

Provisional French Descriptions—Speaking

Novice—Low Unable to function in spoken French. Oral production is limited to occasional isolated words or expressions which have been borrowed into English or which are cognates of English words. Some examples are: *voilà, c'est la vie, cuisine, auto, table*. Essentially no communicative ability.

Novice—Mid Able to operate only in a very limited capacity within very predictable areas of need. Vocabulary is limited to that necessary to express simple elementary needs and basic courtesy formulae, such as *Bonjour, Au revoir, Comment allez-vous?, Très bien, merci, Je m'appelle...*, etc. Syntax is fragmented, verbs are used mostly in the infinitive form, and there is little or no subject-verb agreement or noun-adjective agreement. The majority of utterances consist of isolated words or short formulae. Utterances are marked and often flawed by repetition of an interlocutor's words (Q: *Quel sport préférez-vous?* *A: *Vous préférez le sport tennis.*) and frequent long pauses; speakers at this level cannot create original sentences or cope with the simplest situations. Pronunciation is frequently unintelligible and is strongly influenced by the first language. Can be understood only with difficulty, even by persons such as teachers who are used to dealing with non-native speakers or in interactions where the context strongly supports the utterances.

* Denotes an error characteristic of speakers at this level.

Novice—High Able to satisfy immediate needs using learned utterances. There is no consistent ability to create original sentences or cope with simple survival situations, although there are some emerging signs of spontaneity and flexibility. Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only where this involves short memorized utterances or formulae. There is some increase in utterance length, but frequent long pauses and repetition of the interlocutor's words still occur. Most utterances are telegraphic and errors often occur when word endings and verbs are omitted or confused (e.g., *Oui. *Je parle française.*). Speech is characterized by enumeration, rather than by sentences. Vocabulary is limited to common areas, such as colors, days of the week, months of the year, names of basic objects, numbers up to 60, and names of immediate family members. There is some concept of the present tense forms of the verbs and some common irregular verbs (*aimer, parler, habiter, avoir, être, vouloir, aller*), although use is limited primarily to first person singular and first and second person plural. There is some use of articles, indicating a concept of gender, although mistakes are constant and numerous. Question words are limited to *où, quand, quel, est-ce que, pourquoi, comment* and questions are often syntactically incorrect and semantically inaccurate. May be able to pronounce sounds correctly in isolation (*r, u, p, t, k, é*) but cannot do so consistently in words or sound clusters. Errors are frequent and, in spite of repetition, may severely inhibit communication even with persons used to dealing with such learners. Unable to make one's needs known and communicate essential information in a simple survival situation.

* Denotes an error characteristic of speakers at this level.

Intermediate—Low Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can ask and answer some simple questions, can respond to and sometimes initiate simple statements, and can maintain simple face-to-face conversation. Can ask and answer questions such as *Quel âge avez-vous? Comment vous appelez-vous? Combien de frères et de soeurs avez-vous? Qu'est-ce que tu étudies?* Can sustain a short conversation on such familiar topics as characteristics of self and family members (name, age, physical description), location and description of home, school, or workplace, and other topics that involve an exchange of simple factual information. Can make one's needs known with great difficulty in a simple survival situation, such as ordering a meal, getting a hotel room, and asking for directions. Vocabulary is inadequate to express anything beyond basic information on familiar subjects and elementary needs. Little precision in information can be conveyed and misunderstandings frequently arise because of limited vocabulary, numerous grammatical errors, and poor pronunciation and intonation. There is some control of the present tense of regular verbs and the more common irregular verbs and of gender, number, and subject-verb agreement. Can give simple answers in the negative, limited to the *ne...pas* construction. Misunderstandings frequently arise from limited vocabulary and grammar and erroneous phonology, but, with repetition, can generally be understood by native speakers in regular contact with foreigners attempting to speak French. Little precision in information conveyed owing to tentative state of grammatical development and little or no use of modifiers.

Intermediate—Mid Able to satisfy most routine travel and survival needs and some limited social demands. Can ask and answer questions on very familiar topics and in areas of immediate need. Can initiate and respond to simple statements, and can maintain simple face-to-face conversation. Can ask and answer questions and carry on a conversation on topics beyond basic survival needs or involving the exchange of basic personal information, i.e., can talk simply about autobiographical details, leisure time activities, daily schedule, and

some future plans. In a simple situation, such as ordering a meal, making purchases, and requesting a hotel room, can deal with details, such as requesting a table for two in a quiet corner, asking for an article of clothing of a particular color, getting a hotel room with a private bath for a given length of time, or inquiring about modes of payment. Can handle simple transactions at the post office, bank, drugstore, etc. Misunderstandings arise because of limited vocabulary, frequent grammatical errors, and poor pronunciation and intonation, although speakers at this level have broader vocabulary and/or greater grammatical and phonological control than speakers at Intermediate Low. Speech is often characterized by long pauses. Some grammatical accuracy in basic constructions, i.e., subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective and gender agreement for familiar vocabulary, present tense of regular verbs and common irregular verbs such as *avoir, être, aller, faire, vouloir, pouvoir, savoir, devoir, comprendre*. Can express future time using *aller* plus infinitive. May have a concept of past time, but can use only isolated past tense forms which have been learned as vocabulary items. Syntax in most simple declarative sentences is generally correct, including placement of most common adjectives. Is generally understood by persons used to dealing with foreigners.

Intermediate—High

Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands. Developing flexibility in language production although fluency is still uneven. Can initiate and sustain a general conversation on factual topics beyond basic survival needs. Can give autobiographical information and discuss leisure time activities. To a lesser degree, can talk about some past activities and future plans and non-personal topics, such as activities of organizations, and descriptions of events, although ability to describe and give precise information in these areas is limited. Can provide sporadically, although not consistently, simple description and narration of present, past, or future events, although limited vocabulary range and insufficient control of grammar lead to much hesitation and inaccuracy. Extended discourse is largely a series of short, discrete utterances; cannot sustain coherent structures in longer utterances by the use of conjunctions or relative clauses. Some control of the *passé composé* and basic reflexive verbs. May be able to use some direct and indirect object pronouns, although syntax may still be faulty. Is able to use the partitive (affirmative and negative), demonstrative adjectives, most expressions of quantity, most adverbs, and some idiomatic expressions with *avoir* and *faire*. Comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners, but still has to repeat utterances frequently to be understood by the general public.

Advanced

Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility most social and general conversations. Can narrate, describe, and explain in past, present, and future time. Can communicate facts—what, who, when, where, how much—and can explain points of view in an uncomplicated fashion, but cannot conjecture or coherently support an opinion. Can talk in a general way about topics of current public interest (e.g., current events, student rules and regulations), as well as personal interest (work, leisure time activities) and can give autobiographical information. Can make factual comparisons, such as college life vs. high school life. Can handle limited work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties. Can make a point forcefully and communicate needs and thoughts in a situation with a complication (e.g., calling a mechanic for help with a stalled car, explaining suspicious-looking possessions to a customs official). Has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to respond simply with some circumlocutions. Can be understood by native speakers not used to dealing with foreigners, in spite of some pronunciation difficulties. Can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately, such as the present, *passé composé*, imperfect, future tenses of regular and irregular verbs. Has good control of the reflexive and impersonal form of verbs and of imperatives. However, use of conditional sentences is minimal and very unstable. Is able to use adjectives (including *tout*, comparative and superlative forms) correctly, and can handle object pronouns (one pronoun only), interrogative pronouns, relative pronouns, negative patterns other than *ne...pas*, most prepositions and idiomatic expressions using *depuis* with past tense and *il y a* (ago). Generally syntax is correct and word order is sustained with all pronouns, including *y* and *en*. Grasps but does not control the basic differences in usage between the *passé composé* and the imperfect (repeated or continuous vs. single action in the past, etc.) so that many mistakes are to be expected. Can link sentences together in limited discourse by using conjunctions and subordinate clauses.

Advanced Plus

Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Can narrate, describe, and explain in past, present, and future time. Can communicate facts and explain points of view in an uncomplicated fashion consistently. Shows some ability to support opinions, explain in detail, and hypothesize, although only sporadically. Can discuss topics of current interest and personal interest, and can handle routine work requirements and some complications. Can handle situations involving complications that arise in everyday life (see Advanced Level examples) but will have difficulty with unfamiliar situations (e.g., losing a contact lens in a sink drain and going to a neighbor to borrow a wrench). Normally controls general vocabulary, with

some groping still evident. Speaking performance is often uneven (strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not both, for example). Areas of weakness in grammar can range from simple constructions such as noun-adjective, gender, and subject-verb agreement to more complex structures such as tense usage (imperfect vs. *passé composé*), and relative clauses. Only sporadic ability to use the present subjunctive, which is usually limited to impersonal expressions (*il faut que, il est important que*) and *vouloir que* constructions. Is usually able to use possessive, demonstrative, and double object pronouns correctly as well as to handle the difference between *c'est* and *il est*. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech, but under tension or pressure language may break down.

Superior

Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social and professional topics. Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease. Can support opinions, hypothesize, and conjecture. May not be able to tailor language to fit various audiences or discuss highly abstract topics in depth. Vocabulary is broad enough that speaker rarely has to grope for a word; good use of circumlocution. Pronunciation may still be obviously foreign. Control of grammar is good. Good control of *passé composé* vs. imperfect; uses the present subjunctive appropriately most of the time. Partial control of *si* clauses, particularly in hypothetical statements. Correct use of the future tense with conjunctions such as *quand, dès que*, etc., and good control of negations, including *ne...ni...ni*, negation of the infinitive, and *ne...que*. Errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.

Provisional French Descriptions—Listening

Novice—Low

No practical understanding of spoken French. Understanding is limited to cognates, borrowed words, high frequency social conventions, and occasional isolated words, such as *oui, merci, café, magnifique, mademoiselle*. Essentially no ability to comprehend even short utterances.

Novice—Mid

Sufficient comprehension to understand some memorized words within predictable areas of need. Vocabulary for comprehension is limited to simple elementary needs, basic courtesy formulae, and very simple memorized material relating to everyday objects and situations, such as *Bonjour, Bonsoir, Comment allez-vous? Où habitez-vous? Comment vous appelez-vous?* Utterances understood rarely exceed more than two or three words at a time, and ability to understand is characterized by long pauses for assimilation and by repeated requests on the listener's part for repetition, and/or a slower rate of speech. Confuses words that sound similar, such as *vingt/viens/vin, demain/deux mains, couture/culture*.

Novice—High

Sufficient comprehension to understand a number of memorized utterances in areas of immediate need. Comprehends slightly longer utterances in situations where the context aids understanding, such as at the table, in a restaurant/store, in a train/bus. Phrases recognized have for the most part been memorized: *Passez-moi du beurre. Avez-vous du pain? Le billet coûte 10 francs. Vous désirez?* Comprehends vocabulary common to daily needs. Comprehends simple questions/statements about family members, age, address, weather, time, daily activities and interests: *Etes-vous marié? Vous avez des enfants? Combien de frères et de soeurs avez-vous? Quel temps fait-il?* Misunderstandings arise from failure to perceive critical sounds or endings. Understands even tailored speech with difficulty but gets some main ideas. Often requires repetition and/or a slowed rate of speed for comprehension, even when listening to persons such as teachers who are used to speaking with non-natives.

Intermediate—Low

Sufficient comprehension to understand utterances about basic survival needs, minimum courtesy and travel requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can understand non-memorized material, such as simple questions and answers, statements, and face-to-face conversations in standard French. Comprehension areas include basic needs: meals, lodging, transportation, time, simple instructions (e.g., route directions such as *Allez tout droit. Tournez à gauche. Allez plus loin.*) and routine commands (e.g., from customs officials, police, such as *Passez à la douane. Ouvrez vos valises*). Understands main ideas. Misunderstandings frequently arise from lack of vocabulary or from faulty processing of syntactic information often caused by strong interference from the native language or by the imperfect and partial acquisition of the target grammar.

Intermediate—Mid

Sufficient comprehension to understand simple conversations about some survival needs and some limited social conventions. Vocabulary permits understanding of topics beyond basic survival needs (e.g., personal history and leisure time activities), such as *Où êtes-vous né? Quel est votre passe-temps favori? Qu'aimez-vous faire le week-end?* Evidence of understanding basic constructions, e.g., subject-verb agreement, evidence that some inflection is understood. Candidate's understanding of grammatical structure

allows recognition of future and past references either by verb forms (*futur proche, futur, passé composé, and imparfait*) or by adverbs, adjectives, or prepositions of time (*bientôt, demain, hier, l'année dernière, avant, depuis*).

Intermediate—High	Sufficient comprehension to understand short conversations about most survival needs and limited social conventions. Increasingly able to understand topics beyond immediate survival needs, such as biographical information in which both <i>imparfait, passé composé, futur proche, and futur</i> are used (<i>J'habitais en France quand j'étais jeune. J'irai en France si j'ai assez d'argent</i>). Able to comprehend most sentences that feature familiar vocabulary and situations (home, office, school and daily activities; simple purchases; directions). Shows spontaneity in understanding, but speed and consistency of understanding uneven. Limited vocabulary range necessitates repetition for understanding. Understands commoner tense forms and some word order patterns, including most question forms, but miscommunication still occurs with more complex patterns. Can get the gist of conversations, but cannot sustain comprehension in longer utterances or in unfamiliar situations. Understanding of descriptions and detailed information is limited. Aware of basic cohesive features, e.g., pronouns, verb inflections, but many are unreliably understood, especially if other material intervenes. Still has to ask for utterances to be repeated.
Advanced	Sufficient comprehension to understand conversations about routine social conventions and limited school or work requirements. Able to understand face-to-face speech in standard French spoken at a normal rate, with some repetition and rewording, by a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners. Able to get the gist of some radio broadcasts. Understands everyday topics, common personal and family news, well-known current events, and routine matters involving school or work; descriptions and narration about current, past and future events; the essential points of a discussion or speech at an elementary level on topics in special fields of interest. For example: <i>Est-ce que votre spécialité nécessite une formation particulière? Comment les Européens ont-ils réagi à l'installation des engins nucléaires en Europe? La classe moyenne est-elle la plus affectée par l'inflation?</i>
Advanced Plus	Sufficient comprehension to understand most routine social conventions, conversations on school or work requirements, and discussions on concrete topics related to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable ability and ease of understanding, but comprehension may break down under tension or pressure (including unfavorable listening conditions). May display weakness or deficiency due to inadequate vocabulary base or less-than-secure knowledge of grammar and syntax. May be deficient or uneven in completely comprehending conversations or discussions by educated native speakers due to a less-than-adequate knowledge of more complex syntactic structures (tense usage in simple and complex statements, passive voice constructions, relative clauses, word order, subject-object relationships). Still has some difficulty following radio broadcasts. Can sometimes detect emotional overtones. Increasing ability to understand between the lines (i.e., to make inferences).
Superior	Sufficient comprehension to understand the essentials of all speech in standard dialects, including technical discussions within a special field. Has sufficient understanding of face-to-face speech, delivered with normal clarity and speed in standard dialects on general topics and areas of special interest; understands hypothesizing and supported opinions. Has broad enough vocabulary that rarely has to ask for paraphrasing or explanation. Can follow accurately the essentials of conversations between educated native speakers, reasonably clear telephone calls, radio broadcasts, standard news items, oral reports, some oral technical reports, and public addresses on non-technical subjects. May not understand native speakers if they speak very quickly or use some slang or unfamiliar dialect. Can often detect emotional overtones. Can understand "between the lines" (i.e., make inferences).

Provisional French Descriptions—Reading

Novice—Low	No functional ability in reading French.
Novice—Mid	Sufficient understanding of written French to interpret highly contextualized words or cognates within predictable areas. Vocabulary for comprehension limited to simple elementary needs, such as names, addresses, dates, signs indicating names of streets and avenues (<i>rue, voie</i>); building names (<i>café, aéroport, restaurant</i>); short informative signs (<i>entrée, danger, taxi</i>). Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase and comprehension requires successive rereading and checking.
Novice—High	Sufficient comprehension of written language to interpret set expressions in areas of immediate need. Can recognize all letters of printed French (but very little which is handwritten), and is familiar with French

punctuation and diacritical marks (é, è, ô, ä, ç). Where vocabulary has been mastered, can read for instructional and directional purposes standardized messages, phrases or expressions, such as some items on menus (*poulet, bifteck, salade, thé*), schedules, timetables, maps, signs indicating hours of operation, social codes (*Défense de Fumer*), and street signs (*Arrêt Fixe*). Vocabulary and grammar limited to the most common nouns, adjectives, question words, and a few verb forms. Material is read for essential information. Detail is overlooked or misunderstood.

Intermediate—Low

Sufficient comprehension to understand in printed form the simplest connected material, either authentic or specially prepared, dealing with basic survival and social needs. Able to understand both mastered material and recombinations of the mastered elements kept to the same level. Understands main ideas in material when structure and syntax parallel the native language. Can read simple messages, greetings and social amenities in dialogues and specially prepared texts and very carefully handwritten personal notes intended for a non-native reader. Can understand simple language which contains high frequency grammatical patterns in direct discourse such as NP + VP of most regular verbs in the present tense and of common irregular verbs (*avoir, être, savoir, faire, vouloir, pouvoir, comprendre*) also in the present. Has some familiarity with common idioms such as *faire plus* an adjective for the weather, *avoir plus* age, *aller plus* adjective (for personal well-being) and *à plus* hour for time of occurrence. While the *passé composé* of the most common regular verbs might be understood, great dependence will be placed on adverbs of time for determination of tense (*demain, hier, plus tard, avant, après, à x heures*, etc.) and past meaning might be missed. Misunderstandings may arise when syntax is unlike that of the native language (as in inverted interrogatives especially with the *passé composé*) or when grammatical cues (of tense, number or gender) are overlooked.

Intermediate—Mid

Sufficient comprehension to understand in printed form simple discourse for informative or social purposes. In response to perceived needs, can read public announcements to determine who, what, when, where, why, and how much information about such subjects as sporting events, concerts, parades, and celebrations. Can also identify products, prices, and some conditions of sale in popular, illustrated advertising for everyday items, such as food, clothing, work or school supplies, and travel. Can comprehend a note or letter in which a writer used to dealing with non-native readers describes self and family, ages, occupations, residence, personality traits, and common preferences when high frequency or cognates and simple structures are used. Understands the general content of headlines in newspapers, such as *France-Soir*, or article titles in popular magazines, such as *Paris-Match* and *Elle*, if the content is familiar or of high interest. Understands facts and follows events in simple narration, authentic or specially prepared or edited when discourse consists of basic NP + VP + NP constructions. Can interpret negation, interrogation in various forms. Is fairly consistent in interpreting present, *futur proche* (*aller* + infinitive) and most *passé composé* verbs, when other time indicators (adverbial expressions) are present, but is less consistent when lexical clues are lacking. Recognizes these tenses with most regular verbs within vocabulary range and with eight to 10 most common irregulars. Understands basic noun modifiers including determiners (e.g., definite and indefinite articles, partitives, possessives, demonstratives, interrogatives) and descriptive adjectives both preceding and following, with relative ease. Has some difficulty with cohesive factors such as matching object pronouns with referents and connecting ideas expressed by relative pronouns. Uses guessing strategies to interpret vocabulary consisting of regular cognate patterns, and highly contextualized items. May have to read several times before understanding.

Intermediate—High

Sufficient comprehension to understand a simple paragraph for personal communication, information or recreational purposes. Can read with understanding invitations, social notes, personal letters and some simple business letters on familiar topics. Can identify the main ideas in two to three short paragraphs in simple articles in popular magazines (e.g., *Paris-Match, Elle, Marie-Claire*) familiar news publications (*France-Soir*) or other informational sources (e.g., publicity brochures, travel literature, and similar writing on non-technical subjects. Appreciates descriptive material on daily life and routines, biographical information. Can read for pleasure some uncomplicated authentic prose or edited prose and original poetry (e.g., Jacques Prévert) and specially prepared or edited original texts. This might include fictional narrative, description or cultural information presented in the direct discourse. Guesses at meaning from context but frequently relies on a dictionary. Can follow connected discourse with simple cohesive elements (*puis, ensuite, qui, que* and some object pronouns). Can accurately interpret detail provided by most expressions of quantity (*peu de, beaucoup de, pas de*) and most adjectives and adverbs. Can regularly and correctly interpret the use of the past, usually with the *passé composé* and occasionally with the imperfect. Common reflexive verbs are understood but most idiomatic pronominal verbs are misunderstood. Common idioms with *avoir* and *faire* are understood. Misinterpretation still occurs with more complex patterns.

Advanced	Sufficient comprehension to read simple authentic printed material or edited textual material within a familiar context. Can read uncomplicated, authentic prose on familiar subjects (sports, travel, movies, theater, food, music, current events), news items in newspapers and popular magazines, biographical information in personal letters on family topics. Reads within the limits of identifiable vocabulary some unedited texts, such as prose fiction, from carefully chosen authors, usually contemporary. Such selections might appear in Sunday newspaper supplements, other daily papers, or special anthologies on modern culture. Can usually appreciate distinctions between the <i>passé composé</i> and the <i>imparfait</i> and the future of regular and irregular verbs. Can correctly interpret compound subjects with some understanding of complex (embedded) sentences which use one object pronoun, prepositional phrases and relative pronouns. Can understand the most salient facts and supporting information but subtle nuances and inferences will remain undetected.
Advanced Plus	Sufficient comprehension to understand most factual information in non-technical prose as well as some discussions on concrete topics related to special interests. Able to read for information and description, to follow sequence of events, and to react to information read. Can separate main ideas from lesser ones and use that division to advance understanding. In major newspapers and magazines, can read international items and social and cultural news. Understanding of specialized items depends upon individual interests and background, at this level can read material in own areas of interest. Within literary fields of interest, can read non-esoteric prose, including critical articles and books. Can read signs, posters, advertisements, and public announcements. Can follow simple printed directions for cooking and other projects within areas of expertise. Guesses logically at new words by using linguistic and non-linguistic contexts and prior knowledge. Is able to comprehend most high-frequency idiomatic expressions, but will still have difficulty with figurative meanings. Can correctly interpret temporal differences as indicated by forms which differ from the native language (e.g., <i>depuis</i> and <i>il y a</i> with the present) and by the use of the <i>passé composé</i> and the <i>imparfait</i> of regular and most irregular verbs (including reflexives) as well as distinctions between the future and the <i>futur proche</i> . Will draw correct conclusions from simple <i>si</i> clauses (<i>si</i> + present + future). Although the subjunctive (with impersonals such as <i>il faut</i> , <i>il est nécessaire</i> , and with certain verbs of emotion, <i>vouloir</i> , <i>aimer</i>) is understood, as are adjectives whose meaning changes with position (<i>ancien professeur</i> , <i>professeur ancien</i> , <i>la semaine dernière</i> , <i>la dernière semaine</i>) the reader will still have difficulty detecting attitudes, values, and judgments. Will be sensitive to distinctions made by the use of the comparative and superlative forms and exclusions made with most negatives. Will have personal responses to written material of a literal nature (either factual information in news items or descriptive narrative in prose) but will still have difficulty with figurative meanings.
Superior	Able to read standard newspaper items addressed to the general reader, routine correspondence reports and technical material in a field of interest at a normal rate of speed (at least 220 WPM). Can gain new knowledge from material in a variety of publications on a wide range of unfamiliar topics related to fields of interest. Can interpret hypotheses, supported opinions, and documented facts, as well as figurative devices, stylistic differences, and humor. Can read most literary genres in the original: novels, essays, poetry, short stories, and most literature written for the general public. Reading ability is not subject dependent. Broad general vocabulary, knowledge of most structures, and development of strategies for logical guessing allow for successful interpretation of unfamiliar words, idioms, or structures. Verb tenses and moods have been largely mastered. Can interpret the <i>passé simple</i> as well as hypotheticals involving <i>si</i> clauses (<i>imparfait-conditionnel</i> , <i>plus-que parfait</i> and <i>conditionnel passé</i>) as well as the subjunctive, several passive constructions (with <i>être</i> , <i>on</i> , and pronominal verbs). Able to achieve overall comprehension of material, even though there may be some gaps in detail. Is generally able to comprehend facts, although misinterpretation may still occur. Can draw inferences, but may be unable to appreciate nuances or stylistics.

Provisional French Descriptions—Writing

Novice—Low	No functional ability in writing French.
Novice—Mid	No practical communicative writing skills. Able to copy isolated words and short phrases. Able to transcribe previously studied words or phrases. Able to write name, address, dates and other numbers, as well as common expressions such as those used in greetings and leave-takings.
Novice—High	Able to write simple fixed expressions and limited memorized material. Can supply information when requested on forms such as hotel reservations and travel documents. Can write names, write out numbers from 1-20, dates (days of the week, months of the year), one's own nationality as well as other common adjectives of nationality, addresses, and other simple biographic information. Can write limited learned vocabulary for common objects, short phrases, and simple lists. Can write such expressions as <i>Bonjour</i> ,

Je m'appelle plus name, *Comment vas-tu? Comment allez-vous?* and other fixed social formulae. Can name some common objects; knows some common adjectives and adverbs; can use the present tense of some common *-er* verbs as well as forms of the present tense of *avoir*, *être*, and *aller*; can write simple negative sentences using *ne...pas* and interrogative sentences with words such as *est-ce que*, *où*, *comment*, *pourquoi*, *quand*, etc. Writes in sentences or short phrases using very basic subject-verb-object word order. Can ask and answer very simple yes-no or information questions using limited memorized or very familiar sentence patterns, with frequent misspellings and inaccuracies. Often forgets accents or uses them inappropriately. Sometimes uses infinitives for conjugated verbs. Has a concept of gender, and can produce definite and indefinite articles, though often inappropriately. Often forgets to make adjectives agree with nouns. May misplace adjectives and adverbs in sentences. Generally cannot create own sentences in the language, but uses memorized material or transformations of familiar patterns.

Intermediate—Low

Has sufficient control of the writing system to meet limited practical needs. Can write short messages, such as simple questions or notes, postcards, phone messages and the like. Can take simple notes on material dealing with very familiar topics within the scope of limited language experience. Can create statements or questions in the present tense or compound future using negative and interrogative constructions, within the scope of limited language experience. Material produced consists of recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures into simple sentences. Can express present and future time, the latter by using the present tense plus infinitive construction or the present tense and adverbs of time such as *demain*, *ce soir*, *la semaine prochaine*, *l'année prochaine*. For example: *J'ai un examen demain; Je vais à Paris la semaine prochaine*. Generally cannot express past time using past tenses, but may incorrectly use the present tense and an adverb of time such as *hier*, *hier soir*, *ce matin*, to convey past meaning. Uses sporadically forms such as possessive adjectives, demonstrative and interrogative adjectives, and partitive articles, but not always correctly. Vocabulary is limited to common objects and cognates, and is inadequate to express anything but elementary needs. Can express numbers from 1-100 with some misspellings. Often inserts native-language vocabulary for unknown words, and is generally not capable of circumlocution to get meaning across. Writing tends to be a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments on very familiar topics (likes and dislikes, general routine, everyday events or situations). Makes continual errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, but writing can be read and understood by a native reader used to dealing with foreigners. Able to produce appropriately some fundamental sociolinguistic distinctions in formal and familiar style, such as appropriate subject pronouns, titles of address and basic social formulae.

Intermediate—Mid

Sufficient control of writing system to meet some survival needs and some limited social demands. Able to compose short paragraphs or take simple notes on very familiar topics grounded in personal experience. Can discuss likes and dislikes, daily routines, give dates and times, discuss everyday events, describe immediate surroundings (home, work, school), narrate simple events, and the like. Can use correctly the present tense of most regular verbs and some common irregular verbs, such as *aller*, *avoir*, *être*, *faire*, *vouloir*, *pouvoir*, *savoir*, *comprendre*, etc., with occasional production errors. Can use *aller* plus infinitive to express future time. Has sporadic control of high frequency verbs in the *passé composé*, but may not attend to correct auxiliary verb or past participle agreement. Often uses *passé composé* for *imparfait* inappropriately. Can use definite, indefinite, and partitive articles, but often uses them inappropriately. Frequent errors in gender, and occasional errors in adjective agreement or placement may occur. Shows some ability to use some determiners other than articles, such as possessive adjectives or interrogative adjectives, but may make errors in appropriate choice of form. Does not tend to use object pronouns, relative constructions, or other cohesive elements of discourse, rendering the written style somewhat stilted and simplistic. Generally good control of basic constructions and inflections, such as subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement, and straightforward syntactic constructions in present and future time. May make frequent errors when venturing beyond current level of linguistic competence (such as when expressing opinions or emotions, where non-memorized conditionals, subjunctives, and other advanced concepts of grammar may come into play). When resorting to a dictionary, often is unable to identify appropriate vocabulary, or uses dictionary entry in uninflected form.

Intermediate—High

Sufficient control of writing system to meet most survival needs and limited social demands. Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics (autobiographical information, preferences, daily routine, simple descriptions and narration of everyday events and situations) and respond to personal questions on such topics using elementary vocabulary and common structures. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data and work experience, and short compositions on familiar topics. Can create sentences and short paragraphs relating to most survival needs (food, lodging, transportation, immediate surroundings and situations) and limited social demands. Can express fairly accurately present and future time, using the *futur proche* and the present tense of most common regular and ir-

regular verbs, including reflexive verbs. Uses some common *avoir* and *faire* expressions. Can use the *passé composé* with both *avoir* and *être* auxiliaries, but does not always use it correctly or appropriately. Shows good control of elementary vocabulary and some control of basic syntactic patterns (some object pronouns, partitive and other determiners, use of *de* after negative and quantity expressions, use of negative in past tenses and *futur proche* with correct placement, etc.). Major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts. Dictionary usage may still yield incorrect vocabulary or forms, although can use a dictionary to advantage to express simple ideas. Generally does not use basic cohesive elements of discourse to advantage (relative constructions, object pronouns, especially *y* and *en*, connectors, and the like). Writing, though faulty, is comprehensible to native speakers used to reading French written by non-natives. Is able to express a few thoughts for which vocabulary is unknown via circumlocution, but may insert native-language equivalents for unknown words or use native-language syntactic patterns when expressing ideas beyond current level of linguistic competence.

Advanced

Able to write routine social correspondence and simple discourse of at least several paragraphs on familiar topics. Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, and write cohesive summaries, resumés, and short narratives and descriptions on factual topics. Able to write about everyday topics by using adjectives, both regular and irregular patterns (e.g., masculines ending in *-eux*, *-if*, *-al*) with mostly correct agreements and word order. Able to modify both verbs and adjectives with adverbs although word order not always correct, especially with *passé composé*. Able to narrate events using present, *passé composé*, imperfect and future forms, although the contrast between uses of the two past tenses may not be consistently accurate. Occasional use of some conditional forms to express preference and ability (i.e., *je voudrais*, *je pourrais*...). Has sufficient writing vocabulary to express oneself simply with some circumlocutions. Can write about a very limited number of current events or daily situations and express personal preferences and observations in some detail using basic structures. Is able to recycle new but meaningful phrases whether lexical or structural, i.e., lifts phrases appropriately, writing appears more sophisticated. When writing own thoughts, is more likely to paraphrase according to native language at times. Continues to make spelling errors where sound-symbol correspondence is radically different from English (*-ail*, *-eille*), where there are multiple ways of spelling a single sound (*é*, *ai*, *et*...) and with silent letters. Shows control of most elision (*l'*, *c'*, *m'*, *t'*, *qu'*) but may overgeneralize (*qui* to *qu'*) and heeds most punctuation conventions. Good control of morphology in verb tenses: correct endings for regular and irregular verbs in tenses mentioned above. Also uses correct endings for adjective agreement, and able to add *-ment* to derive adverbs from adjectives. Controls frequently used structures such as negatives, interrogatives, prepositions of location; determiners are handled accurately for form (although lapses in gender assignment occur) but there is incorrect choice as to definite, indefinite, or partitive for accurate meaning. Preposition use after verbs or adjectives is often inaccurate. Writing is understandable by a native speaker not used to reading French written by non-natives. Writer uses a limited number of cohesive devices such as a single object pronoun (direct or indirect) or *y* or *en* but does so when the repetition of the noun would be in close proximity to the original naming. Some use of *qui*, *que* to combine sentences and some common conjunctions are used (*parce que*, *quand*, *où*, etc.). Able to join sentences in limited discourse, but has difficulty and makes frequent errors producing complex sentences requiring tense accords (e.g., *quand* plus future, conjunctions requiring a subjunctive, *si* clauses with other than a present in the result). Paragraphs are reasonably unified and coherent.

Advanced Plus

Shows ability to write about most common topics with precision and in some detail. Can write fairly detailed resumés and summaries and take accurate notes. Can handle most informal and business correspondence. Can describe and narrate personal experiences and explain simply point of view in prose discourse by using introductory phrases [e.g., *A mon avis*..., *je (ne) pense (pas)*...*je (ne) crois (pas)*...*je (ne) suis (pas) sûr*...]. Can write about concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Normally controls general vocabulary with circumlocution or modification where necessary, e.g., may use negation plus lexical item for an unknown antonym, or modify words with *très*, *beaucoup de*, etc., if a more specific term is unknown, or resort to a category label for unknown components. Often shows remarkable fluency or ease of expression, but under time constraints (e.g., no opportunity to rewrite), and pressure (e.g., testing), language may be inaccurate and/or incomprehensible, especially if important lexical items are missing or if inaccurate tense usage interferes with meaning. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weaknesses and unevenness in one of the foregoing or in spelling result in occasional miscommunication. Areas of weakness may involve detail in the use of simple constructions: irregular plurals of nouns, adjectives; determiners (usage rather than form); prepositions (after verbs or adjectives); negatives (omitting one part; with *passé composé*; with multiple negators). Weaknesses are also observed in more complex structures: tense usage and sequence (*passé composé* vs. *imparfait*; sequence in *si* clauses; future after *quand*, *dès que*, etc.); passive constructions (rarely uses *on* or reflexive but tends to parallel English with consequent misuse of *être*); word order (especially with *passé composé* plus negation, inversion, adverbs,

double object pronouns, or adjectives where meaning affected by position); and relative pronouns (rarely attempts other than *qui/que*). Uses a range of tenses as time indicators including conditional, actual future (in addition to *futur proche*), and possibly *venir de* plus infinitive for immediate past. Some misuse of vocabulary still evident, especially when using a dictionary for words with multiple meanings or where related words carry various functions (*travailler/le travail, université/universitaire*), but does use a dictionary to advantage where a fairly direct bilingual translation and no intralingual ambiguity exists. Shows ability to use circumlocution. Writing is understandable to native speakers not used to reading material written by non-natives, though the style is still obviously foreign.

Superior Able to use written French effectively in most formal and informal exchanges on practical, social, and professional topics. Can write most types of correspondence, such as memos, social and business letters (with appropriate formulaic introductions and closings), short research papers, and statements of position. Can express hypotheses and conjectures, and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. Can write about areas of special interest and handle topics in special fields. Has good control of a full range of structures so that time, description and narration can be used to expand upon ideas. Errors in basic structures are sporadic and not indicative of communicative control. In addition to simple tenses, can use compound tenses to show time relationships among events and to express ideas clearly and coherently, but errors are sometimes made when using complex structures, such as indefinite, relative, or demonstrative pronouns when a range of tenses is necessary within a relatively short discourse. Has lexical control of subordinate conjunctions. Usually employs compulsory subjunctives in the present tense and there is some evidence of the *passé composé* of the subjunctive mood. Generally does not use subjunctive in optional cases to suggest attitude of writer (e.g., after *Croyez-vous que...?*). Has a wide enough vocabulary to convey the message accurately, though style may be foreign. Uses dictionary with a high degree of accuracy to supplement specialized vocabulary or to improve content or style. Although sensitive to differences in formal and informal style, still may not tailor writing precisely or accurately to a variety of audiences (except for personal vs. business correspondence) or styles.

Provisional French Descriptions—Culture

- Novice Limited interaction. Behaves with considerateness. Is resourceful in nonverbal communication, but does not reliably interpret gestures or culturally-specific nonverbal behavior, such as physical contacts with greetings, proximity of speaker. Is limited in language (see listening/speaking guidelines), but may be able to manage short phrases of courtesy (*merci, enchanté, s'il vous plaît, pas de quoi, pardon, excusez-moi*) and basic titles of respect (*Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle*). Lacks generally the knowledge of culture patterns requisite for survival situations.
- Intermediate Survival competence. Can deal with familiar survival situations and interact with a culture bearer unaccustomed to foreigners. Is able to use conventional phrases when being introduced, such as *enchanté*, as well as proper greetings at different times of day, such as *Bonjour, monsieur; Bonsoir, madame; Salut* (limited to informal occasions with close friends), and leave-takings, *au revoir, à demain*. Shows comprehension of formal and informal terms of address (*vous* vs. *tu*). Can provide background information in a format appropriate to the culture, such as street designation before name (*Rue de la Paix*), and telephone number groupings in pairs in French provinces, i.e., 32-49-63. Is able to express wants in a culturally acceptable fashion in simple situations: *Je voudrais une chambre avec salle de bains; Un coca s'il vous plaît; Je voudrais envoyer cette lettre aux Etats-Unis. C'est combien?* Understands need to go to specialty shops to buy foods, such as: *la boucherie, la charcuterie, la boulangerie, la poissonnerie, l'épicerie*. Can identify very common products, prices in local currency, and ask questions on conditions of promotion or sale, such as *Combien coûte cette écharpe?* Is aware of the use of the metric system and knows simple phrases, such as *Je voudrais un kilo de pommes*. Is aware of different meal schedules as well as the content of each: *petit déjeuner, dîner* (may be unable to describe the nature of differences between *déjeuner* and *dîner* due to regional or socioeconomic differences). Knows that public transportation has a different structure or organization, i.e.: *métro*, classes in subway train systems, conductor vs. driver. Is generally aware that tips are expected in restaurants but are sometimes included in the price (*service compris* vs. *service non-compris 15%*). Also generally aware that tips are expected in hotels, theatres, and other service situations. Yet may make errors as the result of misunderstanding or misapplying assumptions about the culture, such as not tipping a movie theatre usher or arriving too early for dinner.
- Advanced Limited social competence. Handles social situations successfully with a culture bearer accustomed to foreigners. Though home culture predominant, speaker shows comprehension of general etiquette, such as avoiding taboos and never asking sensitive questions about age, salary, family affairs. Also shows com-

prehension of guest etiquette, such as complimenting hosts on food and wine, keeping both hands on the table when dining, holding the knife in the right hand, understanding that the kitchen is “off-limits” unless invited, not leaving immediately after dinner, and offering food or cigarettes to others before taking them oneself. Is aware of gifts as an expression of friendship, personal esteem, or gratitude. Knows how to accept gifts graciously. Knows how to apologize using such phrases as: *Je regrette, Excusez-moi, Pardon, Je suis désolé d’être en retard*. Can make introductions in formal and informal situations. Knows how to answer and call on the telephone: *Allô, Qui est à l’appareil? Ne quittez pas*. Knows how to ask for a third party: *Ici...Je voudrais parler avec...*, or leave a message: *Pourriez-vous lui dire que...lui a téléphoné?* Occasionally uses polite conditional to make requests (*Pourriez-vous m’indiquer...? Je voudrais un aller et retour*). Knows conversational phrases for accepting invitations (*avec plaisir*) or refusing (*Veillez m’excuser mais...; Merci pour l’invitation, mais...*). Is able to do routine banking using vocabulary, such as *carnet de chèques, chèques de voyage, compte en banque, compte d’épargne, taux de change*; e.g., *Je voudrais déposer/toucher un chèque de...* Knows how to handle routine business at the post office (*Donnez-moi dix timbres, par avion s’il vous plaît. Je voudrais envoyer cette lettre ‘recommandée.’ Je voudrais acheter un mandat postal de 1.000 francs.*). Able to make more specific purchases in small or large stores and/or ask for specific help, such as *Je cherche une chemise de taille 38*. Still makes errors in the use of *vous* and *tu*. Is not competent to take part in a formal meeting or in a group where several persons are speaking informally at the same time.

Superior

Working social and professional competence. Can participate in almost all social situations and those within one vocation. Handles unfamiliar situations with ease and sensitivity, including some involving common taboos, or some that are otherwise emotionally charged. Comprehends most nonverbal responses. Laughs at some culture-related humor, such as imitation of substandard speech, plays on words, etc. In productive skills, neither culture dominates; nevertheless, makes appropriate use of cultural references and expressions, such as colloquial phrases (e.g., *Mon dieu! Sympa, zut! J’en ai marre, vachement*). Understands more colloquial and idiomatic expressions than is able to use (e.g., *avoir un mal au coeur, dormir debout, boire comme un trou, avoir une faim de loup, ras-le-bol*). Generally distinguishes between a formal and an informal register (correct use of *vous* and *tu*) and proper use of titles of respect. Discusses abstract ideas relating the foreign and native cultures and is aware cognitively of areas of difference, i.e., the importance of family ties, typical French characteristics (*art de vivre*), and some understanding of the role that French history and literature play in the everyday life and attitudes of the people. Realizes the influence of the church, religion, or lack thereof, and the anticleric attitude of many. Is aware of various social classes—*ouvrier, petit bourgeois, grand bourgeois*—and the difficulty in “changing” social classes. Can discuss current events as well as fields of personal interest and support opinions. Is generally limited, however, in handling abstractions. Would know that the French *esprit de contradiction* is a means of animating discussion and that French persons might criticize their own country, but would not accept criticism of France from foreigners. Minor inaccuracies occur in perception of meaning and in the expression of the intended representation, but do not result in serious misunderstanding, even by a culture bearer unaccustomed to foreigners.

Near-Native Competence

Fits behavior to audience, and French culture dominates almost entirely when using the language. Full social and professional competence. Has internalized the concept that culture is relative and is always on the lookout to do the appropriate thing; no longer assumes that own culture is “the way it is.” Can counsel, persuade, negotiate, represent a point of view, describe and compare features of the native and target cultures. In such comparisons, can discuss geography, history, institutions, customs and behavior patterns, and current events and national policies. Perceives almost all un verbalized responses (gestures, emotional reactions) and recognizes almost all allusions, including historical (“*L’état, c’est moi.*”) and literary commonplaces (“*Ce siècle avait deux ans.*”; “*Rodrique, as-tu du coeur?*”; “*Il faut cultiver notre jardin.*”). Laughs at most culture-related humor (*l’esprit gaulois*), such as imitation of regional or ethnic speech patterns (*l’accent méridional*) and allusions to political or comic strip figures (e.g., *Les Frustrés de Bretécher* or *Astérix*). Uses low frequency idiomatic expressions (*J’en ai ma claque; C’est pas demain la veille*); sayings (*Couper les cheveux en quatre*), or proverbs (*Vouloir, c’est pouvoir*). Controls formal and informal register. Has lived in the culture for a long time or has studied it extensively. Is inferior to the culture bearer only in background information related to the culture such as childhood experiences, detailed regional geography, and past events of significance.

Native Competence

Native competence. Examinee is indistinguishable from a person brought up and educated in the culture.