

French A2

— What to Study

Level: **A2 (Waystage)** • Language: **French** • Audience: **Learners**

A2 is where French opens up in time. At A1 everything happened now; at A2 you can tell someone what you did at the weekend, describe what your childhood town was like and make plans for next month. It is also where object pronouns start to appear in front of the verb — the first thing that makes French sentences look unfamiliar to an English speaker.

The Common European Framework describes A2 as being able to understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of immediate relevance — basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment; to communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar matters; and to describe in simple terms aspects of your background, immediate environment and matters of immediate need.

Grammar to master

The passé composé. The everyday past tense for completed actions: *avoir* or *être* plus a past participle — *J'ai mangé, Elle est partie.*

- Regular participles: *-er* → *-é*, *-ir* → *-i*, *-re* → *-u* — *parlé, fini, vendu*
- Common irregular participles: *été, eu, fait, pris, mis, dit, vu, venu, pu, voulu*
- *être* for a fixed group of movement and change-of-state verbs — *aller, venir, arriver, partir, entrer, sortir, monter, descendre, naître, mourir, rester, tomber, retourner* — and for all reflexive verbs
- With *être*, the participle agrees with the subject: *Elle est allée, Ils sont venus*

The imparfait. The past tense for description, background and habit: *Quand j'étais petit, j'habitais à Lyon.* At A2 you need the forms and the basic contrast: the *imparfait* sets the scene, the *passé composé* moves the story — *Il pleuvait quand je suis sorti.*

The future. Keep using *aller* plus the infinitive for plans, and learn the *futur simple* of regular verbs and the main irregular stems: *je serai, j'aurai, j'irai, je ferai, je pourrai, je viendrai.*

Object pronouns. French puts them before the verb: *Je le vois, Je lui parle.*

- Direct: *me, te, le, la, nous, vous, les*
- Indirect: *me, te, lui, nous, vous, leur*
- *y* for places and things introduced by *à*: *J'y vais*
- *en* for quantities and things introduced by *de*: *J'en veux deux*

Reflexive verbs. *Se lever, s'appeler, s'habiller, se coucher* — in the present and in the *passé composé* with *être*: *Je me suis levée à sept heures.*

More tools.

- Negation beyond *pas*: *ne ... jamais, ne ... plus, ne ... rien, ne ... personne*
- Comparatives and superlatives: *plus / moins / aussi ... que, le plus*, and the irregular *meilleur* and *mieux*
- The relative pronouns *qui, que* and *où*: *le film que j'ai vu, la ville où j'habite*
- Time expressions: *depuis* with the present (*J'apprends le français depuis un an*), *il y a* meaning "ago", *pendant*
- The imperative: *Viens !, Venez !, Allons-y !*

Vocabulary areas

Aim for roughly 1,000 to 1,500 active words, still learning each noun with its article.

- Past events: the weekend, holidays, childhood, life stages
- Travel: booking, the station and airport, hotels, delays
- Health: the body, symptoms, the doctor's and the pharmacy
- Shopping: clothes and sizes, returns, comparing prices
- Housing: looking for a flat, rooms and furniture, neighbours
- Work and study: the working day, appointments, simple emails
- Celebrations, invitations and gifts
- Weather and the seasons in more detail
- Directions and describing where things are

What you should be able to do

- Describe what you did last weekend or on your last holiday
- Describe a place or a person from your past using the *imparfait*
- Make, change and cancel an appointment by phone or email
- Explain a simple health problem to a doctor or pharmacist
- Give a reason with *parce que* and a simple opinion with *Je pense que...*
- Compare two things: flats, products, cities, plans
- Buy a train ticket and deal with a simple problem such as a delay
- Write a short informal email or message about everyday matters
- Understand the main point of short, clear announcements and messages

Common difficulties

Avoir or être? Most verbs take *avoir*. Learn the *être* group as a list, add all reflexive verbs, and practise them in sentences until the auxiliary comes out automatically.

Passé composé or imparfait? English does not force this choice. Ask whether the action is a completed event that moves the story on, or background: a description, a habit, something that was in progress.

Pronoun order. *Je le lui donne, Il y en a*: two pronouns in a row follow a fixed order. At A2, aim to handle one pronoun reliably and recognise combinations.

Agreement you cannot hear. *Elle est allée* and *il est allé* sound the same; the agreement only shows in writing. Build the habit in written practice.

How to know you are ready for B1

You are ready when you can tell a simple story in the past — mixing *passé composé* and *imparfait* mostly correctly — without stopping to build every verb, and when single object pronouns land before the verb without planning. If you still avoid talking about the past, consolidate A2 before moving on.

Next step

Move on to the French B1 guide, which adds the conditional and the subjunctive so you can talk about what would, could or should happen.

Written by GongbuLeng. Aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) A2 descriptors. For the official French examination at this level, the DELF A2, see France Éducation internationale's DELF page.