

# Success in GCSE Modern Foreign Languages

A modern foreign language is a challenging and rewarding subject that will open up many doors later in life. However, many people are uncertain how to revise a whole language for their exams! Here are some tips and tricks to support revision in French, German and Spanish.

## Organisation:

- Have a dictionary at home
- Bring your exercise book and speaking booklet to every lesson
- Regularly look through both at home to go over vocabulary and grammar
- Create a folder for all revision apps on your phone or tablet
- Do not miss period 6 sessions

## Reading Skills:

25% of the final grade comes from the reading exam. The questions are not just about vocabulary but require lateral thinking and puzzle-solving skills. You will also be expected to read and respond to an authentic French, German or Spanish text.

- Read widely and often in English! This will improve your ability to parse information from longer sources, and also broaden your native vocabulary.
- When you come across a new word in class, write it down and look the meaning up when you get home. You will remember words for longer if you look them up yourself without being told to.
- Switch the language on your phone/tablet/console or any other device to the one that you are studying. You will pick up useful words and command phrases without even realising that you are doing so.
- When doing other homework on Wikipedia switch the language from the menu at the side. What key terms do you recognise? Is the information different? Make a note of any new words – especially if they're synonyms.
- Charity shops are a good place to pick up cheap dictionaries or books written in French/German/Spanish. You can develop your reading skills by reading something in another language.

## Writing Skills:

This is also 25% of the final grade. Students are awarded marks for accuracy, clarity of communication and also the complexity of their language. It is also extremely important to write clearly and legibly.

- Use online revision tools such as Duolingo/Memrise to drill spellings and basic sentence structure.
- Time yourself copying out verb tables to boost both your speed and to reinforce absolutely essential language.
- Make sure you can use at least three tenses – you won't get above a grade 3 otherwise. Do a daily practice; write the same sentence in past, present and future tense and have someone check it for you until you know you can do it with no mistakes!
- Learn the genders of nouns when you learn the words. Not knowing which article or case to use is a quick way to lose marks for accuracy.
- If your handwriting is a little messy test out a range of different pens – it might be your work is neater in a different ink. Little things like this make a difference to the examiner and to your confidence in the exam.
- ALWAYS proof-read everything you have written – you must check you have avoided repetition, contradictions, added accents to letters that need them, added prefixes and reflexive pronouns to the verbs that need them, used the correct word order, used the correct tense and most importantly not used any English words!

## Speaking Skills:

The speaking exam is the first part of the GCSE you will sit, and is worth 25% of your final grade. You have already been provided with a speaking booklet containing all of the possible questions you might be asked in the general conversation section of the speaking exam.

- Revise and memorise your speaking booklet answers. You can correct them or redraft them at any time, even if you're doing a different topic in class.
- Practice saying words out loud. Most online dictionaries give you the option to play the word – click, listen and repeat!
- If you have a phone or tablet with voice recognition enabled, you will also have note-taking app. Find a piece of your work and read it aloud – if your spelling and pronunciation are correct, the phone will display it perfectly on the screen for you. If not, try, try again until you get your accent right!
- Change the audio on a DVD or film and put the subtitles for that language on. How are the characters pronouncing the words on the screen? The way you would or differently? Are they said the way they're spelled or not? Are any letters silent?
- If you're playing any games online, you should be on an EU server. Find a chat-enabled room, and play with other young people from the country whose language you are learning. You'll soon have a very good idea of how to say certain words! You'll also find the people you're playing with are studying for their English exams, so you'll be likely to find someone to help you practice!

## Listening Skills:

This is the most challenging 25% of the GCSE grade. Students will hear native speakers talking at full speed and often with regional accents. Many students struggle, as they are not taking advantage of opportunities outside of the classroom to hear the language being spoken.

- Practice makes perfect – you can download old GCSE papers for free from all the exam board websites, with the audio and the answers. It might not be the same format as your exam, but it will help you improve your ability to answer listening questions.
- There are hundreds of YouTubers who vlog in their native language. Google French/German/Spanish fashion/football/games/dance/music/whatever YouTuber and start watching.
- You can listen to free radio from all around the world online. Find a radio station broadcast in the language you're studying, and you'll still find that a lot of the music is the stuff you like anyway but there'll be adverts and moderation in the language you're learning. This really helps you pick out where words start and end, and helps you become used to different regional accents.
- If you have friends or family living abroad – talk to them! A quick Skype call is free and easy and will boost your speaking skills, too.
- Watch as much TV as you can – honest! Switching languages to the French/Spanish/German dub will help you get used to where words and sentences stop and start but will also help you develop your knowledge of slang and refine your understanding of tenses.
- Try out some World Cinema! France, Germany and many Spanish-speaking countries have large and well-funded independent film studios. There are many excellent films from around the world that can only be watched with English subtitles.

## Useful Weblinks:

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/languages/gcse> - The exam board website

<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/subjects/zhsvr82> - BBC Bitesize revision resources

<http://www.languagesonline.co.uk> – Reading and grammar activities

<http://www.memrise.com> – Required vocab practice for all students

<http://www.wordreference.com> – Online dictionary

<http://www.lindsaydoeslanguages.com/> - Blog about with tips about learning a language  
<https://lyricstraining.com/> - Challenge yourself to fill in the words to foreign language songs  
<https://conjuguemos.com/> - Training activities based around verbs (mostly for Spanish)

### French Only:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/NormanFaitDesVideos> - French comedy YouTuber  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/elsamakeup> - French style/fashion YouTuber  
<http://www.conjugation-fr.com> – A website that provides you with verb tables  
<http://www.french-games.net/> - Quick and easy revision games

### German Only:

<http://www.deutsch-lernen.com> – Help with grammar and mini-tests  
<http://dict.leo.org> – Dictionary website designed for learning German as a second language  
<http://www.verbformen.de> - A website that provides you with verb tables  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/LNLFAN> - Quirky German sci-fi fantasy YouTubers  
<https://www.dw.com/de/deutsch-lernen/nachrichten/s-8030> - Slowed-down German news bulletins

### Spanish Only:

<https://studyspanish.com/> - Some free activities  
<https://www.linguasorb.com/spanish> - Resource hub with links to different topics

### Useful Apps:

DuoLingo – Great for going over basic vocab and sentence structure  
Mosalingua – Easy to use vocab builder  
Memrise – the official app; all students should be using this regularly!  
MindSnacks – Fun vocab games, the first few levels are free  
LinguaScope Newshound – News stories from around the world in different languages  
Mondly, Tandem – Speak to other learners around the world to practice  
VocabBattle – Compete with a friend over Bluetooth to see who knows the most words

### Foreign Language TV/Film:

Most films are widely available, but some have different very age ratings in the UK.

#### French:

Taxi – Police comedy  
Les intouchables – Drama  
Samba – Drama  
Les revenants – TV series, horror  
Braquo – TV crime drama (violent; may have an 18 rating in the UK)

#### German:

Lola rennt – Drama thriller  
Cargo – Sci-fi horror  
Goodbye Lenin! – Historical comedy  
The Last Days of Sophie Scholl – Retelling of a true event during World War 2

#### Spanish:

Club de cuervos – TV series about a football club  
Zippi y Zape – Fantasy adventure  
La lengua de las mariposas – Historical drama

### Foreign Language Books:

There is no particular revision guide we recommend, but the exam board is AQA, and the grading system is 1 -9. The best revision guides come with an audio CD to practice from, or a link to listening activities online as part of the price.

#### French:

Le petit Prince - Antoine de Saint-Exupéry  
Les Aventures de Tintin – Hergé

Astérix le Gaulois – Goscinny & Uderzo

Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers – J.K. Rowling

German:

Andorra – Max Frisch

Im Westen nichts Neues – Erich Maria Remarque

Harry Potter und der Stein der Weisen – J.K. Rowling

Spanish:

Mafalda - Joaquín Salvador Lavado

Harry Potter y la piedra filosofal – J.K. Rowling

## GCSE Course Structure:

Your course is made up of several topics grouped into three themes.

### Theme 1 - Identity and Culture

#### Topic 1: Me, my family and friends

- Relationships with family and friends
- Marriage/partnership

#### Topic 2: Technology in everyday life

- Social media
- Mobile technology

#### Topic 3: Free-time activities

- Music
- Cinema and TV
- Food and eating out
- Sport

#### Topic 4: Customs and festivals in French/German/Spanish-speaking countries/communities

### Theme 2 - Local, national, international and global areas of interest

#### Topic 1: Home, town, neighbourhood and region

#### Topic 2: Social issues

- Charity/voluntary work
- Healthy/unhealthy living

#### Topic 3: Global issues

- The environment
- Poverty/homelessness

#### Topic 4: Travel and tourism

### Theme 3 - Current and future study and employment

#### Topic 1: My studies

#### Topic 2: Life at school/college

#### Topic 3: Education post-16

#### Topic 4: Jobs, career choices and ambitions

My chosen topic:
Topics I feel confident with:
Topics I am not confident with:

