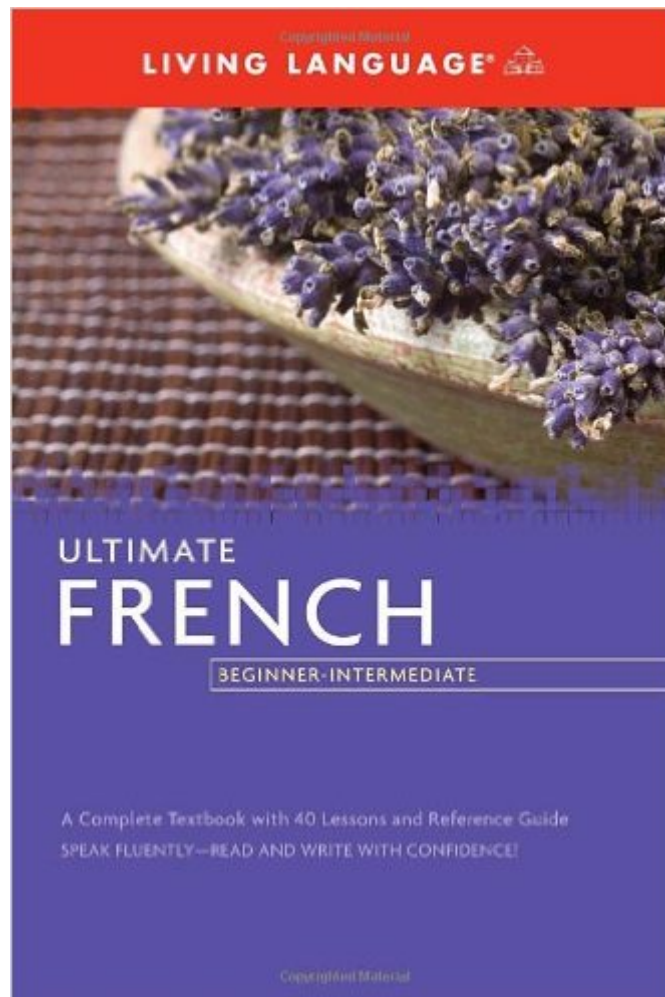


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# Ultimate French Beginner-Intermediate (Coursebook) (Ultimate Beginner-Intermediate)



## Synopsis

Developed by the experts at Living Language, this course has everything you need to learn French from scratch or to revive the French that you learned years ago. Ultimate French combines conversation and culture in an easy-to-follow, enjoyable, and effective format. It's the perfect way to learn French for school, travel, work, or personal enrichment. In this book you'll find:

- 40 lessons with lively dialogues including the most common and useful idiomatic expressions.
- English translations and explanations of French grammar and usage, pronunciation, vocabulary, and cultural notes.
- Quizzes and review sections to check your progress.
- A complete summary of French grammar, and verb charts covering all major tenses.
- An extensive two-way glossary.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

We are using this for our fast paced French refresher course through PCC's continuing education foreign language program. Though I recommend this as a good French text, it is laid out oddly. First, the dialogue is at the beginning of each chapter. These dialogues contain words which are probably unfamiliar to most students until they actually read the section. It is quite confusing to try and pronounce or read these unfamiliar words. I know that the authors felt it better to have students 'try' and read it, then learn the words, then go back to it, but it just doesn't work all that well. Even the instructor has us skip the dialogue until after we work through the chapter it pertains to. Also, the quizzes at the end of each chapter are rudimentary at best. Positives: there are charts at the end

that contain many verb conjugations and lists of other important words. Each chapter is concise and gives the student ample material to work with while not overwhelming the student with endless lists. The paces is nice and the flow from chapter to chapter seems to follow a nice curve for actually learning the language, not learning a few phrases for travel. I would have liked more sentence building exercises, but for a \$13 beginner to intermediate book, it covers a lot of material without getting too in depth. I highly highly highly recommend the following purchases, even if the instructor does not require them.

French Grammar (Barron's Foreign Language Guides) - this is indispensable. This is the book which takes one from merely learning a few words and phrases to actually putting this all to use and building a good foundation for French speaking. It is inexpensive and worth 5x as much in my opinion. Only problem is that it is compact. But it packs in a TON of content and helps with sentence building.

Merriam-Webster's French-English Dictionary - amazing bang for the buck French - English dictionary. Has some charts in the beginning, including a useful conjugation chart. But has over 80,000 entries and 100,000 translations. Pretty amazing for \$6 or \$7. I have the paperback because I don't really want to lug a kindle to class. These three books are perfect for getting started. Then you might try located a good CD resource. I don't recommend Rosetta Stone because of the exorbitant price (you gotta pay for all that marketing they do). Michel Thomas has a good course on CD that builds sentences, but at last look they were all 3rd party and cost \$100+... not really worth it at that point. But if you come across it for a good price then buy it. Also it sounds goofy, but check out some of the kids picture books (even for an adult). The ones that have the pictures with the French word and no English translation. You can buy four or five of these for \$5-\$10 each and they are basically what Rosetta Stone is. See a picture of something and learn the French word for it, not look at an English word and translate it. Get it? Oh, and grab a couple of workbooks that are highly rated for practice. And also of note: the same holds true for other languages with the same publishers' items. I took Japanese and used Living Language, Barron's Grammar, and Webster's Dictionary along with some picture books and the Michel Thomas CDs and it was a breeze to learn with all of those useful tools. So even if it's Italian, Spanish, or another language, I expect these to be good items to purchase (in those respective languages).

When we got married last May, my wife and I were only able to take enough time off for a brief honeymoon to the coast. Since I am planning to go to graduate school in the Fall, we are taking this summer off and are planning a month long trip to France and Spain for a delayed honeymoon. We both have a workable understanding of Spanish, but since the bulk of our time will be spent in France we plan to take an intermediate class in the new year to prepare. This is the text

recommended for our class. Things I like: Short lessons are helpful since we both work full time and don't have a lot of extra time to devote right now. It's nice to have a feeling of completion with each lesson. Also, the book is pretty inexpensive. Thing I don't like: Each chapter begins with a short conversation in French, but without access to the recorded conversation I have a hard time knowing if I am pronouncing words correctly. I feel like I'm either Americanizing the text, or that I sound like a really bad actor playing a Frenchman in an old Bugs Bunny cartoon. The CDs associated with the text are sold separately and raise the price SUBSTANTIALLY. It would be nice to be able to stream at least the conversations online to correct for pronunciation. I think this will work well as the text for a class, but I don't think it's really geared towards self-study.

I have no complaints with the book. I did think that it came with a CD, but it does not. Guess I was misled by reading the reviews. But, its rough learning a language when you can't hear the words pronounced properly! I do not believe that a person could learn the French language properly by using this book alone. All you would learn is how to mis-pronounce words. But with that said, add this book to Rosetta Stone or another source of language learning and this book will be great.

Yes, my title is true. Three years of high school French and I didn't learn even a third of what is contained in this book. For example, we were never even taught the imperfect past tense, which I was surprised to learn is one of the fundamentals of the language and is constantly used. Over 15 years have gone by since then, and during that time all my knowledge of the language (what little there apparently was) was forgotten, so basically I have had to start from square one again. This book claims to cover everything from beginner level (day one, not even knowing how to say a single word) up through intermediate. This is mostly true, there are some relatively higher level concepts covered near the end, but the majority of the book focuses on the fundamentals and is aimed more toward the novice. In total there are 40 chapters. Each chapter begins with a small dialogue between two or three people, written in French, followed by a translation afterward. Then the real lesson will begin, which expands on the material introduced in the dialogue. Each chapter will cover about four or five concepts, and the chapter itself is only about five pages long on average, so they are admittedly pretty brief. There are no frills in the book – no pictures, no colors, nothing like that. It gets right down to business with explaining in a few sentences how the concept works, conjugates a new verb if need be, and gives an average of about five example sentences to demonstrate how the word or phrase is used. A short vocabulary list finishes the chapter along with a page of questions you can use to test yourself. All in all the chapters are laid

out nicely, logically flowing from one topic to the next. Perhaps the best part is it presents the ideas in a way that is not boring. It succinctly explains the concept without getting bogged down in heavy grammatical rules. This makes it an "easy read", I guess as far as a language textbook can be. It's not dry or tedious, like other sources I have since read. Though this book covers a wide array of subjects, it is designed primarily for people either completely new to the language or those looking to brush up on their skills after years of neglect. The downside is that some of the more advanced concepts are just given a brief mention in the later chapters. Tenses like the pluperfect, conditional, and subjunctive are hurriedly thrown into the final handful of chapters and don't get as much attention as they deserve. It gives you enough information to get a handle on the concept and get started, but there's a lot more detail you would need to know in order to feel confident in actually using these. For example, the future tense is introduced on page 290, with an explanation of how to conjugate it, a list of the irregular verb stems, and a few examples. Then on page 293 the book jumps straight into the future perfect tense and gives only three example sentences for how to use it, then the chapter ends, with the following one diving straight into the conditional tense. I think something like a new compound tense warrants more attention, and certainly more examples. It's not that it's a hard concept to grasp, but it is difficult to really get a feel for its proper usage in only three sentences. Likewise, the use of the present participle barely receives two pages. This is enough to where I can recognize it and translate the meaning while reading it, but I wouldn't feel ready to use it on my own yet. But when all is said and done the main question you probably want to know is: "Will I really be able to speak fluent French after reading this book?" The answer, of course, is no. Unless you are John Travolta's character from Phenomenon you are going to need to seek other sources that cover these subjects in greater detail. And of course, spend years practicing. But this book will give you a very solid foundation from which to start. It touches on a little bit of everything so you will at least have been exposed to the ideas, even if you don't yet fully understand them. If you do go on to read a book written in French afterward you would likely be able to understand a great deal of it just by being able to recognize the tenses shown to you here. And of course having a good dictionary helps. I read through this in a month, felt I understood most of the concepts, and decided to give an actual French novella a try: *Le Petit Prince*. I struggled at first, since French uses a tense only found in literature (which actually is briefly mentioned in chapter 40 of this book, so that was very helpful), but I was able to complete the story. I may not have understood every single word or usage of tense, that's true, but I was still able to get the essence of what the author was saying. I think that speaks volumes for how much this book taught me. I had help from a French dictionary (Larousse's) and a little bit

from Google now and then, but otherwise I feel this textbook taught me what I needed in order to understand Petit Prince, and believe me, I put just about every grammar lesson to use. But after two weeks of effort I did it and it feels like a huge accomplishment to have actually completed a nearly 100 page French story when just a few months ago I wouldn't have been able to get beyond the first few words, if that. Just know that one cannot realistically expect to be taught an entire language in only 430 pages – probably not even 4,300 pages would be enough. This book does an excellent job at introducing a concept succinctly and summarizing it, but sometimes more examples are needed. I would of course recommend using all the resources at your disposal and not trying to rely solely on this book to learn from. The website About has an excellent French language section with a lot more examples (many with audio) and alternate explanations, in case the ones in this book still confuse you. But if you are serious about learning the language and are motivated enough to teach yourself, this book is an excellent place to start.

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