# B2 French for citizenship: the 2026 checklist

Everything you need to do to prove your French for citizenship or a residence card, in the right order. Fill in your dates and tick each step as you go. The online version, kept up to date, is at **frenchlevelup.com/b2-citizenship-checklist/**.

## Your dates

Fill this in as you go through steps 1 to 5.

**The document I am applying for** step 1

**The level I need** A2, B1 or B2

**My filing date** step 2

**My latest test date** filing date minus 2 years, test after this

**My weakest skill** step 3

**Test booked on** step 5

## This week: five steps, about an hour and a quarter

- [ ] **Step 1** 5 minutes

### Check which document you are applying for and note its level

Find your document in the table of levels and write it, with its level, in the "Your dates" box.

**Why:** A2 for a first multi-year card, B1 for a first resident card and B2 for French nationality. EU, EEA and Swiss citizens are not concerned by the card rules.

- [ ] **Step 2** 5 minutes

### Write down your filing date and count back 2 years

Your TCF or TEF must be taken after the date you get, because the attestation must be under 2 years old on the day you file. Write both dates in the box.

**Why:** No official text says at which stage of the file the two years are checked, so the day you file is the safe reading. A DELF never expires.

- [ ] **Step 3** about 15 minutes

### Take the free level test and note your weakest skill

Take the test for the level your document needs, then write your weakest skill in the box.

**Why:** One weak skill can sink a global B2, so it decides which exam suits you and how long you need. An online test is not an official proof, it only tells you where you stand.

Take the free B2 test: **frenchlevelup.com/french-level-test/b2/**
B1 test, for a resident card: **frenchlevelup.com/french-level-test/b1/**
A2 test, for a multi-year card: **frenchlevelup.com/french-level-test/a2/**

- [ ] **Step 4** 20 minutes

### Choose your exam: TCF IRN, TEF IRN or DELF

Compare how each exam counts a weaker skill and how long it stays valid, then pick one. Book the IRN version of the TCF or the TEF.

**Why:** TCF Canada and TCF Québec are built for Canadian immigration, and the "TCF ANF" no longer exists.

- [ ] **Step 5** 30 minutes

### Book your TCF IRN, TEF IRN or DELF session now

Look at the dates in the centers near you, pick a session after your latest test date, and write the date in the box.

**Why:** In big cities, sessions can fill weeks ahead. Book first, then plan your preparation backwards from the session.

## Then, until you file

- [ ] Step 6 — a few hours a week

### Work on your weakest skill first, every week until the test

Start with the skill you noted in step 3, because that is the one that can sink a global B2.

**Why:** France Éducation International has suspended re-marking of TCF speaking and writing for sessions from 1 September 2026, until about autumn 2027, so sit the test when you are clearly at the level.

- [ ] Step 7 — 30 minutes to book

### Book the civic exam if your file needs it

For naturalization by decree, pass it before you file, because the certificate is one of the documents in your file. First multi-year cards and first resident cards have their own version.

**Why:** A declaration by marriage does not need it, and people over 65 are not concerned by the card version.

- [ ] Step 8 — exam day, then 10 minutes

### Sit the test, then save your attestation or diploma

Download it, print it and write its expiry date on the copy you keep.

**Why:** CCI Paris keeps TEF attestations for 3 years only, and a TCF or TEF retake needs 20 days between sittings and costs the full fee.

- [ ] Step 9 — 5 minutes before you file

### File, with a proof that is still valid

Check the date on your TCF or TEF attestation one last time. It must be under 2 years old on the day you file.

## Six checks people skip

- [ ] **Check that you are booking the TCF IRN or the TEF IRN, not TCF Canada**

  TCF Canada and TCF Québec are for Canada. For a French file, book the TCF IRN or the TEF IRN.

- [ ] **Check that your attestation will still be under 2 years old on the day you file**

  The expiry date is printed on it. Sit the TCF or TEF close to your filing date, or take the DELF B2 if your file is far off.

- [ ] **Check that no single skill is far below the others**

  On the TCF IRN a strong skill does not carry two weak ones, and on the DELF a paper under 5 out of 25 fails you.

- [ ] **Check that you test your level now, not once your file is ready**

  B1 to B2 takes months, so you need the time to close the gap.

- [ ] **Check that your proof is on the official list**

  Online level tests, my free one included, and app certificates are on no official list. Only the proofs in the table go in a file.

- [ ] **Check that sessions near you still have places before you plan your preparation**

  Pick your test early and look at the dates straight away, then plan your preparation backwards from the session.

## Your next step

> **Not sure where you stand?** Take the free level test: **frenchlevelup.com/french-level-test/b2/**. About 15 minutes, no email.

> **Want a closer answer?** Book a Bilan B2: **frenchlevelup.com/bilan-b2/**. A 60-minute one-to-one assessment with a written plan, €95.

The details behind the steps

## Which level for which document (step 1)

| What you apply for | Level | Who it applies to |
|---|---|---|
| First multi-year residence card (*carte de séjour pluriannuelle*) | **A2** | Under 65, and only cards that come with the integration contract (CIR). Visitor, student and talent cards are outside the CIR, so the A2 rule does not apply to them. |
| First 10-year resident card (*carte de résident*) | **B1** | Under 65, and only the cards on the service-public list, such as spouse of a French citizen or long-term EU resident. |
| French nationality: naturalization by decree, or declaration by marriage | **B2, spoken and written** | Naturalization applications lodged and marriage declarations made from 1 January 2026. |

> Language only, not legal advice. For the rest of your file, check with your prefecture or a lawyer.

## Which proof is accepted (step 4)

### For French nationality

- A TCF attestation from France Éducation International, or a TEF attestation from CCI Paris, issued less than 2 years ago and showing B2.
- A diploma attesting at least B2, such as the DELF B2, or a DALF C1 or C2.
- The *brevet*, or a French State diploma or RNCP certification at level 3 or above.

### For the residence cards

- The TCF and the TEF are the only tests recognized. All four tests (listening, reading, writing, speaking) are taken in person in an exam center, on the same day, in one session. The attestation is valid for 2 years.
- Diplomas are accepted too: DELF, DALF, DELF Pro, DCL, DUEF and DFP at the level you need, or a French diploma from level 3 (CAP, BEP) and the *brevet*.
- A diploma issued by a foreign authority in another country is not accepted, even from a French-speaking country.

The DCL FLE, a Ministry of Education diploma for adults, costs €100 and has no expiry date. It is named on the list for the cards, and the Ministry of Education says it covers the B2 needed for nationality, but service-public does not name it, so check with your prefecture before you rely on it.

> Language only, not legal advice. For the rest of your file, check with your prefecture or a lawyer.

## Which exam to book (step 4)

| Exam | Valid for | How a weaker skill counts |
|---|---|---|
| **TCF IRN** France Éducation International | 2 years from the date the results are issued | Three skills at B2 and the fourth at least at "the top of B1", a level FEI does not put in figures. One skill too low and the attestation says "B2: *NON*". |
| **TEF IRN** CCI Paris | 2 years from the date the attestation is issued | At least 400 on three tests and at least 367 on the weakest. |
| **DELF B2 *tout public*** France Éducation International | For life | 50 out of 100 overall and at least 5 out of 25 in each of the four papers. |

Book the IRN version (*Intégration, Résidence et Nationalité*). TCF Canada and TCF Québec are built for Canadian immigration, and the "TCF ANF" no longer exists.

## Timing (steps 2, 5 and 8)

**Results.** TCF IRN: within 15 working days of FEI receiving the session material from your center. TEF IRN: 1 to 10 working days from the test, by email. DELF: ask your center, because results and the paper diploma take longer.

**Retakes.** You can retake the TCF or the TEF as often as you like, with 20 days between two sittings. Each sitting costs the full fee.

**Re-marking.** France Éducation International has suspended re-marking of TCF speaking and writing for sessions from 1 September 2026, until about autumn 2027. Sit the test when you are clearly at the level, not hoping for a re-mark.

**Sessions.** In big cities, sessions can fill weeks ahead. Look at the dates in the centers near you as soon as you choose a test.

**"Less than 2 years".** No official text says at which stage of the file the two years are checked. The safest reading is that your TCF or TEF attestation must be under 2 years old on the day you file. A DELF never expires, so the question disappears.

## How long from B1 to B2 (step 6)

A research post from Cambridge puts B1 to B2 at 180 to 260 guided learning hours for learners of English, and those hours include homework. At 5 hours of French a week, that is roughly 8 to 12 months, and at 10 hours a week roughly 4 to 6 months.

I take these hours with a pinch of salt, because the time it takes varies hugely from one person to the next. It depends on the languages you already speak, how much French you hear, whether you actually speak and how confident you feel doing it. Read the range as an order of magnitude, not a promise.

## The civic exam (step 7)

- A separate step from the language proof: 40 multiple-choice questions in French, on knowledge and on everyday situations, 45 minutes at most, on a screen in an approved center (CCI Paris or France Éducation International). You pass with 32 correct answers.
- For naturalization by decree, the pass certificate is one of the documents in your file, so pass it before you file. A declaration by marriage does not need it.
- A first multi-year card and a first resident card each have their own version, with the same format, and people over 65 are not concerned by it. The certificate has no time limit.

> Language only, not legal advice. For the rest of your file, check with your prefecture or a lawyer.

## Sources


1. Service-public F11926: proving your level of French for nationality, page dated 1 January 2026, checked 31 October 2026. https://www.service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F11926
2. Service-public F34501: the language level for residence cards, page dated 10 February 2026, checked 31 October 2026. https://www.service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F34501
3. Service-public F17048: the integration contract (CIR), page dated 26 June 2026, checked 31 October 2026. https://www.service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F17048
4. Service-public F2213: naturalization by decree, page dated 16 July 2026, checked 31 October 2026. https://www.service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F2213
5. Service-public F39426: the civic exam for naturalization, page dated 16 July 2026, checked 31 October 2026. https://www.service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F39426
6. Service-public F39530: the civic exam for residence cards, page dated 10 February 2026, checked 31 October 2026. https://www.service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F39530
7. CCI Paris: TEF IRN presentation and attestation pages, checked 31 October 2026. https://www.lefrancaisdesaffaires.fr/candidat/test-evaluation-francais/tef-irn/presentation/
8. France Éducation International: TCF IRN, checked October 2026. https://www.france-education-international.fr/test/tcf-irn
9. France Éducation International: TCF candidate manual, FAQ p. 41, version of September 2026, checked October 2026. https://www.france-education-international.fr/document/manuelcandidattoutes20dc3a9clinaisonsi
10. France Éducation International: practical information for DELF and DALF candidates, checked October 2026. https://www.france-education-international.fr/article/informations-pratiques-pour-les-candidats-au-delf-dalf
11. Ministry of Education: the DCL for candidates, checked October 2026. https://www.education.gouv.fr/le-diplome-de-competence-en-langue-dcl-candidats-l-examen-11624
12. Cambridge: how long does it take to learn a language?, research post of 2018. https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2018/10/11/how-long-learn-language/


> This checklist explains the language requirement and is not legal advice. Rules change, so for your own file, service-public and your prefecture remain the reference. Written by Yann Le Bouhellec, French coach for English-speaking expats. Latest version: frenchlevelup.com/b2-citizenship-checklist/