



Marseilles: A chief port on the Mediterranean

espérer: j'espère te voir cet été = I hope to see you this summer

avoir l'intention de: j'ai l'intention d'aller à la piscine = I intend to go to the pool

LE MOT

Know your prepositions, so that you can say where you are going to, who you're with and where you're returning from.

Don't forget to use formal and informal addresses properly, that is, "tu" and "vous". Don't use "tu" when writing to "Madame", for example.

TYPICAL POINTS

- ◆ Someone is out, and you are leaving a note for them
- ◆ You leave a note to say that you have gone out
- ◆ You say where you are going and what you are doing
- ◆ You may need to cancel an arrangement

- ◆ You are inviting someone somewhere
- ◆ You say when you will be back

SAMPLE PHRASES

- pendant ton / votre absence** = while you were out
- je te / vous laisse ce mot** = I'm leaving you this note
- juste un petit mot** = just a short note
- pour te / vous dire que...** = to tell you that...
- je ne peux pas venir** = I can't come
- veux-tu venir avec nous?** = do you want to come with us?
- je serai de retour / retournerai / reviendrai à 7 heures** = I'll be back at 7 o'clock.
- un ami m'a téléphoné** = a friend phoned me
- je suis allé / suis sorti** = I have gone / have gone out
- je vais rejoindre mes amis** = I'm going to join my friends
- je suis passé chez toi** = I dropped / called into your house

Handy phrases worth knowing for the exam

J'espère que tu vas bien = I hope that you are well
 Moi, je vais bien = I'm fine
 Je m'excuse de ne pas avoir écrit plus tôt = sorry that I didn't write sooner
 Je vais mieux maintenant = I'm better now
 C'est génial/formidable = It's great/marvellous
 Ce sera chouette = It will be brilliant
 J'ai reçu une invitation à une fête = I got an invitation to a party
 J'ai rencontré de nouvelles amies = I met some new friends
 Je me suis bien amusé = I had a great time
 Mes parents et moi sommes sortis au cinéma = my parents and I went out to the cinema
 Mes copains et moi sommes allés à Rouen = my friends and I went to Rouen
 Nous sommes restés dans une auberge

de jeunesse = we stayed in a youth hostel
 J'ai passé un très bon séjour = I had a very good holiday
 J'ai beaucoup aimé mes vacances = I enjoyed my holidays a lot
 Nous avons fait du camping = we went camping
 C'était très agréable = It was very pleasant
 Le vol était assez confortable = the flight was quite comfortable
 Quel dommage! = what a pity!
 C'est moche = It's awful
 Ma nouvelle école, ça me plaît = I like my new school
 Ça ne me plaît pas tellement = I don't like it very much
 Je trouve une matière difficile = I find one subject difficult
 Je passe mon brevet en juin = I'm sitting the Junior Cert in June

Ma famille et moi allons rendre visite à mes cousins = my family and I are going to visit my cousins
 Je vais faire une excursion scolaire avec mes camarades de classe = I'm going on a school trip with my classmates
 Ça me ferait grand plaisir de te voir = I'd be delighted to see you
 J'ai l'intention de faire une excursion à Londres = I intend to go on a trip to London
 Nous allons aller en Allemagne = we are going to go to Germany
 Je vais rentrer chez nous à vingt heures = I'll be home at 8 o'clock
 Comment va ta famille? = how is your family?
 Dis bonjour de ma part à tes parents = say hello on my behalf to your parents
 C'est tout pour l'instant = that's all for the moment.

Exam essentials

It rarely happens that students run out of time in the Junior Cert French exam. Nevertheless, you should divide your time sensibly. I recommend that you answer the reading comprehension questions first.

There are two reasons for this: firstly, you are reading French and answering in English. That is easier than translating your thoughts into French, as in the written section.

Secondly, once you have done this section, you are already thinking in French to an extent, and will probably remember vocabulary faster. You may even spot a phrase, a noun or past tense in the comprehensions that you could then use in the written section.

Never leave a question unanswered in the comprehensions. Guess – you'll at least have a chance of getting some marks for your efforts.

Spend roughly 50 minutes on the comprehension, and 50 minutes on the written section. In the written section, your 50 minutes should be divided into 35 minutes for the letter, and 15 for the postcard/note.

This management of time varies according to the abilities of the student.

Do the note/postcard first, because it's shorter. It's a good feeling to get that behind you before tackling the letter.

When asked for somebody's "two" hobbies, don't write a list hoping to hit the right ones. Give no more than three.

In the listening exam, beware of the similar sounds of "deux amis" and "douze amis". Be careful with "six" and "seize". Watch out for the "half": "J'ai seize ans et demi."

Students are delighted to finish and leave early. Resist the impulse. Stay and check your answers, especially the written. You make mistakes in your mother tongue, English, so why not in a foreign language?

Your checklist should include:

- ◆ verb endings – there's never a "t" on the end of a verb with "je", and never an "s" after "il/elle".
- ◆ Did I use the proper auxiliary verb in the passé composé?
- ◆ Did I put in the correct accents? – for example "chère/j'espère/je suis allé".
- ◆ Did I make the adjectives agree? – "une belle école/la vieille ville/une maison blanche/mes nouveaux amis/ma nouvelle correspondante / une voiture neuve".
- ◆ Did I use the correct prepositions? – for example "au cinéma/à l'école/en Espagne/à Bordeaux/aux Etats-Unis/au Canada/elle vient de France".

