

Handling a tough job interview in French

French B2 (upper intermediate) · Lesson

Quick answer: In an advanced French job interview, present each strength with one concrete proof, tell difficult situations in four parts (context, problem, action, result), and negotiate pay with a gross-salary range and a justification. Stay formal: use *vous*, the conditional of politeness and the subjunctive after wishes.

Level: French B2 (CEFR upper intermediate) · **Standards:** CEFR B2, Spoken interaction

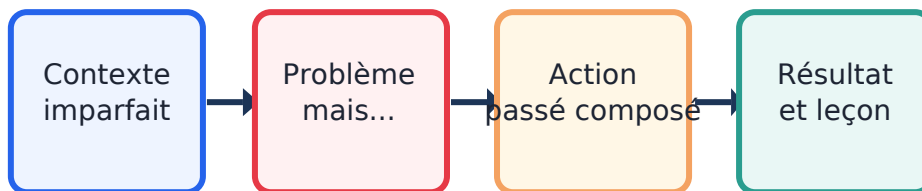
How do you talk about your strengths in French?

At B2 level, a list of adjectives is not enough. Name the quality, then prove it with one concrete fact. Recruiters in France value a calm, modest and precise tone: confident, but never boastful.

Function	Useful phrase
Name a quality	Ma principale qualité est la rigueur. — My main quality is rigor.
Describe yourself	On me décrit souvent comme quelqu'un d'à l'écoute. — People often describe me as a good listener.
Give proof	Par exemple, j'ai réduit les retards de livraison de moitié. — For example, I cut delivery delays in half.
Admit a weakness	J'ai tendance à vouloir tout contrôler, mais j'apprends à déléguer. — I tend to want to control everything, but I am learning to delegate.

How do you describe a difficult situation?

Use the order *context, problem, action, result*. Set the scene in the imperfect (*j'étais, nous avions*), then narrate your actions in the passé composé (*j'ai proposé, nous avons résolu*). End with a result and, if you can, a lesson learned.



A four-part answer to a question about a difficult situation.

A short model

À l'époque, je gérais un petit magasin à Annecy et un fournisseur nous livrait toujours en retard. J'ai donc négocié un nouveau contrat, et nos ruptures de stock ont disparu. — At the time I managed a small shop in Annecy and a supplier was always late. So I negotiated a new contract and our stock-outs disappeared.

How do you negotiate a salary politely?

Job offers in France quote the *gross* salary per year: 45 000 € brut par an. The amount that reaches your account, the net, is lower after social contributions. Give a range, justify it, then offer flexibility.

Step	Phrase
Thank	Je vous remercie de cette proposition.
Justify	Compte tenu de mon expérience, je souhaiterais...
Give a range	une fourchette de 42 000 à 45 000 € brut
Offer a trade	à condition que nous revoyions mon salaire dans six mois (subjunctive)
Ask	Serait-il possible d'en discuter ?

Offre d'emploi

Chef de projet, Lyon, CDI
 Salaire : 40 800 € brut par an
 Télétravail : 2 jours par semaine
 Prime annuelle : 1 200 €

Read the gross figure first, then the extras.

Which formal register should you use?

Too direct	Appropriately formal
Je veux un meilleur salaire.	Je voudrais (J'aimerais) discuter de la rémunération.
Vous pouvez répéter ?	Pourriez-vous répéter la question ?
Il faut qu'on parle des horaires.	Il faudrait que nous parlions des horaires.

Always use *vous*, the conditional of politeness and full forms such as *nous* rather than *on*.

Common mistake

Actuellement means *currently*, not *actually*: Actuellement, je travaille à Nantes. Also use the

present with depuis: Je travaille chez Lumio depuis trois ans, not J'ai travaillé... depuis trois ans.

Culture note

Many French recruiters ask Quelles sont vos prétentions salariales ? early in the process. Preparing a range in advance avoids an improvised figure.

Zoé's tip

Prepare three short stories out loud, each lasting under a minute. Reuse them for any question about conflict, pressure or success.

Key points to remember

- Name a quality, then prove it with one fact: Par exemple, j'ai réduit les retards de moitié.
- Tell a story with the imperfect for context and the passé composé for actions.
- French offers quote the gross yearly salary: 45 000 € brut par an.
- Politeness uses the conditional: Je souhaiterais, Pourriez-vous...?.
- Actuellement means currently, not actually.

Handling a tough job interview in French: frequently asked questions

How do I answer a question about my weaknesses in French?

Name a real but minor weakness and add what you do about it: J'ai tendance à tout contrôler, mais j'apprends à déléguer. Avoid clichés such as being too perfect.

How do I talk about a difficult situation?

Use four parts: the context (imperfect), the problem, your action (passé composé) and the result. Keep it under one minute and end with what you learned.

How do I ask for a higher salary politely?

Thank the employer, justify with your experience, give a range and offer a trade: Compte tenu de mon expérience, je souhaiterais.... Never say je veux.

What is the difference between brut and net?

Brut is the salary before social contributions, and it is the figure in job offers. Net is the amount paid into your account, which is lower.

Should I use tu or vous with a recruiter?

Always use vous unless the recruiter clearly proposes tu. Prefer nous to on in formal speech.