldom
- 6 How do you plan your homework tasks?
 - a) I write out a schedule and stick to it for each homework session.
 - b) I make a list of what I need to do.
 - c) I just do whatever comes up.

7 How organised is your work space?

- a) I know where everything is.
- b) It's OK; I usually find things when I need them.
- c) It might look like chaos, but I haven't got time to clear it up.

8 When you know you've got an essay to write, how easy do you find it to make a start?

- a) It's never easy, but the sooner you start, the sooner you can finish!
- b) Well, it takes me a while ... but I get there in the end.

... I'll just go and make a cup of tea and have one more look at Facebook.

Add up your scores, where:

a = 1 points

b = 2 points

c = 3 points

18–24 points

You might be finding it a bit difficult to keep on top of all your work and are at risk of suffering stress through your own ineffective organisational skills. But all is not lost. By working on your skills, you'll be more aware of your own use of time, which means you can do something about it. Acknowledge that we can all work at being better organised and set yourself a target for what this will mean to you in practice. Hopefully, this will provide you with the motivation and determination to help you change your ways.

13–17 points

You have a reasonably good approach to organising yourself and managing your time. But make sure you put all your good intentions into practice and you're working more effectively more of the time. Admit to yourself that with good organisational skills your student life will benefit and all in all, your life will seem much easier. Make sure you know how to say no to distractions more often, too.

8–12 points

You have a good approach to organising yourself and how you manage your time. Hopefully, your effective time management is also allowing you to balance leisure time with all your hard work! We can all work at being better organised and even you might benefit from some more leisure time to enjoy what you like to do to relax.

2 On which skill areas do you think you need to focus your efforts? Tick those skill areas that need most work. (Add in any other skills that are relevant to you in relation to time management/organisation.)

- ☐ timetable – being in the right place at the right time
- ☐ avoiding procrastination
- ☐ steering clear of distractions
- ☐ achieving a balance between leisure and school work
- ☐ dealing with stress
- ☐ organising work space
- ☐ planning homework
- ☐ drawing up 'to do' lists
- ☐ getting homework in on time
- ☐ meeting deadlines
- ☐ recording/remembering tasks that need to be done
- ☐ allocating a certain time to a task and ensuring it's done within that time

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3 Which skill areas will you focus on over the next week? Tick those skill areas you will work on in the next week/the next month/later this term.

	In the next week	In the next month	Later this term
Timetable – being in the right place at the right time			
Avoiding procrastination			
Steering clear of distractions			
Achieving a balance between leisure and school work			
Dealing with stress			
Organising work space			
Planning homework			
Drawing up 'to do' lists			
Getting homework in on time			
Meeting deadlines			
Recording/remembering tasks that need to be done			
Allocating a certain time to a task and ensuring it's done within that time			
.....			
.....			
.....			

Listening

- 1 **Don't eat while you're listening** – not even chewing gum! Every time you swallow you block your hearing for a moment and when you're doing the exam you have to work quickly and can't afford to lose time.
- 2 Always look at the **title of the passage** – this gives you an idea of what is going to be discussed and helps your brain to bring the relevant vocabulary to the fore.
- 3 If the question asks for a **certain number of ticks**, make sure you do not exceed this number or you will lose marks.
- 4 Always look carefully at the **number of marks** for each question: 2 marks means the examiner wants to see 2 details.
- 5 If the questions are in English for answers in English then as you read the English questions think of the **vocabulary in French** which is likely to be used.
- 6 Remember you do not have to answer in sentences; **often one word** will do.
- 7 If you don't immediately **recognise a word**, don't panic. Listen to the whole phrase and see if you can work out its meaning.
- 8 Remember that some words **sound the same but have different meanings** so if, for example, you hear the word *passe* and think of it as a verb, ask yourself if it could be a noun and therefore have a different meaning.
- 9 If a word sounds very strange, ask yourself if it **is initials**. For example, *la SNCF* is not a word, but the initials of an organisation.
- 10 If you have to answer questions in French then do look carefully at the **question word** at the beginning of the sentence. Remember there is a difference between *Qui* and *Que*!
- 11 You may find you need to listen again to a certain part of the recording that you have not understood, but don't do this more than three times; if you can't understand after three listenings then **come back to it later**. You'll be amazed how often it then appears much easier to understand!
- 12 If you **repeat what you have heard in your head** it sometimes also becomes clearer to you.
- 13 Always go back and **check your work**!
- 14 Remember that the **information** in the passage will come in the **same order** as that of the **questions**; this means that if you can answer a) and c) then the answer to b) is between them.
- 15 Look carefully at what you are being asked to do, e.g. "Answer the questions in **French**". Then **read the questions**. They may give you clues about the vocabulary that will be used in the passage.
- 16 Listen to the passage **all the way through** and then go back and pause the recording in order to answer each question.
- 17 If numbers are required in your answers then always write **the number in figures** e.g. 20 rather than *vingt*.
- 18 If the number you hear is a **long one**, then repeat it to yourself in French, picture it in your mind and then write it out in figures. This is much easier than trying to translate it into English and you are less likely to make a mistake.
- 19 As you listen if you hear a **number or a percentage** mentioned you may want to jot it down immediately so that you can then look for a matching phrase.
- 20 Always use a separate piece of paper for rough work. However, if you have made notes or rough work on the piece of paper you hand in to the examiner, make sure you cross this out.
- 21 Become totally familiar with **numbers, including dates**. Knowledge of these is often tested in the listening comprehension section – years (1987) and percent (18,5 pour cent) frequently occur.
- 22 Don't worry **if you don't understand** a particular word; you are not expected to. It is unlikely that you would understand every word in an authentic listening situation.
- 23 Although the questions are based on the text in chronological order, you should listen to the item **all the way through** before you answer the questions.
- 24 Ask your teachers to recommend a **web-site** or perhaps a **radio programme** in which young people talk about their friendships and interests; this will help you to widen your vocabulary.

Writing

- 1 Always try to justify your opinions.
- 2 Discuss the topics with your friends in English so that you have **plenty of ideas** to write about when you take the exam.
- 3 Try to argue from different angles: e.g. advantages and disadvantages, problems and benefits, problems and solutions, future development.
- 4 Remember that for many of these sub-topic issues you may find good source material in **English magazines**.
- 5 Make sure you **read the question carefully** and pay attention to words like *et* and *ou*.
- 6 Engage your reader: use techniques to **guide the reader** through the essay. Use direct questions or "let's consider" statements.
- 7 Sequence your ideas in a **logical** and **structured** way, e.g. introduction–body–conclusion, overview and details, cause and effect, for and against, chronological order.
- 8 For essay type questions, dedicate the **last few sentences** to a **summary** of what you have written, draw conclusions and/or re-affirm your opinion.
- 9 Plan your answer according to the task set in the question. Think about allocating **one paragraph for each part of the task** and then having a brief introduction and conclusion.
- 10 Follow the principle of **stating an idea** or opinion and then **developing** that idea or opinion using examples which justify or explain it.
- 11 Check that as you develop your answer it is in keeping **with how you have planned** an answer to address the question set.
- 12 Try to write your answer in French straight away. Try **not to translate from English** so that you will not be tempted to use an English sentence structure. Plan your structure before you start.
- 13 It may be useful to organise your ideas on a blank page divided into two columns: "*pour*" and "*contre*".
- 14 For each opinion you give in your answer, try to think of a **reason** to back it up.
- 15 Don't be too eager to start writing your answer immediately but spend time **planning**.
- 16 With a foreign language the first thing you write can usually be improved upon so all the more reason for **detailed planning**.
- 17 Build your essay up from **simple sentences** looking for ways to **link statements** and ideas.
- 18 Sometimes it may be necessary to **simplify what you want to say** so that you can express yourself accurately.
- 19 Avoid vague statements such as *il faut faire quelque chose*. Try to give as much detail as possible to back up your answer.
- 20 Think about composing a **short paragraph for each component** part so that your essay is developed gradually.
- 21 Underline the **key elements** of a question and use these key elements in your planning as paragraph sub-headings.
- 22 Allow yourself to be controversial. Don't worry if you give an opinion that is not your own. The examiner is **not grading your opinions** but your language.
- 23 If you **don't know** the exact word you're looking for, try to describe it or use a similar word.
- 24 As preparation and revision for essay-writing have **topic-specific vocabulary cards** with genders clearly shown.

Speaking

- 1 Have and make use of a **range of opinion expressions** e.g. *je pense que, je crois que, j'estime que, à mon avis, selon moi, je dirais que*.
- 2 Remember that your **opinions** and views themselves are not being judged and in that sense there are no right or wrong answers.
- 3 To make the best use of your preparation time, **study both cards briefly** and choose the one you think you will have the most to say about.
- 4 Often **personal experience** can be a useful way of explaining an idea or opinion. Think about your own experience of a certain topic (advertising, sport, families etc.) – maybe you can use them as an illustration of an idea or opinion.
- 5 To make the best use of your preparation time, make sure you **look at and understand what's on the card** before tackling the printed questions.
- 6 Avoid simply reading off your answers to the printed questions. Try to make the answers sound as **spontaneous** as possible. Don't look down at your paper all the time but make eye contact with the examiner.
- 7 **Listen very carefully to the examiner's questions** once the printed questions have been asked. Is the question asking something about you or is it a more general question?
- 8 Remember to project your **voice confidently** towards the microphone and to speak in a way that doesn't suggest you're totally bored with the whole thing.
- 9 To make the best use of your preparation time, only prepare a **brief answer** to the *De quoi s'agit-il?* question. A couple of sentences that briefly summarise the general subject of the card are enough.
- 10 Don't be afraid to ask for a **question to be repeated** or to say that you don't understand, but avoid asking the examiner for vocabulary you don't know.
- 11 Avoid over-complicated answers or you may risk losing track of what you want to say.
- 12 You are **not expected to ask questions of the examiner**. You don't get marks for asking for the examiner's opinion about an issue.
- 13 To make the best use of your preparation time, avoid using the phrasing of the questions to make long introductions to your answers. Remember you have to make the most of the time you have to speak so **go straight into what is relevant**.
- 14 When talking about television, avoid simply listing the names of programmes in English and instead talk about the types of programmes you enjoy watching.
- 15 When talking about a good film make sure you say what makes it good and don't just say what happens in the film.
- 16 Have examples that you can use to justify your views, for example the benefits and drawbacks of advertising.
- 17 Be sure you can explain *why* you like something, e.g. a particular type of music.
- 18 To make the best use of your preparation time, prepare answers to the questions that are as **detailed** as possible. If you're asked for "reasons why", try to think of a number of different reasons.
- 19 Try to use as wide a variety of expressions as possible than, for example, simply *c'est bon/c'est mauvais pour... (la santé)*.
- 20 Avoid making your contributions about family too personal: information about your family and pets is not what is needed at this level.
- 21 To make the best use of your preparation time, develop your opinion responses by explaining **why you hold a particular opinion**. Try to give reasons to justify the opinion you express.
- 22 Sometimes you can get more ideas by turning a question "on its head" e.g. how would life be without friends?
- 23 Try to express both your own as well as more general, wider-reaching views about a particular topic.
- 24 Try to think about the wider implications of the advantages / disadvantages related to a given issue – don't just relate these to your own experiences. This will give you more scope for things to say!

Reading

- 1 **Make the best use of the time available.** Skim through the test and try to estimate which tasks will need more time. Allot more time for bigger tasks.
- 2 Avoid getting stuck on details such as a word you don't understand or a particular question you don't know the answer to.
- 3 Allow some time at the end to double-check your answers.
- 4 Read the whole text through first to ensure that you understand the main ideas. Then answer the questions.
- 5 If you can't find the answer to a question, move on and come back to that question if there's time at the end.
- 6 Always **read the rubric** very carefully. In some tests, you might be asked which answers are **wrong**.
- 7 The questions are based on the text in **chronological sequence**. So you should not, for instance, answer a question based on the first paragraph with a comment taken from the final paragraph.
- 8 When you read the whole text through, **underline key words and phrases**, and/or **make notes in the margin**. This will help you navigate in the text for answers later.
- 9 Always look carefully at the **number of marks** for each question: 2 marks means the examiner wants to see 2 details.
- 10 If you don't immediately **recognise a word**, don't panic. Read the text around the sentence where the word occurs and see if you can work out its meaning.
- 11 Check if there is any **artwork** in connection with the text that can give you clues for understanding the content.
- 12 For **multiple-choice questions**, don't just tick off the first one that seems right. **Look at all options** before deciding on your answer. There may be subtle differences between the options and although one option may seem correct, another one may be even better.
- 13 Remember that the **questions follow the text in chronological order**. So if you have answered questions 4 and 6, the answer to question 5 should be somewhere in between in the text.
- 14 Always **read the rubric** very carefully. Make sure you give your answers in the **right language**!
- 15 **Beware of false friends**. Learn the correct meaning of words like *achèvement*, *machin*, *marron*, *réaliser* and *sensible*.
- 16 Some people find it useful to draw **spidergrams** for a particular topic in order to revise vocabulary.
- 17 Another way of memorising vocabulary is to write a list of words that you want to revise and put it somewhere visible as a constant reminder.
- 18 Try to **use as many ways of revising vocabulary as possible**. Be creative and learn what works best for you.
- 19 **Try not to guess** the answers. A process of elimination can sometimes help you arrive at the correct answer!
- 20 You might encounter a word which you do not know. If so, try to work out its meaning from the context of the text.
- 21 Make sure you revise your **verb forms**. Failure to distinguish between them can lead to serious misunderstandings and incorrect answers.
- 22 Pay attention to **figures** in the text. They may be required in your answers.
- 23 For matching exercises, check if there are **extra (decoy) options**. If so, be extra careful – especially if you're using a process of elimination.
- 24 If you have to fill out boxes with letters in a matching exercise, make sure you use your best handwriting so that there is no doubt what letter it is. And double-check that there is a letter in every box!