

# Bonus

# How to Language exchange

## What's a language exchange

A language exchange is a relationship between two people who are learning each other's native language and agree to help their partner learn their language. It can be done in person, online via video chat, or even in writing ("pen pals"). This document will tell you all you need to know to have a successful language exchange.

## Pros & Cons of Language Exchanges

### Pros

- Learning with a peer who is also learning and share (some of) your difficulties can be more enjoyable than learning with a teacher or alone with books.
- You get a lot of speaking time.
- It's free. Perfect if you have a lot of time but not a lot of money.

### Cons

- It's time-consuming. You will spend as much time teaching the other person, as you spend learning.
- It requires good organization to ensure that you have regular sessions.
- Finding a suitable partner can be difficult (follow the advice below to ease the process).

## Finding a partner

90% of the results of your language exchange depends on finding a suitable partner. Here is how I do it.

### Step 1 : Brainstorm. - Who would be the ideal language partner?

A good language partner is a person who 1) has a lot in common with you and 2) is dedicated to pursuing their language study regularly and on the long run. Your language exchange will be more productive and more enjoyable if your partner is also a friend who shares your values and interests. Also, keep in mind that your partner will have a different native culture. Cultural differences make communication more difficult. You really want to mitigate this by finding a person who has much in common with you, and who will help you discover their culture and language safely. For this reason, I would also recommend looking for a person of the same gender, especially if you are a woman.

### Step 2: Write an add or contact people

Write an add where you introduce yourself, mention your job, your hobbies, and what you care about, and specify that you are looking for a person who shares your interests and is committed to their study—nothing's worse than a partner who keeps cancelling on you.

Good places to post your add are billboards in university or in your local Institut Français or Alliance Française, or the Couch Surfing forum of your city. If you're going for online, try places like italki or facebook groups. If you already know people who would be a good fit, just email them your add.

### Step 3 : Meet your new partner

If you respect step 1&2, you will likely get only a couple people who feel that they are a good fit—and you are a good fit for them. One or two emails should be enough to get to know them, and then you can schedule your first session, either online or offline.

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### Preparing for the session

The key to having a good session, once you have a good partner, is to prepare for it. Your partner is not a teacher and you can't expect them to know what you need to learn. Decide ahead of time on what you want to speak about during the session (pick one topic from your Fluency Roadmap). Brainstorm quickly how to speak about this topic, and write down a few words that you will need (look them up if necessary). This will jumpstart your brain and avoid some awkwardness at the beginning of the session.

### During the session

Share time equally -Keep it fair! Decide on the length of the session, for example 90 minutes. Spend half the time (45 minutes) speaking French and then switch to your native language for the remaining 45 minutes.

**Agree on the topic at the beginning of the session**—Tell your partner the topic you've chosen for the session. Make sure that you keep speaking about this topic in details and not digress too much. This will ensure that you respect your study plan and actually learn what you are supposed to learn.

**Take notes and ask many questions**—Write down the new words, phrases or grammar rules that your partner shares with you. Some people will know the grammar of their own language and be able to teach it well, and others won't. If you stumble upon a question that your partner can't answer, write it down and google it later.

**Corrections**—Insist that your partner should correct you when you make mistakes, and make sure they're ok with you correcting them.

**Schedule the next session**—Don't leave a session without having an appointment for the next one.

### After the session

Review your notes and transfer the new vocabulary into your vocabulary learning system. Google anything that is unclear.

### Don't get frustrated

A great language exchange is very enriching, as you learn not only French but also the culture of your partner and the country they're from. Besides, a great language partner can also become a friend for life.

However, when you learn French through language exchange, there are many things that can go wrong and create a suboptimal experience. If you follow the advice above, you should be able to avoid most issues. Nonetheless, you might need a couple of tries to really get a language exchange that works well. This can be time consuming and frustrating.

If you don't have time to waste, I recommend you consider regular coaching with me, instead of or in combination with a language exchange. [Click here to learn more about it.](#)

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## Cheatsheet

### Do:

- Be specific when looking for a partner. The best partners are peers. Find someone who has a lot in common with you.
- Prepare for the session and show up with a clear idea of what you want to speak about.
- Share time equally between your study and their study
- Choose one specific topic for each session and discuss it extensively.
- Do your best to explain your language to them.
- Take notes and review them after the session
- Add the new words to your vocabulary list
- Share the tips you learned in this bonus cheat with your partner so they can benefit from it too.

### Don't:

- Message everyone saying “do you want to be my language partner?” and nothing else.
- Accept anyone who “wants to exchange languages” as a partner. Not everyone is a good fit.
- Show up unprepared and expect that the session will magically ‘shape itself’. To have an awesome session, make an awesome preparation.
- Expect your partner to know everything about the French language.
- Get mad if they can't explain a rule. Write down your question and google it later