

Improving your GCSE coursework: French

Coursework in French is worth 25% of the GCSE examination marks. In order to make sure you gain the best possible marks for your coursework project you need to think about the following points. It is important not only that you consider them whilst completing your work, but that you also make it clear to an examiner how you have considered them and what you decided.

Ask somebody who has not done a similar piece of work if it is clear what you have done and why you have done it. A parent or carer might help. Show them this sheet to help them see if you have covered everything and explained it fully.

The more you read, the better you will write	
Have you:	For example:
Read a good range of books in French to find useful words and phrases?	<i>Set aside a few pages in your exercise book as your 'swag bag'. When you find good words and phrases copy them into your swag bag for later use.</i>
Looked for more interesting connectives?	<i>Instead of using and (et) all the time, try to vary your language - this makes it much more authentic and interesting and will improve your marks. Try to use at least four of the following words: puisque, donc, cependant, parce que, car, mais, néanmoins.</i>
Picked out good vocabulary that you can use later in your own work?	<p><i>You can also use phrases such as 'on the one hand / on the other hand' when you are making comparisons - this is another way of joining up ideas and sentences, e.g. d'un côté / de l'autre côté.</i></p> <p><i>When you read an article or exercise in your books, or on the Internet, make sure you make a note of the verbs, adverbs, nouns and adjectives which are useful.</i></p> <p><i>Add to nouns to make them more interesting, e.g. J'habite dans une grande maison construite en 1980 qui se trouve dans une banlieue assez calme.</i></p> <p><i>Remember that adjectives in French agree with the noun - they need to be altered accordingly. Check your adjective charts.</i></p> <p><i>Think of at least two ways of saying the same thing, e.g. Il y a - il se trouve - there are. Use a range of verbs to say 'I think', e.g. penser, être d'avis.</i></p>

Effective writing	
Have you:	For example:
Written in your own way, not just copied from a book or the Internet?	<i>When you use the Internet underline words or phrases from the article you are reading and note them down somewhere. Make sure you know how to translate them and how the grammar fits together. You can try adapting them to fit your own purpose.</i>
Used more than one tense (more than once) in your work?	<i>If you are describing the past try to vary the tenses. Use the perfect and imperfect appropriately, e.g. Quand j'habitais en France je suis allé au bord de la mer tous les weekends.</i>
Avoided trying to translate your ideas directly from English, but written the best you can using the French words you know? Used a dictionary to check meaning, spelling and gender, and checked from English to French and back if you need to look something up?	<i>Try to use depuis and pendant and vary the ideas in English which translate differently into French, e.g. J'habite ici depuis 5 ans; J'habitais en France pendant 10 ans. Both mean 'for' but are used with different tenses to mean different things. This is sophisticated use of language and shows that you are using higher-level grammar skills. Try to find verbs which are useful for saying lots of things, e.g. faire la cuisine, faire du ski - this can mean to do (the cooking) or to go (skiing). Make sure you know all the parts of all the useful and very common verbs. Your teacher will be able to give you a list.</i>

Do you know how you will gain and lose marks?	
Have you:	For example:
Got a copy of the mark scheme?	<i>Ask your teacher for the marks from the syllabus and try to see which mark you are now and where your target mark would be. What grade are you aiming for?</i>
Tried marking a piece of coursework yourself using the mark scheme? Checked your work alongside the mark scheme and made sure you have covered all categories?	<i>What marks would you give yourself for:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accuracy • language • content • grammar • spontaneity?

Planning what to write	
Have you:	For example:
<p>Drawn yourself a concept map of your ideas? You may like to add photos and pictures and make it colourful so it is easier to remember.</p> <p>Maybe a spidergram would be helpful too? Put the main idea in the middle and add ideas around it as and when you think of them.</p>	<p><i>Try to use verbs and vary their tenses to express what you need to write, e.g. if you are talking about health and fitness you can use manger and boire in a number of different ways: je mange, je bois, je dois manger, je dois boire, je vais manger, je vais boire, il faut manger, il faut boire, je ne dois pas Using these phrases, you can build up a profile of healthy living/eating.</i></p>
<p>Kept in mind how the marks will be awarded?</p>	<p><i>Make sure you know which mistakes you have made in the past in terms of spelling and grammar and go over your corrections. Make yourself a tick list to avoid making these mistakes again.</i></p>

Being organised	
Have you:	For example:
<p>Looked at any examples of coursework which have already been marked?</p>	<p><i>Go over past pieces of homework and coursework practice runs and see where you have gained or lost marks. Again make yourself a tick list of the main points. Doing this with a partner may give both of you more ideas than thinking on your own.</i></p>
<p>Used a title which gives you plenty of scope for writing?</p>	<p><i>If you are talking about a holiday or an ideal school you will be able to put lots of ideas and opinions in as well as including different tenses. If you are writing a CV, for instance, there is less scope for showing off! Ask your teacher to tell you which pieces are the best for you.</i></p>
<p>Got a system to keep your notes together?</p>	<p><i>Buy a ring binder or a folder and keep all your ideas and materials there. You may like to make cards to keep in an index box with nouns and phrases on them. These can fit in your pocket so you can spend time learning them or adding to them whilst you are waiting for the bus, for example, or in the hairdresser's / shopping queue.</i></p>
<p>Planned when you are going to do the work, not leaving yourself having to do lots at once?</p>	<p><i>Set aside half an hour, twice a week, to spend time thinking about and revising or writing some comments for your coursework. Go over past work, particularly corrections, to see how you can improve.</i></p>
<p>Checked and rechecked your work, and asked a friend to read your work too? (Remember, you need to offer to read theirs.)</p>	<p><i>Get someone else to read what you have written to see if it makes sense to them. Let them ask you questions about what you have written. Your reply may encourage you to change or add to your work.</i></p> <p><i>Remember, though, the work must be entirely your own.</i></p>