

French speaking countries

- France is not the only country where French is spoken. There are 29 countries with French as an official language and there are currently 220 million French speakers around the world. It is one of the United Nations' five official languages.
- From the 17th century until the 1960s, France ruled many countries around the world. As a result, the French language was spread around the world by colonisers. Although many of these countries are now independent, some of them are still governed by France today.
- French is spoken by 80 million people in Europe, with most of them living in France. In Belgium, it is one of the official languages (along with Flemish Dutch and German) and around 40% of Belgians speak French as their mother tongue. In Luxembourg, although the most popular language is Luxembourgish (no I haven't made that up!), all the laws are written in French. French is also one of 4 official languages in Switzerland (along with German, Italian and Romansh) and is widely spoken in the west of the country. It is also the official language of Monaco, although English and two regional dialect languages (one from Italy and one based on Occitan – a very old French regional language).
- 96.2 million French speakers live in Africa. The main countries where French is spoken are Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Benin, Madagascar, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo (whose capital city, Kinshasa, is the second largest French-speaking country in the world).
- In Canada both English and French are official languages. The state of Québec was a French colony from 1534 to 1750. Around 80% of the population of Québec speak French. Montreal is the 4th largest French-speaking city in the world.
- In the USA, the state of Louisiana was named by the French explorer Robert Cavalier de la Salle after Louis XIV, the King of France. It was even made a part of France in 1682. Although it is now part of the USA, many people in Louisiana still speak French (as well as English and Creole).
- There are even French speaking islands in the Pacific Ocean including French Polynesia, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna.
- In South America and the Caribbean, there are 5 French overseas departments (a department is the French equivalent of a county) – French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte and Réunion. French is also spoken on the island of Haiti.

Fun fact

- French is one of the official languages of the Olympic Games. Although they were inspired by the games held in ancient Greece, the modern format was created in 1894 by Baron de Coubertin who was Belgian, with the first games

being held in Athens, Greece in 1896. The headquarters of the Olympic movement is in Lausanne in Switzerland