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French Made Familiar

The spelling patterns, 100 word origins, and a true story you can read in French.

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What is in this book

English took thousands of words from French and Latin. That means you already know a lot of French words. Some are easy to spot and some are hidden.

Part 1 shows the spelling patterns, like -ty becoming -té, that let you recognize thousands of words.

Part 2 gives you 100 common words you can't guess from the spelling, like nuit, with the English word hiding inside each one.

Part 3 is a full true story in French, the story of Flight MH370. It shows how the stories in the app start out: most of the words are ones you can almost recognize.

Part 1: The spelling patterns

These word endings work the same way across hundreds of words.

-tion stays -tion

nation, information, education / éducation, conversation

-ty becomes -té

university / université, reality / réalité, quality / qualité, liberty / liberté

-ous becomes -eux

famous / fameux, delicious / délicieux, generous / généreux, curious / curieux

-ic becomes -ique

electric / électrique, classic / classique, romantic / romantique, music / musique

-ly becomes -ment

rapidly / rapidement, finally / finalement, normally / normalement, exactly / exactement

-ent, -ant stays -ent, -ant

different / différent, president / président, important, elegant / élégant

-al stays -al

animal, normal, central, final, hospital / hôpital

-ble stays -ble

possible, terrible, probable, flexible, visible

-ist becomes -iste

artist / artiste, tourist / touriste, dentist / dentiste, optimist / optimiste

-ive becomes -if

active / actif, creative / créatif, positive / positif, negative / négatif

-ence, -ance stays -ence, -ance

difference / différence, science, distance, importance

-ary becomes -aire

salary / salaire, necessary / nécessaire, dictionary / dictionnaire, vocabulary / vocabulaire

-ure stays -ure

culture, temperature / température, literature / littérature, adventure / aventure

Three things to remember

The -tion ending looks English but sounds different: nation sounds like "nah-see-ON," with the last sound going through the nose.

To make an -ly word, add -ment to the feminine form of the French adjective: finale becomes finalement.

These patterns work most of the time, so trust your guess when you are reading. If it doesn't fit the sentence, look the word up.

How to spot the hidden words

Many French words wore down over the centuries while English kept an older spelling. Once you know these six changes, a lot of words stop looking foreign.

A hat on a vowel often marks a lost s
forêt and forest, île and isle, hôpital and hospital, fête and feast, bête and beast, côte and coast.

An é at the start often marks a lost s
école and school, étoile (star) and stellar, écrire (to write) and script, étudiant and student.

Latin ca often became cha or che
chat and cat, cheval (horse) and cavalry, champ (field) and camp, cheveu (hair) and capillary.

Latin t between vowels often disappeared
père (father) and paternal, mère (mother) and maternal, frère (brother) and fraternal, vie (life) and vital.

An l before a consonant often became u
autre (other) and alter, château and castle, morceau (piece) and morsel.

A Germanic w often became g
guerre and war, garder (to keep) and ward, gaufre and waffle.

These ten words look like English but mean something else

French	Looks like	Means
attendre	attend	to wait
blesser	bless	to injure
chair	chair	flesh
coin	coin	corner
déception	deception	disappointment
four	four	oven
pain	pain	bread
raisin	raisin	grape
rester	rest	to stay
sale	sale	dirty

Part 2: 100 words you can't guess from the spelling

Every entry here is copied from the Superlexa dictionary. The English word on the right of each entry is its hidden cousin, the one to remember it by.

70 words from the MH370 story

You will see all of these again in Part 3.

1 **nuit** — nocturnal

Night. Nuit comes from Latin noctem, "night," the root of English "nocturnal" and "nocturne," and English "night" is a Germanic relative of it. Bonne nuit means "good night."

2 **ciel** — celestial

Sky, heaven. Ciel comes from Latin caelum, "sky, heaven," the root of English "celestial." The rainbow in French is arc-en-ciel, "arch in the sky," and bleu ciel is "sky blue."

3 **mer** — marine

Sea. Mer comes from Latin mare, "sea," the root of English "marine," "maritime," and "submarine." Outre-mer means "overseas," and mal de mer is "seasickness."

4 **eau** — aquarium

Water. Eau comes from Latin aqua, "water," the root of English "aquarium" and "aqueduct," worn down over the centuries through Old French eve into a word pronounced simply "o." English meets it in "eau de toilette" and "eau de Cologne," "water of Cologne."

5 **mois** semester

Month. Mois comes from Latin mensis, "month," the root of English "menstrual" and "semester," a period of six months. Par mois means "per month."

6 **an** annual

Year. An comes from Latin annus, "year," the root of English "annual," "anniversary," and "per annum." It is used for counting years and ages, as in j'ai vingt ans, "I am twenty," and le jour de l'an, "New Year's Day."

7 **jour** journal

Day. Jour comes from Latin diurnum, "daily," the root of English "journal," a daily record, and "journey," originally a day's travel. English uses it in "soupe du jour," "soup of the day," and bonjour is literally "good day."

8 **temps** tempo

Time; weather. Temps comes from Latin tempus, "time," the root of English "temporary," "contemporary," and "tempo," and of the motto "tempus fugit," "time flies." It also means "weather": quel temps fait-il?, "what's the weather like?"

9 **fois** vice versa

Time, occasion (as in "once," "twice"). Fois comes from Latin vices, "turns," the root of "vice versa," "with the turns reversed." It counts occasions, une fois, "once," deux fois, "twice," and à la fois means "at the same time."

10 **monde** mundane

World. Monde comes from Latin mundus, "world," the root of English "mundane," worldly, ordinary. Tout le monde means "everyone," and English borrowed "beau monde," the fashionable world.

11 **terre** terrain

Earth, land, ground. Terre comes from Latin terra, "earth," the root of English "terrestrial," "territory," "terrace," and "terrain." The potato is pomme de terre, "apple of the earth," and "terra firma" is solid ground.

12 **île** isle

Island. Île comes from Latin insula, "island," through Old French isle, the source of English "isle"; the circumflex marks the s that English kept. Insula also gives English "peninsula," "almost an island," and "insulate." The region around Paris is the Île-de-France.

13 **côte** coast

Coast; rib; slope. Côte comes from Latin costa, "rib," and the circumflex marks the s that English "coast" kept, the coast being the land's flank. The Côte d'Azur is the Riviera, and côtelette, "little rib," gave English "cutlet."

14 **navire** navy

Ship. Navire comes from Latin navigium, "vessel," from navis, "ship," the root of English "navy," "naval," and "navigate." The nave of a church was named after the same word for its ship-like shape.

15 **aile** aileron

Wing. Aile comes from Latin ala, "wing." Its French diminutive aileron, "little wing," was borrowed by English for the hinged flaps on an airplane wing. The same Latin word named the side units of a Roman army, much as a "wing" of an army or a building does today.

16 **voler** volatile

To fly; to steal. Voler comes from Latin volare, "to fly," the root of English "volatile" and "volley." The "to steal" sense came from falconry, where the hawk flew at and seized its prey, and a vol-au-vent, "flight in the wind," is a pastry light enough to fly away.

17 **écran** screen

A screen. Écran comes from Old French escran, from Middle Dutch scherm, "screen, shield," with the r and the vowel swapping places. English "screen" probably comes from the same Old French word, by way of the northern French form escren.

18 **chercher** search

To search, to look for. Chercher comes from Latin circare, "to go around," from circus, "circle," and English "search" is the same word, borrowed from Anglo-French sercher. To search is to go round and round. Detective fiction made famous "cherchez la femme," "look for the woman."

19 **trouver** troubadour

To find. Trouver probably comes from Latin tropare, "to compose a poem," from tropus, "figure of speech," the root of English "trope." The sense moved from "invent" to "find," and the medieval troubadours were "finders" of songs. Je trouve que also means "I think that."

20 **quitter** quit

To leave. Quitter comes from Latin quietus, "at rest, quiet," through a medieval sense "to set free, to release from a debt." English borrowed it as "quit" and "acquit," and "quiet" is from the same Latin word. On the phone, ne quittez pas means "hold the line."

21 **perdre** perdition

To lose. Perdre comes from Latin perdere, "to destroy, to lose," from per-, "thoroughly," and dare, "to give," so "to give away completely." English keeps it in "perdition," utter ruin. A common phrase is perdre du temps, "to waste time."

22 **attendre** attend

To wait. Attendre comes from Latin attendere, "to stretch toward," ad-, "to," plus tendere, "to stretch," the same verb as English "attend." French kept the sense of straining toward a coming moment, while English kept the mind straining toward something. It is a false friend: "to attend" a meeting is assister à.

23 **arrêter** arrest

To stop, to arrest. Arrêter comes from Vulgar Latin arrestare, "to stop, to hold back," built on restare, "to stay behind," and English "arrest" is the same word. The circumflex marks the s that English kept. S'arrêter means "to stop" oneself.

24 **envoyer** envoy

To send. Envoyer comes from Late Latin inviare, "to put on the way," built on via, "road," as in English "via" and "voyage." Its participle gives English "envoy," a person sent with a message.

25 **comprendre** comprehend

To understand; to include. Comprendre comes from Latin comprehendere, "to grasp together," the source of English "comprehend." To understand an idea is to grasp it, and the sense "to include" survives in English "comprehensive."

26 **devenir** souvenir

To become. Devenir comes from Latin devenire, de- plus venire, "to come," so to become is to "come to be" something. Venire is the root of English "venue," "advent," and "souvenir," literally a thing that "comes to mind."

27 **parler** parley

To speak. Parler comes from late Latin parabolare, "to speak," from parabola, "speech, comparison," a borrowing of Greek parabole, the root of English "parable." English borrowed from the French "parley," "parlance," and "parliament," a place for talking. A phrasebook classic is parlez-vous français?, "do you speak French?"

28 **donner** donate

To give. Donner comes from Latin donare, "to give as a gift," from donum, "gift," the root of English "donate," "donor," and "donation." A common phrase is donner sur, "to look out onto," as in une fenêtre qui donne sur la mer, "a window overlooking the sea."

29 **dire** dictate

To say, to tell. Dire comes from Latin dicere, "to say," the root of English "diction," "dictate," "predict," and "verdict," a "true saying." Its participle dit is in c'est-à-dire, "that is to say."

30 **faire** fact

To do, to make. Faire comes from Latin facere, "to do, to make," the root of English "fact," "factory," and "manufacture," literally "made by hand." English keeps it in "laissez-faire," "let them do," and "savoir-faire," "knowing how to do."

31 **mettre** transmit

To put, to place. Mettre comes from Latin mittere, "to send, to let go," the root of English "mission," "transmit," "commit," and "permit." In late Latin the sense slid from "to send" to "to put," and the same verb gives "mise en scène," "putting on stage."

32 **suivre** sequel

To follow. Suivre comes from Latin sequi, "to follow," the root of English "sequel," "sequence," and "consequence." English borrowed from French "suite," a following set of rooms or pieces, and "pursue," from poursuivre. Suivez-moi means "follow me."

33 **venir** venue

To come. Venir comes from Latin venire, "to come," the root of English "venue," "advent," "convene," and "prevent." English borrowed "souvenir," literally "to come to mind." Venir de means "to have just": je viens de manger, "I have just eaten."

34 **montrer** demonstrate

To show. Montrer comes from Latin monstrare, "to point out, to show," the root of English "demonstrate." A related Latin monstrum, a warning sign, gave "monster." A montre is a watch, the thing that shows the time.

35 **penser** pensive

To think. Penser comes from Latin pensare, "to weigh," so thinking is weighing something in the mind. English "pensive" comes from the same verb, and "pansy" from its noun pensée, "thought," a flower given for remembrance.

36 **demander** mandate

To ask. Demander comes from Latin demandare, "to entrust, to hand over," from mandare, "to order," the root of English "mandate" and "command." English "demand" is the same word grown forceful, so it is a classic false friend: je vous demande means "I'm asking you."

37 **arriver** river

To arrive. Arriver comes from Latin ad ripam, "to the bank," the language of boats coming ashore, and English "arrive" is the same word. Ripa, "bank," also lies behind English "river." Arriver also means "to happen": qu'est-ce qui arrive?, "what is happening?"

38 **rester** rest

To stay, to remain. Rester comes from Latin restare, "to stay behind," from re-, "back," and stare, "to stand." English "rest," meaning "the remainder," as in "the rest of the story," was borrowed from the French noun reste. Rester is a false friend: it does not mean "to rest."

39 **décoller** collage

To take off (a plane); to come unstuck. Décoller is coller, "to stick, to glue," with dé-, "undo," so a plane that décolle "comes unstuck" from the ground. Coller comes from colle, "glue," from Greek kolla, "glue," the root of English "collage," art made by gluing things onto a surface.

40 **équipage** equip

Crew (of a ship or plane). Équipage comes from équiper, "to fit out," from Old Norse skipa, "to fit out a ship," from skip, "ship," the same word as English "ship." English "equip" comes from the French verb, so a crew is the people who equip a ship.

41 **pays** peasant

Country. Pays comes from Latin pagensis, "of the district," from pagus, "rural district." The same root gives paysan, "peasant," borrowed into English, and "pagan," first a country dweller. It appears in regional names such as Pays basque, "Basque Country."

42 **lien** ligament

A tie, a bond, a link. Lien comes from Latin ligamen, "a band, a tie," from ligare, "to bind." English borrowed lien itself as a legal word for a claim on someone's property until a debt is paid, and ligare also gives "ligament," "liaison," "ally," and "rely." On a web page, un lien is a link.

43 **loin** longitude

Far. Loin comes from Latin longe, "far off," from longus, "long," the root of English "longitude" and "prolong." What is far away lies a long way off. Common phrases are au loin, "in the distance," and loin de, "far from."

44 **seul** sole

Alone, only, single. Seul comes from Latin solus, "alone," the root of English "sole," "solo," and "solitude." Tout seul means "all alone," and un seul means "a single one."

45 **vrai** verify

True, real. Vrai comes from Latin verus, "true," the root of English "verify," "veracity," and "verdict," a "true saying." English "very" is the same word, borrowed from Old French verai, and once meant "true," as in "the very thing." C'est vrai means "that's true."

46 **homme** human

Man, human being. Homme comes from Latin homo, "human being," as in Homo sapiens, "wise human." The same root gives English "human," "humane," and "homicide," the killing of a person. The pronoun on, "one, people," is a worn-down form of the same Latin word.

47 **vie** vital

Life. Vie comes from Latin vita, "life," the root of English "vital" and "vitamin" and the "vita" of "curriculum vitae." English borrowed "c'est la vie," "that's life." Joie de vivre comes from the related verb vivre, "to live."

48 **preuve** proof

Proof, evidence. Preuve comes from Latin proba, "a test, a proof," from probare, "to test, to approve," the root of English "proof," "prove," "probe," and "probable." The phrase faire preuve de means "to show, to display": faire preuve de courage, "to show courage."

49 **incendie** incendiary

Fire, blaze. Incendie comes from Latin incendium, "a burning," from incendere, "to set on fire," built on candere, "to glow." English "incendiary," "causing fire," comes from the same verb, and candere also gives "candle." A common phrase is un incendie de forêt, "a forest fire."

50 **enquête** inquest

Investigation, inquiry. Enquête comes from Latin inquirere, "to search into," built on quaerere, "to seek," the root of English "inquiry" and "query." The circumflex marks the s that English kept in "inquest," an official investigation.

51 **fond** profound

Bottom; background; fund. Fond comes from Latin fundus, "bottom, base, piece of land," the root of English "fund," "foundation," and "profound," "deep to the bottom." The phrase au fond means "basically, deep down."

52 **lieu** location

Place, spot. Lieu comes from Latin locus, "place," the root of English "local" and "location." English borrowed it in "in lieu of," "in place of," from French au lieu de, "instead of." Avoir lieu means "to take place."

53 **colère** choleric

Anger. Colère comes from Latin cholera, "bile," from Greek khole, "bile," because ancient medicine blamed anger on an excess of yellow bile. The same root gives English "choleric," hot-tempered, and the disease "cholera."

54 **morceau** morsel

A piece, a bit, a morsel of something. Morceau comes from Old French morsel, from Latin morsus, "a bite," from mordere, "to bite." English "morsel," a mouthful, was borrowed from the Old French form, and mordere also gives "remorse," a biting back of the conscience.

55 **boîte** box

Box. Boîte comes from Late Latin buxida, from Greek pyxis, "a box," named for the boxwood it was carved from. English "box" comes from the same Greek word, and the circumflex marks the s of Old French boiste. Une boîte de nuit is a nightclub.

56 **noir** film noir

Black. Noir comes from Latin niger, nigrum, "black," the root of English "denigrate," literally "to blacken." English borrowed it in "film noir," dark crime films, and "pinot noir," the black grape.

57 **carte** chart

Card, map, menu. Carte comes from Latin charta, "sheet of papyrus, paper," the source of English "card," "chart," and "cartoon," first a drawing on heavy paper. English uses it in "à la carte," "from the menu," and "carte blanche," a "blank card" to fill in as one likes.

58 **court** curt

Short. Court comes from Latin curtus, "cut short," the root of English "curt" and "curtail." French uses it in court-métrage, "short film," and court-circuit, "short circuit."

59 **nouveau** novel

New. Nouveau comes from Latin novellus, "new, young," a diminutive of novus, "new," the root of English "novel," "novelty," and "innovate." English borrowed it in "art nouveau," the "new art" of around 1900, and "nouveau riche," "newly rich."

60 **rien** republic

Nothing. Rien comes from Latin rem, "a thing," the res of "res publica," the "public thing" behind English "republic." In ne ... rien, "not a thing," it absorbed the negative and came to mean "nothing" on its own. It gives de rien, "you're welcome," literally "of nothing."

61 **toujours** journey

Always. Toujours is tous jours, "all days," from tout, "all," and jour, "day." Jour comes from Latin diurnum, "daily," the root of English "journal," a daily record, and "journey," a day's travel. Pour toujours means "forever."

62 **jamais** déjà vu

Never; ever. Jamais is ja, "already, now," from Latin iam, plus mais, "more," from Latin magis, so it first meant "ever more, ever." Paired with ne it means "never": je ne l'ai jamais vu, "I've never seen him." The same ja is in déjà, "already," as in "déjà vu."

63 **puis** postpone

Then, next, afterward. Puis comes from Latin post, "after," the "post-" of "postpone" and the P.S. of a "postscript." It is in depuis, "since," and et puis, "and then."

64 **sans** sans serif

Without. Sans comes from Latin sine, "without," the sine of "sine qua non," "without which not," an essential condition. English uses sans itself in "sans serif," type without serifs, and Shakespeare ended a famous speech "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

65 **sous** submarine

Under, below. Sous comes from Latin subtus, "beneath," built on sub, "under," the "sub-" of "submarine" and "subway." English uses it in "sous-chef," the cook just under the head chef, and "sous-vide," "under vacuum."

66 **sur** surface

On, upon, over. Sur comes from Latin super, "over, above," the root of English "superior." English borrowed it through French in "surface," literally "over the face," "surname," and "surreal," "beyond the real."

67 **pendant** pending

During; a pendant (hanging ornament). Pendant is the present participle of pendre, "to hang," from Latin pendere, the root of English "pendulum," "suspend," and "pending." "During" comes from the sense of a matter still "hanging," undecided: pendant la nuit, "during the night," and pendant que, "while."

68 **chez** casino

At the home of, at the place of. Chez comes from Latin casa, "hut, house," the casa of Spanish and Italian, and of "casino," literally "little house." Chez moi means "at my place," and many restaurants are named Chez plus the owner's name.

69 **entre** interval

Between, among. Entre comes from Latin inter, "between," the "inter-" of "international" and "interval." English uses it in "entre nous," "between us," for a secret, and in "entrepreneur," one who "undertakes" a venture.

70 **dernier** retro

Last. Dernier comes from a spoken Latin word built on de retro, "from behind," the retro of English "retro" and "retroactive," so the last is the one at the back. English borrowed "dernier cri," "the last cry," for the latest fashion. Derrière, "behind," comes from the same de retro.

30 more everyday words

71 **main** — manual

Hand. Main comes from Latin manus, "hand," the root of English "manual," "manicure," "manuscript," "written by hand," and "manufacture," "made by hand." It also hides in maintenant, "now," and in main-d'œuvre, "labour," literally "the hand of work."

72 **tête** — testy

Head. Tête comes from Latin testa, "pot, shell," a jokey word for the head that replaced caput. The circumflex marks the lost s, kept in English "testy," once "headstrong." English borrowed "tête-à-tête," "head to head," a private talk.

73 **œil** — binoculars

Eye. Œil comes from Latin oculus, "eye," the root of English "ocular," "oculist," and "binoculars," "for two eyes." English borrowed it in "trompe-l'œil," "fool the eye," a painting so real it looks three-dimensional. Its plural is the very different-looking yeux.

74 **pied** — pedal

Foot. Pied comes from Latin pes, pedis, "foot," the root of English "pedal" and "pedestrian." English "pedigree" is Old French pied de grue, "crane's foot," for the branching lines of a family tree. French says à pied, "on foot," and "pied-à-terre," "foot on the ground," is a small second home.

75 **cœur** — courage

Heart. Cœur comes from Latin cor, cordis, "heart," the root of English "cordial," "courage," and "accord." English "heart" is a related word on the Germanic side. To learn par cœur is to learn "by heart," and Sacré-Cœur in Paris is the basilica of the Sacred Heart.

76 **sang** sanguine

Blood. Sang comes from Latin sanguis, "blood," the root of English "sanguine," once the cheerful temperament thought to come from blood. English borrowed "sang-froid," "cold blood," for calm under pressure.

77 **dent** dental

A tooth. Dent comes from Latin dens, dentis, "tooth," the root of English "dental" and "dentist." The "dandelion" is dent de lion, "lion's tooth," for its jagged leaves.

78 **langue** language

Tongue; also, a language. Langue comes from Latin lingua, "tongue, speech," the root of English "linguist," "lingual," and "bilingual." English "language" comes from French langage, built on langue. The phrase langue maternelle means "mother tongue."

79 **pain** companion

Bread. Pain comes from Latin panis, "bread," the root of English "pantry," first a bread store, and "companion," one who shares bread. English bakeries use the French name in "pain au chocolat," "chocolate bread." English "pain" looks the same but is a different word, French peine.

80 **lait** lactose

Milk. Lait comes from Latin lac, lactis, "milk," the root of English "lactose" and "lactate." Its Greek relative gala, "milk," gives "galaxy," named for the Milky Way. English knows the French word from "café au lait," "coffee with milk."

81 **œuf** oval

Egg. Œuf comes from Latin ovum, "egg," the root of English "oval," literally "egg-shaped," and "ovary." English "egg" is a separate Norse word.

82 **sel** salad

Salt. Sel comes from Latin sal, "salt," the root of English "salad," first salted greens, and "sauce." English "salt" is a Germanic relative of the same word. Sel et poivre is "salt and pepper."

83 **fromage** form

Cheese. Fromage comes from Latin forma, "mold, shape," the root of English "form." Cheese was named for being pressed into a mold. Italian formaggio has the same origin, and fromage de chèvre is "goat cheese."

84 **vin** vinegar

Wine. Vin is Latin vinum, "wine," which takes the form vino in the proverb in vino veritas, "in wine there is truth." Un verre de vin rouge is "a glass of red wine." English "wine" is the same Latin word, borrowed early by the Germanic peoples, and "vinegar" is vin aigre, "sour wine."

85 **faim** famine

Hunger. Faim comes from Latin fames, "hunger," the root of English "famine" and "famished." French says avoir faim, "to be hungry," literally "to have hunger": j'ai faim, "I'm hungry."

86 **fils** filial

Son. Fils comes from Latin filius, "son," the root of English "filial." Its Anglo-Norman form fiz gave English surnames in Fitz-, so Fitzgerald means "son of Gerald." French adds fils after a name the way English adds "Junior."

87 **frère** fraternal

Brother. Frère comes from Latin frater, "brother," the root of English "fraternal" and "fraternity," and English "friar" comes from its Old French form frere. It is the frère of the song "Frère Jacques," "Brother John."

88 **père** paternal

Father. Père comes from Latin pater, "father," the root of English "paternal," "patriarch," and "patriot." English "father" is a related word on the Germanic side. The name shows up in Paris's Père Lachaise cemetery.

89 **mère** maternal

Mother. Mère comes from Latin mater, "mother," the root of English "maternal," "matron," and "matrix," and of "alma mater," "nourishing mother," a graduate's school. English "mother" is a related word on the Germanic side.

90 **voir** vision

To see. Voir comes from Latin videre, "to see," the root of English "video," literally "I see," "vision," and "evident." It is in "au revoir," "until seeing again," and "déjà vu," "already seen."

91 **entendre** intend

To hear, to understand. Entendre comes from Latin intendere, "to stretch toward, to direct one's mind," the root of English "intend." English borrowed it in "double entendre," a phrase with a second, often risqué, meaning. S'entendre means "to get along."

92 **manger** mandible

To eat. Manger comes from Latin manducare, "to chew," from mandere, "to chew," the root of English "mandible," the jawbone. English "manger," a feeding trough for animals, comes from an Old French noun built on this verb, and "blancmange" is literally "white eating."

93 **boire** beverage

To drink. Boire comes from Latin bibere, "to drink," the root of English "imbibe" and "beverage." A tip in French is a pourboire, literally "for drinking."

94 **écrire** script

To write. Écrire comes from Latin scribere, "to write," the root of English "scribe," "script," and "describe." The opening é stands where Old French had es-, escrire, keeping the s of "scribe." A writer is un écrivain.

95 **lire** lecture

To read. Lire comes from Latin legere, "to read, to gather," the root of English "legible," "lecture," and "legend," literally "a thing to be read." The idea is gathering up letters with the eye, and the same verb gives "collect" and "select."

96 **soleil** solar

Sun. Soleil comes from Latin soliculus, "little sun," an affectionate form of sol, "sun." The same sol gives English "solar," "solstice," and "parasol," a shield "against the sun."

97 **arbre** arboretum

Tree. Arbre comes from Latin arbor, "tree," the root of English "arboretum," a garden planted with trees. A Christmas tree is an arbre de Noël.

98 **école** school

School. École comes from Latin schola, from Greek skhole, "leisure," since study and discussion were what free time was for. English "school" and "scholar" come from the same word. The initial é stands for a lost s, the s that English kept in "school."

99 **fête** feast

Party, holiday, festival. Fête comes from Latin festa, "feast days," and its circumflex marks the s that English kept in "feast" and "festival." English has also borrowed fête itself for a garden party or a celebration. Every June France holds the Fête de la Musique, a nationwide street-music festival.

100 **chien** canine

Dog. Chien comes from Latin canis, "dog," the root of English "canine" and the Canary Islands, "islands of dogs." Latin ca- often became French che- or chi-, as in cheval from caballus.

Part 3: Flight MH370

This is a true story, and it is how the stories in the Superlexa app start out. About 8 out of every 10 words are cognates, names or small grammar words, so you can follow it from your first day.

Try each paragraph in French first and trust your guesses. Words in red are from the list in Part 2. The English translation is in the tinted box under each paragraph, so you can check yourself as you go.

Learn these small words first

le, la, les, l' the
un, une a, an
des some
de, du, d' of, from
à, au, aux to, at
en, dans in
et and
ou or
que that, which
qui who, which
avec with
pour for
par by
son, sa, ses his, her, its
leur, leurs their
ce, cet, cette, ces this, these
il, elle, ils he, she, they
ne … pas not
plus more
mais but
est, était is, was
a, avait has, had

Vol MH370

Le 8 mars 2014, un avion de la compagnie Malaysia Airlines a **décollé** de l'aéroport de Kuala Lumpur. Sa destination était Beijing, la capitale de la Chine. Le **vol** a reçu le numéro MH370. À bord, il y avait 227 passagers et 12 membres d'**équipage**, donc 239 personnes au total. L'avion était un Boeing 777, un modèle moderne, spacieux et très fiable, utilisé par des compagnies aériennes partout dans le **monde**.

On March 8, 2014, a Malaysia Airlines plane took off from Kuala Lumpur airport. Its destination was Beijing, the capital of China. The flight was given the number MH370. On board, there were 227 passengers and 12 crew members, making 239 people in total. The plane was a Boeing 777, a modern, spacious, and very reliable model used by airlines all over the world.

Le capitaine s'appelait Zaharie Ahmad Shah. Il avait 53 **ans** et une longue expérience: plus de 18 000 heures de **vol**. Le copilote, Fariq Abdul Hamid, avait 27 **ans**. Les passagers **venaient** de différentes nationalités. La majorité était chinoise. Il y avait aussi des Malaisiens, des Indonésiens, des Australiens, des Indiens, des Américains, des Français et d'autres.

The captain's name was Zaharie Ahmad Shah. He was 53 years old and had extensive experience: more than 18,000 flight hours. The first officer, Fariq Abdul Hamid, was 27 years old. The passengers came from different nationalities. The majority were Chinese. There were also Malaysians, Indonesians, Australians, Indians, Americans, French, and others.

Le **décollage** a eu **lieu** à 00h41, **pendant** la **nuit**. Les premières minutes ont été normales. L'avion est monté à son altitude de

croisière, environ 10 000 mètres. Le **ciel** était calme. La distance jusqu'à Beijing **demandait** un trajet d'à peu près six heures de **vol**.

Takeoff took place at 00:41, during the night. The first few minutes were normal. The plane climbed to its cruising altitude, about 10,000 meters. The sky was calm. The distance to Beijing required a journey of approximately six hours of flight.

À 01h19, le capitaine a **parlé** avec le contrôle aérien de la Malaisie. Son **dernier** message radio a été simple: « Good night, Malaysian three seven zero. » Quelques minutes après, l'avion a **quitté** l'espace aérien malaisien et a dû passer **sous** le contrôle du Vietnam. Mais l'avion n'a **jamais** contacté le Vietnam.

At 01:19, the captain spoke with Malaysian air traffic control. His last radio message was simple: "Good night, Malaysian three seven zero." A few minutes later, the plane left Malaysian airspace and was supposed to pass under Vietnam's control. But the plane never contacted Vietnam.

À 01h21, le transpondeur de l'avion a **arrêté** d'émettre. Le transpondeur est le système qui transmet la position, l'altitude et l'identité de l'appareil aux radars civils. **Sans** ce signal, l'avion est **devenu** presque invisible pour le contrôle aérien normal. **Sur** les **écrans**, le point MH370 a simplement disparu.

At 01:21, the plane's transponder stopped transmitting. The transponder is the system that transmits the aircraft's position, altitude, and identity to civil radar. Without this signal, the plane became almost invisible to normal air traffic control. On the screens, the MH370 blip simply disappeared.

L'avion avait aussi un système appelé ACARS, qui **envoie** des messages techniques **sur** l'état des moteurs et de l'appareil. Ce système a **arrêté** de transmettre **entre** 01h07 et 01h37. La connexion satellite de l'avion, elle, a toutefois continué à échanger

de brefs signaux automatiques avec un satellite **pendant** encore plusieurs heures.

The plane also had a system called ACARS, which sends technical messages about the condition of the engines and the aircraft. This system stopped transmitting between 01:07 and 01:37. The plane's satellite connection, however, kept exchanging brief automatic signals with a satellite for several more hours.

Pendant longtemps cette **nuit**-là, personne n'a **compris** la situation. Les contrôleurs ont **pensé** à un problème de communication. Ils ont essayé de contacter l'avion par radio et par d'autres canaux. **Sans** résultat. Les autorités ont commencé à **comprendre** qu'un avion moderne, avec 239 personnes, avait totalement disparu.

For a long time that night, no one understood the situation. Controllers thought it was a communication problem. They tried to contact the plane by radio and through other channels. Without success. Authorities began to realize that a modern airplane, with 239 people, had completely disappeared.

Les premières **recherches** ont commencé dans la **mer** de Chine du Sud, **sur** la route normale **entre** la Malaisie et le Vietnam. Des bateaux et des avions de plusieurs **pays** ont exploré cette zone. Ils n'ont **rien trouvé**: pas de débris, pas de fragments, pas de traces de carburant **sur** l'**eau**.

Initial searches began in the South China Sea, along the normal route between Malaysia and Vietnam. Ships and planes from several countries explored this area. They found nothing: no debris, no fragments, no traces of fuel on the water.

Puis les militaires malaisiens ont révélé une information importante. Leur radar militaire, différent du radar civil, avait détecté un avion non identifié après 01h21. Cet avion a **fait** demi-tour. Au **lieu** de continuer vers le nord-est, il est revenu vers l'ouest, il a traversé la péninsule malaisienne, et il a continué au-dessus du

détroit de Malacca. Ensuite, le radar militaire a **perdu** le contact aussi. **Pendant** que l'avion passait près de l'**île** de Penang, le téléphone du copilote s'est connecté une seconde à une antenne au sol, mais il n'y a eu aucun appel et aucun message.

Then the Malaysian military revealed an important piece of information. Their military radar, distinct from civil radar, had detected an unidentified aircraft after 01:21. This plane made a U-turn. Instead of continuing northeast, it turned back west, crossed the Malaysian peninsula, and continued over the Strait of Malacca. Then, military radar lost contact as well. While the plane was passing near Penang Island, the first officer's phone connected for a second to a cell tower on the ground, but there was no call and no message.

À ce moment, l'histoire est **devenue** un **vrai** mystère. Pourquoi l'avion a-t-il changé de direction? Qui a programmé ce changement? Le système de pilotage automatique a **suivi** une **nouvelle** route précise, ce qui indique une action humaine dans le cockpit, mais les experts n'ont pas pu **dire** qui et pourquoi.

At that point, the story became a real mystery. Why did the plane change direction? Who programmed this change? The autopilot system followed a precise new route, which indicates human action in the cockpit, but experts could not say who or why.

Au début de l'**enquête**, un autre détail a attiré l'attention. Deux passagers avaient utilisé des passeports **volés**, un autrichien et un italien. La police a d'abord **pensé** à un acte terroriste. Mais l'**enquête** a **montré** que ces deux **hommes** étaient des Iraniens qui voulaient émigrer en Europe. Ils n'avaient aucun **lien** avec la disparition de l'avion.

Early in the investigation, another detail caught attention. Two passengers had used stolen passports, one Austrian and one Italian. Police initially thought of a terrorist act. But the investigation showed that these two men were Iranians who wanted to emigrate to Europe. They had no connection to the plane's disappearance.

Il **restait** un **dernier** indice. Le Boeing 777 possède un système qui communique automatiquement avec un satellite de la compagnie Inmarsat. Toutes les heures environ, le satellite et l'avion ont échangé un signal automatique, un contact technique très **court**. Ces signaux ne **donnaient** pas la position exacte, mais ils **donnaient** la distance **entre** l'avion et le satellite. Le **dernier** signal complet a eu **lieu** à 08h11, presque sept heures après le **décollage**.

There remained one last clue. The Boeing 777 has a system that automatically communicates with a satellite owned by the company Inmarsat. Roughly every hour, the satellite and the plane exchanged an automatic signal, a very short technical ping. These signals did not give the exact position, but they provided the distance between the plane and the satellite. The last complete signal occurred at 08:11, almost seven hours after takeoff.

Des experts en mathématiques et en communication ont analysé ces signaux **pendant** des semaines. Leur conclusion: après le détroit de Malacca, l'avion a tourné vers le sud et il a **volé pendant** des heures au-dessus de l'océan Indien, très **loin** de toute **terre**, dans une direction opposée à sa destination. Le carburant s'est terminé vers 08h19. L'avion est probablement tombé dans une région isolée de l'océan Indien du sud, à l'ouest de l'Australie.

Experts in mathematics and communication analyzed these signals for weeks. Their conclusion: after the Strait of Malacca, the plane turned south and flew for hours over the Indian Ocean, far from any land, in the opposite direction of its destination. Fuel ran out around 08:19. The plane likely crashed into an isolated region of the southern Indian Ocean, west of Australia.

Cette zone est une des plus difficiles de la planète. L'**eau** y est très profonde, souvent plus de 4 000 mètres. Le **fond** de l'océan est montagneux, avec des volcans **sous**-marins et des canyons. Les tempêtes sont fréquentes. Aucun port n'est proche. Chaque bateau

devait naviguer plusieurs **jours** seulement pour **arriver** dans la zone de **recherche**.

This area is one of the most challenging on the planet. The water there is very deep, often over 4,000 meters. The ocean floor is mountainous, with underwater volcanoes and canyons. Storms are frequent. No port is nearby. Each ship had to sail for several days just to reach the search zone.

Pendant les premiers **jours**, les **recherches** ont été dispersées. Une partie des équipes **cherchait** encore dans la **mer** de Chine du Sud, à l'est. Une autre partie commençait dans le détroit de Malacca, à l'ouest. Cette confusion a coûté du **temps** précieux, parce que les autorités ont communiqué les informations du radar militaire avec beaucoup de retard.

During the first few days, search efforts were scattered. Part of the teams was still searching in the South China Sea, to the east. Another part was starting in the Strait of Malacca, to the west. This confusion cost valuable time, because the authorities communicated the military radar information with a significant delay.

En avril 2014, un **navire** australien, l'Ocean Shield, a détecté des signaux acoustiques réguliers **sous** l'**eau**. Beaucoup de personnes ont **pensé** aux **boîtes noires**, parce que ces **boîtes** émettent un signal **pendant** environ un **mois** après un accident. Les **recherches** se sont concentrées **sur** cette zone. Après plusieurs semaines, la conclusion a été négative: ces sons ne **venaient** pas de l'avion. Les **vraies boîtes noires** n'ont **jamais** été localisées.

In April 2014, an Australian ship, the Ocean Shield, detected regular underwater acoustic signals. Many people thought of the black boxes, because these boxes transmit a signal for about a month after an accident. Search efforts focused on this area. After several weeks, the conclusion was negative: these sounds did not come from the plane. The real black boxes were never located.

L'Australie a coordonné les opérations. Des **navires** spécialisés ont utilisé des sonars pour créer des **cartes** du **fond** marin. Des robots **sous**-marins ont examiné les zones les plus intéressantes. Des avions ont observé la surface chaque **jour**. Plusieurs **fois**, des images satellite ont **montré** des objets qui flottaient, mais après vérification, ce n'était pas l'avion: c'étaient des conteneurs, des filets de pêche ou d'autres objets.

Australia coordinated the operations. Specialized vessels used sonar to map the seafloor. Underwater robots examined the most interesting areas. Aircraft scanned the surface every day. Several times, satellite images showed floating objects, but upon verification, it was not the plane: they were shipping containers, fishing nets, or other objects.

Les **mois** ont passé. Les familles des passagers ont **attendu** des informations, souvent en **colère** contre les autorités et contre la compagnie. Les explications changeaient, les communications étaient confuses, et **pendant** longtemps il n'y a eu aucune **preuve** physique.

Months passed. The families of the passengers waited for information, often angry at the authorities and the airline. Explanations kept changing, communications were confusing, and for a long time there was no physical evidence.

La première **preuve** est arrivée en juillet 2015. **Sur** une plage de l'**île** de la Réunion, dans l'océan Indien, un **homme** a **trouvé** un grand **morceau** d'**aile**. Les experts ont identifié un flaperon, une partie mobile de l'**aile** du Boeing 777. Un numéro de série a confirmé l'origine: cette pièce **venait** bien du **vol** MH370. La distance **entre** la Réunion et la zone de **recherche** est énorme,

mais les courants de l'océan Indien vont dans cette direction, donc le résultat était logique.

The first piece of evidence arrived in July 2015. On a beach on Réunion Island, in the Indian Ocean, a man found a large piece of a wing. Experts identified it as a flaperon, a movable part of the Boeing 777's wing. A serial number confirmed its origin: this part indeed came from flight MH370. The distance between Réunion and the search area is enormous, but Indian Ocean currents flow in that direction, so the finding made sense.

Après ce flaperon, d'autres débris ont été **trouvés sur** les **côtes** du Mozambique, de la Tanzanie, de Madagascar et de l'Afrique du Sud. Plusieurs pièces ont été confirmées ou considérées comme très probables. La position de ces débris a confirmé l'idée générale: l'avion a fini sa route dans l'océan Indien du sud. Mais aucun de ces objets n'a **donné** la position précise de l'appareil.

Following this flaperon, other debris was found on the coasts of Mozambique, Tanzania, Madagascar, and South Africa. Several pieces were confirmed or considered highly likely. The location of these debris pieces confirmed the general idea: the plane ended its flight in the southern Indian Ocean. But none of these items provided the exact location of the aircraft.

La police a aussi analysé le simulateur de **vol** personnel du capitaine, installé **chez** lui. **Sur** cet ordinateur, les experts ont **trouvé** les traces d'une route vers le sud de l'océan Indien, proche de la trajectoire finale supposée de l'avion. Pour certains, c'est un signe important. Pour d'autres, un pilote passionné teste beaucoup de routes différentes, et un **seul** fichier ne prouve pas une intention.

Police also analyzed the captain's personal flight simulator, installed at his home. On this computer, experts found traces of a route toward the southern Indian Ocean, close to the plane's assumed final trajectory. For some, this is an important clue. For others, a passionate pilot tests many different routes, and a single file does not prove intent.

La grande **recherche sous**-marine officielle a exploré environ 120 000 kilomètres carrés du **fond** de l'océan. Elle a coûté plus de 150 millions de dollars, partagés **entre** la Malaisie, l'Australie et la Chine. Des scientifiques australiens ont étudié les courants **pendant** des années. Ils ont **mis** dans l'**eau** des objets similaires à des débris d'avion et ils ont observé leur mouvement, pour définir les zones probables. En janvier 2017, après presque trois **ans**, les trois gouvernements ont suspendu l'opération. Ils n'avaient pas **trouvé** l'avion.

The major official underwater search explored about 120,000 square kilometers of the ocean floor. It cost more than 150 million dollars, shared among Malaysia, Australia, and China. Australian scientists studied the currents for years. They placed objects similar to plane debris into the water and observed their movement to define probable areas. In January 2017, after nearly three years, the three governments suspended the operation. They had not found the plane.

En 2018, une entreprise privée américaine, Ocean Infinity, a proposé un **nouveau** contrat: paiement seulement en cas de succès. Ses **navires** modernes ont utilisé une flotte de robots **sous**-marins autonomes, capables d'explorer une grande surface en peu de **temps**. Cette **recherche** a couvert une zone additionnelle très étendue. Le résultat a été le même: **rien**.

In 2018, a private American company, Ocean Infinity, proposed a new contract: payment only in the event of success. Its modern vessels used a fleet of autonomous underwater robots capable of exploring a large area in a short time. This search covered a vast additional area. The result was the same: nothing.

L'**enquête** officielle finale de la Malaisie est sortie en juillet 2018. Elle a admis une réalité simple: **sans** l'avion et **sans** les **boîtes noires**, l'équipe ne pouvait pas déterminer la cause de la disparition. Elle a critiqué le contrôle aérien, trop lent à **donner**

l'alarme cette **nuit**-là. Mais elle n'a pas accusé une personne précise et elle n'a pas confirmé une théorie unique.

Malaysia's final official investigation report came out in July 2018. It admitted a simple reality: without the plane and without the black boxes, the team could not determine the cause of the disappearance. It criticized air traffic control for being too slow to raise the alarm that night. But it did not blame a specific person and did not confirm a single theory.

Plusieurs hypothèses existent. Certains experts **pensent** à une action délibérée d'une personne dans le cockpit, à cause de la route précise vers le sud, dans une région **sans** aéroport et **sans** témoins. D'autres imaginent un **incendie** ou une panne technique, avec un **équipage** inconscient à cause d'un problème d'oxygène, et un avion en pilotage automatique jusqu'à la fin du carburant. Aucune de ces versions n'a de **preuve** directe. La police a examiné la **vie** du capitaine, du copilote et des passagers, **sans trouver** une raison claire.

Several hypotheses exist. Some experts suspect a deliberate act by someone in the cockpit, due to the precise route south into a region without airports or witnesses. Others imagine a fire or a technical failure, with an unconscious crew due to an oxygen issue, and the plane on autopilot until it ran out of fuel. None of these versions has direct evidence. Police examined the lives of the captain, the first officer, and the passengers without finding a clear motive.

La disparition du MH370 a eu des conséquences concrètes pour l'aviation. Les autorités internationales ont **demandé** un meilleur système de **suivi** des avions au-dessus des océans, avec une position transmise plus souvent. Aujourd'hui, un avion de ligne moderne est plus difficile à **perdre** complètement.

The disappearance of MH370 had practical consequences for aviation. International authorities demanded better aircraft tracking systems over oceans, with positions transmitted more frequently. Today, a modern airliner is much harder to lose completely.

En 2025, la Malaisie a signé un **nouveau** contrat avec Ocean Infinity pour reprendre les **recherches** dans une **nouvelle** zone, définie par des analyses récentes des signaux satellite, des courants et des débris. Le principe est **resté** le même: paiement seulement en cas de découverte de l'avion.

In 2025, Malaysia signed a new contract with Ocean Infinity to resume searches in a new area defined by recent analyses of satellite signals, ocean currents, and debris. The principle remained the same: payment only upon discovery of the plane.

Plus de dix **ans** après la **nuit** du 8 mars 2014, la position exacte de l'avion et la raison de sa route vers le sud sont **toujours** inconnues. 239 personnes sont montées dans un avion normal pour un **vol** de **nuit** normal, et cet avion n'est **jamais arrivé**.

More than ten years after the night of March 8, 2014, the exact location of the plane and the reason for its southward route remain unknown. 239 people boarded a normal plane for a normal night flight, and that plane never arrived.

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