Talk French 2 in the classroom: Units 1–5

Unit 1

1.1 Getting to know people
Learners work in small groups practising the key questions Comment tu* t’appelles?, Tu habites où? and Qu’est-ce que tu fais comme travail? If they don’t already know each other, they answer with information about themselves; if they know each other from a previous class, you can supply fictional identity cards for them to work from. Using the information they’ve found out in their original groups, each person then introduces somebody else and provides information about them in the third person. This is done within different groups, ideally of about six or seven. To finish off, groups work together to come up with at least one sentence in the third person plural with the information they’ve gathered, for example X et Y habitent ...

*Or vous, if that’s what you normally use.

1.2 Talking about people
Ask learners to bring in a photograph or picture showing several people (it could be a family photo or a picture from a magazine, such as a celebrity family) and to prepare a few sentences about it. One of these must include depuis.

Brainstorm with the whole group the questions needed to find information about people.

Working in small groups, each learner then talks for a couple of minutes about their picture and answers questions from the other learners about it. It doesn’t matter if questions relate to information already given – this is an opportunity to field simple questions and to reinforce vocabulary.

If preparing for Asset Languages external assessment, this activity could be revisited at a later stage, with comparisons brought in and practised: plus, moins and some basic adjectives, for example jeune, âgé and grand.
1.3 Asking and saying why
Write the reasons given on page 11 for wanting to learn French onto cards or slips of paper, one per card. Since you need enough for each learner to have a card, you can duplicate or modify some of the reasons, for example pour parler avec mon amie française, parce que j’adore aller à la Côte d’Azur.
Learners mingle, asking Pourquoi est-ce que tu veux apprendre le français? and answering according to the card they hold. They need to jot down the reasons they’re given.
You can pull the activity together at the end by asking questions to consolidate the language, for example Qui apprend/veut apprendre pour travailler en France?, simply expecting a name in reply. This will get them used to the idea of understanding without necessarily being able themselves to supply accurate detailed answers at this stage.

1.4 Professional introduction
Particularly if you’re teaching those who are learning French for work, encourage learners to introduce and talk about themselves as if they were at a professional meeting. This could involve their finding out for themselves some key vocabulary relating to their work.
Practice for this activity could include reading a selection of personal profiles and assuming another person’s identity. You can find any number of these on the internet, allowing you to extend vocabulary, for example occupations. It makes useful listening practice for the rest of the group and is an opportunity for you to focus on linguistic detail appropriate to your class.

1.5 Verb endings
An excellent way of getting to grips with verb endings is for learners to work in small groups, each group having a small stack of cards with a regular verb on each card, ideally with an image of the action on it too. Each group also needs a die, with a personal pronoun on each face: je, tu, il/elle/on, nous, vous, ils/elles. These are available commercially.
Learners take turns to pick a card (from the pile face down on the table), throw the die, and give the correct ending for the verb according to which pronoun they’ve thrown. The others verify the ending and challenge any errors. Encourage groups to speed this up as it progresses.
Unit 2

2.1 24-hour clock
These activities should get learners thoroughly familiar with the 24-hour clock and with vocabulary such as avant, jusqu’à, entre ... et, vers – meaning that they can listen at home to the Talk French 2 audio for page 16, having been thoroughly prepared for it.

- It’s straightforward to recreate airport announcements for learners to listen to for key information. Having revised numbers and listened to some times, they could practice simple role-plays at a check-in desk, where one partner asks the times of flights to a few destinations, another replies and they check for comprehension.

Alternatively, you can create a ‘departures screen’ by writing a list of places with the departure time and a flight number against each one. Make three copies: keep one as your master, and on the other two blank out different information. Learners work in pairs, filling the gaps by asking each other the appropriate questions.

- A picture of a departures screen can be used as a prompt for describing what you see. Encourage learners to come up with statements such as Le vol pour Bordeaux part à ... or Il y a deux vols pour Londres ce matin/avant cinq heures.

2.2 12-hour clock and daily life

Make two lists, both headed Cherchez quelqu’un qui ... On the first, follow this with a few phrases involving time, for example, se lève tôt tous les jours, or se couche avant dix heures. On the second, include more general phrases, for example travaille à la maison, fait du sport tous les jours.

The lists need to include some items that will not easily be found, since the purpose is to allow adequate opportunity to practise asking and answering the questions.

You need enough copies for one per learner, and they’ll need a few minutes to think about the questions. You can manipulate the rules depending on the strength of the group. For example, if the instruction is Cherchez quelqu’un qui se lève tôt tous les jours, you could expect them to use the wording on their
list: Vous* vous levez tôt tous les jours? or you could insist that they rephrase: Généralement, vous vous levez à quelle heure?

Learners then mingle, asking questions to find someone conforming to their list and replying to others’ questions at the same time. When they find a person conforming to the requirement on their list, they make a note of their name.

You can pull it together at the end by asking the whole group, for example, Qui travaille à la maison?, Il y a quelqu’un qui se lève tard tous les jours? And you can include the plural, for example Combien de personnes se lèvent tôt?

*This activity is already challenging when learners are using vous, since they have to manipulate the verb endings.

2.3 Irregular verbs

One way of familiarising learners with the irregular verbs introduced in this unit is to use the pronoun dice, as suggested for regular verb endings in 1.5. Learners work in small groups, each group having a small stack of cards with an irregular verb on each card, ideally with an image of the action on it too. Each group also needs a die, with a personal pronoun on each face: je, tu, il/elle/on, nous, vous, ils/elles.

Learners take turns to pick a card (from the pile face down on the table), throw the die, and give the correct ending for the verb according to which pronoun they’ve thrown. The others verify the ending and challenge any errors. Encourage groups to speed this up as it progresses.

2.4 Daily or work routine

- Working in small groups, learners take it in turns to talk to the rest of the group about their daily routine (or work routine). This need only involve about ten sentences and last a couple of minutes. Some preparation needs to be done beforehand, both on the presentation and on compiling some questions to ask the speaker.

- Follow this up by moving to the third person. Show some pictures of people working in various occupations, for example milkman, teacher, police officer, supermarket worker, housewife or husband, bank teller. Start by asking questions about their hours of work, moving towards encouraging learners
to offer information. Being provocative, for example by saying teachers finish work at 3pm, can lead to quite heated debate in French.

- If learners are interested in writing about this afterwards at home, suggest that they write about someone else’s day in addition to their own. Or they could include a friend or partner and write in the first person plural.
Unit 3

3.1 Il y en a ...
You can familiarise learners with vocabulary and at the same time practise il y en a/il n'y a pas de by using descriptions of French towns, whether from tourist brochures or the internet. Learners work in groups and you’ll need one town per group.
Allow the groups plenty of time to read the information about their town. Then bring the class together and brainstorm the vocabulary for places found in towns. From these, choose a list of about six, for example camping, château, restaurants, musées.
Give them the names of all the towns and ask them to circulate and find out what places from the list are available in the various towns. They ask one question at a time, for example À XX il y a ...? The person addressed gives the answer if they know it, otherwise they say Je ne sais pas (unless you choose to teach Je ne connais pas plus the place).
You can stop the activity when you feel learners are comfortable with the form of the questions and answers, and follow up with a whole-class discussion or summary.

3.2 Irregular verbs
Pouvoir, devoir and faire can be practised, if necessary, using dice as in 1.5. Learners work in small groups, each group having three cards, with one of the verbs on each card. The groups also need a die, with a personal pronoun on each face: je, tu, il/elle/on, nous, vous, ils/elles.
Learners take turns to pick a card (from the three face down on the table), throw the die, and give the correct ending for the verb according to which pronoun they’ve thrown. The others verify the ending and challenge any errors.
Encourage groups to speed this up as it progresses.
3.3 Who likes doing what?
A survey offers useful practice of du/de la/des, while allowing learners the opportunity to say what their interests are.
Put together a short list of leisure interests and ask learners to circulate, asking others whether they do or like these, making a note of who does and doesn’t.
Learners reply according to their own preferences (although if they want to indulge in fantasy and say they go climbing in the Alps every week, there’s absolutely no reason why they shouldn’t!). Encourage them to go beyond Oui/Non in their responses and to use J’aime beaucoup ..., Je n’aime pas tellement ..., Je ne fais jamais d’escalade, etc.
You then bring learners together and ask true or false questions, for example Deux personnes font du taekwondo. Vrai ou faux? It’s an opportunity for everyone to participate, even though some will do so in a more passive sense than others.

3.4 On and nous/vous
This practises the same vocabulary field as 3.3, but focuses on on and nous/vous verb endings.
You need sets of about 10–12 cards with symbols or words on them representing, for example, nature, water sports, food, historical monuments and walking.
Learners work in pairs; they have a set of cards face down in a pile on the table, and their brief is to assume that they’re speaking on behalf of themselves and another person.
If the first learner picks a card depicting randonnées, they ask Vous faites des randonnées? and the other person provides as full a response as they can, using on or nous.

3.5 Il faut
Using the same or similar images as for 3.4, for example sightseeing, cycling and sailing, display them to the whole class, telling them that this is what you’re going to do and inviting them to come up with a relevant piece of advice, for example Je te/vous conseille d’apporter ..., Il faut avoir ....
3.6 Describing a place

particularly if your learners are preparing for external assessment, get them to prepare a promotional presentation for a town, city or region, describing its main features and saying what there is to do and see there. They could include their likes and dislikes and make some recommendations.

Class preparation for this could centre on a picture or photo of a town known to the learners.
Unit 4

Most of the activities for Unit 4 feature pictures of properties on paper or card. It’s very useful to have a wide selection – they’re readily available from, for example, magazines, local and national newspapers, the internet or estate agents’ offices.

4.1 Types of property

In this very simple survey, learners circulate, asking everyone in the class *Elle est comment, votre maison?* and making a note of the reply. Only the type of property is required here, for example *une villa, un appartement, un chalet*. You can get them to reply according to where they really live or you can give everyone a picture to answer from.

After the questions, learners work in pairs or small groups. Using their notes, they summarise the survey results, for example *Une personne habite dans une ferme, Cinq personnes habitent dans des appartements*. Finally the whole class can discuss the findings.

4.2 Understanding property descriptions

Provide about ten pictures of different properties and, separately, written descriptions for six of them. Learners work in pairs or small groups to identify which properties are featured in the written descriptions.

Learners then work in pairs to produce a written description for any two of the remaining properties. Collect these (unsigned) descriptions and redistribute them at random, asking learners to identify the picture they refer to. Following this stage with a general discussion gives you the opportunity to focus on detail and accuracy.

4.3 Describing a property

Learners work in small groups, with a selection of pictures spread out before them. They take it in turns to say three statements about one of these properties; the others have to deduce which it is. If they can’t, then the speaker has to produce a fourth statement. Encourage the use of *très* and *plutôt*.
4.4 Who lives where?

To link up with previous units and provide revision, give out pictures of a number of different properties and invite learners, working in small groups, to create a profile of the people who might live in them. Encourage the use of parce que.

4.5 Finding out about a house to rent

You need some cue cards for this activity, using words or symbols. A card has up to six items of information on it, such as location, age, number of bedrooms, and whether there is a garden and parking; the activity works best if several cards are similar in some of the detail. As the class will be divided into two groups, you will only need enough different cue cards for half of your class, and you need two copies of each card. If you use different coloured paper or card for each group, it makes life easier.

Half the class want to rent a house with the features listed on their card. Only one person in the other half will have such a property and the aim is to find that person by asking questions about the property.

The cards can then be shuffled and the roles reversed.

4.6 Describing a home

In pairs, learners take it in turns to describe their home and answer simple questions. The description should include at least one feature they like or don’t like.

It’s worth repeating this with different partners as it tends to be more fluent the second time around. The activity can be followed up with learners working in threes or fours, saying where someone else lives and adding a couple of sentences about the house.

An alternative is to ask learners to describe their dream home and to imagine they’re showing someone round it.
4.7 Comparing houses and expressing an opinion

If preparing for external assessment, you could return to the contents of this unit after Unit 5, using it to consolidate vocabulary and practise comparison and contrast. Provide pairs of pictures, each pair being two properties that are very different, and invite statements using plus/moins that highlight these differences. Learners could also give their opinion on the properties.
Unit 5

To get learners familiar with the vocabulary for clothes and colours, it’s worth investing a little time in creating sets of cards depicting items of clothing in various colours. They’ll last you for ages and can be used for other activities too.

5.1 Clothes, colours and agreement

Learners work in groups, with a pile of the cards face down on the table. One person picks a card but doesn’t show it. The rest of the group have to find out what it is by asking, for example, C’est une chemise?, to which the person with the card replies Oui, c’est une chemise or Non, ce n’est pas une chemise, as the case may be. When someone has guessed the item correctly, they then have to find out what colour it is by asking, for example, Elle est blanche? After three such guesses, the person with the card says what it is. Add incentive by awarding a point to a person who guesses correctly, and a point to the card holder if nobody gets it right.

5.2 Asking for a specific item

The clothes cards can be used for a variation of Happy Families, which gives practice in asking for a specific item. For this, every person also has an individual ‘shopping list’. They work in groups of about four, each having a quarter of the cards, which they keep hidden from the others. Working clockwise, they take it in turn to ask the person sitting next to them if that person has an item from their shopping list, for example Je cherche un pull vert. If that person has the item, they have to give the card up. The winner is the first person to obtain pictures of every item on their list.

5.3 Expressing an opinion

You can also use the clothes cards, together with dice or cards featuring smiley or cross faces, to express an opinion on the clothes and practise celui/celle-ci. When a person picks a card and a smiley face, they have to find something positive to say about the item, for example À mon avis, celle-ci est classe.
cross face is picked, they have to express a negative opinion, for example À mon avis, celui-ci est trop sombre.

After this controlled practice in groups, learners come together to discuss and give their opinion of clothes worn by people in the news (as seen in pictures from magazines, colour supplements etc., which you display). Son, sa, ses will be revisited at this stage.

5.4 Witnesses

Show the class a picture of a few people together, and introduce one of them, but without mentioning their appearance or preparing the class for what follows – the element of surprise is essential. Let them see the picture for about a minute, without writing anything down, then take the image away, and ask the class to tell you what that person is wearing.

5.5 Comparisons

To practise (le/la) plus and (le/la) moins and revise numbers at the same time, divide the class into groups, each group representing a colour. Write on the board the names of four or five items of clothing (including a plural item) and ask groups to agree a price for those items.

Everyone then circulates and asks the price of as many items as they can in a specified time, noting the prices in the various colours.

Bring everyone together and ask questions, for example C’est combien le pantalon noir? After someone has supplied the answer, continue along the lines of Et le rouge? C’est plus ou moins cher? Et le bleu? ... Alors, c’est lequel le plus cher? The pace of the questioning can become quite brisk as they become familiar with the language.

5.6 Focus on vocabulary and grammatical detail

The activity featuring the sac à dos on page 49 is designed to boost vocabulary. There are countless items for sale on the internet which can be used in a similar way. Learners could work on a few in groups in the classroom, which would leave the sac à dos for them to do at home.
5.7 Word association

A word-association chain can be an entertaining end to a lesson, designed to consolidate and boost vocabulary. You start it off with, for example, **sac à dos** and invite learners to supply another word with some link to **sac à dos**. Next they need a word associated with the second word, and so on.

Learners will tend to use words from this unit because they’re fresh in their minds. It provides useful consolidation but it does limit the scope of the activity, so encourage them to look beyond.

Because learners at this level don’t have an extensive vocabulary, it can be necessary to provide the occasional new word or some clever steering to stop the chain grinding to a halt.