

Don't Forget Your French Dictionary!

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**Don't Forget Your French Dictionary!**

**By Triston Huntsmin**

The summer after I graduated from college I had the unique opportunity to travel to France with my roommates and friends. A group of six of us left for France on the cheapest flight we could find the morning after graduation. We had plans to stay for the entire summer and just see what unfolded. None of us had jobs lined up or anything to rush back to, so we just took things in stride and determined to have the adventure of a lifetime. We learned quickly, however, that forgetting a French dictionary was not the best way to start a great summer.

We talked briefly about what we should bring on our journey to France, and I even remember hearing one of the guys mention that we would do well to remember a French dictionary since none of us spoke a word of French. I thought that advice was wise, but I never thought to bring a French dictionary myself. I was convinced that one of the more organized and responsible guys would surely remember to bring such a valuable tool for our survival.

I was wrong. Not one guy out of the six of us thought to bring a French dictionary with us on our journey. We realized this on the eight hour flight to Paris from our hometown of Chicago. We laughed about our mistake at first with sighs that we would just figure our way around and that we would be fine.

Landing in Paris we quickly learned that it would have been wise to include a French dictionary in our packing. We learned that while many French people speak and understand English, far fewer of them are willing to help lazy Americans who haven't taken the time to learn any of their language. So we were stuck in a country that mostly spoke English but that wasn't willing to help us get around their land.

We made it through what turned into a four month journey through most of France. We talked about leaving the country to explore nearby Italy or Spain, but we decided to remain in France and focus all of our time and energy on exploring this country in a more detailed way. We picked up small bits of French as we went along, but most of our weeks were spent struggling to make it from town to town on nothing but our English. A French dictionary sure would have been nice.

## Don't Forget Your French Dictionary!

The moral of my story: bring a French dictionary the next time you visit France. Or better yet, bring a dictionary to any country you visit that doesn't speak your language.

Triston Huntsmin has lived for years with the regret of not bringing a French dictionary on his first trip to France. He has since become fluent, however, and even lived in Paris for nearly ten years. See

<http://www.aboutfrenchdictionary.info>

for more.

### **Not A Day Without A Dictionary**

**By Hallidae Thomason**

There are many small ways to make your days a little more full and to take every opportunity for learning. As a teacher, I am passionate about seeing people grasp what a privilege and a blessing that learning is. If you are blessed enough to live in a place that allows or better yet encourages you to further your education, then I believe that it is right and good of you to do that. There are many, many ways for you to take learning seriously, but one of the easiest and best ways is to grab a dictionary.

There are many things I love about a good dictionary. Being an English professor, the connection is obvious. I love words. I love the power of language for communication. I think it is quite amazing that two people that have never met can sit down and have a conversation and basically understand everything that is being said because they speak the same language. While it is very true that you can speak a language and even learn new words without using a dictionary, think of all there is to learn by using a dictionary.

I gave myself a challenge a few years ago when it came time to make a New Year's resolution. Typically, my resolutions had consisted of plans to eat better and workout more, but that year I decided that I would buy a new dictionary and spend a few minutes each day reading it. Sound boring? If so, then you obviously haven't tried reading from a dictionary. It is actually one of the best decisions I have ever made. I looked forward to my few minutes in the dictionary so much that I began reading it both morning and night. Reading my dictionary daily was by far the easiest resolution to follow.

What I love about reading the dictionary is learning how much I do not know. All I have to do is flip open a page and I am confronted with how much more there is to learn, not just about my language, but about all of life. I read words that I have never heard of and I learn concepts that I didn't even know existed. Reading my dictionary is one of the most humbling and yet thrilling things I've ever done.

So, grab a dictionary. Start the process of learning new words to add to your understanding and vocabulary, but also let your time in a dictionary teach you new and exciting things about the world.

Hallidae Thomason is an English professor who encourages all of her students to read a dictionary daily, even if just a few new words. See

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<http://www.dictionarystimes.info>

for more on this great habit.



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