**The Fundamental Learning Cycle (cycle 2)**

**Cycle 2 is the first stage of compulsory schooling for all pupils, beginning in Cours Préparatoire (age 6-7) and finishing in Cours Elémentaire 2 (age 8-9). It gives students solid groundwork in subjects like reading, writing, problem solving and the French language. Subjects covered in Cycle 2 include French, Modern Languages (foreign or regional), Art and Music, Physical and Sport education, Civic and Moral Education, Investigating the world, and Mathematics.**

* [**French**](http://eduscol.education.fr/cid116594/the-fundamental-learning-cycle-cycle-2.html#lien0)
* [**Modern languages (foreign or regional)**](http://eduscol.education.fr/cid116594/the-fundamental-learning-cycle-cycle-2.html#lien1)
* [**Artistic education**](http://eduscol.education.fr/cid116594/the-fundamental-learning-cycle-cycle-2.html#lien2)
* [**Physical and sports education**](http://eduscol.education.fr/cid116594/the-fundamental-learning-cycle-cycle-2.html#lien3)
* [**Civic and moral education**](http://eduscol.education.fr/cid116594/the-fundamental-learning-cycle-cycle-2.html#lien4)
* [**Investigating the world**](http://eduscol.education.fr/cid116594/the-fundamental-learning-cycle-cycle-2.html#lien5)
* [**Mathematics**](http://eduscol.education.fr/cid116594/the-fundamental-learning-cycle-cycle-2.html#lien6)

Cycle 2 is the first stage of compulsory schooling for all pupils. Language skills are the priority in this cycle, in particular French, the core subject. These three years, from "Cours Préparatoire" (age 6-7) to the end of "Cours Elémentaire 2" (age 8-9) offer an adequate, consistent length of time to give all pupils solid basic skills in reading and writing, adapted to each child's pace of learning.

In Cycle 2, pupils gradually acquire the knowledge, approaches and academic language they need to explore the world: such as solving a problem, understanding a document, writing a text, creating or designing an object. Pupils also learn gradually not just how to do an activity, but how to explain why they have done it in that way and to justify their answers and approaches in a reasoned manner. The learning process continually combines practical skills (observation, manipulation, experimentation, real-life activities) with abstract skills, through activities that help to memorise approaches and basic knowledge and make them automatic, and comprehension activities gradually leading to more complex knowledge.

**French**

Learning to read and write is crucial in Cycle 2, continuing on from nursery school where pupils develop their oral expression, acquire vocabulary, discover the alphabet, practice the early stages of writing, listen to texts and learn how to understand them. French is fundamental as it helps pupils to communicate and socialise with each other, making it easier to access all the other subjects and the language they use; for this reason there are several daily French sessions throughout Cycle 2.

**The main points covered are as follows:**

**Comprehension and oral expression**

Oral learning is essential when beginning to read and write; likewise, throughout the cycle, gradual proficiency in reading and writing leads to more varied and better structured oral expression.

Pupils read aloud and recite varied texts and complete activities that improve their understanding of the texts studied in class. Memorising texts (poems, extracts from plays that they act out, etc.) particularly helps to enrich their vocabulary and sentence structure.

They learn to be attentive when listening to or discussing with others for longer periods of time, expressing their lack of comprehension if necessary. Pupils also learn to play an active role in conversations and express themselves clearly, taking account of the discussion topic and the speakers, making relevant contributions to a discussion (asking questions, answering a question, expressing agreement or disagreement, adding extra information, etc.).

They practise recounting, describing and explaining, and in particular must be capable of recounting on their own a text studied in class.

**Reading**

Pupils learn to read through systematic activities that help them to master the relationships between letters or groups of letters and sounds, and to memorise words. The objective is to be able to automatically identify common words, memorise their spelling and easily decode unknown words; writing activities help with acquiring these automatic habits and learning to read.

This work is always carried out in connection with working on the meaning and understanding of texts, the purpose of all reading. Pupils acquire initial independence in reading varied texts, adapted to their age. They study five to ten works per academic year, taken from children's literature and classic literature (picture books, novels, stories, fables, poems, plays), learning how to identify genres, series and authors. Independent reading is encouraged: pupils regularly borrow books that suit their preferences and tastes and are encouraged to talk about their personal reading in class.

Reading out loud has an important role in Cycle 2, helping pupils to become familiar with the construction of written sentences. Practising reading fluency also helps to make the process of identifying words automatic; by the end of CE2, all pupils must be able, after preparation, to read a half-page text out loud fluently.

**Writing**

Pupils learned to write by hand and on the keyboard in the last year of nursery school; in Cycle 2, they complete their learning of handwriting, moving gradually towards automatically forming letters and increasing in speed and assurance. They learn how to do simple word processing functions and how to use a keyboard. They learn to copy or transcribe a text of a dozen lines without making mistakes, in legible handwriting, with correct punctuation and spelling, and careful presentation.

Pupils also learn to write their own texts: a sentence in response to a question, asking a question, and gradually a portion of a text or a whole text of around half a page, in coherent, organised, well punctuated language. They gradually learn to reread their own texts to improve them and check spelling.

**Understanding of language (grammar, spelling, vocabulary)**

The study of language in Cycle 2 is closely linked to learning to read and write, contributing to a better understanding of sentences, texts and correct spelling. At this stage of education, it is not necessary to have a complete knowledge of how the French language works as a system. It is more about observing language, manipulating it, classifying items in order to identify the main regularities and then applying them orally and in writing. Irregularities or exceptions are learned and memorised if frequently used. Pupils learn to spell the most common words and to use their reasoning to make agreements in the nominal group and between the verb and subject. They use their knowledge of language to improve their oral expression, understanding of words and texts, and improve the texts they write.

The fundamental concepts introduced in Cycle 2 help pupils to start Cycle 3 with a more systematic, conceptual understanding of the French language.

**Modern languages (foreign or regional)**

All pupils begin learning a modern foreign or regional language in Cycle 2, at age 6-7 (Cours Préparatoire). The main objective during the cycle is to develop the behaviour essential to learning a foreign language - curiosity, listening, paying attention, memory and self-confidence; pupils are encouraged to speak in another language without reticence or fear of making mistakes.

The same curriculum applies to all foreign and regional languages, and each teacher adapts it to the language they teach.

Oral language is a priority during this cycle, when pupils are beginning to learn to write French; the lessons focus on simple listening and comprehension tasks, reproduction and gradually, personal expression. Three language skills are therefore developed simultaneously: listening and understanding, reacting and conversing, speaking continuously. The skills levels used in all European countries, on a scale going from A1 (minimal skills, beginner level) to C2 (advanced skills) are used as a reference point for teachers: by the end of Cycle 2, all pupils should have reached level A1 in the three language activities.

Studying a language is inseparable from studying the culture of the language; developing pupils' awareness of differences and cultural diversity by observing things similar to their own everyday lives, based on what they are familiar with. Three themes are therefore explored throughout Cycle 2:

* children (body, clothes, family, a typical day, weather, key events in the year and in life, sensations, tastes and feelings, etc.);
* school (the alphabet, numbers, time markers, routines, rules and regulations at school, school activities, sport, arts and leisure activities, etc.);
* the childhood environment (home, the immediate, practical environment, daily life, the shops, public places, animals, stories and legends, monsters, fairies and other cultural references in children's literature, nursery rhymes and songs, etc.).

**Artistic education**

In Cycle 2, artistic education allows pupils to explore two areas: art and imagery, and music, taking into account the sounds and images that are part of pupils' daily environment, in order to train their eyes and ears, develop their awareness and creativity, stimulate their curiosity and give them the enjoyment of creating or discovering. Artistic or musical expression is always linked to the exploration of major works of art and artistic approaches and comparing them, not in order to imitate them, but to enrich pupils' imagination and establish initial cultural landmarks.

**In Art**, during Cycle 2, pupils seek personal, original responses to the situations proposed by the teacher, in varied artistic fields (drawing, painting, collage, modelling, sculpture, assembling, photography, video, digital creation, etc.) discovering new tools and materials and trying out new activities. They gradually learn to take other people into account, cooperating with them on group projects, presenting their work to them and showing an interest in their classmates' work. They learn to be spectators by observing and expressing what they experience when looking at works or productions other than their own. Three main topics, similar to the concerns pupils have at this age, are covered in the curriculum:

* representing the world;
* expressing emotions;
* narrating and telling stories through images.

**In Music,** pupils take part in group performances or productions, using their voices and bodies. They learn to sing simple melodies, nursery rhymes, singing by imitation, with expression and the right intonation, respecting musical phrasing. They create and put together sounds using various instruments or sound objects. They learn to compare sound elements and musical works by identifying resemblances and differences, expressing their emotions, feelings and preferences, and listening and respecting the work and opinions of others.

**Physical and sports education**

The main objectives of Physical and sports education are the same throughout the three cycles of primary school and lower secondary school, with levels of learning that increase through the cycles:

* **developing motor skills and learning to express yourself using your body;**
* **becoming familiar with working tools and methods by practising sport;**
* **sharing rules and taking on roles and responsibilities within a team;**
* **learning how to look after your health through regular physical activity;**
* **becoming familiar with a physical and artistic sport culture.**

Following increasing levels of difficulty, pupils gradually learn to produce their best performance, adapt their movements to varied environments, express themselves in front of others through artistic or acrobatic activities, lead and manage a match in a team or between two players. Depending on their pupils, teachers freely choose the available materials and equipment and different physical and sports activities for the lessons (athletics, swimming, dance, circus arts, gymnastics, team ball games, racket sports, etc.), constructing an appropriate, coherent training programme. They ensure that each pupil participates in a variety of individual and group activities during the cycle.

Between the ages of six and nine, in Cycle 2, most pupils spontaneously enjoy taking part in physical activity. Physical and sports education takes advantage of this enjoyment to develop and improve their motor skills, in different situations and by means of varied activities, as acquiring motor skills is essential to their future physical education and more generally their health and well-being. Particular focus is placed on learning to swim. Through individual and above all group activities, pupils in Cycle 2 also learn to follow common rules, respect their classmates and respect their own bodies, becoming aware of their abilities, limits and the potential risks to them or their classmates in certain situations. Throughout the cycle, via group activities (particularly ball games), they learn to take on different positions and roles (attack, defence, player, referee) and adapt to new situations. Through artistic activities such as dance, they discover and use the expressive resources of the body, constructing a body language and learning to verbalise the emotions they feel and the actions they perform; initially through simple execution, then by gradually composing and producing choreography, and exercising their imagination and creativity.

**Civic and moral education**

**Civic and moral education has four main objectives during the three cycles of primary and lower secondary school:**

1. emotional awareness education, to learn to identify feelings and emotions, put them into words, discuss them and understand other people's feelings and emotions;
2. education in rules and law, to understand the meaning of rules in the classroom, primary or secondary school and to make pupils (future citizens) aware of the role and importance of law in the French Republic;
3. education in moral judgement, in order to understand and discuss the moral choices encountered in life, requiring pupils to put forward arguments, debate and justify their choices;
4. experience of engagement, to encourage pupils to participate in the social life of the class and the school they belong to, acquire a spirit of cooperation and a sense of responsibility towards others.

In Cycle 2, one hour per week is spent on this subject. This is not theoretical education, but practical, concrete education that puts pupils in role play situations to get them to think, express themselves, act and react.

**On the curriculum in Cycle 2:**

* **Emotional awareness:** identifying emotions, expressing yourself to classmates using specific vocabulary, learning to pay attention to others (respecting adults and classmates, politeness, accepting differences); identifying the symbols of the French Republic present in the school. For example, pupils may learn to divide and share tasks in research, cooperation or experimental situations, learn about themselves and others through artistic activities (self-portraits and portraits) or become aware of their body and others' bodies through dance.
* **Rules and law**: respect for the rules of group living, understanding punishments, their levels of seriousness and educational value, understanding some of the values and founding principles of a democratic society, etc. For example, pupils may take part in drawing up rules for the classroom or playground.
* **Moral judgement:** expressing and justifying a point of view or personal choice in simple terms, taking part in a debate without imposing your point of view or rejecting your classmates' point of view, etc. For example, pupils may reflect on fairness and unfairness, good and evil by using fictional stories (tales and legends) or situations experienced by the class.
* **Experience of engagement:** respect for commitments made to yourself and to others, taking on responsibility in the classroom and the school, etc. For example, pupils may learn about a few major figures, men and women, involved in the scientific, humanitarian or ecological fields, or take on a role as mentors to younger classmates or mediators in disputes between classmates.

**Investigating the world**

In nursery school, pupils have explored and discovered the world around them in all its forms, discovering the living world, exploring materials, using, manipulating and making objects, and learning how to use digital tools. In Cycle 2, they go further, learning how to conduct an investigation and initial reasoning to describe and understand the world around them, by asking questions, observing, describing and doing experiments, and reasoning to draw conclusions.

Eight main skills are covered in this area, which are studied in more depth in the subsequent cycles: **practising scientific approaches, imagining and producing, learning tools and methods, practising languages, using digital tools, adopting ethical, responsible behaviour, situating in space and time.**

**This subject is broken down into three main parts:**

1. **Investigating the living world, materials and objects**, to learn an initial scientific and technological approach. Pupils study matter in all its forms (living and non-living, naturally present in the environment or man-made, etc.); they observe and identify changes in the state of water (solid, liquid, gas) and relate these to meteorological phenomena (clouds, rain, hail, etc.). They learn to distinguish between living and inert beings by observing animals, plants and minerals in their environment. They observe how living beings are nourished, develop and reproduce. They observe the process of growth in their own body and the mechanism of movement. Finally, they learn about healthy living (diet, sleep, physical activity, etc.) and understand the beneficial effects on their health. Pupils discover and use technical objects in everyday life. They make objects and simple electrical circuits, learning to respect basic safety rules. They become familiar with a digital environment, in particular how to use word processing.
2. **Investigating space and time**, to learn how to locate oneself in both space and time: pupils use common representations of space (models, plans, photos, etc.), produce their own (of the school, neighbourhood, town, etc.) and learn how to find their way in a nearby environment. In representations of the world (world maps, globes, digital maps) they learn to locate places, in particular continents, Europe, France and their own region; on maps of the solar system, they can identify the position of planet Earth. To learn how to situate themselves in time, pupils identify time divisions (months, weeks, days, hours, etc.) and their durations, and identify cyclical phenomena (the change from day to night, the seasons) using calendars, timetables and clocks. Students learn to situate events in time and in relation to others, in particular, using timelines (historical periods and characters, at the end of the cycle in CE2).
3. **Exploring how the world is organised**, to gradually comprehend that they are part of an organised society that develops through space and over time. Pupils compare the lifestyles of different populations in the world or populations from different eras (between two generations for example). They explore nearby spaces (school, park, town, etc.) to gain a gradual understanding of how they are organised (for example the function of the different places in the town). They explore the diversity and main characteristics of landscapes (coasts, mountains, countryside, desert, etc.).

**Mathematics**

Following nursery school, where mathematics-related activities are based on observation and manipulation, Cycle 2 introduces pupils to the written dimension of mathematics: writing numbers, mathematical symbols, techniques for doing sums (addition, subtraction, multiplication), producing simple geometrical shapes. Problem-solving becomes central, developing pupils' ability to find out, reason and communicate their results.

Six main skills are covered in mathematics Cycle 2, which are continued in Cycles 3 and 4: discovery, modelling, representing, reasoning, calculating and communicating. Pupils gradually acquire these skills, which are part of the Common Core that will be tested at the end of compulsory education.

**The Mathematics curriculum Cycle 2 covers three areas:**

**Numbers and calculation**

Pupils reinforce and extend their knowledge of whole numbers up to 10,000, and they learn to calculate. They learn different ways of naming numbers (writing in figures, verbal names, concepts of doubling, halving, etc., units, tens and hundreds) and use these numbers to count, order and compare. They make the link between a number and a measured length. When given simple problems, they begin to add, subtract, multiply and divide. These early calculations are learned through addition and multiplication tables. Daily practice of mental arithmetic reinforces knowledge of numbers and operations.

**Size and measurements**

Using everyday objects and examples, pupils complete activities to learn how to differentiate different kinds of measurements (length, mass, volume, duration, price, etc.) and to compare the measurements (for example length) of two objects. They then learn to measure using appropriate instruments (hourglass for duration, graduated ruler for length, scales for mass) and learn common measurement units (metre, gram, litre, etc.). Finally, they make calculations with measurements, to solve problems in real-life situations such as finding the distance between two trees in the school playground or calculating the price of a shopping list.

**Space and geometry**

Pupils learn spatial recognition, in close connection with the "Investigating the world" topic and physical education and sport. This is done using landmarks and representations of space. They also acquire knowledge of geometry, by studying solid and plane shapes, learning how to recognise and name common solids (sphere, cylinder, cube, pyramid, etc.) and reproduce them. They use appropriate vocabulary to describe common geometrical shapes (square, rectangle, triangle, side, top, circle, disc, etc.) and instruments (ruler, templates, set square) to produce them on paper. They learn techniques to help them recognise that the points are aligned on a shape, that two lengths are equal, or to identify a right angle or symmetry.