

Please Pardon My French*!

*"Pardon my French" or "Excuse my French" is a common English language phrase ostensibly disguising profanity as words from the French language. The phrase is uttered in an attempt to excuse the user of profanity, swearing, or curses in the presence of those offended by it, under the pretense of the words being part of a foreign language.

We use a lot of French words in the English language, most of which retain their original French meaning, or a least a close idea to the original meaning. However, there are quite a few French words and phrases that we use in Modern English which don't work anything at all like their true French counterparts.

A. Match the words in the box to their definitions. This isn't as easy as it looks! Write your answers in the box to the left.

à la mode bureau cache cause célèbre
corsage en suite marquee (marquise)
pièce d'occasion portemanteau
risqué séance touché venue



	1. The acknowledgment of an effective counterpoint.
	2. An article written (by an author or journalist) for a special occasion.
	3. An issue arousing widespread controversy or heated public debate.
	4. A word that fuses two or more words or parts of words to make a new word with a new meaning as in <i>brunch</i> or <i>blog</i> .
	5. A dessert with ice cream (or cheese) as in <i>apple pie à la mode</i> .
	6. A gathering of people attempting to communicate with the dead.
	7. A hotel or bedroom in a home (esp. British) having an attached private bathroom.
	8. The sign above a theater that tells the public what movies are playing. (See the above image.)
	9. A small bouquet of flowers worn on a woman's dress (usually the upper left portion) or worn around her wrist (either) for a formal event.
	10. A person or thing (such as clothing) that is sexually suggestive.
	11. A specialized governmental agency such as the FBI.
	12. A collection of items such as weapons stored in an inaccessible place.
	13. A temporary or changeable location: for example, for a meeting or conference.

B. Complete the following English usage sentences with a French word from the box.

attaché coup d'état cul-de-sac début
déjà vu en masse exposé mayday
négligée outré passé précis
première rouge vignette

1. I understand why you are being laughed at, that hat you are wearing is so _____.
2. Even when she is ill, her cheeks are rosy and healthy looking; I think she uses a lot of _____.
3. Victoria's Secret is known for its suggestive women's wear; it is a great place to shop to buy your wife a _____.
4. Airplanes or boats that find themselves in an emergency situation can use the international call for help of SOS in Morse Code or _____ via the two-way radio.
5. Before your Master's thesis can be defended in front of the jury, a _____ must be written and approved by the jury.
6. Tonight is the opening _____ of this new eclectic musical group. I really hope that they will be successful, otherwise they might not have a second performance.
7. As a class of students on tour in a foreign country, every place that we went, we went _____; we were never alone.
8. In modern day, newspapers are full of _____ of government corruption somewhere in the western world.
9. Her art is a bit too _____ for most people to enjoy; it is rather bizarre!
10. She has worked as an _____ at the embassy since graduating from university; she gives the ambassador advice concerning cultural relations with the country in which they work and live.
11. I'm so excited that we have been invited to the special _____ of Julia Roberts' new film. I can't wait to tell all of my friends!!
12. The play's program features a little _____ about each member of the cast.
13. The 84-year-old former leader was overthrown in a _____ in September by a military council that now leads the West African country.
14. There were only a few houses where I grew up because my street was a _____.
15. Although I had never been to this cathedral before, I had the strangest sense of _____ from the moment that I walked in; I just knew that I had been there before.

C. Unscramble the letters to make French words used in English that match their English definitions.

Real French Word	Scrambled French Word	English Usage Definition
	recone	1. This word is used when you want the band to play another song.
	ontounbière	2. A flower placed in the buttonhole of a suit jacket.
	iseroé	3. A very formal evening party.
	treené	4. The main dish in a multi-course meal. (<i>le plat de résistance</i>)
	cheerchér	5. An obscure or pretentious person.
	rehorsedovu'	6. Snacks served with drinks before a meal (very similar to the French <i>apéritif</i>).
	toripprou	7. A medley or a mixture of things
	suovendezr	8. A one-on-one meeting with someone for mysterious reasons. (This is written as one word in English.)
	toref	9. A strength or a strong point of someone.
	poucemanid (3 words)	10. A surprise attack
	retoicries	11. A writing table.
	giponire	12. A woman's dressing gown.

D. Can you name these "French" things in English? Each answer contains two words, and in each answer, one of those words is the word *French*.

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.

