I want to learn French

I want to learn French - We often hear this from enthusiastic students who want to learn French but have no idea how to get started. French language is like a vast maze, and with the plethora of resources available online, it is not surprising to be overwhelmed and confused where to begin. In this article, Nageeb Gounjaria discusses some ways to get started.

1 Self-study

Self-study through audios and videos is helpful, especially for learning vocabulary and grammar. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to learn **French pronunciation** this way (unless you have an exceptional talent for mimicry).

On the one hand, you don't get corrected instantly if you mispronounce. On the other, you may be deceived by your own ears and tempted to think you are on the right track. Moreover, audios and videos for learning French do not teach **listening skills**, considered the most challenging of the 4 language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening).

That is why beginner students often feel native French speakers talk too fast and lump many words together (liaison). The result: a cacophony of words that they are unable to follow.

Why is that? Making sense of normal speech requires you to **learn how to listen** in the first place. Your ears are bombarded with a lot of sounds, and they need to know exactly which sound **to pick and decode**. They will analyse these sounds against a frame of reference (which must be learned). Otherwise, such sounds will simply be discarded as **noise and nonsense**.

2 Join a Group Class

Classroom learning remains more effective than self-learning, especially in small group situations. But students need to have realistic expectations; it is not always possible for a teacher to correct the pronunciation of individual students in a group.

And it comes to no surprise that most untrained French teachers are unable to teach pronunciation and listening skills, and cater to the individual needs of their students.

3 Get a French private tutor

Learning French with a private tutor is the best, tried and tested option. If you are on a tight budget, you can get a private tutor at least for the pronunciation part, just to be on the right track from the start.

However, not any French tutor will do. You need an experienced French tutor with a sound **knowledge of rules governing pronunciation**, a professional French tutor who can tune up your ears, and teach you intonation, nuances and the overall musical pattern of the French language.

Besides simulating realistic circumstances, your tutor can also give you the **cultural context**, an indispensable element in language learning.