# Table of Contents

## 1. Pre-Departure Information

Your Next Steps .................................................................................................................3
Birth Certificate ..................................................................................................................6
Your Work Contract (Arrêté de Nomination) .................................................................6
Visas....................................................................................................................................8
  - General information ......................................................................................................8
  - Applying for the visa ......................................................................................................8
  - OFII form ......................................................................................................................9
  - Once you have your visa .............................................................................................9
  - Regional consulates ....................................................................................................9
  - Contact information for regional consulates .............................................................10
  - FAQs for visas .............................................................................................................11
  - Visa application steps .................................................................................................12

What Now? Timeline of Things to do this Summer .........................................................13
Pre-Departure Checklist ...................................................................................................14

## 2. Post-Arrival Information

Validating Your Visa ..........................................................................................................16
Traveling on Your Visa .......................................................................................................17
Housing ...............................................................................................................................17
Banking ..............................................................................................................................21
Health Insurance ...............................................................................................................23
Orientation (“Stage”) .........................................................................................................26
Salary / Advance of First Payment ..................................................................................26
Having a Second Job .........................................................................................................27
Vacations / School Year Calendar ....................................................................................27
Discounts ..........................................................................................................................27
Deferring School Loans ....................................................................................................28
Taxes ....................................................................................................................................28
French Paperwork ..............................................................................................................30
Doing the Program Again in the Future ..........................................................................30
Post-Arrival Checklist – Things to Do ..............................................................................31
Contact Information ..........................................................................................................32
Pre-Departure Information

Congratulations! You have been selected to participate in the 2016-2017 Teaching Assistant Program in France, sponsored by the French Ministry of National Education. You have already received an assignment in one of France’s school districts – your “académie”. This handbook will guide you through what you need to do over the summer to prepare for your trip to France, and will also provide information on various aspects of your new life as an “assistant(e) de langue” in France.

Your Next Steps

Start saving money
Even though you will receive a monthly stipend as an assistant, you will not receive your salary for your first month of teaching until the end of October or November. You should therefore save money this summer so that you will have enough funds to cover the first month or so of living in France, especially if you have to make a security deposit when renting an apartment. Having extra spending money will also allow you to take advantage of your vacations and travel, and have a cushion in case of emergency.

Most assistants leave for France with at least $2,000. This sum really depends on your personal spending habits, lifestyle, and the region where you will be living (Paris is very expensive, rural France is cheaper). It is your responsibility to create a realistic budget for yourself. Some assistants do just fine on the salary provided, while others need to supplement their salaries by other means.

Locate a copy of your birth certificate
You will need your official birth certificate in order to enroll in France’s national healthcare and social services system. Please see the “Birth Certificate” section on page 6 for more information.

Research airline fares, but hold off on purchasing your ticket
We do not recommend purchasing your plane tickets until you have received your work contract (arrêté de nomination) in the mail and have a visa appointment on the books.

It takes a couple of months for work contracts to be prepared and mailed out, then it will take you several more weeks to apply for and obtain the long-stay work visa you will need for France (see page 8 for more information about booking a visa appointment in advance). Since there are many variables in play, we suggest leaving your travel options open until you know for sure when you will be able to depart for France. We would hate for you to purchase a plane ticket now only to find out that you can’t leave on the date you planned because of slow paperwork or visa delays. If you decide to book your plane ticket
now, please note that this is entirely at your own risk. That said, most assistants are able to depart for France in mid- to late September to get settled, look for housing, meet other assistants, and get in touch with their contact person.

Your contract officially begins on October 1, 2016 and ends on April 30, 2017. You will find out the details of your specific school and city placement when you receive your work contract in the mail this summer.

**Request a Federal Identity History Summary**

As of this year (academic year 2016-2017) all selected candidates are required to have a copy of their Identity History Summary from their home country before beginning work in France.

Immediately after confirming your position in France, you should therefore request a federal Identity History Summary from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. There are two options for requesting this document.

**Option 1:** Request an Identity History Summary directly from the FBI, Option 1 presented on the FBI’s website.

Requesting directly through the FBI is less costly, but takes between 13 and 15 weeks to process. Please send in your request to the FBI by May 20th at the latest, and keep a copy of your signed I-783 Application.

There is an FBI fee of $18 to process your request, and fees totaling about $10-$15 to obtain fingerprints at a local police station. The process for requesting fingerprints varies by state, and it is your responsibility to move forward according to the regulations of your state.

If you have any concerns about your record, please email me as soon as possible to avoid serious eligibility issues later this summer.

If you have questions about the process for obtaining the Identity History Summary, please contact the FBI Customer Service directly at 304-625-5590.

Essentially, you will complete four steps: 1/ fill-out an I-783 application form, 2/ complete fingerprint card, 3/ make an $18 payment to the FBI by check or credit card, and 4/ mail in application form and fingerprint card to the FBI.

**Be sure to select “Live, work, or travel in a foreign country” as the Reason for Request on the I-783 Application.**

**We do not require the Identity History Summary to be apostilled**

After mailing the required material by post to the FBI, they will then process the request, and mail you back a paper document of several pages that will contain your Identity History Summary. Have responses mailed directly to you, DO NOT instruct the FBI to mail responses to the Embassy.

You will then need to log back into your online application and attach a copy of this document in the Supplemental Items ‘Autres’ section. You should also bring a paper and digital copy of the document with you to France.
Option 2: Request an Identity History Summary through an FBI-approved Channeler, or Option 2 presented on the FBI’s website.

Many of you have expressed concern about finding someone to take your fingerprints while you are still living in France, in another country, or are travelling. You have also expressed concern about the pressure of the 13-15 week processing timeline. Many police stations in other countries will complete the fingerprinting for you, but some will not be familiar with the process.

We initially suggest that all Assistants obtain a federal Identity History Summary directly through the FBI, and not through an FBI-approved Channeler. This is because a Channeler charges a higher fee and there is more variation in the document that they produce. A Channeler is a private business that has contracted with the FBI to process requests for Identity History Summaries.

However, the Teaching Assistant Program CAN accept an Identity History Summary obtained through an FBI-approved Channeler.

Obtaining this document through a Channeler takes about 1-3 weeks, depending on the Channeler, in lieu of the 13-15 week processing time that the FBI requires. The fees for Channelers vary greatly, between $40 and $65.

Essentially, if you cannot find a way to obtain your Identity History Summary directly through the FBI (which is the less costly option) in time for October 1st, you can wait to complete this process when you return to the U.S. this summer and obtain the Summary through an FBI-approved Channeler within about 1-3 weeks.

Additional points of clarification:

- Please indicate that your employer is the Teaching Assistant Program in France. You DO NOT need to give a precise address for this employer.

- If your local police station refused to complete the fingerprinting on a standard paper, it is up to you to find the appropriate alternative. This is a very decentralized process. You may be directed to another agency from which you will purchase fingerprinting cards for $5-$10, or you may be able to complete a livescan at the police station. Please note that if you complete a livescan, you MUST have the police station print out the scan and hand it to you. You will then mail this document in to the FBI with your packet. The FBI will not accept electronic livescan files.

- If you have concerns about an incident on your record, please contact us via email.

- You can leave blank the ORI number, and indicate in Reason Fingerprinted section ‘Live, work, or travel in a foreign country’.

- The FBI Customer Service is very responsive, and will respond to many of your questions regarding fingerprinting or specific questions about filling out the require forms. Please call this number with any question that is related to the request process at 304-625-5590.

If, for any reason, you do not think that you will be able to receive the Identity History Summary by September 20th, 2016 please contact me via email as and I will give you instructions on how to proceed.
Birth Certificate

You will need to bring an official birth certificate with you when you go to France. The birth certificate is used for enrollment in France’s national healthcare and social services system known as the Sécurité sociale or “Sécu.”

The Sécu requires all foreigners follow standardized guidelines for enrollment documentation. Foreigners born in the U.S. must show the Sécu an original birth certificate. You should plan on having this ready to go by early October:

1. An original birth certificate

The birth certificate you present to the Sécu must be official, however it does not necessarily need to be the original copy that was issued at the time of your birth. You can obtain an official certified copy or you may be able to order a new “original” from your city or state of birth. The French authorities will NOT accept just a photocopy of your birth certificate.

Many assistants choose to obtain a new “original” birth certificate from the state or city where they were born so that they don’t have to bring the true original to France. A number of U.S. states allow you to order a new “original” birth certificate online (for a fee, of course) through sites like www.vitalcheck.com. You can also order a new certificate by writing to or calling the office that manages records for your state of birth: www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm

2. Birth certificate translation and apostille

Until last year, Assistants needed a French translation of their Birth Certificate and an “apostille”, a kind of international certification, for the Sécu. These two items are no longer necessary. If you were born in another country and your birth certificate was issued in a language other than English, you will need to present an English translation of this document.

Please note that the birth certificate documentation rules described above apply only to assistants who were born in the U.S. or who are U.S. citizens by birth.

If you are a naturalized U.S. citizen or a U.S. permanent resident, please contact us and we will provide you with information specific to your country of birth.

Your Work Contract (Arrêté de Nomination)

You will receive a letter in the mail this summer containing your official work contract known as an “arrêté de nomination.” The arrêté de nomination will provide you with essential information, including the name of your school, the school’s address and your contact person’s information. This document is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT since it serves as proof that you will be legally employed in France as an “assistant(e) de langue” during the 2016-2017 school year. Without it, you will not be able to get your
work visa. Keep your contract in a very safe place and **DO NOT LOSE IT**! Replacing lost work contracts is very difficult and takes a lot of time, so please be extremely careful!

Your arrêté will be mailed to you directly by your académie between late June and early August. Some academies take a while to mail them out, so **DO NOT PANIC** if you do not receive yours in June or July. You do not need to apply for your visa until late August or the beginning of September anyway (but you can get your visa earlier if you are ready), so please be patient and wait until August 14th to contact us if you have not received your contract. We will not answer “where is my arrêté?” emails until the 14th of August (please remember that we receive LOTS of emails during the summer with serious concerns, so this allows us to answer emails from assistants with truly urgent situations).

If August 14th arrives and you still do not have your arrêté de nomination, then email us at that time.

Once you receive your contract, do the following:

1. Make a copy (or 2, or 3…) just in case!
2. Verify that your personal information is correct (name, date of birth, etc.).
3. Make sure that your arrêté is stamped by the French Department of Labor (DIRECCTE – Direction régionale des entreprises, de la concurrence, de la consommation, du travail et de l’emploi OR DDTEFP – Direction départementale du Travail de l’Emploi et de la Formation professionnelle). This stamp is required in order to get your visa. The stamp may not say DIRECCTE or DDTEFP exactly, but if it looks official and says something about “travail” or the “Préfecture” on it, it’s probably the right stamp! If you are in doubt, scan the documents you received in your packet and email them to us; we can let you know if you have what you need.

4. Read through **“Le Guide de l ‘assistant,”** a booklet from the CIEP that should be included in your work contract packet. This booklet provides guidance for what you can expect this summer and next year, and answers many frequently asked questions. If you don’t have it in your packet, don’t worry! You can download it online at: [http://www.ciep.fr/sources/assistants-etrangers-france/guide-assistant-de-langue-en-france-2016-2017/](http://www.ciep.fr/sources/assistants-etrangers-france/guide-assistant-de-langue-en-france-2016-2017/)

5. Contact your school and/or contact person. You will find your school’s and your contact person’s information on your arrêté de nomination or on another document in your packet. If you can’t find your school’s address, phone number or email, you can look this information up online: [www.education.gouv.fr/pid24301/annuaire-recherche.html](http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid24301/annuaire-recherche.html). If you are really having trouble finding contact information after looking through your documents and in the directory, email us and we will do our best to help.

**Do not be concerned if your school or contact person does not reply immediately.** French schools are closed from the middle of June until the middle of August, and many people in the school district administration leave on vacation for the whole month of August. If you do not get a reply to the emails and/or letters you send, then you can give them a call in early September once school is back in session. (Don’t stress out if this is the case. Your académie will still be expecting you this fall, even if you don’t get in touch with your assigned school(s) before you leave for France.)
Note: If you receive other documents that look important in your packet, keep them and follow whatever instructions are attached. Your académie might include a letter to sign and return to them to confirm that you received your contract in the mail and still intend on coming to France this fall. Or you might receive a form from the local healthcare authority in your region that you must fill out and return in order to schedule a medical visit for once you arrive in France. If you receive any additional documents like this, just use your best judgment and follow the indicated instructions.

Visas

General information
You will need to obtain a long-stay work visa this summer from your regional French consulate. The visa for teaching assistants is a visa type D – “visa de long séjour, mention travailleur temporaire.”

You are not legally allowed to work in France without a long-stay visa and you cannot apply for this visa once you are in France. You must get the visa BEFORE leaving for France. Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique, and La Réunion are all parts of France.

If you have questions regarding the visa application process or the legalities of the visa itself, please contact the visa section of your regional consulate directly. We are not visa experts and have no power over the visa process, so although we will certainly do our best to answer your questions, we may not be able to help in certain cases. Each regional consulate has a website and email address for visa questions.

Applying for the visa
You must apply for your visa in person at the French consulate that corresponds to your permanent address: http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?article330. If you are not sure which consulate applies to your address, contact the consulates in question to find out.

French consulates in the U.S. issue visas by appointment only. You should apply for your visa a minimum of one month before your departure and must book your appointment in advance using your consulate’s online appointment scheduling system. We strongly recommend that you book your visa appointment about 2 months before your desired appointment date. Spaces fill up quickly in the summer, especially since many students leave for semesters abroad in August and September. The consulates do not allow “walk-ins” or emergency appointments at the last minute, so make sure to book your appointment soon so that you don’t wind up in a jam at the end of the summer. When you go to your appointment, be patient and bring a smile. The process is simple as long as you bring the correct documents.

We recommend applying for the visa sometime between July 1st and September 5th. If you apply later than this, the visa service cannot guarantee that you will receive your visa in time since processing time is usually 2-3 weeks. Please note, however, that you cannot apply for the visa until you have your stamped “arrêté de nomination” in hand because this is the only document that the visa service will accept as proof of employment for the work visa.

The visa application process has two steps and takes 2-3 weeks to complete. The first step is to turn in your application at the consulate. As a teaching assistant, you do NOT have to pay a visa processing fee. Once the visa has been approved by the authorities in France (2 to 3 weeks after the first appointment), you must return to the consulate with your passport to pick up the visa. If you are unable return in person for this second step, most consulates offer the option of leaving your passport at the consulate during your first appointment, then they can mail it to you once the visa is ready. If your consulate offers this service...
and if you choose this option, you must provide the consulate with a pre-paid, self-addressed, secured-mail envelope. Your consulate’s website will have more details about whether this option is available and if so, what you need to give them (the envelope usually needs to be UPS, USPS or FedEx, but the exact company preference can vary by consulate – certified mail is not accepted).

If you are asked to pay a visa processing fee, or if your visa is rejected altogether, please call us at (202) 944-6011. This process should be easy as long as you follow all the instructions listed on your regional consulate’s website and bring ALL necessary documents when you go. Please note that we cannot help if you forget to bring a necessary element of your application, and we cannot rush the processing time of your visa.

**OFII form**

When you go to your first visa appointment, you will be asked to fill out the top portion of a form from the Office Français de l’ Immigration et de l’Intégration (OFII) and submit it with your application. You will use the OFII form to register with the authorities upon arrival in France. You can print the form at: [http://www.ofii.fr/IMG/pdf/Formulaire_de_demande_d_attestation_OFII_-recto-verso-Version_du_24-12-2015.pdf](http://www.ofii.fr/IMG/pdf/Formulaire_de_demande_d_attestation_OFII_-recto-verso-Version_du_24-12-2015.pdf)

You must fill out the top portion of the form (under “rubriques à completer lors de la demande de visa”) and submit it with your visa application. When your visa is ready, the consulate will give you back the visa (affixed in your passport) AND the OFII form that will have been stamped by the visa service. **Keep the OFII form and bring it with you to France!**

When you arrive in France, fill out the bottom portion of the form and return it to the OFII branch in your area. This must be done within the first 3 months of your arrival in France. The form requires you to provide a permanent address in France, so you will not be able to send it in until you have secured housing. After you mail in the form, the OFII will schedule you for a brief medical visit required of all foreigners living in France on long-stay visas. You will receive a letter either directly at your address, or through your school, informing you of the time and place of this appointment. The medical visits for assistants usually take place in the fall/winter.

**Once you have your visa**

Your visa will be issued for the length of your contract, however you must register with the OFII within the first 3 months of your stay in France. The procedure for registering with the OFII is explained in the post-arrival section of this handbook. **If you do not register with the OFII within the first 3 months of your stay in France, your visa becomes invalid and it is illegal for you to stay in France!**

**Regional consulates**

Each consulate has different requirements for the visa application process. Please refer to your regional consulate’s website (contact information on the next page) to learn more about the application process you will need to complete. It is a good idea to double check the website a day or two before you go for your visa appointment to make sure you have all necessary documentation ready.

Most assistants apply to the consulate corresponding to their region of residence during the summer. The visa service generally defines your region of residence as the region where you have lived for the past 6 months, but this rule is not set in stone as there are a number of applicants who have just graduated from college and moved. Most consulates require you to show **proof of residency** (e.g. a utilities bill in your name) at your first appointment to show that you live in their region of authority. If you cannot provide this, many consulates will accept a bill and letter written on your behalf by your “host” (parents, landlord,
etc.), stating that you live under their roof. The required documentation for proof of residency varies by consulate, so please refer directly to your consulate for more detailed information.

**Contact information for regional consulates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>STATE(S)</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Tel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATLANTA</td>
<td>Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consulfrance-atlanta.org">www.consulfrance-atlanta.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:visas@consulfrance-atlanta.org">visas@consulfrance-atlanta.org</a></td>
<td>(404) 495-1660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOSTON</td>
<td>Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consulfrance-boston.org">www.consulfrance-boston.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:visas.boston-fslt@diplomatie.gouv.fr">visas.boston-fslt@diplomatie.gouv.fr</a> (you may reach the visa section in Boston by email ONLY)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHICAGO</td>
<td>Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consulfrance-chicago.org">www.consulfrance-chicago.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:visas@consulfrance-chicago.org">visas@consulfrance-chicago.org</a></td>
<td>(312) 327-5229 (M–F, 2pm – 4:30pm only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSTON</td>
<td>Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana (for visas), Oklahoma</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consulfrance-houston.org">www.consulfrance-houston.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:visas.houston-fslt@diplomatie.gouv.fr">visas.houston-fslt@diplomatie.gouv.fr</a></td>
<td>(713) 985-3299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOS ANGELES</td>
<td>Southern California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Southern Nevada</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consulfrance-losangeles.org">www.consulfrance-losangeles.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:visa-info@consulfrance-losangeles.org">visa-info@consulfrance-losangeles.org</a></td>
<td>(310) 235-3257 (M–F, 2pm – 4:30pm only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIAMI</td>
<td>Florida, Puerto Rico</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consulfrance-miami.org">www.consulfrance-miami.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:visas.miami-fslt@diplomatie.gouv.fr">visas.miami-fslt@diplomatie.gouv.fr</a></td>
<td>(305) 403-4150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW ORLEANS</td>
<td>Louisiana (this consulate does NOT issue visas, contact information provided only for translation reference purposes)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consulfrance-nouvelleorleans.org">www.consulfrance-nouvelleorleans.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@consulfrance-nouvelleorleans.org">info@consulfrance-nouvelleorleans.org</a></td>
<td>(504) 569-2870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW YORK</td>
<td>New York, Connecticut, New Jersey</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consulfrance-newyork.org">www.consulfrance-newyork.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:visa@consulfrance-newyork.org">visa@consulfrance-newyork.org</a></td>
<td>(212) 606-3601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAN FRANCISCO</td>
<td>Northern California, Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Northern Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consulfrance-sanfrancisco.org">www.consulfrance-sanfrancisco.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:visa@consulfrance-sanfrancisco.org">visa@consulfrance-sanfrancisco.org</a></td>
<td>(415) 591-4811 or (415) 591-4812 (M–F, 2pm – 5pm only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASHINGTON, DC</td>
<td>Washington, D.C., Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consulfrance-washington.org">www.consulfrance-washington.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:visas@consulfrance-washington.org">visas@consulfrance-washington.org</a></td>
<td>(202) 944-6200 (M–F, 3pm – 5pm only)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FAQs for visas

- **I need to apply for my visa earlier than normal and my arrêté de nomination hasn’t arrived yet. Can you get me the arrêté de nomination early, or can you convince the consulate to issue my visa without it?**

NO. We cannot get your arrêté de nomination to you any earlier than normal, nor do we know exactly when it will arrive. The academies in France must create the work contracts and then have them approved by the French Department of Labor. This process can take several weeks or even months, and unfortunately there is no way around it. The consulate must see the original arrêté de nomination since they cannot legally issue a work visa without seeing a work contract approved by the labor authorities in France.

If you planned on traveling, studying or working abroad this summer, you might not be able to get your assistant visa before you leave. If this is the case, you will need to return to the U.S. for a few weeks in early September to get your visa.

- **I am currently living outside of the United States. Can I get my French long-stay visa in the country where I am located?**

Maybe. If you have been living in another country for more than 6 months and can provide a “justificatif de domicile” (i.e. a utilities bill/lease in your name or a letter from your host plus your host’s utilities bill/lease), you may be able to get the long-stay visa at the French consulate in the country where you are currently located. Please contact the visa section at the French consulate in that country for more details:


- **I am living in France right now and already have a long-stay visa/titre de séjour. Can I just renew it here instead of returning to the U.S. to get an entirely new visa?**

Maybe. You should go to your local Préfecture to speak with someone about your situation. It is sometimes possible to renew/extend a “titre de séjour,” but it must still be valid when you apply for renewal. You cannot renew or extend a titre de séjour that has already expired. If you have a valid titre de séjour, you would next need to show proof that you have a job next year as a teaching assistant (your work contract). If you have not received your arrêté de nomination yet and your titre de séjour is about to expire, the Préfecture may be able to issue a temporary titre de séjour known as a “recipissé” which might give you a little bit more time for your contract to arrive in the mail. Once you have received the arrêté, you should go to the Préfecture immediately to renew your titre de séjour. The Préfecture is the authority on this issue, so you must abide by their rules. If they refuse to renew or extend your “titre de séjour,” then you will have to return to the U.S. at the end of the summer to get a new visa. They are the final authority on the matter. Please direct any further questions to your local Préfecture.

- **I am currently in France, but don’t have a long-stay visa or titre de séjour. Can I get my long-stay visa here in France?**
No. You must return to the United States to get your long-stay visa.

- **I am going to be a teaching assistant and a full-time student next year. Which visa should I get?**

  Worker status is considered more important than student status by French immigration authorities and you should therefore apply for a long-stay work visa.

  Since a person cannot have two visas at once, you should apply ONLY for a work visa to cover your time in France. The work visa will be issued for the length of your teaching contract, starting on the date you arrive in France and expiring at the end of your contract (visa services usually add on some extra time – around one month – to allow you to wrap up your affairs in France, but this can vary by consulate and individual situation). If your studies begin before late September and/or end after mid-May, you should also bring the paperwork proving your student enrollment status for the 2016-2017 year to your visa appointment (in addition to your normal assistantship paperwork, of course!). If you explain your situation to the visa agent, the consulate should be able to issue you a visa covering your student dates as well.

  As a long-stay worker in France, you will have the same student enrollment status and rights as a normal French resident. This means that you can enroll in classes and complete your visa process without going through Campus France. If you are confused about how to enroll in classes at a French university, Campus France can still help answer your questions ([www.usa.campusfrance.org](http://www.usa.campusfrance.org)).

- **I am planning on going to France with my significant other. What should I do?**

  It is your responsibility to research the intricacies of bringing another person with you to France. Americans are only allowed to remain in France as tourists for up to 90 days. If an American wants to stay in France longer than this, he or she must obtain a long-stay visa. The long-stay visa is usually only available to students with proof of enrollment and to workers with proof of employment. The Teaching Assistant Program cannot help arrange for your significant other to work or study in France. For more information about available visas, please visit your regional consulate’s website.

**Visa application steps**

1. Receive your work contract (arrêté de nomination stamped by the French Department of Labor) in the mail.
2. Make a visa appointment using the online scheduling system for your regional consulate.
   - **You may plan ahead and schedule your appointment even if you have not received the arrêté de nomination yet.** Most arrêtés arrive in July, however we cannot give you an exact date by which you will definitely have your contract. Use your best judgment to estimate a date that should work for you.
     * If you have not received your work contract before your visa appointment date and need to cancel your appointment, you can do this through your regional consulate’s online scheduling system. If you have to reschedule and need an appointment earlier than the next available date in the system, we recommend checking the system frequently (by refreshing your browser every 15 minutes or so). Sometimes an earlier appointment will open up due to another cancellation and the new space will become available online.
3. Prepare all documents for your visa appointment according to the instructions listed on your regional consulate’s website.

4. Go to your visa appointment.
   - If you plan to return to the consulate in person when your visa is ready, you may take your passport with you when you leave. The consulate will contact you once your visa is ready (usually 2-3 weeks after the first appointment) and you will need to return in person to get the visa affixed in your passport and to pick up the OFII form.
   - If you are not able to return to the consulate to pick up your visa in person, you must leave your passport at the consulate along with a pre-paid, self-addressed, secured-mail envelope. The consulate will mail your passport, visa, and OFII form back to you as soon as your visa is ready.

5. You may leave for France once you have both your arrêté de nomination and your visa.
   - When you arrive in France (or the Schengen Zone if you will be traveling to France through another country), make sure to get your passport stamped by the border police.
   - Then secure housing and mail back your OFII form.

What Now? Timeline of Things to do this Summer

May – June:
- Obtain an official version of your birth certificate that you can bring to France
- SAVE MONEY!!!
- Research airline fares. We do not recommend purchasing your plane tickets until you have at least received your arrêté de nomination in the mail and have booked a visa appointment. If you decide to book your plane tickets now, please note that this is entirely at your own risk.
- Make a visa appointment at your regional French consulate using the consulate’s online visa appointment scheduling system. Visa appointments should be made about 2 months prior to the appointment date. We recommend getting an appointment on the books for August or the very beginning of September. If you make an appointment but do not receive your work contract before the appointment date, you can reschedule your appointment online.

June – July:
- Watch for your arrêté de nomination in the mail. When you receive it:
  - Make at least one copy of the work contract document!
  - Verify your personal information
  - Check for the stamp from the French Department of Labor (DIRECCTE or DDTEFP)
  - Read through the CIEP’s “Guide de l’assistant”
  - Get in touch with your school and/or contact person!

August – September:
- Contact us if you have NOT received your arrêté de nomination in the mail by August 5th.
- Make sure you have all the necessary documentation, photos, and photocopies for your visa appointment.
• Get your long-stay visa at your local French consulate.
• Leave for France once you have both your arrêté de nomination and your visa.
• Upon arrival in France or the Schengen Zone, make sure to get your passport stamped by the border authorities.

Pre-Departure Checklist

☐ Passport
☐ Copy of federal Identity History Summary uploaded to your online tapif.org account
☐ Visa de long-séjour (affixed in your passport)
☐ OFII form (stamped and returned to you by the visa service)
☐ Official version of your birth certificate
☐ Arrêté de nomination stamped by the French Department of Labor
☐ All the documents your académie sent you over the summer, especially the address and phone number for your school and/or contact person
☐ Photocopies of the documents listed above (the French authorities LOVE photocopies and it can be a good idea to bring copies of your important documents any time you want to apply or sign up for something like a bank account, phone plan, etc.)
☐ Credit/debit card (make sure you let your bank know that you will be living in France this year so they do not put holds on your cards… you should also ask them what kind of fees you should expect to encounter while abroad)
☐ Plane ticket (make sure to check online to see what your airline’s baggage policy is… you wouldn’t want to get stuck having to pay overweight bag charges at the airport!)
☐ Money: You will need personal funds to cover your expenses through at least the end of October. The exact amount will depend on your spending habits, lifestyle and region where you are assigned. You are responsible for creating a realistic budget for yourself. Some assistants do fine on the salary provided, while others need to supplement their salary. We recommend a minimum of $2,000 to cover expenses during this initial period of the contract, but again, this varies by person and region of assignment.
☐ Optional health insurance to cover you for the first 3 months of your contract – not required, but generally recommended (see page 23 for more information).
☐ Optional travel insurance to cover you during the year for emergency medical costs outside of France and repatriation of remains (see page 23 for more information).
☐ Accommodations for at least a few days after you arrive in France: a reservation at a youth hostel or inexpensive hotel, staying with friends, etc.
You may also want to register your passport and travel plans with the U.S. Department of State’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (this will make things easier in case of emergency): https://step.state.gov

Finally, PLEASE REMEMBER to get your passport stamped by the border authorities upon entering France or the Schengen Zone!
Post-Arrival Information

Validating Your Visa

Your visa will be issued for the length of your contract, however you must register with the Office Français de l’Immigration et de l’Intégration (OFII) within the first 3 months of your stay in France. If you do not register with the OFII within the first 3 months of your stay in France, your visa becomes invalid and it is illegal for you to stay in France!!!

Once your visa is validated, it becomes your “titre de séjour” and will act like a residency card. It will basically allow you to be “French” for most administrative purposes during your 7-month teaching assistant contract. With a validated visa, you can come and go as you please in and out of France, and you can also to register for social benefits like health insurance, subsidized housing, etc.

Validation procedure

When you apply for your long-stay visa at your regional French consulate, you will fill out the top portion of the OFII form and submit it with your visa application. The visa service will stamp the middle portion of the form and give it back to you with your visa. Keep this form and bring it with you to France!

When you arrive in France or the Schengen Zone, make sure to get your passport stamped upon entry. Once you have secured housing in France, complete the bottom section of the OFII form (under “rubriques à compléter après la délivrance du visa et avant l’envoi à l’OFII”) and submit the following documents to the OFII branch in your area:

1. Completed OFII form
2. Copy of your passport ID and validity page(s)
3. Copy of the entry stamp you received at the airport
4. Copy of your long-stay work visa issued at the French consulate

You can submit your OFII dossier by mail or in person. If you decide to mail the documents, you must send them by “lettre recommandée” – the French equivalent of certified mail. This is a little bit more expensive than sending a regular letter, but allows you to confirm when the OFII receives your form (this is important because the OFII receives a ton of mail each day and has been known to lose letters sent by regular mail). To do a “lettre recommandée,” simply go to the post office and ask the person at the counter for help.

If you are close to the OFII branch in your area, you may want to drop off your dossier in person. This way, you can ensure that the OFII properly registers your file.
To find the OFII branch that corresponds to you, please refer to page 2 of the OFII form: www.consulfrance-washington.org/IMG/pdf/ofii_ENG-4.pdf

Medical visit
After you submit your OFII dossier, you will be scheduled for a brief medical visit (FREE for assistants) required of all foreigners living in France on long-stay visas. You must complete this routine medical exam in order for the French authorities to fully validate your visa.

You will receive a letter in the mail informing you of the time and place of your medical visit. **You must go to the appointment scheduled for you by the OFIII – they will not go out of their way to reschedule the visit for a date that is more convenient for you.** Validating your visa is of the utmost importance, so we suggest that you do whatever it takes to keep this appointment! If it happens to be on a day that you are scheduled to teach, ask your school for permission to go to the appointment and make up any missed classes at a later date. They should be okay with this since the medical visit is mandatory for you to legally stay in France for the year. The medical visits for assistants usually take place in the fall/winter.

After your appointment, the OFII will validate your visa by giving you an OFII validation sticker (“vignette OFII”) in your passport, stamping your long-stay visa, or affixing another “titre de séjour” document in your passport.

**OFII website**
For more information about the visa validation process, please visit the OFII’s website at: www.ofii.fr/visa_long_sejour_titre_de_sejour_193/presentation_du_vlsts_915.html

Traveling on Your Visa
If you wish to travel to another Schengen Zone country during your time as an assistant, your long-stay multiple entry visa allows you to do so at anytime. You can view a map of the Schengen Zone here: www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/07._carte_espace_schengen_document_no7_.pdf

If you wish to travel to a country outside of the Schengen Zone or back to the U.S.:

- **Within the first 3 months of your arrival in France** – Your visa allows you to do so without having the OFII validation sticker in your passport or receipt stating that your file has been received.

- **After the first 3 months of your arrival in France** – You must have the OFII validation sticker in your passport (or at least the receipt showing you have started the OFII registration process). Failing to comply with the OFII registration process within 3 months of your arrival in France will result in your having to present a new application for a long-stay visa at the French consulate or embassy in the U.S.

Housing
General information
You are responsible for finding your own housing in France. We recommend getting in touch with your school and/or contact person before you leave so that you can learn more about housing options in your area. They can recommend an inexpensive hotel or youth hostel where you can stay for the first few days, or let you know if someone at the school can let you stay at their house while you get settled.
Youth hostel websites:
- www.fuaj.org
- www.hihostels.com
- www.hostelworld.com
- www.guideforeurope.com/francehostels.html
- www.hostels.com
- www.mije.com (youth hostels in Paris)

Some schools provide housing for language assistants, however this option usually only exists at the high school level. Some lycées have boarding students who actually live at the school in dormitory-style housing and in these cases, the school is sometimes able to set aside a room for the language assistant. In this scenario, the assistant often performs light RA duties in exchange for this cheap or even free housing. Some lycées even have small apartments set aside for their assistants. It is much rarer to find on-site housing for assistants at the collège and primary school levels. Your contact person should be able to tell you whether or not your school will provide you with housing. If the answer is no and you have to find your own housing, don’t panic! Hundreds of assistants find themselves in this situation every year and do just fine.

**We do not recommended searching for housing until after you have arrived in France or have at least been in contact with your school.** This is because:

1. Your school may already have housing reserved for you
2. It is not advisable to sign a lease without seeing the apartment and surrounding neighborhood
3. You probably won’t know the region well enough before you arrive to know which areas are easily accessible to your school

Many assistants organize their own housing each year. You can stay in a youth hostel for the first week or so while you look for a place to live. Try reaching out to other assistants in your area and team up to find housing. Most cities have a youth information center offering housing information to young people and students on a budget – this can be a great place to start. Finding housing on your own seems scary at first, but it is usually not as difficult as expected! Don’t stress out too much if you go to France without something set in stone. You will find many other assistants in the same situation who will be there to support you in your housing search.

If you have been placed in Paris or its suburbs (Créteil/Versailles), past assistants have recommended finding a place where you can stay for at least the first month while you look for housing. Paris is a large city full of students from all over the world. It can be very difficult to find a place to live and most assistants spend at least two weeks searching for housing. For this reason, we recommend that you begin your housing search immediately upon arrival so that you don’t have to spend all of your saved-up money on a hotel.

If you have not been placed in Paris or its suburbs, it is still a good idea to look around online now to get a general idea of how much it will cost rent an apartment in your area.

When you find an apartment, you will most likely have to pay a security deposit (*caution or dépôt de garantie*) equivalent to 1 or 2 months rent, plus the rent for the first month; you will need to have quick access to the equivalent of 2 or 3 months rent. Most landlords have no problem accepting wire transfers, but please note that there may be international transfer fees on both ends – you should also take into account the time it takes to complete the transfer (usually 2-3 days).

In Paris and other large cities, you may need to make a quick decision on the spot about whether or not to take an apartment. A letter of financial guarantee may help a landlord accept your application over the applications of French people who already have French co-signers. This letter can be from your bank, your parents, or another person willing to cover you financially should you not be able to pay your rent.

You can prepare this letter yourself and have it notarized to make it more official. The French consulate
in Vancouver has a form letter that you can use to get an idea of what the letter should say (but you would obviously need to tailor it to your specific needs as a language assistant): www.consulfrance-vancouver.org/IMG/pdf/garantie_financiere_700dollars_bilingue-2.pdf

If you are renting a place on your own, look for a place with a refrigerator and “plaquettes” or burners at the very least. Many studios do not have ovens, but you can buy a small toaster oven if you need one.

We suggest preparing a budget before you leave the U.S. in which you include the maximum amount of money that you can spend on housing, groceries, toiletries, transportation and spending money.

**Websites**

Housing websites (if you have any to add, please contact us by email):

- www.leboncoin.fr
- http://geo.craigslist.org/iso/fr
- www.pap.fr
- www.immopublic.fr
- www.seloger.fr

For finding a roommate….often less expensive, and a good way to meet French people:

- www.kel-koloc.com
- www.appartager.com
- www[colocation.fr
- https://en-fr.roomlala.com/

Sites with housing sections for students and young people on limited budgets:

- www.mapiaule.com
- www.service.fr/logement-etu.html
- www.location-etudiant.fr
- www.capcampus.com/logement-1159/
- www.annonceetudiant.com

Housing for students (some student residences will allow you to live there even if you are not attending the local university):

- www.cnous.fr
- www.estudines.fr
- www.adele.org
- www.logetudes.com
- www.icade-immobilier.com/residence-services-etudiant.html

* Please note that each region also has its own Centre Regional d’Information Jeunesse that will have housing suggestions and perhaps even listings for young people on limited budgets in that particular area. You can find yours by searching online for “CRIJ” + the name of your region or city. For instance, if you are placed in the académie of Lille, you could search “CRIJ Lille” and you will find the site for the CRIJ Nord-Pas de Calais at www.crij-npdc.fr (look under Logement > Annonce logement).

**Housing vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>location</th>
<th>renting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>colocation</td>
<td>renting with roommates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locataire</td>
<td>renter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
propriétaire | landlord
---|---
loyer | rent
caution/ dépôt de garantie | security deposit
meublé | furnished
chambre | a room in someone’s apartment or house
cuisine équipée | a kitchen with refrigerator and burners, sometimes an oven
cuisine non-équipée | a kitchen with no refrigerator, no burners, no oven
plaque/cuisine électrique | burners
toilette sur le palier | toilet not in the apartment, but on the same floor
coin douche | not a full bathroom, just a shower and a sink
salle de bain | full bathroom (bathtub)
avec/sans ascenseur | with/without an elevator
étage | floor
un bail | lease
les charges | utilities

* In France the ground floor is the “rez-de-chaussée” (RC) and the first floor is the floor above the rez-de-chaussée (the second floor to Americans). Below the rez-de-chaussée is the sous-sol (SS). Rooms are called “pièces.” A pièce can be any room except the kitchen and the bathroom. For example, a 2-bedroom apartment with a kitchen, living room, dining room, and one bathroom can be listed as a 4 pièces – T4 or F4 in ad-speak.

**Caisse d’Allocations Familiales (CAF)**
If you rent a room or apartment in France (with or without roommates), you may be eligible for the Caisse d’Allocations Familiales or CAF, an organization that gives housing subsidies for people with limited incomes. Not everyone is eligible for CAF – eligibility depends on your exact housing situation and also in part on the amount of money you made over the past few years – but most assistants do qualify. For more information about eligibility requirements, how to apply, and to get an estimate of how much money you might receive through CAF, please visit their website at: [www.caf.fr](http://www.caf.fr)

When searching for housing, we strongly recommend finding a place to live that is affordable without the CAF. Even if you are eligible for CAF and apply right away, it will still probably take at least a few
months to start receiving payments. It is therefore best to find housing that you can pay for each month without relying on CAF.

If you are eligible for CAF and want to apply, you will have to turn in some paperwork (application form, copy of your validated visa/titre de séjour, copy of your lease, bank routing information, etc.) and then wait to be approved. This process is slow and you may not receive any money for several months.

*Please note:* At the end of your time in France, you MUST formally request to close your CAF account. The CAF usually requires you to submit a formal letter stating that you will be leaving France and that you wish to stop the subsidy payments. If you do not make this formal request to close your account, the CAF may continue the direct deposits to your French bank account even after you leave France; once they realize their error after a few months, they will try to get these payments back and will threaten legal action if you do not comply. To avoid the hassle of trying to arrange repayment from the U.S., please make sure to close your account at the end of your time in France.

**Taxe d’habitation**

If you rent an apartment in France, you may be responsible for paying a “taxe d’habitation” at the end of the year, and this tax amounts to several hundred euros. Please speak to your landlord about this so that you will not be caught off guard should you be responsible for paying this tax (the French government would send you a bill next summer). For more information, see page 29.

**Banking**

**Setting up a French bank account**

In order for you to get paid, you need to open a bank account in France. We recommend doing this immediately so that you can receive an advance on your salary (you will need to have opened your French bank account before October 10th or so if you want the salary advance – more information on page 27). In order to open a bank account, you must have an address in France. If you have not found permanent housing this early in the month, ask your school if they might be able to serve as your address for a while. They can sometimes provide you with a housing letter to give to the bank.

We recommend visiting a couple of banks to find out about their conditions and what they require to open an account. Choose a bank that is close to your home or your school as you will have to visit the same branch in person to make changes to your account. Please note that some academies have agreements with a certain local bank, and this bank might be easier to deal with thanks to more experience with language assistants and their special needs. Ask your school or académie contact person about this before selecting a bank. Major banks in France include Banque Populaire, BNP Paribas, Caisse d'Epargne, Crédit Agricole, Crédit Lyonnais, Crédit Mutuel, HSBC, and Société Générale.

When you open an account, you will need to provide at least your passport and a “justificatif de logement.” Each bank has different requirements, so don’t be shy about asking questions. Make sure to explain to them that you will be leaving after your contract is finished at the end of April. Some banks have fees if you stay with them for less than one year, so take the time to understand their account closure policy before signing anything.

Once you have opened your account, ask the bank for several copies of your “Relevé d’Identité Bancaire” or RIB. This is a document that provides your bank account coordinates. You will be asked for your RIB whenever you set up direct deposits or automatic withdrawals (i.e. when you apply for your salary advance, CAF, etc.), so it’s good to have extra copies on hand for the future.
Closing your French bank account
When you leave France at the end of the year, you will need to close your French bank account. The easiest way to do this is to meet with your bank “conseiller/conseillère” 1-2 months before your departure to let them know that you will be leaving the country and to talk about the steps for closing your account. Your bank “conseiller/conseillère” can guide you through the process.

Please note that you will need to leave your account open through at least the end of April to receive your last month’s assistant salary. You may need to leave the account open longer if you have other automatic deposits or withdrawals set up (reimbursements, CAF, etc.). As long as you arrange everything in advance and fill out the necessary paperwork ahead of time, it is usually possible to leave your account open for a few weeks after you leave the country to all for these final transactions to go through (then your French bank can do a wire transfer of your funds to your U.S. account and fully close the French account on your behalf after that).

Your U.S. bank account
We recommend speaking with someone at your American bank about international banking fees so you know what to expect in France. Call both your bank and credit card companies to let them know you will be in France for the next 7 months so that they do not put holds on your accounts due to unusual account activity.

Many American ATM cards can be used at French banks. Be aware that most banks charge a fee for the use of foreign ATMs, but this method often gets you the best exchange rate.

Sending money via wire transfer from an American bank to a French bank can take anywhere from 24 hours to a couple of weeks. You should ask both your U.S. and French banks how long it takes on average so that you know what to expect. Please note that international wire transfers usually involve paying fees to both the sending and receiving banks. Check with both banks for details.
Health Insurance

General information
As a teaching assistant, you will be covered by the French "Sécurité sociale" or "Sécu". Your salary each month will reflect deductions from your paycheck for healthcare and social services. You cannot opt out of this plan. The Sécu covers 70% of medical costs incurred IN FRANCE, 35–65% of prescriptions filled IN FRANCE, and 80% of hospitalization fees IN FRANCE. If you travel outside of France, you are NOT covered by the insurance provided by the French government (even if you go home to the U.S. over the holidays). You are also NOT covered for trips back home for emergency care or for repatriation of remains. We therefore recommended purchasing additional travel insurance to cover you outside of France and in case of a major emergency. We cannot tell you where to buy this insurance, but talk to your parents, contact a student travel agency, do some research on the Internet…

Your coverage under the Sécu will only go into full effect once you have a “numéro de sécurité sociale” (social security number). This number will be assigned when you turn in your enrollment paperwork to your local “caisse de Sécurité sociale.” It is therefore VERY IMPORTANT that you turn in the Sécu paperwork as soon as possible once you get to France.

Last year, the CPAM (Caisse primaire d’assurance maladie, the organization that manages the Sécu) set up a bilingual French/English hotline to answer Assistants’ questions regarding coverage details. If you have particular questions about obtaining prescriptions or questions about whether a certain treatment will be covered in France, we suggest calling this number for more information. The number is 00 33 811 36 36 46 from abroad, and 0811 36 36 46 from France. This service is available between 9am and 6pm daily Paris time.

Enrollment
You will receive more information about how to enroll in the Sécu at your académie’s orientation session or “stage” for assistants. Your académie may have already started the enrollment process for you during the summer, so ask at the “stage” for more details about what you need to do next. Each region’s Sécu paperwork process is a little different, so the académie will have the best information about how to enroll.

Enrolling in the Sécu usually consists of filling out some forms and turning them in (along with copies of your passport, birth certificate) to your local “caisse de Sécurité sociale.” Once the Sécu processes the paperwork, you will be assigned a “numéro de sécurité sociale.” Once you have this number, you will be eligible to be reimbursed for healthcare expenses.

The Carte Vitale
Once enrolled in the Sécu, you will receive a health insurance card known as the “Carte Vitale.” This card allows you to benefit from immediate reimbursement for medical costs. For example, if you go to the doctor and present your Carte Vitale, you will only have to do a small co-pay at the end of the visit. If you do not have your Carte Vitale, you will have to pay the doctor in full, then the doctor will give you a reimbursement claim form to submit to your local “caisse de Sécurité sociale.” The paperwork is like filing a reimbursement claim with your health insurance company in the U.S. – it’s annoying, but not too difficult as long as you have the right documentation.

It can take a long time to receive the Carte Vitale in the mail. We therefore recommend having additional individual insurance to cover you in case of major emergency during the first two to three months. This is not required, but can help avoid paying large out-of-pocket sums while you wait to receive your Carte Vitale. Basically, this helps you in emergency situations – If you have a big accident and incur major...
medical costs during the transition period (between when you receive your “numéro de sécurité sociale” and when you receive your Carte Vitale), you would have to pay out-of-pocket at the doctor’s office or hospital, then file a claim for reimbursement later. If you broke your arm, for instance, the bills could be expensive and might be difficult to pay out-of-pocket. We recommend finding an individual plan for the first two to three months that can help you pay immediately for emergency medical treatment.

*We cannot provide advice about private insurance companies.

**Medical visits and reimbursement**

Coverage through the Sécu is generally more comprehensive than most American health insurance plans. If you get sick while in France, you may go to a doctor of your choosing. At the end of your appointment, the doctor will either use your Carte Vitale to enter your information into the system and you will only have to do a very small co-pay (usually only a few euros!), or you can pay in full and then submit a request for reimbursement to the Sécu later. Your doctor’s office can provide you with the appropriate claim forms. It is important to understand that paying in full for a doctor’s visit in France is much cheaper than paying in full for medical care in the U.S. – the full out-of-pocket price for most medical visits is only 20-30 euros.

**Medicine and prescriptions**

The Sécu covers 35-65% of the cost of prescriptions filled in France. If you need a prescription medication while you are in France, you will need to visit a French doctor, have him or her write you a prescription, and then take the prescription to a pharmacy. Pharmacies in France will not accept foreign-written prescriptions.

If you currently take a specific medication, we recommend bringing a couple of month’s worth of the medication with you to France to cover you until you can see a French doctor. If you are planning on getting any of your current medications in France, it can be helpful to ask your U.S. doctor write a note explaining the details of your current medication regime (reason for taking medication, name of medication, dosage, etc.). This may make it easier for the French doctor to write you a prescription for the same drug.

Prescriptions in France are reimbursed on a scale, usually between 35% and 65% of the sticker price of the medication. The reimbursement amount depends on the drug, and is indicated by the color of the label or “vignette” that they put on the medication. For more information, please visit: [www.ameli.fr/assures/soins-et-remboursements/combien-serez-vous-rembourse/medicaments-et-vaccins/remboursement-des-medicaments-et-tiers-payant/quel-remboursement-pour-vos-medicaments.php](http://www.ameli.fr/assures/soins-et-remboursements/combien-serez-vous-rembourse/medicaments-et-vaccins/remboursement-des-medicaments-et-tiers-payant/quel-remboursement-pour-vos-medicaments.php)

If you already take a particular medication and want to find out the price of the drug in France and how much would be reimbursed by the Sécu, please visit: [www.doctissimo.fr/html/medicaments/articles/medicaments_loupe.htm](http://www.doctissimo.fr/html/medicaments/articles/medicaments_loupe.htm)  
*(prix de vente = price, tx de remboursement = the percentage that the Sécu would cover)*

You can find aspirin, ibuprofen, etc. in France. Medicine is NOT sold in grocery stores in France, only in pharmacies. Most medications that are sold over-the-counter in the U.S. are also sold over-the-counter in French pharmacies.
Dental and vision
The Sécurité sociale covers dental and eye care to a certain extent. It covers routine vision check-ups, dentist visits and fillings, but does not reimburse as well for more expensive treatments like crowns, eye glasses, etc. Additional coverage is available through the MGEN (see below).

The MGEN
As a teaching assistant through the French Ministry of National Education, you will have the option to enroll in a more comprehensive health plan for an extra fee. This extra “top-up” insurance is not very expensive and can be a good option if you have more complex medical needs.

The standard Sécu coverage is good for basic medical needs and prescriptions (like treating common ailments like a cold or the flu). If you have a more complicated pre-existing condition, take an expensive medication, or if you think you will need to visit more expensive specialists during your time in France, you may want to consider joining a “mutuelle” (a health insurance group separate from but linked to the Sécu). Mutuelles can cover the remaining costs for doctor’s visits (i.e. the co-pays), more expensive medical procedures, and additional reimbursements for prescriptions that are not covered by the Sécu. Mutuelles also provide additional coverage for dental and eye care.

Assistants have the option of joining the mutuelle for teachers called the Mutuelle Générale de l’Éducation Nationale (MGEN). The MGEN is considered one of the best “mutuelles” in France and provides excellent coverage for additional medical costs. Please note, however, that you may not be able to benefit from this until a couple months into your contract due to paperwork processing times. You should receive more information about how to enroll at your académie’s orientation “stage.”

To find the closest MGEN office to you, visit the MGEN’s website at www.mgen.fr. Scroll down and click on the green box labeled “Votre section MGEN”. You can then either click the office closest to you on the map, or enter in your département code (this is the first two letters of your school’s zip code - for example, the zip code for Nîmes is 30000, which means that Nîmes is in the 30 département).

Websites
You can find more information out about the health insurance available to assistants here:

CIEP information

L’Assurance maladie – La Sécurité sociale
www.ameli.fr/assures/index.php

- Reimbursement information:
  www.ameli.fr/assures/soins-et-remboursements/index.php

  To find your local “caisse”:
  www.ameli.fr/assures/votre-caisse/index.php

- Article explaining the “vignette” system for prescriptions:
• Look up your medication here:
  www.doctissimo.fr/html/medicaments/articles/medicaments_loupe.htm

MGEN
www.mgen.fr

• Estimated Medical Reimbursement Chart (Sécu vs. MGEN):
  www.mgen.fr/particuliers/loffre-globale-mgen/sante/frais-medicaux-courants/

• Dental Reimbursement Chart:
  www.mgen.fr/particuliers/loffre-globale-mgen/sante/soins-dentaires/

• Vision Reimbursement Chart:
  www.mgen.fr/particuliers/loffre-globale-mgen/sante/optique/

**Orientation ("Stage")**

Each académie will have an orientation meeting or “stage” in the beginning of October. Some of you will receive information about the meeting via email or regular mail this summer, while others will not receive details for the orientation until you arrive in France. The details of your region’s stage may be listed on the CIEP’s website for assistants de langue:

  www.ciep.fr/assistants-etrangers-france
  (under “Votre arrivée en France” > “Dates des stages d’accueil dans les académies”)

At the first “stage,” you will:
- Meet the other assistants in your académie (not just the English speakers)
- Learn about the French school system and get some teaching tips
- Receive information about the paperwork for your salary, health insurance, etc.
- Ask questions and discuss any problems or concerns that you may have

The first orientation “stage” will last a day or two and is held in the beginning of October. If the orientation lasts more than one day, the académie will help you make arrangements for a place to stay in the city. These details will be slightly different for each académie. Your académie may also schedule one or two other “stages” later on in the school year, but these usually focus more on training and teaching skills and less on administrative paperwork.

Above all, please feel free to ask questions at the first orientation so that you can get a better understanding of what you need to do during the first month or two of your stay. Don’t be shy since many of your fellow assistants will probably also have the same questions and concerns.

**Salary / Advance of First Payment**

As a language teaching assistant in continental France (including Corsica), you will be paid €964.88 per month. After mandatory deductions are made for social security, you will receive approximately €790 net per month. This amount is the same no matter what level you teach and no matter where you have been placed in continental France. You will always receive the same monthly salary, regardless of how many vacation days happen to be in a particular month.
If you have been placed in one of the “départements d’outre-mer” or “DOMs,” your monthly salary will be a little bit higher to compensate for the higher cost of living overseas. Here are the NET monthly salaries for the DOMs: Guadeloupe: €1119.19; Guyane €1119.19; Martinique €1119.19; La Réunion €1223.

The paperwork involved with processing your first salary payment will take some time to process. You need to check with your school’s “intendant” or your circonscription contact person to make sure that he or she has all the necessary paperwork. Be patient, but persistent.

**Advance of first payment**

You may ask for an advance on your first salary. The advance will allow you to receive 70% of your salary at the end of October and 130% at the end of November (if you are in continental France, this means that you would receive about €553 at the end of October and then €1027 at the end of November). This advance is NOT automatic. If you do not ask for your advance, you will not be paid until the end of November. You would then receive both months’ salaries at the same time.

As soon as you arrive in France and make contact with your school or circonscription, ask about how to apply for the salary advance. You MUST apply before October 10th (the deadline may be a little different this year, so verify this with your académie) or you will not receive the advance. You must provide your school or circonscription with a “Relevé d’Identité Bancaire” or RIB (the document with your bank account coordinates) in order to file for an advance, so you will need to open a bank account first.

**Having a Second Job**

Most regions of France do not allow language assistants to pursue official secondary employment. This restriction is intended to make sure that your job as a teaching assistant is your primary means of living in France at any given time (since you will be in France on a special-status visa for assistants).

Many assistants do private tutoring or babysitting for cash in order to earn some extra money.

**Vacations / School Year Calendar**

As a teaching assistant you will have 5 weeks of paid vacation. For more details and the dates of your vacations, please visit: [www.education.gouv.fr/pid25058/le-calendrier-scolaire.html](http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid25058/le-calendrier-scolaire.html) *(make sure you select the calendar for the 2016-2017 school year)*.

Academies are divided into three zones (A, B, and C) that have different dates for winter and spring breaks. Do not automatically assume that you and a friend who has been placed in a different académie will have the same vacations without first checking the website. If you have been assigned to Corse, Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique, or La Réunion, you can do a “recherche géographique” and this will take you to your académie’s website where you can view your vacation dates. The dates reflect the last day of class and the day you are expected back.

**Discounts**

Young people, students, and teachers with proper ID are eligible for a number of discounts throughout France. Many academies, schools, or circonscriptions can issue you a professional’s card or even a student ID to help you get these discounts. Please ask about this possibility at your orientation.
You might want to look into getting an International Student or Youth Identity Card which can also help with discounts (www.isiccard.com, www.statravel.com/youth-travel-card.htm).

If you are 27 or under and are planning on doing a lot of traveling this year, you may want to purchase a “carte de reduction jeune” through the SNCF. The card is usually €50 and will allow you to get discounts of up to 60% off train tickets in France. You will always receive a discount of at least 25%, even if you book at the last minute, so this card can be a great way for frequent travelers to save money. For more information, please visit: www.sncf.com/fr/tarifs-reduits/carte-jeune

Many French cities also offer cultural discount cards for young people. These cards usually cost about 5 or 10 euros and allow you to get discounts to “spectacles” like theater, opera, ballet, art shows, concerts, and even movies! This can be a good way to take advantage of cultural productions in your area without spending a lot of money. Visit your city’s youth information or tourism office for more information.

### Deferring School Loans

If you have school loans, it may be possible for you to defer repayment during your time in France. Please contact your loan provider or university financial aid office directly for more information on exactly how to do this. We cannot answer questions about the procedure for deferring loans, however we can provide you with a letter attesting to your teaching assistant position, hours, salary, etc. If your loan provider asks for this type of documentation, please email us with the information you need us to include and we will email the letter to you as a PDF (if you need a hard copy mailed to you or your loan provider, please make sure to also include that information in your email request).

### Taxes

This section of the handbook is provided solely as an informational resource for American teaching assistants wishing to find out how past assistants have handled taxes on assistantship income. This information is not intended to serve as legal or financial advice. As each person’s tax situation is unique, we advise assistants to address case-specific questions to a certified tax professional (in France or in the U.S.) or IRS representative.

#### French taxes

Teaching assistants do not generally pay French income tax on their income made in France. This is thanks to an agreement between the French and American governments saying that people working on short term contracts like this (and thanks to the educational nature of the assistantship program), the French government will not collect tax on income earned by foreign language assistants in France.

The amount withdrawn from your paycheck every month is for contributions to the Sécurité sociale (for health insurance and other social services like subsidized housing, etc.). You can see a breakdown of the Sécu contributions on your "bulletins de paie". Average American assistants do not have to do any French tax paperwork to declare assistantship income in France.

*If you have other sources of income in France aside from the assistantship, or if you are established more permanently in France, you may need to declare your assistantship income as part of your larger tax declaration to the French government. If you have these types of questions, we recommend that you speak directly with a French tax professional.*
American taxes

It is your responsibility to determine whether you need to declare your French income and/or pay taxes on it in the U.S. We cannot give legal advice on U.S. taxes, so if you have questions, we recommend speaking with a tax accountant or IRS representative. You can call the IRS in the U.S. at 1 (800) 829-1040 or in France at 01 43 12 25 55.

You may still need to declare your French income on the U.S. tax forms. The French-American government agreement mentioned above is based on the premise that since you will not declare your income to France, you WILL declare it to the U.S. The assistantship income is not enough to be taxable on its own, but you do usually still need to declare it.

The above information only applies to average teaching assistants who do not have other sources of income. If you have other income while in France or for the rest of the 2016 or 2017 year, your assistantship income may combine with your other income to become taxable. We cannot provide official tax advice for individual situations, so please direct any further questions to a tax accountant or IRS representative.

Please note that since you will be working for the French government and not an American organization, you will not receive any sort of 1099 or W-2 form for your income (since the French government does not issue these types of documents). You can use your “bulletins de paie” as proof of income.

* We would like to stress that we cannot give you advice on your taxes, so please do not email us about this in March or April. The above information is all that we know!

Taxe d’habitation

If you rent an apartment in France, you may be responsible for paying a “taxe d’habitation” to the French government at the end of the year. This tax can amount to several hundred euros. Whether or not you get charged the tax depends on the type of housing you have and the region where you live, so please speak with your landlord directly about this. If you are responsible for the tax, a bill will be mailed to you in the U.S. next summer. According to official texts, assistants are responsible for the “taxe d’habitation” insofar as:

The “taxe d’habitation” is established for the entire year under the circumstances existing on the 1st of the year, in the name of the persons who have at their disposal or are in holding of taxable properties, in any capacity whatsoever. The tax applies to all inhabited furnished properties (art. 1407, 1408 and 1415 of the French tax code). However, properties inhabited by students in university residences are not subject to the “taxe d’habitation” when the residence is managed by a “centre regional des oeuvres universitaires et scolaires” or by an organization performing an equivalent role under equivalent financial restraints. The result of aforementioned arrangement is that the quality or the status of the resident does not influence the principle of imposition of the “taxe d’habitation.” The “taxe d’habitation” may therefore be imposed on:

- the owner inhabiting the property;
- the beneficiary;
- the renter or subletter;
- the inhabitant not paying rent;
- the squatter.

For more information, please visit:
www.impots.gouv.fr/portal/dgi/public/particuliers.impot?espId=1&impot=TH&pageId=part_taxe_habitation&sid=50
French Paperwork

Learning how to function in the French bureaucratic system is an essential skill that you will learn this year. You will find that French authorities will ask for lots of photocopies and ID photos each time you have to submit official paperwork. Please remember that you are living in a different country and culture with a system that functions on a different schedule. The squeaky wheel gets the oil in France, so be polite, but persistent.

If you need to sign a French document, it is usually marked: “Fait à ______ le ______”. You are expected to write “Fait à (the town where you are) le (date)” and then sign directly below. Remember to write the date the French way (day/month/year). For example:

Fait à Besançon le 27/10/2015

Jane Doe

Doing the Program Again in the Future

Americans may participate a maximum of two 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, among other factors.

If you are applying for a second assistantship in non-consecutive years (ex. You were an assistant in 2012-2013 and now you are applying again for 2016-2017) you must apply through the general TAPIF application at tapif.org.
Post-Arrival Checklist – Things to Do

Things must be done in a particular sequence once you arrive in France (for example, you won’t be able to apply for a salary advance without opening a bank account first). We have done our best to put these steps in the correct order, but you may find that there are other things you need to do in between...

When you arrive:

☐ Get your passport stamped by the border authorities when you enter France or the Schengen Zone

☐ Find housing

☐ Open a bank account

October 1:

☐ Go to your school or circonscription and introduce yourself
  ▪ Meet your contact person and talk about your teaching schedule
  ▪ Ask about when and where the orientation “stage” will be (if you do not already know)

First week of October:

☐ Ask for an advance on your salary (make sure to do this ASAP in October!)
  ▪ You will need to provide a Relevé d’Identité Bancaire (RIB) with the request, so you must already have a French bank account open before you can submit the request

First few weeks of October:

☐ Attend your académie orientation “stage” and meet the other teaching assistants in your region!
  ▪ Make sure to ask questions at this time if you are confused about your next steps, need help filling out paperwork, etc.

☐ Plan your first lesson!

☐ Return the OFII form and corresponding photocopies to your regional OFII office (either by “lettre recommandée” or in person)

☐ Fill out your Sécurité sociale paperwork and follow up to get your numéro de sécurité sociale.

☐ Register your passport and travel plans with the U.S. Department of State’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (this will make things easier in case of emergency): https://step.state.gov

Whenever you are ready:

☐ Go to your medical visit on the date scheduled by the OFII (details will be provided in the letter you should receive from the OFII after submitting your OFII form and photocopies)

☐ Apply for CAF (optional)
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