



FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

French

INTRODUCTION

This guide is for researchers who do not speak French but must write to France, Belgium, Luxembourg, or Quebec to request genealogical records. It includes a list of sentences you would use in a letter about genealogical records and a French translation of these sentences.

BEFORE YOU WRITE

Before you write a letter in French to obtain family history information, you should do these things:

□ **Determine exactly where your ancestor was born, married, or died.** Because most genealogical records were kept locally, you will need to know the specific town where your ancestor's records were kept. See the *Tracing Immigrant Origins Research Outline* (34111) from the Family History Library™ for help in finding hometowns.

□ **Determine if the Family History Library has records from the area where your relative lived.** The best sources of information in French-speaking areas are records of births, marriages, and deaths kept by civil registration offices (or parishes in Quebec). The library has microfilmed these records for many localities, but not all. Use the Family History Library Catalog™ to determine what records are available through the Family History Library and Family History Centers™. If records are available from the library or Family History Centers, it is usually faster and more productive to search these records first. The library's *France Research Outline*, *Canada Research Outline*, and *Quebec Research Outline* explain how to research records at the library or at Family History Centers. If the records you want are not available at these locations, you can use the research outlines to help you decide what records to search. Write to the Family History Library (35 North West Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-3400) for the addresses of nearby Family History Centers.

□ **Determine where records from your ancestor's hometown are stored today.** Records for smaller localities may be kept with records of a nearby larger community. You can use a gazetteer to determine which community serves your ancestor's locality in France, Belgium, or Luxembourg. For help locating records, see the library's research outline for France. For help locating parish records in Quebec, see the library's research outlines for Canada and Quebec.

RESEARCH BY MAIL

What to Ask in Each Nation

Write *only* when you cannot find the information any other way. The following list shows the kind of information you may be able to obtain through correspondence from several kinds of organizations in French-speaking nations:

In **all French-speaking nations** you can write to—

- *Genealogical societies.*
 - Request that the letter be forwarded to a member interested in the same family, locality, or group of people.
 - Request a list of people who might consider making a short search of records in a nearby repository for pay.
- *Professional researchers.* Offer to pay a researcher for a search of records in a nearby repository.

In **France and Belgium** you can also write to—

- *Civil registration offices.* Request a birth, marriage, or death certificate to verify the place of origin of a direct ancestor.
- *Departmental or provincial archives.*
 - Ask where the records of a specific town are kept and what dates the records cover.
 - Ask when their archives are open to the public.

In **Luxembourg** you can write to—

- *Civil registration offices.* Request a certificate to verify the birth place of a direct ancestor born within the last hundred years. The Family History Library has filmed most earlier records from Luxembourg.

In **Quebec** you can write to—

- *Roman Catholic parishes.* Request transcripts of baptism, marriage, or burial records from 1877 to the present. The Family History Library has filmed most earlier Catholic records from Quebec.

Addressing the Envelope

Societies. The book *Genealogical Research Directory: National and International* by Keith A. Johnson and Malcolm R. Sainty lists the addresses of most genealogical societies in French-speaking nations (Sydney: Johnson and Sainty, 1993; FHL book 929.1025 G286grd 1993).

Address the envelope to—

Monsieur le Président
(*Name of the society*)

(Address)
(Postal code) (Town)
(NATION)

Professional researchers. Names and addresses of researchers for hire can be found in genealogical periodicals.

Civil registration offices. (France, Belgium, and Luxembourg only.) Address the envelope to—

Monsieur l'officier de l'état-civil
Mairie de (Town)
(Postal code) (Town)
FRANCE, BELGIUM, or LUXEMBOURG

Archives. Find archive addresses with the help of the *France Research Outline*, the International Council on Archives' *International Directory of Archives* (Archivum Series, vol. 38 [Munich: Saur, 1992]; FHL book 020.5 Ar25 v. 38), or call the Family History Library at 801-240-3433.

Address the envelope to—

France: Monsieur le Directeur
Archives départementales
(Postal code) (Town)
FRANCE

Belgium: Monsieur le Directeur
Archives de la Province
(Postal code) (Town)
BELGIUM

Catholic parishes. (Quebec only.) Address the envelope to—

Monsieur le Curé
(Town), Québec
CANADA (Postal code)

Postal Codes

When addressing your letter, you will need to write the postal (zip) code **before** the name of the town when writing to France, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Write the postal code **after** the word "Canada" when writing to Quebec. For help finding postal codes, use the postal gazetteer for the country, or call the Family History Library at 801-240-3433.

How to Send Return Postage and Money

The first time you write someone in Europe or Quebec, send three international reply coupons (available at most large post offices) to pay for return postage.

When writing to a parish in Quebec, it is also a good idea to send a donation of \$10 as a courtesy. Do not send a personal check, which is difficult and expensive to exchange. Cash is most easily converted to foreign currency, but there are always risks in sending cash.

An easy and inexpensive way to send money to Europe or Quebec from the United States is to

telephone Ruesch International Financial Services at 800-424-2923. Ask for an international bank draft for the equivalent of \$10 (or another amount) in either Canadian dollars or Belgian, Luxembourg, Swiss, or French francs. There is a \$2 service charge. Have the check made payable to the organization you are contacting (the *Paroisse* [parish] in Quebec). Ruesch will give you a transaction number to write on your payment check. Send the payment to—

Ruesch International Financial Services
International Division, 10th floor
1350 Eye Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20005

When they receive your payment, Ruesch will promptly send you a foreign currency draft (check) you can mail to Europe or Quebec.

Some researchers do not send money when writing to a civil registration office, archive, researcher, or genealogical society for the first time. These organizations may prefer to bill you for their services. Some may ask you to make the check payable to their account number. If you want, you may write an institution to determine their fees before making a request. However, this will significantly increase the time it takes to get information.

Checklist for Mailing Your Letter

- Keep a photocopy of your letter.
- Enclose three international reply coupons.
- Convert funds to foreign currency.
- Mark "Air Mail" on envelopes addressed overseas.

WHAT TO EXPECT

It may take six months or longer for you to receive a reply to your request for information (airmail improves the response time). The results of writing to civil registration offices (or parishes in Quebec) can vary greatly. You may get more information than requested, or you may get no answer at all. Some will not answer until money is sent. Some may be unable to provide information.

Because some information is not easily obtained by writing directly to a registrar (or priest in Quebec), you may need to hire a local private researcher. We suggest that you inquire about a competent local researcher when you write.

When you receive a reply, send a note of thanks or acknowledgement. You may wish to do this in a follow-up letter requesting further information. Refer to your earlier letter and their return letter by date. If they have assigned you a reference number, include that number as well.

Use French-English dictionaries to help you understand the reply. Sometimes you can hire accredited genealogists to translate for you.

If you do not receive an answer, write again sending a copy of your first letter. Do not send more money unless you verify that your first letter did not arrive.

HOW TO WRITE A LETTER IN FRENCH

Your letter should include the following:

- the date (at the top)
- the name and address of the addressee
- a greeting
- a short, specific, genealogical request
- a comment about return postage (and sometimes reimbursement)
- closing remarks
- your signature
- your return address (including your country)

Be brief and simple. Do not ask for more than one or two pieces of information in a single letter.

The following English-to-French translations will help you compose your letter. Read the sentences in English and choose those that best express what you want to say. Alternative phrases are shown in double brackets (« »). Be sure that your sentences are arranged logically. You may want to write your letter first in English using the following sentences, then replace the sentences with their French translations. However you

proceed, make sure you type or neatly print your letter and, when necessary, add any diacritical marks and special characters (such as à, â, ç, é, è, ê, ë, î, ï, ô, ö, û, ù) with a pen.

Gender. Three of the words in the French translations need to match your gender. The words are intéressé(e), obligé(e), and reconnaissant(e). The feminine ending is listed in parentheses. If you are a man, use intéressé, obligé, and reconnaissant. If you are a woman, use intéressée, obligée, and reconnaissante.

Do not use this guide as the letter itself! That might insult the recipient and lessen the chance of a reply.

Writing Dates

Write dates in the European style: day-month-year. Write the name of the month out and write the year in full. For example, write *10 décembre 1889*, not *12-10-89* or even *10-12-1889*.

January	- janvier	July	- juillet
February	- février	August	- août
March	- mars	September	- septembre
April	- avril	October	- octobre
May	- mai	November	- novembre
June	- juin	December	- décembre

English

French

Letter to a Genealogical Society

1. Dear President:	1. Monsieur le Président,
2. My ancestor (<i>fill in ancestor's name</i>) emigrated from your region. «in (<i>fill in year</i>).»	2. Mon ancêtre (<i>fill in ancestor's name</i>) a quitté votre région. «vers (<i>fill in year</i>).»
3. He «She» was from (<i>fill in the town</i>).	3. Il «Elle» venait de (<i>fill in the town</i>).
4. He was born «She was born» «about» (<i>fill in date</i>).	4. Il est né «Elle est née» «environ» (<i>fill in date</i>).
5. I have not been able to identify this place which appears to be in your area. Perhaps I do not have the correct spelling. Do you have any suggestions?	5. Il ne m'a pas été possible d'identifier ce lieu exact d'origine dans votre région. Peut-être que l'orthographe a été déformée. Auriez-vous quelque recommandation à ce sujet?
6. The spelling of the surname, (<i>fill in surname</i>), is not certain. What is the likely spelling in your area?	6. L'orthographe de ce patronyme, (<i>fill in surname</i>), n'est pas certaine. Pourriez-vous suggérer les orthographes possible pour votre région?
7. Could you tell me if the surname (<i>fill in the surname</i>) is common in your area? Is there a member of your group who is studying that surname or the families in (<i>fill in the town</i>)? Would you kindly forward my letter to that person?	7. Pourriez-vous me dire si le nom de famille (<i>fill in the surname</i>) existe dans votre région? Y a-t-il un membre de votre groupe qui étudie ce nom ou les familles de (<i>fill in the town</i>)? Voudriez-vous être assez aimable pour lui acheminer ma lettre?

8. Do you have a list of people who are willing to do research for a fee?	8. Avez-vous une liste de personnes qui se chargent de faire des recherches rémunérées?
9. Is there a periodical published by your association? Please tell me the conditions and benefits of subscription and how to run a genealogical query.	9. Est-ce que votre association publie une revue? Quelles sont les conditions et les avantages de souscription et comment pourrais-je insérer une question dans la revue?
10. Please find enclosed three international reply coupons for return postage.	10. Veuillez trouver ci-joint trois coupons réponse internationaux pour couvrir les frais postaux.
11. With my greatest thanks, please accept my sincere greetings. <i>(Your signature)</i> <i>(fill in your name and address)</i>	11. Avec mes plus grands remerciements, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués. <i>(Your signature)</i> <i>(fill in your name and address)</i>

Letter to a Professional Researcher

12. Dear Sir: «Madam:»	12. Monsieur, «Madame,»
13. I need the help of a genealogist for some research. I would be very grateful if you would send me your rate and conditions, including traveling expenses if necessary.	13. J'ai besoin de l'aide d'un généalogiste pour quelques recherches. Je vous serais très obligé(e) de bien vouloir m'envoyer votre tarif et conditions, y compris bien entendu, frais de déplacements éventuels.
14. Can I write to you in English?	14. Puis-je vous écrire en anglais?
15. Please find enclosed a family group sheet with all the information I have.	15. Veuillez trouver ci-joint une feuille de groupement de famille avec toutes les informations que je possède.
16. Would you be able to research the ancestors of the husband? «the wife?» «both spouses?»	16. Pensez-vous que vous pourriez rechercher les ancêtres de l'époux? «l'épouse ?» «des époux?»
17. I would like to find all the children of each family as well as the children's death dates when they died under the age of eight years.	17. Je désire avoir tous les enfants de chaque famille trouvée, ainsi que les décès des enfants morts en dessous de huit ans.
18. The marriages of the children interest me also.	18. Les mariages des enfants m'intéressent aussi.
19. I am not interested in the marriages of the children except for the direct line.	19. Les mariages des enfants ne m'intéressent pas excepté pour la lignée directe.
20. I do not need a complete transcription of each document but a short transcription of the genealogical information found in the documents and the source of information.	20. Je n'ai pas besoin de transcription complète des documents mais simplement une transcription des informations généalogiques trouvées dans chaque document avec la source d'information.
21. Please complete the family group sheets and do not worry about transcribing the documents.	21. Veuillez compléter des fiches familiales sans vous inquiéter de transcrire les documents.
22. If I use your services, it is my intention to pay you with a draft in converted currency. Please tell me the name to write on the draft.	22. Si je décide d'employer vos services, je compte vous payer par mandat international en monnaie de votre pays. Veuillez bien me dire le nom de la personne à qui le mandat doit être libellé !

23. Please find enclosed three international reply coupons for return postage.	23. Veuillez trouver ci-joint trois coupons réponse internationaux pour couvrir les frais postaux.
24. Awaiting your answer, Sir. «Madam.» Sincerely, (<i>Your signature</i>) (fill in your name and address)	24. Dans l'attente de votre réponse, je vous prie de croire, Monsieur «Madame», à l'expression de mes sincères salutations. (<i>Your signature</i>) (fill in your name and address)
Letter to a Civil Registration Office	
25. Dear Civil Registrar:	25. Monsieur l'officier de l'état-civil,
26. I would be very grateful if you would send me a complete copy of the «birth» «marriage» «death» certificate of (<i>fill in relationship</i>). my father my mother my grandfather my grandmother my great-grandfather my great-grandmother my parents my grandparents my great-grandparents one of my male ancestors one of my female ancestors	26. Je vous serais très obligé(e) de bien vouloir m'envoyer, si possible, la copie intégrale de l'acte de «naissance» «mariage» «décès» de (<i>fill in relationship</i>). mon père ma mère mon grand-père ma grand-mère mon arrière grand-père mon arrière grand-mère mes parents mes grands-parents mes arrière grand-parents d'un de mes ancêtres d'une de mes ancêtres
27. (<i>Supply pertinent information</i>) a. Given name and surname: b. Date of birth: c. Place of birth: d. Father's given name and surname: e. Mother's given name and maiden surname: f. Husband's given name and surname: g. Wife's given name and maiden surname: h. Date of marriage: i. Place of marriage: j. Date of death: k. Place of death:	27. (<i>Supply pertinent information</i>) a. Prénom et nom: b. Date de naissance: c. Lieu de naissance: d. Prénom et nom de son père: e. Prénom et nom de jeune fille de sa mère: f. Prénom et nom de son mari: g. Prénom et nom de jeune fille de sa femme: h. Date de mariage: i. Lieu de mariage: j. Date de décès: k. Lieu de décès:
28. Please find enclosed three international reply coupons for return postage.	28. Veuillez trouver ci-joint trois coupons réponse internationaux pour couvrir les frais postaux.
29. With my greatest thanks, please accept my sincere greetings. (<i>Your signature</i>) (fill in your name and address)	29. Avec mes plus grands remerciements, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués. (<i>Your signature</i>) (fill in your name and address)
Letter to a Departmental or Provincial Archive	
30. Dear Director:	30. Monsieur le Directeur,

31. Do you have the civil and parish registers for the town of <i>(fill in town name)</i> ? For which years?	31. Possédez-vous les registres d'état-civil et paroissiaux de <i>(fill in town name)</i> ? Pour quelles années?
32. Are there other years available somewhere else?	32. Existe-t-il d'autres années consultables en mairie?
33. Please tell me the days and hours that you will be open during the month of <i>(fill in the month)</i> . (See page 3 for names of the months. Use <i>d'</i> in front of <i>avril, août, and octobre.</i>)	33. Voudriez-vous bien m'indiquer les heures et jours ouvrables pendant le mois de «d'» <i>(fill in the month)</i> . (Use <i>d'</i> in front of <i>avril, août, and octobre.</i>)
34. Could you send me the name and address of a person who could do research for me?	34. Pourriez-vous m'envoyer les nom et adresse d'une personne qui pourrait faire une recherche pour moi?
35. Could you send me the name and address of the genealogical association for your region?	35. Pourriez-vous m'envoyer les nom et adresse de l'Association généalogique de votre région?
36. Please find enclosed three international reply coupons for return postage.	36. Veuillez trouver ci-joint trois coupons réponse internationaux pour couvrir les frais postaux.
37. With my greatest thanks, please accept my sincere greetings. <i>(Your signature)</i> <i>(fill in your name and address)</i>	37. Avec mes plus grands remerciements, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le directeur, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués. <i>(Your signature)</i> <i>(fill in your name and address)</i>

Letter to a Catholic Priest in Quebec

38. Dear Parish Priest:	38. Monsieur le Curé,
39. I am researching ancestors, and I would be very grateful for any information which you could find in your registers on my family.	39. Je suis en train d'effectuer des recherches sur mes ancêtres et je vous serais très obligé(e) pour toute information que vous pourriez trouver dans vos registres sur ma famille.
40. <i>(Supply pertinent information)</i> a. Given name and surname: b. Date of birth: c. Place of birth: d. Father's given name and surname: e. Mother's given name and maiden surname: f. Husband's given name and surname: g. Wife's given name and maiden surname: h. Date of marriage: i. Place of marriage: j. Date of death: k. Place of death:	40. <i>(Supply pertinent information)</i> a. Prénom et nom: b. Date de naissance: c. Lieu de naissance: d. Prénom et nom de son père: e. Prénom et nom de jeune fille de sa mère: f. Prénom et nom de son mari: g. Prénom et nom de jeune fille de sa femme: h. Date de mariage: i. Lieu de mariage: j. Date de décès: k. Lieu de décès:
41. Could you trace my ancestors back to the previous generation?	41. Pourriez-vous remonter mes ancêtres à la génération précédente?
42. I would like more information on the family of <i>(fill in the person's name)</i> . I would be very grateful if you could obtain the names and birth dates of his «her» brothers and sisters as well as the marriage of their parents.	42. Je voudrais davantage d'information sur la famille de <i>(fill in the person's name)</i> . Je vous serais très reconnaissant(e) si vous pouviez obtenir les noms et dates de naissance de ses frères et soeurs ainsi que le mariage des parents.

43. Please find enclosed \$10 (Canadian) for reply postage and donation to your parish. Let me know the balance owed you.	43. Veuillez trouver ci-joint 10 dollars (Canadien) pour les frais de réponse et une donation à votre paroisse. S'il vous plaît, veuillez bien me dire la balance qui vous est due.
44. With my greatest thanks, please accept my sincere greetings. (<i>Your signature</i>) (fill in your name and address)	44. Avec mes plus grands remerciements, je vous prie d'agréer, monsieur le curé, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués. (<i>Your signature</i>) (fill in your name and address)
Follow-up [Use these sentences in follow-up letters as needed.]	
45. Thank you for the information you sent on (<i>fill in date</i>).	45. Je vous remercie pour les informations que vous m'avez fait parvenir (<i>fill in date</i>).
46. I need further information about one of the individuals you mentioned in your letter: (<i>fill in name</i>).	46. J'ai besoin d'informations supplémentaires sur (<i>fill in name</i>) que vous mentionnez dans votre lettre.
47. I am very grateful for the information that you had the kindness to send me. I take the liberty to impose again on your kindness and ask you to please send me the complete copy of the «birth» «marriage» «death» certificate of (<i>fill in name</i>).	47. Je vous suis très reconnaissant(e) pour les informations que vous avez eu la gentillesse de m'envoyer. Je me permets d'abuser de nouveau de votre amabilité pour vous demander de bien vouloir m'envoyer la copie intégrale de l'acte de «naissance» «mariage» «décès» de (<i>fill in name</i>).
48. I requested a certificate from you on (<i>fill in date</i>). See the enclosed photocopy. Perhaps you did not receive the request. I am still interested in obtaining this certificate. Please inform me how much I should send you.	48. Je vous ai écrit le (<i>fill in date</i>) vous demandant de bien vouloir m'envoyer un acte d'État-civil. Veuillez trouver ci-joint la photocopie de ma lettre que vous semblez ne pas avoir reçue. Je suis toujours intéressé(e) à recevoir ce document. S'il vous plaît veuillez bien m'aviser de la somme à vous envoyer.
49. I am enclosing a copy of a letter I sent you on (<i>fill in date</i>). Please write and tell me if you can do this research.	49. Je vous joins une copie de la lettre que je vous avez envoyée le (<i>fill in date</i>). Je vous serais reconnaissant(e) si vous pouviez me contacter et me faire savoir si vous pouvez faire cette recherche.

See the next page for an example of a letter using the sentences in this guide.

EXAMPLE LETTER

Date 20 juillet 1994

Addressee Monsieur l'officier de l'état-civil
Mairie de Nulle Part
67999 Quelque Part
FRANCE

Greeting Monsieur l'officier de l'état-civil,

Genealogical Request Je vous serais très obligée de bien vouloir m'envoyer la copie intégrale de l'acte de naissance de mon arrière grand-père.

Prénom et nom: Jacob BELLER
Date de naissance: 19 novembre 1857
Lieu de naissance: Nulle Part, Bas-Rhin, France
Prénom et nom de jeune fille de sa femme: Anna ZIMMERMAN
Date de mariage: 19 janvier 1882
Lieu de mariage: Fairbury, Livingston, Illinois, USA

Comment on Postage Veuillez trouver ci-joint trois coupon-réponse internationaux pour couvrir les frais postaux.

Closing Avec mes plus grands remerciements, je vous prie d'agrèer, Monsieur, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués.

Signature

Return Address Jane Doe
674 "Q" Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84103
USA

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Family History Library welcomes additions and corrections that will improve future editions of this guide. Please send your suggestions to—

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File: Language Helps.

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