



Unlock Mystery French Texts You've Never Read

KS4 FRENCH

LANGUAGES

Ages 13-16 ⌚ 3 min read

Why New French Texts Feel Scary

When you open a French text you've never seen before, it's easy to panic. You might not know every single word, and that feels like a barrier. But here's the secret: **you don't need to understand every word to get the meaning.** Native speakers skip over words they don't know all the time!

Strategy 1: Hunt for Cognates

A **cognate** is a word that looks similar in both French and English because they share the same root. For example, "**café**" means coffee, "**musique**" means music, and "**important**" means important. These words practically translate themselves! Scan the text and circle all the cognates you spot—you'll be surprised how many you already understand.

Think of it like finding familiar faces in a crowd. Even if you don't know everyone, the friendly faces you recognize help you feel confident.

Strategy 2: Use Context Clues

The words around an unfamiliar word often give you hints about its meaning. If you see "**Elle porte une robe**" and you don't know "**robe**," think about what makes sense. She's putting something on her body—it's probably clothing. Context is your detective tool.

Think of it like guessing what someone is saying when you can't hear every word—you use the other words around it to fill in the gaps.

Strategy 3: Break Words into Pieces

Many French words have **prefixes** (beginnings) and **suffixes** (endings) that change their meaning. If you know "**re-**" means again, then "**relire**" means to read again. Learning common word parts unlocks dozens of new words instantly.

Strategy 4: Make Logical Guesses

If a sentence talks about weather and you see an unknown word, guess it's weather-related. Use the **topic** and **genre** of the text to narrow down possibilities. A recipe will have different vocabulary than a sports article, so your background knowledge matters.

Think of it like a quiz show where you eliminate wrong answers until only one is left.

Strategy 5: Read Actively

Don't just stare at the page. **Highlight cognates, underline tricky words, write questions in the margin, and predict what comes next.** Active reading turns confusion into a puzzle you're solving, not a wall blocking you.