

# NATIONAL FRENCH WEEK ACTIVITY

The National French Week 2000 activity at the Downingtown High Ninth Grade Center that seemed to spark the most interest and participation was the "French in English" Contest. This was actually the brainchild of my husband Ron, an enthusiastic Francophile by marriage!

I had placed stacks of fliers summarizing all of the week's activities on the office counter starting Friday of the preceding week, and events were announced by students of French on the public address system. I had placed a copy of the following expressions in each homeroom teacher's mailbox, with a large handwritten notation in the margin of page 1 giving the contest dates. I prepared a simple tabulation sheet that was also supplied (you want to make it EASY for teachers to conduct this contest during the few free minutes of homeroom). The tabulation sheet had a space to indicate the homeroom number and the teacher's name. Numbers ran down the left side with blank spaces in two columns to fill in the French expression and the English meaning.

The announcement was as follows: "On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, homeroom teachers will have lists of French expressions used in English and tabulation sheets. Designate a writer in each homeroom to transfer expressions to the numbered sheet(s) provided and GIVE THE ENGLISH MEANING. You may also furnish expressions that may not appear on the lists. The homeroom with the greatest number of expressions at the end of homeroom on Friday will receive warm croissants delivered on a designated day next week." The announcement was repeated each day of the contest.

Having fresh croissants on hand for delivery at 7:15 a.m. was a challenge. I bought the large size refrigerated ones, and baked them myself, brought in my warming tray and a French brand of jam. Teacher and students absolutely loved it, and I received a handmade thank you card (bearing French expressions from non-French students!) signed by everyone in the winning homeroom.

This rather simple activity truly achieved the goal of reaching out and including those students and adults who believe that they are not involved in French!

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This list features words and phrases that most English speakers know, use, and recognize as French words. The rationale is not to retrace 600 years or so of history to determine the influence of French on the development of the English language, but rather to show some of the many distinctive French terms that have entered our everyday speech. Occasionally the English usage has resulted in a change of spelling, loss of an accent, or even a change of meaning.

## People

fiancé  
fiancée  
divorcé  
divorcée  
attaché (used by the press  
and by diplomats)  
chauffeur  
valet  
aide-de-camp  
madam  
gourmet  
maître d'  
idiot savant  
concierge  
entourage  
connoisseur (spelled with an  
o)  
liaison  
protégé  
nouveau riche  
chef

## Characteristics

nonchalant  
adroit  
maladroit  
blasé  
banal  
de luxe  
gauche  
chic  
bizarre  
suave  
svelte

## Food and Drink

éclair  
champagne  
buffet

hors d'œuvres  
petit fours  
canapés  
omelette  
meringue  
soufflé  
pâté  
Hollandaise sauce  
gateau  
French cuisine  
Nouvelle Cuisine  
quiche  
escargots  
sauté  
piece de résistance  
filet  
foie gras  
croissants  
café au lait  
cordon bleu  
fromage frais  
apéritif  
sorbet  
à la mode  
au jus

## Things

attaché case  
chaise longue  
eau de cologne  
lingerie  
coupe  
résumé  
communiqué  
Mardi Gras  
ballet  
pas de deux  
œuvre

suite  
critique  
matériel (military)  
bidet  
coup d'état  
exposé  
cause célèbre  
cliché  
sabotage  
camouflage  
espionnage  
facade  
detente

## Expressions

Au contraire!  
C'est la vie.  
déjà vu  
R.S.V.P.  
rendez-vous  
tête-à-tête  
ménage à trois  
faux pas  
gaffe  
double entendre  
rapport  
passé  
joie de vivre  
in lieu of  
vis-à-vis  
de rigueur  
en route  
lèse-majesté  
raison d'être  
tour de force  
crème de la crème  
milieu  
savoir-faire

sang-froid  
en masse  
art deco  
art nouveau  
cachet  
fête  
et voilà  
à la  
bête noire  
mélange  
fait accompli  
cavalier  
moiré  
bon mot  
laisser faire  
patois  
potpourri  
naïveté  
fin de siècle  
brouhaha  
en route

## Places

chalet  
pied-à-terre  
bureau  
bistro  
salon  
boutique

## American cities with French names

Des Moines  
Terre Haute  
Baton Rouge  
Fond du Lac  
Eau Claire  
Des Plaines  
Detroit  
Paris, etc.