

TCF and TEF writing phrases

French connectors, opinion and letter phrases with English meanings, plus a plan for every TCF task and TEF section.

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Interactive version: nclcfrench.com/tcf-tef-writing-phrases

QUICK ANSWER

The phrases that help most in TCF Canada and TEF Canada writing are logical connectors (de plus, cependant, par conséquent, en conclusion), opinion phrases (à mon avis, il me semble que), concession (certes..., mais...) and correct letter formulas (Madame, Monsieur, ... Je vous prie d'agréer...). Learn a few from each group, use them where they fit naturally, and keep inside the word counts.

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French connectors for the TCF and TEF

Connectors are what examiners notice first when they assess coherence. Use a variety, but only where the logic is real: a par conséquent that follows no cause costs more than it earns.

Introduce and order your ideas

Tout d'abord, ...	First of all, ...
Pour commencer, ...	To begin with, ...
Premièrement, ... Deuxièmement, ...	Firstly, ... Secondly, ...
La question de ... suscite de nombreux débats.	The question of ... sparks a lot of debate. <i>A clean first sentence for TCF task 3 or TEF section B.</i>

De nos jours, ...

Nowadays, ...

*Very common. Follow it with a concrete fact, not a vague cliché.***Add an idea**

De plus, ...

Moreover, ...

En outre, ...

Furthermore, ...

More formal than de plus: good in a letter to a newspaper.

Par ailleurs, ...

In addition, ... / On another note, ...

Introduces a new, related point. It does not mean "elsewhere" here.

Ensuite, ...

Next, ... / Then, ...

Non seulement ..., mais aussi ...

Not only ..., but also ...

Sans oublier que ...

Not to mention that ...

Contrast and concede

Cependant, ...

However, ...

Toutefois, ...

However, ... / Nevertheless, ...

En revanche, ...

On the other hand, ...

Contrasts two facts. To reject an idea outright, use au contraire.

..., alors que ... / ..., tandis que ...

..., whereas ...

Pourtant, ...

Yet, ... / And yet, ...

Certes ..., mais ...

Admittedly ..., but ...

The classic concession. Examiners read it as a sign of B2 range.

Il est vrai que ..., néanmoins ...

It is true that ..., nevertheless ...

Bien que + subjonctif

Although ...

Always the subjunctive: bien qu'il soit cher, not bien qu'il est cher.

Malgré + nom

Despite ...

*Followed by a noun: malgré le prix. Avoid malgré que in the exam.***Give a cause**

..., parce que ...

..., because ...

Puisque ...

Since ... (the reader already knows the reason)

..., car ...

..., for ... / ..., because ...

Written style. Never start a sentence with car.

Grâce à + nom

Thanks to ...

*Positive cause only. For a negative cause, use à cause de.***À cause de + nom**

Because of ...

En effet, ...

Indeed, ... / In fact, ...

*Explains or confirms the previous sentence. It does not mean "in effect".***Étant donné que ...**

Given that ...

Show a consequence**Donc, ...**

So, ...

C'est pourquoi ...

That is why ...

Par conséquent, ...

Consequently, ... / As a result, ...

Ainsi, ...

Thus, ... / In this way, ...

..., si bien que ...

..., so much so that ... / ..., with the result that ...

*Followed by the indicative.***Cela entraîne ...**

This leads to ... / This results in ...

Give an example**Par exemple, ...**

For example, ...

Prenons l'exemple de ...

Let's take the example of ...

C'est notamment le cas de ...

This is particularly the case with ...

Comme le montre ...

As ... shows

Conclude**En conclusion, ...**

In conclusion, ...

Pour conclure, ...

To conclude, ...

En somme, ... / Bref, ...

In short, ...

*Bref is lighter: fine in a message, less so in a formal letter.***Pour toutes ces raisons, ...**

For all these reasons, ...

Enfin, ...

Finally, ... (the last point in a list)

Not the same as finalement, which means "in the end" or "after all".

Phrases pour donner son opinion, agree, disagree and nuance

TCF task 3 and TEF section B reward a clear position that you qualify with care. The same phrases work out loud: see [TCF and TEF speaking questions](#).

Give your opinion

À mon avis, ...	In my opinion, ... <i>Not à mon avis, je pense que: that says the same thing twice.</i>
Selon moi, ... / D'après moi, ...	In my view, ...
Je pense que ... / Je crois que ...	I think that ... / I believe that ... <i>Indicative after the positive form; subjunctive after the negative: je ne pense pas que ce soit...</i>
Il me semble que ...	It seems to me that ...
Je suis convaincu(e) que ...	I am convinced that ...
J'estime que ...	I consider that ... / I believe that ...
En ce qui me concerne, ...	As far as I am concerned, ...
Personnellement, je suis favorable à ...	Personally, I am in favour of ... <i>The opposite: je suis opposé(e) à...</i>

Agree

Je suis tout à fait d'accord avec ...	I fully agree with ... <i>D'accord avec a person or an idea; d'accord sur a point: nous sommes d'accord sur ce point.</i>
Je partage l'avis de ...	I share the view of ...
L'auteur a raison de souligner que ...	The author is right to point out that ...
Je rejoins ... sur ce point.	I agree with ... on this point.

Disagree

Je ne suis pas d'accord avec ...	I disagree with ...
Je ne partage pas cet avis.	I don't share this view.
Contrairement à ce que pense l'auteur, ...	Contrary to what the author thinks, ...
Il me paraît exagéré de dire que ...	It seems an exaggeration to me to say that ...

Je doute que + subjonctif

I doubt that ...

Je doute que ce soit efficace.

Nuance your position

Dans une certaine mesure, ...

To some extent, ...

Tout dépend de ...

It all depends on ...

À condition que + subjonctif

Provided that ...

à condition qu'elle soit bien organisée

Il faut toutefois nuancer ce point.

This point needs some qualification, though.

D'un côté ..., de l'autre ...

On the one hand ..., on the other ...

Ce n'est pas toujours le cas.

That is not always the case.

Sans doute, mais ...

Probably, but ...

Sans doute means "probably". "Without a doubt" is sans aucun doute.

Formal letter French phrases and informal message openers

Pick the register from the recipient named in the prompt. A friend gets tu; a newspaper, a landlord or an organisation gets vous. Mixing the two in one text costs marks.

Formal letter: openers

Madame, Monsieur,

Dear Sir or Madam,

To someone you don't know. Never Cher Monsieur to a stranger.

Madame la Directrice, / Monsieur le Directeur,

Dear Director,

When the prompt gives the person's role.

Je me permets de vous écrire au sujet de ...

I am writing to you regarding ...

Je vous écris afin de ...

I am writing in order to ...

À la suite de votre annonce parue le ..., ...

Further to your advertisement published on ..., ...

Suite à is common but frowned on in careful writing. À la suite de is safe.

J'ai lu avec intérêt votre article sur ...

I read your article on ... with interest.

An ideal first line for TEF section B.

Je souhaiterais obtenir des renseignements sur ...

I would like some information about ...

Formal letter: closers

Dans l'attente de votre réponse, ...	I look forward to your reply, ... <i>Then go straight into the closing formula in the same sentence.</i>
Je vous remercie par avance de votre attention.	Thank you in advance for your attention.
Je reste à votre disposition pour tout renseignement complémentaire.	I remain available should you need any further information.
Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, Monsieur, l'expression de mes salutations distinguées.	Yours faithfully. <i>Repeat exactly the form of address you opened with (Madame, Monsieur).</i>
Veuillez agréer, Madame, Monsieur, mes salutations distinguées.	Yours faithfully. (shorter version)
Cordialement,	Kind regards, <i>Fine in a work email. Too light for a formal letter to a newspaper or an authority.</i>

Informal message: openers

Cher Marc, / Chère Sophie,	Dear Marc, / Dear Sophie, <i>Cher agrees: chère for a woman, chers amis for a group.</i>
Salut Julie !	Hi Julie! <i>Friends and close colleagues only.</i>
J'espère que tu vas bien.	I hope you're well.
Ça fait longtemps ! Comment vas-tu ?	It's been a long time! How are you?
Je t'écis pour te raconter ...	I'm writing to tell you about ...
Devine ce qui m'est arrivé !	Guess what happened to me!

Informal message: closers

J'ai hâte d'avoir de tes nouvelles.	I can't wait to hear from you.
Tiens-moi au courant !	Keep me posted!
Dis-moi si ça te convient.	Let me know if that works for you. <i>Useful at the end of a task 1 invitation.</i>
À bientôt !	See you soon!
Amitiés,	Best wishes, <i>Friendly but a little reserved: right for a neighbour or a colleague.</i>

Bises, / Grosses bises,

Love, / Lots of love,
Close friends and family only.

Phrases to tell a story and summarise documents

For TCF task 2 (an account of an experience with your opinions), the summary in TCF task 3, and the news story in TEF section A. Put events in the *passé composé* and background in the *imparfait*.

Recount an experience (TCF task 2)

Le mois dernier, j'ai participé à ...	Last month, I took part in ...
Tout s'est très bien passé jusqu'au moment où ...	Everything went very well until ...
Ce qui m'a le plus marqué(e), c'est ...	What struck me most was ...
J'ai été agréablement surpris(e) par ...	I was pleasantly surprised by ...
En revanche, j'ai été déçu(e) par ...	On the other hand, I was disappointed by ...
Je recommande vivement ...	I highly recommend ...
Si c'était à refaire, je ...	If I had to do it again, I would ... <i>Followed by the conditional: je partirais plus tôt.</i>

Summarise two documents (TCF task 3, part 1)

Les deux documents traitent de ...	Both documents deal with ...
Selon le premier document, ...	According to the first document, ...
L'auteur du second texte estime que ...	The author of the second text believes that ...
Le premier document met en avant ...	The first document highlights ...
Au contraire, le second souligne que ...	By contrast, the second one stresses that ...
Les deux points de vue s'opposent sur ...	The two viewpoints clash on ... <i>Report only. Your own opinion belongs in part 2.</i>

Continue a news story (TEF section A)

Quelques minutes plus tard, ...	A few minutes later, ...
Aussitôt, ...	Immediately, ...
Selon les témoins, ... / D'après la police, ...	According to witnesses, ... / According to the police, ...
« ... », a déclaré le propriétaire.	"...", the owner said. <i>Subject and verb swap after a quote: a-t-il confié, a précisé la policière.</i>

Il y a eu plus de peur que de mal.	It was more frightening than harmful. / No one was badly hurt. <i>A set phrase typical of news stories.</i>
L'enquête se poursuit.	The investigation is ongoing.
Finalement, tout est rentré dans l'ordre.	In the end, everything went back to normal.

Phrases to argue: TEF section B and TCF task 3

TEF section B asks for at least three developed arguments. Each one needs an idea, an explanation and an example. Annotated models: [TEF Canada writing examples](#) and [TCF writing task 3 examples](#).

Put forward an argument

Le premier argument que je souhaite avancer est que ...	The first argument I would like to put forward is that ...
Il ne faut pas oublier que ...	We must not forget that ...
Il est indéniable que ...	It is undeniable that ...
Force est de constater que ...	One has to admit that ... <i>Formal and strong. Use it once, not in every paragraph.</i>
Contrairement aux idées reçues, ...	Contrary to popular belief, ...
C'est la raison pour laquelle ...	That is the reason why ...

Answer the other side and call for action

On pourrait objecter que ..., mais ...	One could object that ..., but ...
Certains affirment que ... Or, ...	Some claim that ... Yet, ... <i>Or here means "yet" or "however", not "or".</i>
Cet argument ne tient pas, car ...	This argument doesn't hold up, because ...
Il serait donc souhaitable que + subjonctif	It would therefore be desirable that ... <i>...que la ville prenne des mesures.</i>
J'invite donc vos lecteurs à ...	I therefore invite your readers to ...

A plan for every TCF task and TEF section

Word counts and times are the official ones. The plans are ours: a reliable structure, not the only one.

Practise them with a timer on [TCF Canada writing practice](#) or [TEF Canada writing practice](#).

Task	Length	Plan
TCF tâche 1: Message : décrire, raconter, expliquer	60–120 words	Greeting in the right register. One line on why you are writing. One short paragraph for each point the prompt asks for. A closing line and your first name.
TCF tâche 2: Article, courrier ou note : compte rendu avec opinions	120–150 words	Format the prompt asks for (title for an article, greeting for a letter). Context: when, where, who. What happened, in past tenses. Your impressions and opinion, linked to the goal in the prompt (recommend, complain, thank).
TCF tâche 3: Comparer deux points de vue et donner son avis	120–180 words (a workable split: about 40–60 for the summary, 80–120 for your opinion)	Part 1: the shared topic, document 1's view, then document 2's view after a contrast word, all in your own words. Part 2: your position, two arguments with an example, a concession, a one-line conclusion.
TEF section A: Écrire la suite d'un article	80 words minimum, 25 minutes	Third person, past tenses, several paragraphs. What happened next. Witnesses and a short quote. The outcome and what changes now. Bring new facts: don't repeat the start.
TEF section B: Exprimer son point de vue et le justifier	200 words minimum, 35 minutes	Madame, Monsieur, then the issue in your words and your position. Three arguments, one paragraph each, with an example. A concession and your answer to it. A conclusion and a formal closing.

The TCF tasks share one 60-minute clock and must be done in order. TEF sections are timed separately.

TCF Canada: the word range is a hard limit

France Éducation internationale says a copy can be rated "**A1 non atteint**" if a task is outside its word range, off topic, missing, or copies sentences from the prompt or documents. A word is anything between two spaces: un bon sujet is 3 words, c'est-à-dire is 1. Aim for the middle of each range. The TEF sets minimums only. Both tests side by side: [TCF and TEF cheat sheet](#).

Common writing mistakes that cost marks

DO

- Answer every point in the prompt, in the format it asks for (message, article, letter).
- Keep one register from start to finish: tu or vous, never both.
- Use a connector at the start of most paragraphs, and vary them.
- Write paragraphs: one idea each, with a line break between them.
- Keep 3 to 5 minutes to re-read for agreements (-elles sont parties), accents and verb endings.
- Rephrase the documents and the prompt in your own words.
- Learn to type é, è, à, ç, ô and French quotation marks quickly if you test on computer.

DON'T

- Don't copy sentences from the prompt or the documents: on the TCF it can lead to "A1 non atteint".
- Don't give your opinion in the summary part of TCF task 3.
- Don't stack rare words you're unsure of. Accurate B2 French beats risky C1 vocabulary.
- Don't forget the subjunctive after bien que, à condition que, il faut que and je ne pense pas que.
- Don't start a sentence with car, and don't write mais aussi without a non seulement before it.
- Don't use texting style (slt, pk) or English words when a French one exists (courriel, fin de semaine in Canada).
- Don't write far over the TEF minimum just to look strong: extra words mean extra mistakes and less time to check.

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