NEW

BREAKTHROUGH

F R E N C H

THIRD EDITION

Stephanie Rybak

Brian Hill

General Editor

Professor of Modern Languages

Language Centre, University of Brighton

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HOW TO USE THIS COURSE

Since the Breakthrough series was introduced in 1982, several million people world-wide have used the courses to learn a variety of languages. This is a completely revised edition: there are new recordings, new activities and new ways of presenting the material. We have talked to hundreds of learners about their 'Breakthrough' experiences and we have acted on what we were told to ensure the new course is even more enjoyable and useful.

Following this course will help you understand, speak and read most of the French you are likely to need on holiday or on business trips. The course is based on recordings made in France of ordinary French people in everyday situations. Step by step you will learn first to understand what they are saying and then to speak in similar situations yourself.

General hints to help you use the course

- Have confidence in us! Real language is complex and you will find certain things in every unit which are not explained in detail. Don't worry about this. We will build up your knowledge slowly, selecting only what is most important at each stage.
- Try to study regularly, but in short periods: 20–30 minutes each day is usually better than 3½ hours once a week.
- To help you learn to speak, say the words and phrases out loud whenever possible.
- If you don't understand something, leave it for a while. Learning a language is a bit like doing a jigsaw or a crossword: there are many ways to tackle it and it all falls into place eventually.
- Don't be afraid to write in the book and add your own notes.
- Do review your work frequently. It helps to get somebody to test you – and they don't need to know French.
- If you can possibly learn with somebody else you will be able to help each other and practise the language together.
- Learning French may take more time than you thought. Just be patient and above all don't get angry with yourself.

Suggested study pattern

Each unit of the course consists of approximately sixteen pages in the book and fifteen minutes of recording. The first page of each unit will tell you what you are going to learn and will give some hints on language learning. You should follow the material at first in the order in which it is presented. As you progress with the course you may find that you evolve a method of study which suits you better

– that’s fine, but we suggest you keep to our pattern at least for the first two or three units or you may find you are not taking full advantage of all the possibilities offered by the material.

The book contains step-by-step instructions for working through the course: when to use the book on its own, when to use the recording on its own, when to use them both together and how to use them. On the recording our presenter will guide you through the various sections. Here is an outline of the pattern proposed:

Pronunciation notes

At the start of each unit there are some tips on pronunciation. One or two points are explained in the book, which are then picked up and practised on the recording. Remember that while good pronunciation of a foreign language is desirable, you will usually still be understood even if your accent is not quite accurate.

Conversations

Listen to each conversation, first without stopping the recording, and get a feel for the task ahead. Then go over it bit by bit in conjunction with the vocabulary and the notes. You should get into the habit of using the pause/stop and rewind buttons on your machine to give yourself time to think and to go over the conversation a number of times. Don’t leave a conversation until you are confident that you have at least understood it.

Symbols used are:

= listen to the recording;

► = key words which you should try and learn.

There are usually two or three conversations in each section, and three sets of conversations in a unit.

Practice

This section contains a selection of listening, reading and speaking activities which focus your attention on the most important language in the unit. To do them you will need to work closely with the book and often use your machine – sometimes you are asked to write the answers to an exercise and then check them on the recording, at others to listen first and then fill in answers in the book. Again, use your pause/stop and rewind buttons to give yourself time to think and to answer questions.

You will also find practice exercises for speaking the main words and phrases which you have already heard and had explained. The book gives only an outline of the exercises, so you are just listening to the recordings and responding. Usually you will be asked to take part in a conversation where you hear a question or statement in French, followed by a suggestion in English as to what to say. You then give your reply in French and listen to see if you were right. You will probably have to go over these spoken exercises a few times before you get them absolutely correct.

Grammar

At this stage in a unit things should begin to fall into place and you are ready for the grammar section. If you really don't like grammar, you will still learn a lot without studying this part, but most people quite enjoy finding out how the language they are using actually works and how it is put together. In each unit we have selected just one or two important things. At the end of the book is a straightforward summary of the main grammar points.

Key words and phrases

This is a list of the most important words and phrases used in the unit. Pause at this section to see how much you can remember. Look first at the French and find the English equivalent. Then try it the other way round, from English into French. If you find there are some groups of words you have forgotten (don't worry – it happens to everybody!), turn back and have another look at the conversations and notes. These key words and phrases are likely to crop up later in the course so it's worth getting to grips with them before you leave a unit.

Did you know?

In this section you will be given some practical background information on customs, culture and life in French-speaking countries.

Answers

The answers to all the exercises can be found on the last page of each unit, if they have not already been given on the recording.

If you haven't learned languages using a recording before, just spend five minutes on Unit 1 getting used to the mechanics: try pausing the recording and see how long the rewind button needs to be pressed to recap on different length phrases and sections. Don't be shy – take every opportunity you can to speak French to French people and to listen to real French. Try listening to French broadcasts on the radio or watch satellite television. It's even a good idea to talk to yourself in French as much as possible. Try describing what you see as you are travelling around, for instance. *Bon courage!*

At the back of the book

At the back of the book is a reference section which contains:

- p. 233 the Review section, which recaps on each unit using speaking exercises.
- p. 235 a short Grammar summary with definitions of grammatical terms (noun, adjective, etc.). The section also covers the main rules of French grammar for those who wish to study them in greater detail than the main part of the course provides.
- p. 241 a French–English Vocabulary list containing all the words in the course.
- p. 249 a brief Index to enable you to look things up in the book.