

Your First 90 days in France

The honest checklist. Tick things off as you go, and read the full guide on the blog for the why behind each step.

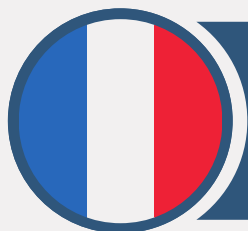
Month 1: Do these first

Some have deadlines and some unlock everything else.

- **Validate your VLS-TS online at ANEF:**
Within 3 months of arriving. Keep confirmation with your passport.
- **Sign your OFII integration contract (CIR):**
If/when you're invited. Includes 24 hours of civic training and free French classes. If your level is below A2.
- **Get a French phone number/SIM card:**
Needed for text codes on French admin sites.
- **Open a French bank account:**
Bring your passport and proof of address. Traditional, online, or neobank.
- **Get proof of address (*justificatif de domicile*):**
Lease, utility bill, or phone bill. Make copies. Keep up-to-date.
- **Register with CPAM for health coverage:**
Working: your employer handles it. Not working yet: apply after 3 months of legal residence, on ameli.fr.
- **Find a *médecin traitant*:**
Search annuaire.sante.ameli.fr. Start early, GPs are scarce.

Month 1 & 2: Important, not immediately urgent

- **Get a *mutuelle* (or check C2S eligibility):**
Supplementary insurance for what the *Sécu* doesn't cover.
- **Open your ameli.fr account:**
Once you have your social security number.
- **Get set up with the tax office:**
impots.gouv.fr or your local SIP if you can't create your account online.
- **Get a Navigo or local transport card:**
navigo.fr or any staffed metro station (Paris area).
- **Register with your embassy:**
Americans: the STEP program at step.state.gov. Takes five minutes.
- **Understand your US tax obligations:**
A US return every year, and an FBAR if foreign accounts top \$10,000.



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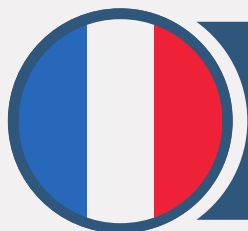
Month 2 & 3: Building your life here

- **Put your permit renewal window on your calendar:**
Usually 4 to 2 months before expiry, on ANEF. Check your permit type and your prefecture's website.
- **Sort out your driving license:**
Exchange within 1 year of arriving. Only some US states are eligible, so check yours.
- **Check your CAF eligibility:**
caf.fr simulator. RSA generally needs 5 years on a work permit for non-EU nationals.
- **Find your local pharmacie:**
Introduce yourself. Pharmacists are a real first stop for minor ailments.
- **Join at least one community:**
Expat group, club, association, or your mairie's programs.
- **Start French classes:**
Free OFII classes if they're prescribed to you.
- **Give yourself permission to find this hard:**
It is hard. It gets easier.

Key dates tracker

Fill in your own dates. The renewal window is the standard one and can differ by permit type, so confirm it on your prefecture's website.

Milestone	The Rule	My date
Arrival in France	Day 0	
Validate my VLS-TS	Within 3 months of arriving	
Apply for health coverage (if not working)	After 3 months of legal, uninterrupted residence	
OFII appointment	The date on your convocation	
Driving license exchange deadline	1 year after arriving (check if your US state is eligible)	
Permit expiry date	Printed on your permit or visa	
Renewal window opens	Opens about 4 months before expiry & closes 2 month before	



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Documents to keep handy

You'll be asked for these again and again. Keep a paper folder and a scanned copy.

- Passport
- Visa and validation confirmation
- Proof of address (recent)
- Livret de famille or marriage certificate, if relevant
- RIB (French bank details)
- Passport-size photos
- Social security number or attestation de droits
- Copies of everything, on paper and scanned

Key websites

Website	What it's for
administration-etrangers-en-france.interieur.gouv.fr (ANEF)	Validating your VLS-TS, residence permit applications and renewals
ameli.fr	Health coverage, Carte Vitale, finding a médecin traitant
caf.fr	Housing and family benefits, eligibility simulator
impots.gouv.fr	Your French tax account
service-public.fr	Official answers on almost any procedure
ofii.fr	Your integration contract and civic training
step.state.gov	Americans: register with the US Embassy

Read the full guides: Every step here is explained, with my own experience and links to my posts at abuckeyeinparis.com.

A note on the rules. I'm not a lawyer or an immigration advisor. What applies to you depends on your visa and permit type, and French rules change often. Check your own situation on service-public.fr, ANEF, and your prefecture's website.