Frequently Asked Questions

Teaching Assistant Program in France

FRENCH SKILLS

Do I need to speak French?

Yes. Applicants must have an intermediate proficiency in French. You should be comfortable enough in the French language to complete daily tasks, hold conversations of substance, and manage a classroom of French students. Assistants are required to do a number of tasks all in French, including completing immigration paperwork, opening a bank account, going to a medical visit, and working with French teaching colleagues on a daily basis. Having a good French skills is therefore essential to having a positive and successful experience as a Teaching Assistant in France!

How will you judge my French skills?

We judge French language skills by looking at a number of elements of the application, including:
- Your transcripts to see how many French courses you have taken and at what level, plus your grades
- Your personal statement of motivation, to be written in French and not corrected by anyone else
- Your letters of recommendation, at least one of which needs to be completed by a French professor or language evaluator from the Alliance Française, AND/OR your standardized French language test scores from the TCF, TEF, DELF, or DALF (if you did not take French courses in college or you do not have a French professor or language evaluator to complete your first letter of recommendation)

What can I do to show that I have the necessary French skills?

If you don’t have a French professor or language evaluator to do a language evaluation recommendation for you, OR if you have not taken many (or any) formal French classes, then you can sign up to take one of the standardized French language tests available through the Alliance Française. This is not mandatory, but it can help in cases where the applicant has not taken formal French classes at university or is no longer in contact with a university French professor.
The most common standardized French-language exam is the TCF, however you can also take the TEF, DELF or DALF. These tests are scored on the European Framework of Reference for Languages and test scores are reflected on that scale (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2). TAPIF requires a minimum B1 level. You can find out more information about these tests here:

http://frenchlanguage.frenchculture.org/certifications-and-diplomas

For information about testing centers in the U.S. and dates, please contact your local branch of the Alliance Française:


Please research testing dates WELL IN ADVANCE. You must have your test results BEFORE the application deadline. Testing sessions fill up fast towards the end of each fall semester, so you need to plan in advance as to not miss the TAPIF application deadline.

**Can I still apply if I don't have a B1 French level yet?**

We cannot take future French courses into account, so you must demonstrate that you have the requisite French language skills AT THE TIME OF APPLICATION.

If you will not have the minimum B1 level of French skills by the application deadline, we encourage you to keep learning French and apply for the following year’s program.

**APPLYING TO THE PROGRAM**

**Where do I apply?**

Applications for 2019-2020 are NOW OPEN at tapif.org.

**When is the application deadline?**

The deadline for 2019-2020 is January 15, 2019.
Who is the typical TAPIF participant?

Most TAPIF program participants have just finished college and do the program during the school year after they graduate (to do this, you need to apply during the fall of your senior year of college).

Although most participants are in their early to mid-20’s, we welcome anyone between the ages of 20 and 25 who is interested in teaching English in France. A number of TAPIF participants have just finished graduate studies or are young professionals looking for a new challenge. Many applicants are teachers and educators taking this year to immerse themselves in the French language. As long as you meet the program’s eligibility criteria, we encourage you to apply!

Teaching assistants come from all fields of study. While we do have many French majors and minors in the program, we also have many assistants with backgrounds in other fields like education, international relations, political science, history, English, science, etc. Most selected participants have taken at least a few French courses in college or have demonstrated a serious study of French after graduation.

What is the acceptance rate?

For the 2018-2019 program, approximately 2,000 people applied for roughly 1,100 available positions. After ranking applicants based on the program’s application evaluation criteria, the top 1,100 applicants were immediately offered positions in early April. Approximately 400 other applicants were kept on the waiting list. A large number of accepted applicants withdraw over the course of the summer, meaning that roughly 300 waitlisted candidates were eventually offered positions for the 2018-2019 program. The remaining candidates were declined positions.

Applications are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and the most qualified candidates receive offers in the spring.

How are applications evaluated?

Applications are evaluated based on a number of criteria that are indicative of a candidate’s potential for successful participation in the program:

- French-language skills (applicants must demonstrate a proficient level of French equivalent to level B1 on the European Framework of Reference for Languages)
- Teaching experience
- Experience working with children or young adults
- Experience living abroad
- The level of the applicant’s university studies
- General motivation

Applications are ranked based on the above criteria and acceptance/placement decisions are made starting with the most qualified applicants.

**I applied to TAPIF in the past. Can I apply again?**

Past applicants who were not accepted to the program or who withdrew from the program over the summer are welcome to reapply for a new academic year. Prior applicants, regardless of the result of their application, will be given equal consideration (i.e. no advantage or disadvantage) during the application review process.

If you submitted an application in the past four years (for the 2016-2017 school year or later) we want to make it easy for you to reapply, and we can use your previous application. Here is what you should do:

1. Create a new dossier for 2019-2020 at tapif.org by clicking Sign-Up. You can use an email address you have used in the past, but you’ll need to create a new password and verify this.

2. Email the Program Manager at natalie.cox@diplomatie.gouv.fr with the subject line PREVIOUS APPLICANT. In the email, please list your full name, the year you submitted the previous TAPIF application, the email address you used on the previous application, the email you used for the new 2019-2020 application.

We will then transfer your dossier to the 2019-2020 school year and email you shortly with new log-in information. You’ll be able to log-in to see your old completed application. You can modify it, or submit it as is. You’ll still be required to pay the application fee. (Note: You must have SUBMITTED your application in the past in order to access this information. If you started an application but did not submit it, we are not able to use that application for this school year.)
I already participated in TAPIF. Can I do the program again?

Americans may participate a maximum of 2 times in the TAPIF program. If you are applying for an assistantship for a second consecutive year, you will need to apply to renew your contract through the CIEP (Visit http://www.ciep.fr/en/foreign-language-assistants-in-france) Renewal is contingent upon a positive review from the host institution, whether or not the assistant wishes to remain at his or her host institution or be transferred to another school or académie, amongst other factors.

IMPORTANT: If you apply for and are selected to renew your contract for a second consecutive year through the CIEP, it is NOT POSSIBLE to apply for a second long-stay work visa from within France. You therefore MUST return to the U.S. between the two contract periods in order to apply for the visa in person from one of the French Consulates in the U.S.. French labor and immigration laws do not allow you to apply to renew this visa for a second year from France. Even if you are successful in renewing the visa, your contract as an Assistant de langue can be terminated by the labor authorities if you do not return to the U.S. between your two contract periods.

If you are applying for a second assistantship in non-consecutive years (ex. You were an assistant in 2016-2017 and now you are applying again for 2019-2020) you must apply through the general TAPIF application at tapif.org. We can use your previous application if you submitted it in 2016-2017 or later. Please see above for steps on how to do this.

Former assistants wishing to do the program a second time must meet all normal program eligibility requirements. Their applications will be reviewed based on the same selection criteria as for first-time applicants.

If all criteria are met, former assistants will be systematically placed on the program waiting list when decisions are sent out in April (new candidates receive priority; former assistants will be considered for positions that open up during the spring and summer due to new candidate withdrawals)

If you meet all above criteria, you will be systematically placed on the program waiting list in early April. You will then be considered for positions that open up during the spring and summer due to new candidate withdrawals. Nearly all former Assistants are offered positions off the waiting list every year.
What is the TAPIF application like?

The online application to TAPIF is similar to a typical college application. You will be asked to provide basic information about yourself, your academic background, your experience with the French language, your experience teaching or working with young people, and your experience living or working abroad. You will also need to provide a statement of purpose about why you want to be a Teaching Assistant in France. This statement is to be written IN FRENCH (approximately 500 words in length) and must NOT be proofread or corrected by anyone with a knowledge of the French language.

You will also need to provide the following documents:

- A scan of your passport. Your passport must be valid through at least October 30th of the year in which you would end your teaching contract with the program. For example, if you want to apply to the 2019-2020 program, your passport would need to remain valid through October 30, 2020. (If you do not have a passport, if your passport has expired, or if it will expire before that October date, you should start the passport application/renewal process immediately in order to have it before the TAPIF application deadline. Applications missing the passport scan will be considered incomplete.)
- If you are a permanent resident of the U.S.: A scan of your U.S. green card in addition to the scan of your currently-valid passport from your country of citizenship.
- A scan of your official university transcript. Print-outs of unofficial online transcripts are NOT acceptable. Plan now to obtain a hard-copy official transcript from your university registrar before the application deadline.
- You will also need one language evaluation from a university French professor or a language evaluator from the Alliance Française, and one recommendation from a different person who knows you in an academic or professional capacity. These recommenders will be registered in your online application, and each person will be asked to complete an online recommendation form that will be electronically attached to your application. Paper letters of recommendation will NOT be accepted. (If you do not have access to a university French professor or Alliance Française language evaluator to complete the “language evaluation” recommendation, then you may take a standardized French language test and submit those scores instead. For more information, see the “French Skills” section above.)
How can I prepare to apply?

Gather the documents listed above.

You should also keep working on your French-language skills and try to gain as much experience as possible teaching or working with young people. These two elements of the application can be the deciding factors as to whether someone gets accepted to the program or not.

Do I need a TEFL or ESL certificate to apply?

A TEFL or ESL certification is NOT required to apply to TAPIF and in fact, most program participants do not have this certification. That said, a TEFL or ESL certification can nonetheless give you an edge during the application process because it shows that you have studied the theory and pedagogy behind teaching English to speakers of other languages, and that you may also already have TEFL/ESL classroom experience.

Several organizations offer discounted certification courses for future, current, and former TAPIF Assistants:

CIEE TEFL
International TEFL Academy

The Embassy does not endorse these courses and does not promote specific organizations or offerings. The above information is meant to inform interested TAPIF candidates and alumni of the discounted courses available to TAPIF affiliates.

When will I hear back with a decision?

Decisions are sent out by e-mail within the first two weeks of April.

You will be notified in all cases, whether your candidacy has been selected or declined.
What is the difference between TAPIF and the Fulbright ETA program?

The French Ministry of Education sets aside over 1,200 Teaching Assistantships for Americans every year, of which 10 are official Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) positions. If an applicant receives one of the 10 Fulbright ETA spots, his or her teaching assistantship will be managed directly by the Fulbright Commission and the Institute of International Education (IIE), and he or she will not have much contact with the Embassy administration.

The main benefits of applying for a Fulbright spot rather than (or in addition to) the normal Embassy-managed TAPIF program are that Fulbright ETAs receive a travel allowance, health and accident coverage, and access to all enrichment activities offered by the Fulbright Commission (in addition to the normal teaching assistantship stipend). Fulbright ETAs also have the prestige of being official Fulbright grantees.

The remaining teaching positions are administered through the Embassy Program (TAPIF). If you want to give yourself the best chance of receiving a teaching position in France next year (whether Fulbright or not), you should apply to BOTH programs.

If you apply only to the Fulbright program, you will only be considered for one of the highly-competitive 10 official Fulbright ETA spots; your name will NOT be automatically entered for a TAPIF position. If you apply only to TAPIF, you will be considered for one of the regular Embassy-managed spots (and similarly, you will NOT be automatically considered for Fulbright).

We encourage you to apply for both programs. If you receive the Fulbright, then your name will be taken out of the running for a normal TAPIF position. If you do not receive a Fulbright, you will still be eligible for one of the remaining normal TAPIF spots as long as you submit a TAPIF application.

LOGISTICS

Is housing provided for assistants?

Assistants are responsible for finding their own housing in France. That said, we do our best to help assistants with their search - our offices at the Embassy and the school districts in France provide information on where and how to find lodging in France. After that, a lot depends on the school in France.
Certain schools are able to arrange housing for their assistants, and some can even offer assistants very cheap or even free housing at their school’s dormitory (some high schools in France have boarding students who live at the school during the academic year, and the school can sometimes house their assistant in exchange for performing duties similar to those of an R.A.). Some schools and contact persons arrange housing for their assistants ahead of time (for instance, a school might have a standing agreement with a landlord in the town who rents his/her apartment each year to assistants), while others are not able to provide very much help to their assistants.

It is best to work off of the assumption that you would need to find your own place to live in France.

**Will I need a visa?**

Yes. Teaching assistants must obtain a long-stay work visa IN PERSON from their regional French consulate in the U.S. Costs of travel to the assistant’s regional French consulate are NOT covered by the program.

Please note that work visas for assistants usually take 1-3 weeks to be issued. Exact processing times depend on the consulate, however, so please consult the website for your regional French consulate’s visa service for more information.

Assistants should plan on being in the U.S. during the entire month of August and up through late September to allow enough time to complete the necessary visa procedures.

**Can I choose where I get placed in France?**

The TAPIF application includes a section where you can list your general regional placement preferences. Due to the number of requests and limited availability in certain regions, however, we are simply unable to accommodate all applicants’ requests. Applicants are highly encouraged to keep an open mind and to list 3 school districts of preference on the application. We are usually (but not always) able to assign assistants to one of their top 3 regions of choice.

Accepted applicants receive their general regional assignment in one of the school districts in France known as “Académies” at the time of acceptance notification in early April. Each Académie then makes its own specific city and school placements.

Applicants cannot make requests for specific city or school placements.
Flexibility is HIGHLY ENCOURAGED when it comes to regional placement. TAPIF is a “programme de mobilité”, and assistants are expected to go wherever they are assigned in France. Accommodations will NOT be made for candidates with special circumstances (ex: plans to study at a particular university during the year, family or friends in a particular town, etc.). We remind candidates that TAPIF is a program designed to send assistants to ALL regions of France, and that the main focus of the program is to provide native language speakers to French students learning foreign languages, with the added benefit of giving foreigners the chance to live and work in France for a year with a stipend. We are really looking for candidates who are motivated to teach anywhere in France and who will be able to approach the teaching assistantship as their primary reason for being in France.

Program acceptance and placement decisions are done entirely by merit (and not on a "first come, first served" basis). We base our evaluations on a number of criteria including: French-language skills, teaching experience, experience working with children or young adults, experience living abroad, the level and focus of the applicant’s university studies, and general motivation. We evaluate and rank the applications, then accept the top applicants into the program. We then do Académie assignments, starting with the most qualified applicants and going down the list. The stronger your application is, the more likely it is that you will be placed in your top area of choice. A lot depends on the number of requests for a region vs. the number of positions available in that area. Certain Académies are more "competitive" than others. Paris, Lyon, Strasbourg and Grenoble always receive many requests for a very limited number of spots. Other Académies like Amiens, Caen, Limoges, Poitiers, Reims and Rouen, are less "competitive".

**Can couples do this program?**

Couples are welcome to apply to the program, however each person must apply individually and each person’s application will be evaluated separately based on the standard TAPIF criteria. Each person must qualify individually before we will take the couple status into account. This means we would not automatically accept a significant other who is not qualified for the program simply because the other member of the couple is very qualified. If both people are accepted to the program on their individual merits, only then will we take couple status into account (when making placement decisions).

The program application includes a question about civil status/applying as a couple, so this would let us know that you are applying together. If both members of the couple are accepted, we would do our best to place you together in the same region. We recommend requesting some of the less popular regions in order to give yourselves the best chance of being placed together. As placement
decisions are done on merit (and the most qualified applicants get placed first), it can be very tough for two people to both receive placements in very popular (and therefore very competitive) Académies like Paris, Strasbourg, Lyon, Grenoble, etc. Your chances of being placed in the same region are higher if you both select Académies that receive fewer overall requests, like Caen, Clermont-Ferrand, Limoges, Reims, and Rouen. If both people are accepted into the program and placed in the same region, then it is up to the school district to make the specific town and school assignments. The Académies usually do their best to keep couples together.

If one member of a couple applies to TAPIF and the other does not (or if both people apply and only one is accepted), then the accepted person is responsible for researching visa requirements for bringing the other person to France. Americans are allowed to travel in France for up to 90 days as tourists (without a visa), however after this amount of time, the non-assistant must have a visa. Many accompanying significant others go to France as students by enrolling in an academic program in France for the year - student visas are much easier to obtain than other long-stay visas, and this way, the person can go to France and take some classes for the length of the other person’s assistant contract. For more information about studying in France, please visit the website for CampusFrance:

http://www.usa.campusfrance.org

You can also find out more information about the different types of long-stay visas at your regional French consulate’s website.

**Can assistants take classes at a French university at the same time?**

While it is technically possible to be a student at the same time as doing the Teaching Assistant Program, this presents a number of challenges in terms of scheduling and logistics. First of all, if you are accepted to the program, we cannot guarantee that you would be assigned near the particular university at which you are interested in studying. We cannot take special circumstances into account when making our regional assignments, so we cannot guarantee placement in any particular Académie. Even if you were to be placed in the region where you were hoping to take classes, it would then be up to the school district to assign you to a specific town or city, and the school district cannot guarantee placement close to any particular university. For instance, if you wanted to study in Tours and ended up being placed in the Académie d’Orléans-Tours, the school district administrators might still assign you to a city other than Tours (and you may end up teaching far away from the university). If you did get placed in the city where the university is located, your
university classes would need to fit in with your teaching schedule, which can vary greatly depending on a school’s needs as there is no set teaching schedule. It can be tough to be both a student AND an assistant at the same time.

We are really looking for candidates who will be able to approach the teaching assistantship as their priority and primary reason for being in France. It is fine for assistants to enroll in classes at local universities after arriving in France and figuring out how much spare time the teaching schedule allows, so this can work if you are just interested in doing classes on the side. If you are more interested in pursuing a degree or taking classes at a particular university, then this would be much more difficult. Legally speaking, though, assistants have the right to take classes during their year in France so long as the classes do not interfere with the teaching schedule. ↑

MONEY QUESTIONS

Is the assistantship salary enough to live on?

The monthly salary for teaching assistants comes to approximately €790 NET, which in most cases (depending on personal spending habits), is enough to live a comfortable lifestyle in most regions of France. €790 per month allows most assistants to buy food, rent a room or apartment in their town, and live a modest student lifestyle. While assistants do not live in luxury, most are able to live comfortably during their 7-month contract. Some are even able to travel a bit during their year in France if they bring some extra savings with them to France.

Please note: Urban areas like Paris can be extremely expensive. It can therefore be VERY difficult to make ends meet on the assistantship salary in the Ile-de-France region.

Other regions of France have a significantly lower cost of living. Many assistants receive housing subsidies from the Caisse d’Allocations Familiales (CAF), however please note that not everyone is eligible to receive CAF as the subsidy is issued on a case-by-case basis.

Budget questions really depend on region of assignment, plus personal spending habits, savings, and circumstances.
How much money will I need for start-up expenses?

Assistants are responsible for purchasing their own plane tickets to and from France. Assistants are also responsible for the costs of travel to and from their regional French consulate in the U.S. for the visa application process.

Most assistants leave for France with at least $2,000 in savings to help cover the initial start-up costs during the first couple of months they are in France (assistants who want extra spending money or who want to travel during weekends and school breaks usually bring more than $2,000). You would not receive your first paycheck until the end of October at the earliest, so you would need some money to live on between your arrival and at least the end of October. Depending on your housing situation, you may need enough money to pay a security deposit and first month’s rent on an apartment. You should work on the assumption that you will have to find your own housing in France, then if you are provided with housing by your school, you’ll be pleasantly surprised and will have some extra money saved up.

Is there a program fee?

There is a $80 application fee to apply to the program. After that, there is no fee for participating in the program.

(assistants are responsible for purchasing their plane tickets to and from France, however, and must cover any costs associated with traveling to their regional French consulate in the U.S. for the visa application process. assistants should also plan to bring at least $2,000 with them to France to cover start-up expenses since the first month's salary is not paid until the end of October.)

Does the program pay for my plane tickets?

The program does not cover airfare to and from France, nor does it cover the costs of travel to the regional French consulate for the mandatory in-person visa appointment. Please budget accordingly.
What other costs are associated with the program?

Assistants are responsible for all costs associated with travel to their regional French consulate in the U.S. to apply for their long-stay work visa. An in-person visa appointment at the regional French consulate in the U.S. is mandatory.

Assistants need personal funds (suggested minimum of $2,000) to cover their start-up expenses during their first month or two in France. Assistants are also responsible for covering the cost of: airfare to and from France, traveling to their appropriate regional French consulate to apply for their long-stay work visa, and the translation of documents required to enroll in the French national healthcare system.

Can assistants have second jobs in France?

Assistants are generally not allowed to have second official jobs. Rules are subject to change by school district and regional labor authority. Assistants are advised to check directly with their school contact person in France to find out if second jobs are allowed (and if so, what rules apply).

Many assistants earn extra money by tutoring or babysitting on the side for cash.

Can I defer my student loans during my year as an assistant?

Past assistants have been able to successfully defer their student loans by making a loan deferment request directly to their loan provider. The Embassy cannot submit the request for you as each assistant’s situation is different, however the Embassy CAN provide you and/or your loan provider with a letter stating your position as a teaching assistant and the details of your placement, contract length, salary, etc. Please contact your loan provider directly for more information.