French Meanings of English Sayings of French Origin

- Au naturel: (Oh nah-tu-rel) Naked
- Coiffe: (Kwoff – short ‘o’ sound as in ‘off’) A stylish hairdo
- In lieu of: (lee-yuh – ‘lieu’ is pronounced similar in English and French) Instead of
- Je ne sais quoi: (zuhuh-nuh-say-kwah; pronounce the ‘a’ in ‘kwah’ like the ‘a’ in ‘father’) Something unexplainable, generally positive
- Faux pas: (foe pah – pronounce the ‘a’ in ‘pah’ like the ‘a’ in ‘father’) A mistake in etiquette
- À la mode: (Ah lah mohd;) Fashionable
- Au contraire: (Oh kon-trair; pronounce the ‘o’ in ‘kon’ like the ‘o’ in ‘yogurt’) On the contrary
- Carte blanche: (Kart blansh) Free reign – generally referring to a project as in, ‘They gave me carte blanche to decorate this room.’
- C’est la vie: (Say lah vee) That’s life
- Double entendre: (on-tohn-druh; Entendre is pronounced the same in English as it is in French; ‘o’ in ‘tohn’ is short as in ‘ox’) When a phrase is ambiguous and can be interpreted in multiple ways

Common French Sayings

- Ça m’est égal: (Saw met ay gahl; both ‘a’ letters are pronounced as in ‘father’) It doesn’t matter to me.
- À jeune chasseur, il faut un vieux chien: (Ah jhun shaw-sur, eel fote uhn vee-yuh shee-en) Someone inexperienced needs someone older to show him the ropes.
- À bon chat, bon rat: (Ah bohn shah, bohn rah; pronounce the ‘a’ in ‘chat’ and ‘rat’ like the ‘a’ in father) Tit for tat.
- À deux pas de chez moi: (Ah duh pah de shay mwah) Right by my house.
- Acheter quelque chose à prix d’or: (Ah-shuh-tay kel-kuh shose ah pree door) To pay an arm and a leg for something.
- Après la pluie, le beau temps: (Ah-pray lah plowwee luh bo tahm) Every cloud has a silver lining.
- Bien faire et laisser dire: (Beeeyehn far, ay leh-say-deer) Work hard and don’t listen to others’ criticism.
- Ça ne me dit pas grand-chose: (Sahn muh dee pah grahn shose) I’m not familiar with that.
- Qui vole un œuf vole un bœuf: (Kee vole uhn uhf vole uhn buhf) Once a thief, always a thief.
- Manger les pissenlits par la racine: (Mahnjhay lay pee-san-lee par lah rah-seen) To be dead or pushing up daisies.
- Souris qui n’a qu’un trou est bientôt prise: (Soo-ree kee na-kun troo, ay bee-en-toe preeze) Better to be safe than sorry.
- Courir sur le haricot: (Koo-rear soor luh ah-reek) To annoy someone or get on their nerves.
- C’est le ton qui fait la musique: (Say luh tohn kee fay lah moo-zeek) It’s not what you say but how you say it.
- Les carottes sont cuites: (Lay kah-rott sohn kweet) The die are cast.