



KEEPING FRENCH ALIVE THIS SUMMER

A Parent's Guide - Listening, Talking, Reading & Playing

Why summer matters

A long break without school or daily French can chip away at the fluency your child built during the year, what teachers call the “summer slide.” The good news: it doesn’t take much to prevent it. Around 15–20 focused minutes a day, woven into normal routines, keeps French active and even helps it grow.

This guide works whether your child speaks French at home or is still learning it, and it spans ages 2 to 10+. You don’t need to do everything: pick a few ideas from each section and build a small, enjoyable habit. The four pillars below cover the full picture: a child needs to LISTEN and READ (input) but also to TALK and PLAY (output). The fastest gains come when your child is the one speaking.

1 • LISTEN	2 • TALK	3 • READ	4 • PLAY & DO
<i>podcasts, songs, audio stories</i>	<i>conversation, games, questions</i>	<i>shared reading, books, comics</i>	<i>games, cooking, outings, writing</i>

Set realistic expectations: attention span

Knowing how long a child can typically focus helps you choose activities of the right length and stops you (and them) from feeling like something is wrong. A rough rule of thumb is the child’s age × 2 to 5 minutes. So a 5-year-old won’t sit through a 20-minute podcast, and that’s perfectly normal. Match the activity to the age, and stop while it’s still fun.

AVERAGE ATTENTION SPAN

age x 2 to 5 minutes

AGE	MINUTES OF ATTENTION
2 years	4 to 10 minutes
3 years	6 to 15 minutes
4 years	8 to 20 minutes
5 years	10 to 25 minutes
6 years	12 to 30 minutes
7 years	14 to 35 minutes
8 years	16 to 40 minutes

The average attention span increases with age. It represents the child's capacity to stay focused on a task at hand.

Pillar 1 — Listen

Audio builds vocabulary, sentence structure, verbal comprehension and verbal memory — all foundations for speaking and, later, reading. It's also the easiest pillar to sustain on holiday: in the car, at bedtime, or during quiet time.



Tales & stories

- **Toudou** - Short, with very clear articulation so words are easy to grasp. Great for the littlest ones.
- **Les p'tites histoires** - Short, well-told stories. Ages 5–6 and up. Themes vary: school, friendship, animals, emotions.

- **Une histoire et Oli** - Produced by France Inter. Tales written and read by well-known children's authors.
- **Encore une histoire** - Original stories told clearly and simply. Ideal for early readers (1st grade). Around 5–10 minutes.

Songs & rhymes

- **Comptines et chansons Pomme d'Api**
- **Histoires en musique**
- **Sing in the car**: nursery rhymes and singalongs stick in memory and are perfect for toddlers. Henri Dès collections are really good for preschoolers (very old but still very good!). Aldebert collections are good for primary students.

Interactive & educational podcasts

- **Curieux de sciences** - Curiosity-driven science for young children.
- **Les aventures de Rodolphe et Gala** - Playful educational adventures with built-in quizzes; encourages oral interaction and varied vocabulary.
- **Les Odyssées** - Ages 6+. Engaging historical storytelling with rich, sophisticated language.
- **Bestioles** - Ages 7+. Detailed and fun — for insect lovers!
- **Nouvelles héroïnes** - Ages 9+. Inspiring true stories of contemporary women.
- **Autrement l'histoire** - Ages 10+. History moments explain differently.

Audio storytellers (screen-free)

- **Lunii ("Ma Fabrique à Histoires")** - the child chooses characters and setting to build their own story; great for autonomy.
- **Tonies** - audio figurines for hands-free listening, ideal for younger children.
- **Cathy's padlet (our FLE teacher)** - a goldmine of curated French resources.

Pillar 2 — Talk

Listening is input; speaking is where the biggest gains happen. The single most powerful thing you can do is have real, back-and-forth conversations in French every day.

- **Make talk a routine.** Use mealtimes, car rides and bath time as French moments: "rose & thorn of the day," narrate what you're doing, plan tomorrow together.
- **Ask open questions.** Prefer "What do you think happens next?" or "Why?" over yes/no questions, which end the conversation.
- **Expand, don't correct.** If your child says "chien parti," reply "Yes, le chien est parti dans le jardin!", you model the full sentence without making it a lesson.
- **Talking games.** "Je vois, je vois" (I-spy), 20 questions, "ni oui ni non," rhyming chains, riddles (devinettes) and jokes; all force the child to produce language and have fun doing it.
- **Tell stories together.** Story dice or picture cards: each person adds a sentence to keep the story going.

Pillar 3 — Read

Reading aloud together is the most evidence-backed language activity there is, even for children who already read on their own. The trick is to make it a dialogue, not a performance.

Dialogic reading — the PEER habit

- **Prompt** your child to say something about the page;
- **Evaluate** their answer;
- **Expand** on it with a little more language;
- **Repeat** the new phrasing so they hear it again.

Ask who/what/where/why questions, connect the story to their life, and let them “read” the pictures back to you.

What to read

- **Picture books** for the youngest; let them turn pages and name what they see.
- **Comics / BD** for reluctant or older readers: Tom-Tom et Nana, Arièle, Anatole Latuile, Astérix, Tintin.
- **Magazines** by age: Popi & Pomme d’Api (toddlers), Astrapi & J’aime lire (6–10), Images Doc for the curious.
- **Library & local resources:** ask your library about its French section, or check the Alliance Française and French cultural events nearby.

Bonus: French screen time, done well

- Switch the audio (and subtitles) on Netflix, YouTube and tablets to French - a free, effortless source of input.
- Choose French cartoons and films; rewatching a familiar favourite in French is especially powerful.
- Keep it interactive when you can: pause and ask “What just happened?” in French.

Pillar 4 — Play & Do

Language sticks best when it’s attached to real activities and real people. Summer is full of natural opportunities.

- **Cook together.** Following a recipe in French builds sequencing words (d’abord, ensuite, enfin) and everyday vocabulary. Shopping lists and gardening work the same way.
- **Board & card games.** Play classics in French: UNO, memory, Devine tête (Hedbanz), Times Up Kids, Story Cubes.
- **Outings with narration.** Name what you see at the park, museum or beach; describing the world out loud is rich vocabulary practice.
- **Connect with French speakers.** Schedule video calls with family, set up a pen pal, arrange playdates, or look into a French summer camp or club.
- **Write, for older kids.** A short holiday journal, postcards to grandparents, a comic strip, or captions for their photos, low-pressure ways to produce French.

Before you leave: a quick setup checklist

Five minutes of prep makes the whole summer easier, especially if you'll be travelling or offline.

- Download a few podcasts and audiobooks for offline listening (planes, cars, dead zones).
- Set devices, streaming apps and the car playlist to French now, so it's the default.
- Pack 4–5 French books, a comic and a magazine, or load them on a tablet/e-reader.
- Charge the Lunii / Tonie and pack spare figurines.
- Plan one or two video calls with French-speaking family to look forward to.
- Print the one-page routine on the next page and stick it on the fridge.

Your one-page summer routine

A simple rhythm, aim for a daily quick win plus one bigger activity. Adapt to your child's age and energy.

Daily (10–15 min)	Pick one
Morning	A podcast or song with breakfast / in the car.
Afternoon	A talking game, cooking, or an outing — narrate it in French.
Bedtime	Read a book together using the PEER habit, or an audio story.
Anytime	Screens in French; one real conversation with open questions.

Weekly bonus

- One video call with French-speaking family or friends.
- One “big” activity: cook a recipe, visit somewhere new, or write a journal page / postcard.

Remember: quality over quantity. A few minutes of warm, back-and-forth French beats an hour of background noise. Keep it playful, follow your child's interests, and stop while they still want more.

Quick links

- Lunii audio storyteller: lunii.com
- Tonies audio figurines: tonies.com
- France Inter / Radio France kids podcasts (Oli, Les Odyssées, Bestioles...): radiofrance.fr
- Most podcasts above are free on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and major podcast apps (search by name).

I wish you all a very good summer. Warmly, Camille.