

Studies, work, leisure and traditions across the francophone world

AP French Language and Culture · Lesson

This AP French lesson explains **AP French contemporary life** step by step, with examples in French and English. Then practise with the worksheet on AP French contemporary life and check yourself with the quiz.

Quick answer: The AP French Contemporary Life theme covers education, careers, leisure, travel, holidays and traditions. To score well, use precise vocabulary, compare francophone communities with your own, and support each idea with a cultural detail. Comparatives, contrast words and past tenses make descriptions clear and mature.

Level: AP French Language and Culture · **Standards:** AP French Language and Culture (College Board CED), Theme: Contemporary Life

AP French contemporary life: the lesson

How do education systems differ across the francophone world?

To compare schools, learn the stages and the exact words. In France, students attend le collège, then le lycée, and pass le baccalauréat. In Québec, l'école secondaire is followed by le cégep, then university. In Switzerland, la maturité opens the door to higher education.

En France

le collège

le lycée

le bac

l'université

Au Québec

l'école secondaire

le cégep

l'université

Two paths to higher education, simplified.

Words that mislead

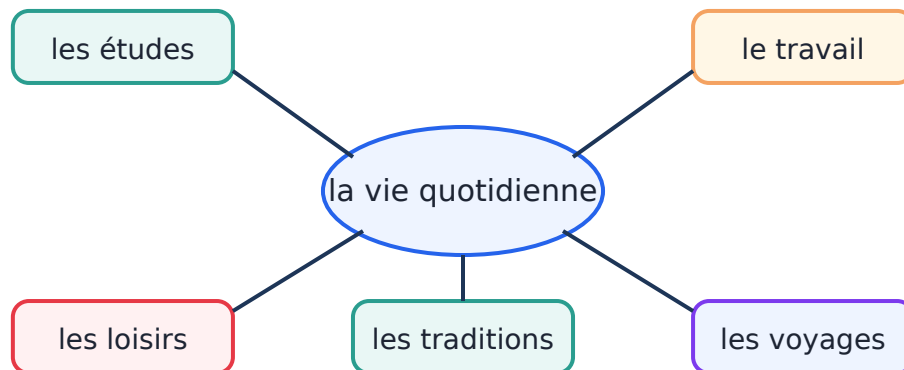
A collège is a middle school. Un élève goes to school, un étudiant goes to university. Passer un examen is to sit an exam; to pass it is réussir.

How do you talk about careers and leisure?

French	English
un stage	an internship
une bourse	a scholarship
un emploi à temps partiel	a part-time job
un entretien d'embauche	a job interview
le bénévolat	volunteering
les loisirs	leisure activities

Compare and contrast

Use plus / moins / aussi + adjective + que, and autant de + noun + que. To oppose two groups, use alors que or tandis que: Les Français fêtent le 14 juillet, alors que les Québécois fêtent le 24 juin. — The French celebrate July 14, whereas Québécois celebrate June 24.



Five areas of the theme.

Talking about travel

- Nous avons passé une semaine à Fort-de-France, où nous avons goûté des fruits que nous ne connaissions pas. — We spent a week in Fort-de-France, where we tasted fruit we did not know.
- Si je pouvais, je partirais un an à l'étranger pour apprendre une autre langue. — If I could, I would leave for a year abroad to learn another language.

Notice the relative pronouns où and que: they let you pack two ideas into one sentence, a habit that raises the level of any answer.

How do you describe holidays and traditions?

Use the present with *on* for customs: *En janvier, on partage la galette des rois.* — In January, people share the king cake. Add *il est de tradition de + infinitive* and *la coutume veut que + subjunctive* for a more formal register. For a story about a trip, the *passé composé* gives the events and the *imperfect* gives the setting: *Il faisait beau quand nous sommes arrivés à Tahiti.*

Dates to know

The Fête de la Musique, held on June 21, was launched in France in 1982. Québec's national holiday is the Saint-Jean-Baptiste on June 24. In France, la rentrée is the back-to-school period at the end of the summer holidays.

Zoé's tip

In a cultural comparison, give one similarity and one difference, then say what you would like to try. That small structure earns clear, personal answers.

Key points to remember

- Un élève goes to school up to the lycée; un étudiant studies at a university or college.
- Le collège in France is middle school, not college.
- Réussir un examen means to pass; passer un examen means to take it.
- Québec has the cégep between secondary school and university.
- Contrast with *alors que* or *tandis que* when you compare two communities.

Studies, Work, Leisure and Traditions Across the Francophone World: frequently asked questions

What does the AP French Contemporary Life theme include?

It includes education, careers, leisure, travel, holidays and traditions. Tasks ask you to compare practices in francophone communities with your own.

What is the difference between un élève and un étudiant?

Un élève attends primary or secondary school, up to the lycée. Un étudiant attends university or higher education.

Does passer un examen mean to pass an exam?

No. Passer un examen means to take or sit an exam. To pass it, say *réussir un examen* or *être reçu*.

What is a cégep in Québec?

A cégep is a public college between secondary school and university. It offers pre-university and technical programs.

How do I contrast two cultures in French?

Use *alors que* or *tandis que* to oppose two statements. Add *en revanche* to start a new sentence of contrast.