

## **Recommendations for improving marks in French Immersion / Language-learning**

### **1: Improve in-class work habits**

- Keep your phone in your bag in class
- Use class time to work
  - Always try the practice work, don't wait for the answers
- Complete assignments on time and hand them in
- Ask questions and ask the teacher for feedback on writing / practice work
- Keep an organized binder
- Use an agenda / calendar to keep track of due dates
- Ask to sit near the front

### **2: Improve work habits outside of class**

- Study frequently (e.g. 10-15 minutes every day)
- Study effectively (don't just reread notes or cram)
  - Effective study includes flashcards, testing yourself, redoing and correcting practice work, teaching someone else...

### **3: Improve your French**

Language learning involves 4 different kinds of practice (Source: Paul Nation):

- Meaning-focused input
  - Exposing yourself to the language by listening, watching tv, reading etc. Use a variety of topics. The best level to read / listen to is one that you can understand but that will still introduce you to new vocab and grammar (e.g. a book with around 3-10 unknown words per page)
- Meaning-focused output
  - Using the language to communicate (writing, speaking)
- Language-focused learning
  - Concentrating explicitly on studying new vocabulary and grammar rules
- Fluency practice
  - Concentrating on practicing the aspects of the language that you already know in order to become faster / more automatic (e.g. rewatching something, reading quickly with an easy text, rereading, redoing practice work)

The importance of 'noticing': You need to think actively about how you use language. Notice when you run across a new word or expression, analyse how to correct your mistakes...

### **Specific skills to practice**

- Reading (helps with vocabulary, grammar, and speed)
  - Read every day. Studies show that the more you read, the more your vocabulary, grammar and general comprehension improves
  - Read at an appropriate level (you should understand approx 95-98% of the words already)
    - E.g. If there are more than 6-10 unknown words on a page (standard novel format) the text may be too difficult to read unless you are doing some extra vocab work with it
  - If most texts are too difficult, choose a novel that you've already read in English or a novel at an easy level (check out books from Orca Publishing for example)

- Other reading strategies: rereading, translating the text into English (only to check understanding - this strategy isn't good for developing reading fluency), reading out loud, following along with an audio book
- Listening
  - The key to improving your listening is practicing with a variety of materials. Unfortunately, your teacher will always be easier to understand than daily conversation because he/she will speak more slowly, repeat often, use simpler vocabulary, avoid slang and will be talking about topics that you are used to
  - Try practicing by listening to the radio, downloading podcasts, watching shows with French audio (subtitles in French are fine, but never use English subtitles)
    - If you have Netflix, you can search for content by language
  - Find short videos and try to write down word-for-word what you hear. Listen multiple times.
    - One site with lots of short news videos is: [apprendre.tv5monde.com](http://apprendre.tv5monde.com)
- Writing
  - keep a journal
  - Correct your work with a different color and look for patterns in your mistakes. Do you tend to make the same mistake multiple times? If you don't understand why something is a mistake, ask for help.
  - study how to correct *anglicismes* (see the grammar notes on the website)
  - memorize sentences with example structures (e.g. 'je ne l'ai pas mangé' for the passé composé)
- Vocabulary
  - There are different levels to knowing a word (e.g. recognizing it, knowing how formal it is, understanding its meaning, being able to use it...)
  - Low vocabulary is the main reason a student struggles in a language course
  - Most people need to see a word at least 6-10 times before they know its meaning (and practice even more if they want to use it)
  - Strategies:
    - Make flashcards and use them daily
      - Flashcard apps include: Quizlet, Memrise, Anki
    - Keep a journal of new words
    - Write stories or journal entries using the new words
    - Read a lot (a good goal would be 30 min a day)
    - Use the 'keyword' strategy for difficult words
      - This means you create a strange sentence or image in your 1st language that includes the meaning of the word you want to memorize and part of the sound of the word to memorize. E.g. souris = mouse 'The surly mouse said 'Go away!' / bagnole = car 'They banned old cars' / épuisé = exhausted 'The ape was so exhausted he fell out of a tree!'
  - Study words every day - don't wait for a test to be announced
- Pronunciation: read out loud with an audiobook or by imitating francophones; record yourself to compare your accent. Practice harder sounds like r and u.
- Grammar: Find extra exercises. There are lots of online resources. Some print resources that are often available in libraries are: *Practice Makes Perfect: Complete French Grammar*, and *The Ultimate French Review and Practice*.
- Speaking: Choose a topic at random and talk about it for at least 2 minutes. Speak in French with other French Immersion students.
- Work with a francophone tutor.

#### 4: Redos

- Quizzes on vocabulary and grammar (but not reading or listening) can be redone up to 2 weeks after the original date.

#### 5: Use the website (marshik.weebly.com) to find resources like

- Vocab and grammar notes
- A list of useful websites
- Links to quizlet sets

#### How to use flashcards effectively:

- Uncluttered cards
  - Put one thing to learn on a card and the answer on the back. (Never put multiple items on a card)
    - If you're studying vocabulary, it is best to use the word/phrase to study and its translation (rather than a definition).
- Increase the ways you connect to the word
  - Use cards with different colors, say the word out loud, make a gesture, picture the word in your head, add an image or a keyword-style sentence...
- Don't cheat
  - If you have to look at the back of the card to get the answer, you don't know the answer
- 'Spaced repetition'
  - Basic idea: review harder cards more frequently than easy cards
  - Don't cram!!!
  - An ideal routine would be similar to the following
    - Every day: Practice the 'difficult level' cards you're already working on, and add 5-10 new cards
    - During one session (5-10 min long), do the cards until you know them all
    - Sort those cards into 3 or 4 piles: e.g.: already knew it, easy, took some effort, a struggle to memorize
      - If you're using physical cards, a series of boxes for each day of the week would be useful. When you're done the session put the card in the box for the day of the week you want to practice it again
      - Apps like Anki do the organizing for you
    - Repeat the really hard cards soon (e.g. later that day), repeat the middle cards in a day or two, repeat the easy cards in a week or so
  - If your goal is language-learning, you should create a giant collection / database of flashcards as the year progresses so you will still be reviewing words from September in June. However, if assessment in your class is organized on a unit-by-unit schedule, you may want to do separate flashcard collections for each unit. This latter strategy is less organisation- and time-intensive, but less effective for long-term learning.