

# Why Learn French?

Excerpts take from the “Why Learn French?” brochure published by Southern Illinois University’s chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French. Some information may have changed since the original publishing date of this

## **The Reasons May Surprise You...**

### **French Means BUSINESS!**

French is the second most frequently used language of the Internet. If you choose a career in business, it is likely that you will do business with one or more French-speaking countries around the globe. Consider these facts:

- French is an official language of Canada, our major trading partner. Montreal is the second largest French-speaking city in the world, and U.S.-Canadian trade is the largest two-way trade in the world.
- France, the world’s fourth largest economy, is at the geographical center of Europe, the world’s largest market (370 million consumers). French-speaking European countries include Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Monaco, and parts of Italy and Spain.
- Many American companies are firmly implanted in Europe. Ford made Bordeaux its world headquarters for the production of automatic transmissions; Motorola made the Paris region its world center for research and development in cellular communications; and Hewlett Packard established its worldwide center of telecommunications in Grenoble.
- French-speaking African countries represent an area larger than the U.S.

### **French Means JOBS!**

Over 1,200 French companies in the U.S. employ nearly half a million Americans. You may associate French with careers in high fashion, fine art, literature, and gourmet food, but French is also an excellent tool for careers in government, business, science, and technology. The following examples demonstrate the broad range of opportunities available in French:

- Over 1,200 French companies in the U.S. employ nearly half a million Americans. Familiar U.S. manufacturers that are French-owned include Mack Trucks, Zenith, RCA-Thomson, Bic, American National Can Corporation, and Dannon.
- Jobs requiring or preferring knowledge of French include titles such as product design engineer, programmer analyst, translator, marketing representative, language instructor for the CIA, exchange program coordinator, and NT network administrator.
- France and the U.S. have long shared aerospace technology – French astronauts participate in U.S. space flights and France’s Ariane rocket

launches American satellites. France has the world's second largest aeronautics industry. In fact, all U.S. Coast Guard helicopters are made by Aérospatiale in Toulouse.

- Some prominent French inventions include: the smart card (with an embedded computer chip), the Minitel (an electronic telephone directory and online videotext network), fiber optics, and HDTV. France's TGV is the world's fastest train at 322 mph.
- The French play a major international role in medicine and science. The greater Paris area has the highest concentration of mathematicians in the world; three French-trained physicists have won the Nobel Prize in the 1990s; and the Human Genome Project is located in Paris.

### **French Means WORLD TRAVEL!**

With nearly 75 million visitors in 2004, France is the number one tourist destination in the world. Even if your career doesn't directly involve French, it is likely that you will use it as a traveler. French is the official language of 33 countries and is widely spoken in at least 10 others. Paris is the site of many international conferences and conventions.

### **French Means GLOBAL COMMUNICATION!**

French is...

- The second most frequently used language of the Internet;
- The second most frequently taught foreign language worldwide after English;
- An official language and a working language of the Olympic Games and the United Nations;
- One of the two official working languages at the International Labor Bureau, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Red Cross.

### **Explore these WEB SITES:**

- American Association of Teachers of French – <http://www.frenchteachers.org>
- Embassy of France – [www.info-france-usa.org](http://www.info-france-usa.org)
- Office of Science and Technology – [www.france-science.org](http://www.france-science.org)
- Québec Government – [www.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.gouv.qc.ca)