

**Speaking French with
Miss Mason and François**

Volume 1

A compilation of Gouin series

Compiled by Allyson D. Adrian, PhD



CHERRYDALE
PRESS

Speaking French with Miss Mason and François, Volume 1
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Contents

Acknowledgements	iv
Meet Miss Mason and François	v
How to use this volume	viii
Series 1: I open the book	2
Series 2: I sharpen my pencil	4
Series 3: I put three pencils in the pencil case	6
Series 4: I get up	8
Series 5: I hug my grandmother	10
Series 6: I offer a flower to my grandmother	12
Series 7: I am a child of God	14
Series 8: I wash my hands	16
Series 9: I make green	18
Series 10: I paint a picture	20
Series 11: Set the table, please	22
Series 12: The chair	24
Series 13: I sit in an easy chair and I sleep	26
Series 14: I wake up	28
Series 15: I write	30
Series 16: I write on the board	32
Series 17: I count	34
Series 18: I fall	36
Series 19: I wash my face	38
Series 20: We're going to a restaurant	40
Series 21: I pack my backpack	42
Series 22: I unpack my backpack	44
Series 23: I try to write	46
Series 24: I am an artist	48
Series 25: I play with a ball	50
Series 26: I read an interesting book	52

Series 27: I am cold	54
Series 28: I play tag	56
Series 29: My dog	58
Series 30: We go on a picnic	60
Series 31: I go out in the rain	62
Series 32: The weather is good	64
Series 33: Shannelie plants a flower	66
Series 34: John paints a plant	68
Series 35: Mary makes green	70
Series 36: I open the door of my room	72
Series 37: I am thirsty	74
Series 38: Arthur sells lemonade	76
Series 39: My two dogs, Milo and Snoopy	78
Series 40: I scare a bird	80
Series 41: I play in the snow	82
Series 42: I get ready for bed	84

Meet Miss Mason and François

Why are we studying French this way?

If you are like me, you may wonder why we learn things in a particular way; certainly the methods in *Speaking French with Miss Mason and François* are unique. I can best explain them to you by introducing you to Miss Mason and François. They lived in the days of Charles Dickens and Florence Nightingale—the latter half of the 1800s—but their ideas are amazingly fresh today and will help you learn French.

Miss Charlotte Mason liked a good joke and being outside in the woods. People who met her say that she always made them feel better about themselves. She lived in Victorian England, but her ideas were not typical. For instance, many people believed poor children couldn't learn; she knew that wasn't true. Her own family had not been wealthy; the U.S. Civil War had been bad for her father's business. And her parents died by the time she was sixteen. She knew that even poor orphans could learn. She thought all children should read the best authors, hear great composers' music, observe the great artists' paintings, and spend time outside observing the many and varied works of the Creator. She also believed that every family should be able to connect with families from other countries by learning to speak several languages.

Though Miss Mason probably never met Monsieur François Gouin in person, his ideas inspired her. He was a Frenchman who tried unsuccessfully to learn German. He took classes, then he memorized words from a dictionary, but he still couldn't speak German. One day he asked German children to teach him how to say the steps to opening a door. He found that if he said the German sentences and acted them out, he could remember them! He was so excited that he created sets of sentences to describe everything he saw and did *in German*. Each set described a single activity: how to get water from the well, how to light a fire, how an acorn grows into a tree, and even how the shepherd walks by with his dogs.

François opened language schools where people learned languages using these sets, which he called "Gouin series." His students learned to think and speak about *all of life* in other languages. Miss Mason used his method and had such success that many students were soon learning more than three languages at a time—and they were only studying each one for a few minutes at a time two or three times a week.

Gouin saw that it is hard to remember lists, but easy to remember how *to do* things in a logical order. That is why we are not learning lists of *things* in French, but rather we are learning *how to do things* in French. The first thing you learn in a Gouin series are the verbs. Miss Mason called verbs the "king

words.” Why? You cannot have a sentence without verbs. Repeat the verbs slowly until you know them, then learn the rest of the sentence. To speak French with others, you need to know verbs.

I studied German when I was young. My mother used to tell me that I would know German when I could think it or, better yet, dream in it. To help you think in French, this book contains Gouin series about the everyday things you do. Most likely these are things you wouldn't say in English, e.g., "I take a book, I open the book, I close the book." But when you first learned to speak, you probably did narrate your actions, e.g., "I open the book! I'm reading it!" or "Watch me Mom! I kick the ball!" Narrating what you do creates new connections in your brain; when you narrate the Gouin series you are making connections *in French*.

When you truly know something, you are able to remember it. Miss Mason knew that the best way for you to remember something was to narrate it back to someone—your teachers, mother, friends, etc. Something about hearing or reading and then telling it back helps your mind retain knowledge. Modern science shows that Miss Mason was right. We know now that we tend to remember only 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, and 30% of what we see. But if we both see and hear it, we remember 40%; if we discuss it, we remember 50% of it; if we teach it, we remember 90% of it. In a sense, narrating is teaching, because you are telling someone else “the story.”

Miss Mason knew, though, that we need good stories to narrate. You've probably read a fabulous book and told friends about it without having to refer to the book. Why? Good stories have a flow to them; they have a beginning, middle, and end or what we call a “narrative form.” The stories we can't wait to tell Miss Mason called “living” ones. Gouin series, too, take a narrative form; living series should be easy to narrate back in English. Be sure to learn each series in English and act it out. That way when you start learning the French, you know what you are saying and your mind translates each action into French. The English and French words do not translate exactly, but the ideas do. The series teach the *idea* in French of opening the door or packing your backpack and so on.

What can I do to learn French well?

You hold within you the power to learn French well. Miss Mason believed that you learn what you pay attention to; neuroscientists agree with her. You don't need to study French for hours, but you do need to focus intensely. Fifteen minutes of intense focus serves you better than an hour of loose study.

Listen to the series to train your ear to hear the French sounds and to know how to pronounce new words. Once you are familiar with a series, read it—you remember more of what you both hear and see. Writing out a series will help you remember even more.

Also, act out what you are saying. When you do so, you create more connections in the brain to help you remember the new phrases. It is tempting to

just say the series, but remember that little extra effort to act out the series helps you learn more quickly.

Finally, challenge yourself. After learning two or three series, create and act out new ones using the phrases you know. Use phrases from series in conversation. Sit with a friend and talk about what you do: “What do you do in the afternoon?” “I read an interesting book” or “I go visit a friend.” You need not include every sentence from the series, but use a few or even simply use the title, e.g., “What do you do?” “I play with a ball.” When you can talk about what happened yesterday, tell stories to each other: “Did I tell you what my dog did yesterday? First, he barked at himself in the mirror. Then he . . .” Telling stories helps you remember the French sentences that much more—and it is fun.

Why Miss Mason and François Gouin?

If you use Gouin series, do you need to know Miss Mason? If you use Gouin series without Miss Mason’s methods and motives, your practice may look very different. For instance, you might try to study French for hours. Miss Mason taught that you can focus best in short lessons: 20 minutes for younger students and 40 minutes for older ones. Modern scientists who study the brain using CAT scans say she was right. In fact, we now know that even in a 40 minute class, you remember more if there are two 20 minute activities. Studying something for hours does not mean that you learn more.

Without knowing Miss Mason you might assume you should memorize lists of Gouin series. But Miss Mason said not all series are living series to all students, so you won’t remember every series you study; and you don’t have to stick with a series until you know it. Instead, focus on what you know; you may forget a few series, but you will remember many others.

Finally, Miss Mason wanted you and your family to learn languages so that you could be ambassadors for your country. That doesn’t mean you have to travel. You can speak French with your French neighbors or with Swiss in Switzerland—but in both cases you represent your nation in their eyes. She wanted you to discuss good literature, poetry, politics, current events, and even matters of faith—to do much more than pay for a taxi or check into a hotel room. She wanted you to use your language ability to connect with others—to serve them and your country. Miss Mason had great confidence in our ability to learn. If you are studying more than one language at school or at home, you should know that Miss Mason thought it was possible to do so. She often said that we need a feast for the mind; I hope the Gouin series in this book provide part of that feast.

Bon Voyage!

Allyson D. Adrian AKA “Dr. A”

How to use this volume

Perhaps the most important thing I can tell you is that this volume is meant to take you two to three years to work through. I recommend learning a new series every one to two weeks, depending on the length of the series. I wouldn't linger over a single series any longer than two weeks even if you don't know it perfectly; nor would I learn more than one series in a week. You are most likely to persevere if you go at a moderate rate.

I designed this volume so that most of the series build on each other. If you begin with series one, then you will already know several of the verbs in series two. New verbs are introduced in each series; by working through the volume, you learn gradually without being overwhelmed. And since the series build, learning a new one can actually help reinforce the one you just studied.

It is possible to learn the series out of order. If the beginning series are too easy, jump to the middle and challenge yourself. (Consider, though, that I have learned new expressions in these early series, even when I had studied the language at the college level.) Even in the middle, if you learn several series in proximity to each other, they will build on each other. What matters most is that you follow *the method* for learning Gouin series—not that you follow my ordering of them.

How to Approach a Lesson

I designed this book to help you follow Miss Mason's method. Look at a series. Each of the four columns represents a step in the process. The first column contains the entire English series. That is the first thing to learn. You can probably do that in a single ten minute session, but if you need more than one session, take it. *It is vital to know the English by heart before going further.* Acting it out as you say it helps you remember the series.

In the second column, you see the English verbs. The second step is to say and act out the verbs. When you can do so from memory, it is time to go to the facing page which contains the French.

The first column on the French page contains the French verbs. If you are using this volume with a teacher, the **student** should say the first English verb in the series, then the teacher should introduce the first French verb, and the student should repeat it. If you are using the volume at home, say the first English verb, then listen to the French verb on the audio. Repeat the French verb slowly three times. Work your way through the lists of English and French verbs in the series, occasionally going back to see if you can say all the French verbs so far. Be sure to act them out as you say them. Acting out is essential to this method.

Try saying the French verbs from memory. When you can do that, you are ready to move to the fourth column, which contains the entire series. Learn

the sentences one part at a time. Sometimes you can do this very quickly—on the same day that you learn the series in English. Sometimes, though, it may take two or even three days to learn the entire series. That is okay; you are learning.

Under each series is a response box. These are comments a teacher can say to the student(s) to develop an ear for questions and feedback. Many of the response boxes contain two columns: one addressed to a single student and a second addressed to many students. I arranged it this way because French uses different words for “you” based on whether you are speaking to one person or to many. The verb also changes. In English I could simply say “Repeat after me”—and that would be appropriate if I were speaking to one student or to ten students. In French, though, I would need to say “Écoute-moi” to one student and “Écoutez-moi” to ten students. Teachers should feel free to address comments and questions to one student or to the whole class. If you are learning alone at home, take an extra minute and say the responses and answer the questions.

It won’t matter so much for hearing the French, but you should know the spelling of a word sometimes depends on whether the subject is male or female. So, for example, where you see the English word “friend,” in the French series you will read “ami(e).” That is to indicate that “ami” refers to a male friend; however, “amie” refers to a female friend. Anytime you see “e” added to the end of a word, it is an indication that it is necessary to clarify the gender of the subject and adding “e” always makes it feminine.

Older students (eleven and up) and adults should copy each series. You may be tempted to skip copywork and rush to a new series; however, copying the series helps you remember it. This method emphasizes oral learning, so train the ear first; but once you know the series, take time to write it.

At the bottom of some pages you will find recitations, conversations, exercises, or grammar. (The grammar is not meant to substitute for a grammar book, but it does allow you to approach grammar intuitively from the series.) These are optional activities to engage the mind as you learn French. Miss Mason said that a change was as good as a rest, and these are a few ways in which you can change your lesson routines. I did not include songs in the book, but I urge you to learn three or four French songs each year. They are a delightful way to increase your fluency.

We are not engaging in a one to one translation of words; we are, though, translating ideas. French may employ entirely different verbs than we would use to convey an idea in English. For instance, in English we say, “I eat breakfast,” but in French you say, “I take breakfast.” So recognize when the verbs don’t correspond exactly and think to yourself, “Ah, that is the verb used to convey this idea in French. Isn’t that interesting?”

Because we are translating ideas, the volume works for those who want to learn English, too. French speakers should start with the series in French, then say the verbs in the French column, and move to the left to see the corresponding verbs in English, and finally learn the entire English series.

I open the book

I take the book.
I open the book.
I close the book.

take
open
close

Variations:

I take the notebook. I open the notebook.
I close the notebook.
I take the wallet. I open the wallet.
I close the wallet.

Responses:	<i>To the student:</i>	<i>Watch me!</i> <i>What are you opening?</i> <i>What are you closing?</i> <i>What are you doing?</i>
	<i>To the students:</i>	<i>Watch me!</i> <i>What are you opening?</i> <i>What are you closing?</i> <i>What are you doing?</i>

J'ouvre le livre

prends Je prends le livre.
ouvre J'ouvre le livre.
ferme Je ferme le livre.

Variations :

Je prends le cahier. J'ouvre le cahier.

Je ferme le cahier.

Je prends le portefeuille. J'ouvre le portefeuille.

Je ferme le portefeuille.

<p>Réponses: À l'élève : <i>Regarde-moi!</i> <i>Qu'est-ce que tu ouvres?</i> <i>Qu'est-ce que tu fermes?</i> <i>Qu'est-ce que tu fais?</i></p> <p>Aux élèves : <i>Regardez-moi!</i> <i>Qu'est-ce que vous ouvrez? (Qu'ouvrez-vous?)</i> <i>Qu'est-ce que vous fermez? (Que fermez-vous?)</i> <i>Qu'est-ce que vous faites? (Que faites-vous?)</i></p>
--

I put three pencils in the pencil case

I open the pencil case.

open

I take a pencil.

take

I put the pencil in the pencil case.

put

I take two pencils.

take

I put the pencils in the pencil case.

put

I close the pencil case.

close

Variations:

I open the pencil bag, etc.

I open the box, etc.

I open the backpack, etc.

Responses:	<i>To the student:</i>	<i>Pay attention. Look at the pencil case. Look at a pencil. What do you do first? And after, what do you do?</i>
	<i>To the students:</i>	<i>Pay attention. Look at the pencil case. Look at a pencil. What do you do first? And after, what do you do?</i>

Exercise

I count to ten

I count:

I indicate the order:

one

first

two

second

three

third

four

fourth

five

fifth

six

sixth

seven

seventh

eight

eighth

nine

ninth

ten

tenth

Je mets trois crayons dans la trousse

<i>ouvre</i>	J'ouvre la trousse.
<i>prends</i>	Je prends un crayon.
<i>mets</i>	Je mets le crayon dans la trousse.
<i>prends</i>	Je prends deux crayons.
<i>mets</i>	Je mets les crayons dans la trousse.
<i>ferme</i>	Je ferme la trousse.

Variations :

J'ouvre la trousse, ...

J'ouvre la boîte, ...

J'ouvre le sac à dos, ...

Réponses:	À l'élève :	<i>Fais attention!</i> <i>Regarde la trousse.</i> <i>Regarde le crayon.</i> <i>Qu'est-ce que tu fais d'abord?</i> <i>Qu'est-ce que tu fais après?</i>
	Aux élèves :	<i>Faites attention!</i> <i>Regardez la trousse.</i> <i>Regardez le crayon.</i> <i>Qu'est-ce que vous faites d'abord?</i> <i>Qu'est-ce que vous faites après?</i>

Exercice

Je compte jusqu'à dix	Je compte :	J' indique l'ordre :
	un (une)	le premier (la première)
	deux	le deuxième (la deuxième)
	trois	le troisième (la troisième)
	quatre	le quatrième (la quatrième)
	cinq	le cinquième (la cinquième)
	six	le sixième (la sixième)
	sept	le septième (la septième)
	huit	le huitième (la huitième)
	neuf	le neuvième (la neuvième)
	dix	le dixième (la dixième)

I am a child of God

I am a child of God.
 I can do what He tells me.
 I ought to obey him,
 and by His grace I will.

am
can do
ought
will

<p>Responses: <i>To the student:</i> Who are you? What can you do? How will you do it?</p>

Exercise

What can you do?

Can you walk ?	Yes, I can walk.
Can you run ?	Yes, I can run.
Can you bicycle ?	Yes, I can bicycle.

Can you see ?	Yes, I can see.
Can you hug your grandmother?	Yes, I can hug my grandmother.

Can you open your book?	Yes, I can open my book.
Can you drive ?	No, I cannot drive.
Can you fly ?	No, I cannot fly.

What else can you do?

Je suis un enfant de Dieu

suis Je suis un enfant de Dieu.
 peux Je peux faire ce qu'il me dit.
 dois Je dois faire sa volonté,
 ferai et par sa grâce je le ferai.

Réponses: À l'élève : *Qui es-tu?*
Qu'est-ce que tu peux faire? (Que peux-tu faire?)
Comment est-ce que tu le feras? (Comment le feras-tu?)

Exercice

Que peux-tu faire ?

Peux-tu **marcher** ?

Oui, je peux marcher.

Peux-tu **courir** ?

Oui, je peux courir.

Peux-tu **faire du vélo** ?

Oui, je peux faire du vélo.

Peux-tu **voir** ?

Oui, je peux voir.

Peux-tu **embrasser** ta grandmère ?

Oui, je peux embrasser ma grand-mère.

Peux-tu **ouvrir** ton livre ?

Oui, je peux ouvrir mon livre.

Peux-tu **conduire** ?

Non, je ne peux pas conduire.

Peux-tu **voler** ?

Non, je ne peux pas voler.

Qu'est-ce que tu peux faire d'autre ?