
Noblitt, James. *Système-D 4.0 Writing Assistant For French.*

Thomson & Heinle, 2005. ISBN 10-141300081-9. System Requirements: For PC: Windows 98, ME, 2000, XP (not NT); Pentium II 233mhz; 32 MB RAM (64 MB recommended); For Macintosh: MacOS 8.6 or later; PowerPC processor or later; 64 MB RAM. For both systems: 16-Bit sound card, 800 X 600, 16-bit high color display; speakers or headphones, 8xCD-ROM. Includes: One Packaged Dual-Platform CD-ROM with a User's Manual.

The *Système-D Writing Assistant For French* program is an excellent practical learning tool that makes writing French educational and fun. Based on a strong pedagogical rationale, the program offers a wide variety of unique and helpful features, such as word processing, a built-in comprehensive grammar check, lists of useful phrases, a glossary, complete verb conjugations, thematic vocabulary lists, an audio pronunciation guide for all French words, and a multitude of examples, as well as *Merriam-Webster's French-English Dictionary*, with its searchable database of over 80,000 entries.

The CD-ROM is convenient and easy to use. The computer literacy required to use the program is at the novice level. When the user launches *Système-D*, it opens a window containing a toolbar with the following tabs: *Search*, *Dictionary*, *Verb Conjugator*, *Grammar*, *Vocabulary*, and *Phrases*. Clicking on the links is the best way to navigate the program. With the *Search* function, in order to find information, the user can type a word, phrase, or verb form in the search box and select any of the proposed options. *Dictionary*, *Grammar*, *Vocabulary*, and *Phrases* are the search options that correspond to the toolbar tabs of the program window. Under the *Dictionary* option, the user can choose the language (either French or English) and look for definitions, examples, and words that match the word being searched. Under the rubric *Phrases*, the user has several options for searching for topics and matching whole words. When the search has been finished, the program provides the search results in the *Results* section. Clicking on a particular result leads to a definition and examples; the user has to click on the *Definitions* tab or the *Examples* tab to access the related information. By clicking on the *Listen* tab or icon, the user can hear the pronunciation of the item. By clicking on a highlighted and underlined example in the *Examples* section, the user can hear the example. Audio recordings are made by native speakers and are of excellent technical quality. The *Related Links* section contains links to information, explanations, and examples based on the search criteria (grammar, vocabulary, phrases) for a particular language item. By clicking on a particular link, the user can access information and the corresponding vocabulary word, phrases, or grammar topic. By clicking on the tabs for *Dictionary*, *Verb Conjugator*, *Grammar*, *Vocabulary*, and *Phrases* that appear on the toolbar, the user can access related information on a particular language item (e.g., definitions, translations and examples in both languages, complete verb conjugations, grammar explanations, vocabulary, and phrases). The database is extensive. There

are over 1.4 million French verb forms for over 3,700 verbs in 12 tenses and moods. In addition, *Système-D* integrates with the word processing programs that the user might be familiar with, such as Microsoft Word and Corel WordPerfect. Clicking on the *Word Processor* link that appears on the program window launches the user's word processing program. With the *Accent Tool Bar*, the user can incorporate French accents into a document.

Système-D is a highly practical language learning and writing tool that can be used individually or in the classroom. The program can accompany a variety of textbooks and be integrated into various in-class writing tasks. The instructor might order the program with other in-class materials or consider installing it in a language lab or computer lab (whether at a secondary or a post-secondary institution). In lab, students could use the program either to complete independent assignments or to participate in writing workshops conducted by the instructor. The program is a sound pedagogical tool for writing in French. Since all its features are conveniently located in one place, this program promotes a creative, learner-centered, task-based approach, as well as the productive and autonomous use and learning of the target language. Various domains of language study are addressed. Audio recordings of vocabulary, accompanied by numerous examples, enable language learners to access key information on writing and show that the program is geared to multiple intelligences (students interact with audio and text). The appealing and convenient design and user-friendliness of the toolbar functions make navigating the program easy and fun. User control over the pace of the writing and learning process, instant access to necessary materials, clusters of vocabulary and function topics, detailed references, and ready availability of audio recordings, as well as an overall focus on the user and on tasks, underscore the pedagogically sound and well-organized content of this excellent program.

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Oukada, Larbi, Didier Bertrand, and Janet Solberg. *Controverses*.

New York: Thomson & Heinle, 2006. Includes a Workbook. ISBN 1-4130-0452-0.

Controverses is a program for intermediate learners of French that engages them in studying the target language through the discussion of relevant, compelling, and thought-provoking social and cultural issues and topics important to students of French and Francophone culture. The program is based on the 5C's of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learners (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) and puts communication, cultures, critical thinking, and the learner at the heart of language study and teaching.