Essential French Dialogs
Everyday Conversations & Travel Tips
# Table of Contents

1. **Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 9

2. **How to use this audiobook** .......................................................................................... 10  
   To improve your understanding ......................................................................................... 10  
   To improve your pronunciation ......................................................................................... 11

3. **Booking a hotel room** .................................................................................................. 12  
   Conversation on the phone ............................................................................................... 12  
   Conversation on the phone + Translation ........................................................................ 13  
   Tips about French hotels ................................................................................................... 14  
   The elevator ....................................................................................................................... 14  
   The floor issue .................................................................................................................. 14  
   Noise ................................................................................................................................. 14  
   Size ................................................................................................................................... 14  
   Amenities .......................................................................................................................... 14  
   Bathrooms ......................................................................................................................... 15  
   Smoking or non-smoking ................................................................................................. 15  
   Internet Access ................................................................................................................. 15  
   Check-in .............................................................................................................................. 15  
   Tipping ............................................................................................................................... 16  
   Proof of booking .............................................................................................................. 16

4. **At the restaurant** ........................................................................................................ 17  
   Au restaurant, conversation ............................................................................................. 17
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Au restaurant, conversation + translation</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips about eating in a French restaurant</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful ordering vocabulary and sentences</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t address your waiter as garçon</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fumeur ou non-fumeur ?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you like your meat cooked?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with the waiter</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipping in France</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants hours</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Asking for directions and avoiding scams</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for directions, conversation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for directions, conversation + translation</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for directions and avoiding scams</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitfall</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful vocabulary</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get to the point</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bags, wallets and credit cards</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common scams</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make some copies/photos of important documents</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Boutiques and other non-food small stores</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping for clothes, conversation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping for clothes, conversation + translation</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips about French shops</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names of speciality stores</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. **At the bakery, speciality food stores** ................................. 41

   At the bakery, conversation .................................................. 41
   At the bakery, conversation + translation .................................. 42
   Tips about la boulangerie and speciality food stores .................... 43
   Names of speciality food stores .............................................. 43
   Schedule ............................................................................... 44
   La boulangerie ....................................................................... 44
   La pâtisserie ........................................................................ 44
   La boulangerie pâtisserie traiteur ........................................... 45
   Don’t buy a “baguette”! .............................................................. 45
   The line ................................................................................ 45

8. **Buying in an open air market & a supermarket** ................. 46

   At the market, conversation ..................................................... 46
   At the market, conversation + translation .................................. 48
Tips for shopping at the markets and supermarkets .................................................. 51
Ambiance of the French markets ............................................................................. 51
Schedule .................................................................................................................. 51
Check what is handed to you ................................................................................. 52
Check for local crops ............................................................................................ 52
Produce in season only ......................................................................................... 52
Ask the fish monger to prepare your food............................................................ 52
Do barter in markets ............................................................................................. 52
Politeness and lines ............................................................................................... 53
Take cash to the market ....................................................................................... 53
No more bags at supermarkets ............................................................................ 53
Some supermarkets deliver .................................................................................. 53
Place one Euro in your cart .................................................................................. 54

9. **Sick in France: à la pharmacie** ..................................................................... 55

   At the pharmacy, conversation ........................................................................ 55
   At the pharmacy, conversation + translation .................................................. 56
   Tips about being sick and pharmacies, hospitals etc...................................... 59
   Useful vocabulary ............................................................................................... 59
   Tricky vocabulary .............................................................................................. 60
   A regular doctor’s visit is cheap ...................................................................... 60
   Schedule and “on call” pharmacies .................................................................. 60
   Pharmacies also sell beauty products ............................................................. 61
   Train with my free medical exam lesson ......................................................... 61
   For medical emergencies in France .................................................................. 61
10. **La SNCF: the French train system** ..........................................................62
   - Buying a train ticket, conversation ..........................................................62
   - Buying a train ticket, conversation + translation ....................................64
   - Tips about trains .......................................................................................66
   - Generalities ...............................................................................................66
   - Schedule .....................................................................................................67
   - Your ticket ..................................................................................................67
   - Announcements .........................................................................................68
   - Cars and seats ...........................................................................................68
   - Luggage ......................................................................................................68
   - Special cars ................................................................................................68
   - Toilets ..........................................................................................................69

11. **Renting a car & driving in France** .......................................................70
   - Renting a car, conversation ......................................................................70
   - Renting a car, conversation + translation ...............................................71
   - Tips about renting a car ............................................................................73
   - Gas .............................................................................................................73
   - Gas stations ................................................................................................74
   - Most French cars have manual transmissions .........................................74
   - Car size .......................................................................................................74
   - Take your own GPS, car seat etc..............................................................74
   - Minimum and maximum age to rent a car ..............................................75
   - Driver’s license .........................................................................................75
Car rental schedules
Insurance: check your credit card offerings
Numbers of kilometers
Co-drivers
Different driving rules
Right hand right of way
50km speed limits when you are in driving in a town
Full stop at stop signs
No turn on right at a red light
Rear passengers buckle up!
France is full of roundabouts
Introduction

Fact: foreigners traveling to France are going to face linguistic as well as cultural challenges.

To help you prepare for it, I’ve chosen key situations any tourist is bound to encounter (booking a hotel room, ordering in a restaurant, buying in a shop...) and have recorded a short and realistic dialog to give you the vocabulary and confidence you’ll need to speak and interact in French.

These French dialogs are recorded at two speeds:
• a slower speed, so you can learn the sentences by repeating them and work on your French pronunciation
• a faster, more natural speed, so you can train your ear to understand the French when they speak to you

You may notice some differences between the 2 recordings: spoken street French is full of glidings that vary with the speed of speech, and I will record the second, faster recording, focussing on real street French pronunciation.

Whenever the dialog is between two persons only, I will not say the name of the speaker, so it’s more dynamic. When there are more people involved, I will say the speaker’s name, so you can follow who is speaking.

I have also included practical tips, factual and cultural points which will help you fit in and prevent nasty surprises. These tips are full of additional vocabulary related to the subject of the chapter.
How to use this audiobook

I suggest you start with listening to the tips, and study the vocabulary in them.

Then, if you are a beginner, you may need to read the dialog and the translation to get acquainted with the new vocabulary.

If you are not a beginner, you should already know a lot of the vocabulary, and if you don’t know all of it, you may be able to guess some from the context of the conversation. Listen, listen, listen and try to guess. Then refer to the French text, and as a last resort, to the translation. And of course study the new words.

1. To improve your understanding

Depending on your level, you should study with the slow or the normal recording, without reading the dialog, and see how much you are able to understand.

When you don’t understand something, play it back a couple of times. You may get it on the 3rd or 4th run, and it’s a good exercise to push your ears and brain to understand.

If you cannot “hear” properly what I say, try to figure out the sounds: what do you hear? Write it down.

Then try to guess. These are dialogs, the conversation is somewhat predictable. What do you think they are saying? Write it down as well. How would you say that in French?

The next step is to go see the dialog. First read only the French dialog. Can you understand now? Is it a word you know? Did you guess what it meant? If you knew that word, how come you didn’t understand it?
If it’s a new word, look in the translation, and then make a flash-card about it. Then work on memorizing it.

Many students want to understand every single word of the conversation, and automatically translate everything in their head. It’s not a good habit, since it’s unlikely that in a real conversation, you’ll understand everything. Partly because it’s likely there will be some vocabulary you don’t know, and partly because in a real life situation, you won’t be able to hear everything very clearly. Therefore, it’s very important that you learn to “go with the flow”. And retrain your brain to use its “guessing power”, as it does in your native language. Very often, the context and the logic of the conversation are as important to understanding as the vocabulary involved.

2. **To improve your pronunciation**

Depending on your level, practice with the slow or the normal recording. Beginners may not be able to speak as fast as in the normal recording, and that’s OK. At this stage, you cannot speak like a native, and it’s perfectly fine to speak slower. Actually, the person you talk to is likely to match your speed, so the faster you talk, the faster they’ll talk back, which may not be what you want!

Practice repeating each sentence one by one, pausing between them if necessary.

Pay close attention to the spoken French glidings, but also where I breathe in the sentence (this is very important since many students don’t know where to breathe), and mimic my voice as if you were an actor.

Note also the “song” of my voice: where it goes up, where it goes down, and compare it to the punctuation of the dialog.

Always learn the vocabulary with the audio playing, so the written form doesn’t fool you into a wrong pronunciation.

Training out loud is essential, do not just listen to the recordings, make sure you repeat everything out loud.

*Good luck with your French studies, and remember, repetition is the key!*
Booking a hotel room

In this chapter, we’ll study a typical conversation in a hotel. *La cliente* (the customer, here a woman) talks to *le réceptionniste* (the hotel clerk).

As far as the language is concerned, it’s very likely that people working at the hotel will speak at least some basic English, so I wouldn’t worry too much about it.

1. **Conversation on the phone**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cliente</th>
<th>Allo, bonjour monsieur, je voudrais réserver une chambre.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Réceptionniste</td>
<td>Bien sûr Madame. Pour combien de jours ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliente</td>
<td>Une semaine. Du 10 au 17 juillet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Réceptionniste</td>
<td>Une chambre double ou une chambre simple ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliente</td>
<td>Une chambre double s’il vous plaît, non-fumeur, avec baignoire si possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Réceptionniste</td>
<td>Ah, désolée, nous n’avons pas de chambre avec baignoire. Toutes nos chambres ont une salle de douche privée, et des toilettes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliente</td>
<td>D’accord. Je voudrais une chambre très calme, côté jardin ou cour, pas côté rue, et pas au rez-de-chaussée.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*End sample*
2. **Conversation on the phone + Translation**

**Cliente**
Allo, bonjour monsieur, je voudrais réserver une chambre.
Hello, good morning sir, I'd like to book a room.

**Réceptionniste**
Bien sûr Madame. Pour combien de jours ?
Of course miss. For how many nights?

**Cliente**
Une semaine. Du 10 au 17 juillet.
One week. From the 10th to the 17th of July.

**Réceptionniste**
Une chambre double ou une chambre simple ?
A single or double occupancy room?

**Cliente**
Une chambre double s'il vous plaît, non-fumeur, avec baignoire si possible.
A double room please, non-smoking, with a bathtub if possible.

**Réceptionniste**
Ah, désolée, nous n'avons pas de chambre avec baignoire. Toutes nos chambres ont une salle de douche privée, et des toilettes.
Oh, I'm sorry, we don't have any rooms with a bathtub. All of our rooms come with a private shower and toilet.

**Cliente**
D'accord. Je voudrais une chambre très calme, côté jardin ou cour, pas côté rue, et pas au rez-de-chaussée.
OK. I would like a very quiet room, facing the garden or courtyard, not facing the street, and not on the ground level.

... End sample
Choosing an accommodation in France can be quite a challenge: there are many hotels, *chambres d’hôtes* (bed and breakfast), *auberge de jeunesse* (youth hostels) ranging from the upmost luxuriant to the... well, let’s say ridiculously noisy, dirty and uncomfortable.

**The elevator**

My first tip will definitely be about *l’ascenseur* (the elevator)... or the lack of it. Although the French accessibility laws are changing drastically, there are still quite a lot of smaller hotels (in Paris in particular) that don’t have an elevator. Even if there is an elevator it will often be extremely TINY (and when I say tiny, I mean having to walk in sideways!)

So forget larger suitcases. And if there is no elevator, be ready to carry your *valises* (suitcases) yourself: it’s not the clerk’s job, and in standard hotels, there are no porters or bellhop.

**The floor issue**

This brings us to the second point: the French count their floors from *le rez-de-chaussée* (first floor) up. So you have to account for that one floor difference; *le deuxième étage* (literally 2nd floor) is actually the equivalent of a US third floor. Something to remember when there is no elevator.

**Noise**

Noise is something to consider when choosing your hotel in larger cities: the ground floor will solve the stairs issue, but may be quite noisy... So pack earplugs, especially if you are traveling in the summer and you may need to leave your windows open.

*End sample...*