€3.⁹⁵

Complete
French
Grammar

Sylvie
Cadiou

MENTOR

CONTENTS

Chapter 6: VERBS

When you look up a verb in the dictionary, it is given to you in the **infinitive**, meaning the most basic form of the verb before anything is done to it. In English, infinitives are the **to** form of the verb, e.g. to play.

The infinitive in French can be used in a sentence but it will nearly always be with another verb, e.g. je vais *jouer* = I am going *to play*.

It is also used to express the *–ing* form of an English verb, when that *–ing* form has the meaning of to, e.g. I like *playing* (= to play) football = j'aime *jouer* au football.

All infinitives in French end in ER, IR or RE. This is an obvious way of grouping them, which is why you have three families of verbs: the **ER verbs**, the **IR verbs** and the **RE verbs**. Of these three families, the ER verb family is by far the biggest. The majority of ER verbs are **regular verbs**.

Regular verbs, from the word règle meaning rule, are well-behaved verbs that follow the same rules. Once you learn a rule, all regular verbs will follow it, enabling you to use verbs you may not have known before.

But of course, in every good family, there is a black sheep or two. French verb families have their black sheep too; they are called **irregular verbs**. In other words, they do not follow rules. With them, all bets are off. You therefore have to **learn** how they behave in the present tense, the passé composé etc on a case by case basis.

The most useful irregular verbs to know are:

> **avoir** = to have
> **être** = to be
> **aller** = to go
> **faire** = to do or to make
> **prendre** = to take

You can call these the *Famous Five* (*Le Club Des Cinq* in French!).

Tenses

A verb will change according to the **subject** used but also according to the **tense** you're using, i.e. a verb in the future (je jouerai = I will play) does not look like a verb in the past (je jouais - I used to play) - how else would we know which is which?!

A quick overview of essential tenses

Example: **jouer** with je as the subject:

Gone By	Now or Regularly	Yet to Come	Unsure
Passé Composé -What happened e.g. j'ai joué **Imperfect** -How it was -What was happening -Used to happen e.g. je jouais **Immediate Past** -What just happened e.g. je viens de jouer	**Present tense** -What happens -What is happening e.g. je joue	**Present with context** e.g. je joue demain **Future** -What will happen e.g. je jouerai **Immediate Future** -What is going to happen e.g. je vais jouer	**Conditional** -What would happen e.g. je jouerais

The Present Tense

You use the **present tense** to say **how things are**, e.g. I am tall; she is Irish.

You also use the **present tense** to say **what you do regularly** and **what you're doing right now**. In English, there are two different way of spelling your verb. In French, there is only one:

> *I do* French in school = je *fais* du français à l'école
> *I'm doing* French at the moment = je *fais* du français en ce moment

You have to say do.

This applies to all verbs, not just faire, e.g. she sings or she is singing = elle chante.

The **present tense** is also used in phrases with depuis (since/for).

Example: il *travaille* ici depuis six mois.

That sentence in English would be he *has been working* here for six months.

Formation of the Present Tense with Regular Verbs

As regular verbs follow rules, your task can be simplified by learning the rules for each tense. You don't have to learn each verb individually, like you have to do with irregular verbs. Here is the rule for putting a regular verb in the **present tense:**

1. Remove the ER, IR or RE from the infinitive. This gives you the **stem**. You will have to add endings to the stem.
2. Add the correct **ending** to the stem, according to the grid on the top of the next page:

	For **ER** verbs, add:	For **IR** verbs, add:	For **RE** verbs, add:
For **je**	e	is	s
For **tu**	es	is	s
For **il; elle; ce; ça; on**	e	it	(nothing)
For **nous**	ons	issons	ons
For **vous**	ez	issez	ez
For **ils; elles**	ent	issent	ent

Example: You want to say my sisters like pop music. First, identify to like in French. That's aimer, which is a regular ER verb. The pronoun you use to replace my sisters with is they, feminine, i.e. elles.

Now, apply the rule:
Remove the ER from aimer. This gives you the stem **aim-**
Check the grid. You need the first column, as it deals with ER verbs.
1. Read down through the list of persons until you find elles.
2. You need to add **–ent** to the stem.

→ mes sœurs **aim-** + **-ent** la musique pop = mes sœurs aiment la musique pop.

Examples: je regarde; tu choisis; elle attend; nous vendons; vous adorez; ils grandissent

A few spelling exceptions

1. When the verb ends in **–g**er, the nous form ending is **–eons**, e.g. nous mangeons. That's to keep the soft sound of that g.
The letter g is *hard* when it is followed by a, o or u, e.g. le golf, la gare and *soft* when followed by e or i. That's why there is a **u** in words like guitar/la guitare. It would begin like giraffe otherwise.

2. For the same reason, verbs ending in **–c**er keep that soft s sound by using a **ç** in front of the **–ons** ending, e.g. nous commençons.

3. Verbs ending in **–y**er only keep that **y** with the nous and vous forms. All the other persons use **i** instead, e.g. envoyer → j'envoie/tu envoies but nous envoyons/vous envoyez.

Some verbs play fast and loose with accents:
Some verbs with no accents in the **infinitive** have them in the **present tense**, but not with each person:
acheter → j'achète, tu achètes, il achète; nous achetons; vous achetez; ils achètent
se lever → je me lève ; tu te lèves ; il se lève ; nous nous levons ; vous vous levez ; ils se lèvent
Verbs with acute accents in the infinitive don't always keep those accents *acute*:
préférer → je préfère; tu préfères; il préfère; nous préférons; vous préférez; ils préfèrent

Irregular verbs: The Famous Five in the present tense

	AVOIR	ETRE	ALLER	FAIRE	PRENDRE
With **je** or **j'**	ai	suis	vais	fais	prends
With **tu**	as	es	vas	fais	prends
With **il; elle; ce; ça; on**	a	est	va	fait	prend
With **nous**	avons	sommes	allons	faisons	prenons
With **vous**	avez	êtes	allez	faites	prenez
With **ils; elles**	ont	sont	vont	font	prennent

Examples: tu prends; j'ai; ils vont; ça va; nous sommes

EXERCICES

1. Translate the following phrases into French. All the verbs are regular.

    (a) She chooses (to choose = choisir) _____

    (b) We're playing (to play = jouer) – Give two ways of saying this._____

    _____

    (c) The boys are singing (to sing = chanter) _____

    (d) Do you like..? (to like = aimer) – use the casual *you*. _____

    (e) He waits (to wait = attendre)_____

    (f) The little girls are growing up (to grow up = grandir) _____

    _____

    (g) You sell … (to sell = vendre) – use the polite *you*. _____

    (h) I wash (myself)   (to wash = se laver)* _____

*Se laver is a reflexive verb, like s'appeler. Remember, most reflexive verbs are regular ER verbs. The only difference is the reflexive pronoun that has to be added, e.g. tu *te* réveilles. See page 22.

EXERCICES

2. Match the subject to a suitable irregular verb, then **finish the sentence** yourself and **say what it means**, e.g. je + fais *du français* = I do French/I am doing French.

Paul	vais
Mes amis	est
La souris	vas
Elles	prend
Marilyn et moi	font
Tu	sont
Toi et ta mère	avons
Je	êtes

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

(e) _____

(f) _____

(g) _____

(h) _____

3. In the following sentences, **fill in the gaps** with a suitable regular or irregular verb in the **present tense**. Then **translate each sentence into English**:

(a) Mes voisins _____ anglais.

(b) J' _____ trois chiens.

(c) Mes stylos _____ dans ma trousse.

(d) On _____ du chocolat.

(e) Vous _____ le bus ?

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

(e) _____

The Present Participle

First, let's see what a **present participle** is in English.
Look at the following example:

John likes playing cards.

There are two words in the verbal group in this sentence: **likes** + **playing**.
These two verbs have different meanings and the second verb ends in *-ing*. This second verb is a **present participle** in English.

The **present participle** in English can also be used after prepositions such as by,
e.g. *By leaving early, we'll be in Montpellier before twelve*.

The **present participle** in French behaves a bit differently.
In the sentence *John likes playing cards*, the French use an infinitive, not a present participle, for the second verb, e.g. John likes playing cards = John aime jouer aux cartes.
Basically, if you can replace the verb ending in -ing (e.g. playing) with a verb starting with to... in English, you will use an infinitive in the French translation,
e.g. John likes playing/to play = John aime jouer.

However, you need to use a present participle in French when you use a verb with en (= by, on/upon or whilst).

Examples:
Tu réussiras en travaillant dur = You will succeed by working hard.
En arrivant, on a pris le Métro = On arriving, we took the Métro.
Je suis tombé en jouant au hockey = I fell whilst playing hockey.

You can see how the **present participle** could be really useful (and impressive!) in your written work.

The way to form the present participle is to look at the nous form of any verb in the **present tense (ER, IR or RE)** and remove the –ons ending. This gives the stem, to which you add – **ant**.

Example: To translate playing.
we play = nous jouons
Remove the –ons to get the stem ➔ jou-
Add –ant ➔ jou- + -ant = jouant
jouant = playing

(Three exceptions: being = étant; having = ayant; knowing = sachant)
Sometimes, there is a need for the **present participle** in French, but not in English. English is a wonderfully elastic language where you can say things like, he ran out of the room . The

French language is not so nimble and that sentence in French has to be he went/came out of the room *running*. To express that, you need the **present participle**. → il est sorti de la pièce *en courant.*

In English and in French, the **present participle** is also used to create **adjectives** out of verbs, e.g. charming comes from to charm; in French, charmant come from charmer. However, like all adjectives in French, present participles used as adjectives agree with their noun. Example: un film intéressant/une histoire intéressante

Note
Remember that in English, not all verbs ending in -ing are present participles.
                         Look at this example: *John is playing cards.*
You cannot replace playing with to play in the example.

The verbal group **is playing** is in the present tense and the sentence translates into French as, John joue aux cartes. You do not translate the is nor the playing seperately.

EXERCICES

Translate the following sentences into French:
   (a) I saw Marie when on my way (=while going) to school.   (to go = aller)
   (b) I went in by opening the door.   (to open = ouvrir)
   (c) I went in shouting.   (to shout = crier)
   (d) He listens to music whilst waiting for the bus.   (to wait for = attendre)
   (e) She broke her leg whilst skiing.   (to ski = faire du ski)

   (a) _____
   (b) _____
   (c) _____
   (d) _____
   (e) _____

The Passé Composé

Also known as the **perfect**, the **passé composé** is the tense you use to say **what happened**. You use it to talk about something that happened just once in the past (e.g. I went to the cinema, I have eaten an apple), rather than something you regularly used to do in the past.

The **passé composé** means composed past, so remember you will need to combine TWO words.

The first word of the **passé composé** is called the **auxiliary**. It is either avoir or être in their **present tense** forms.
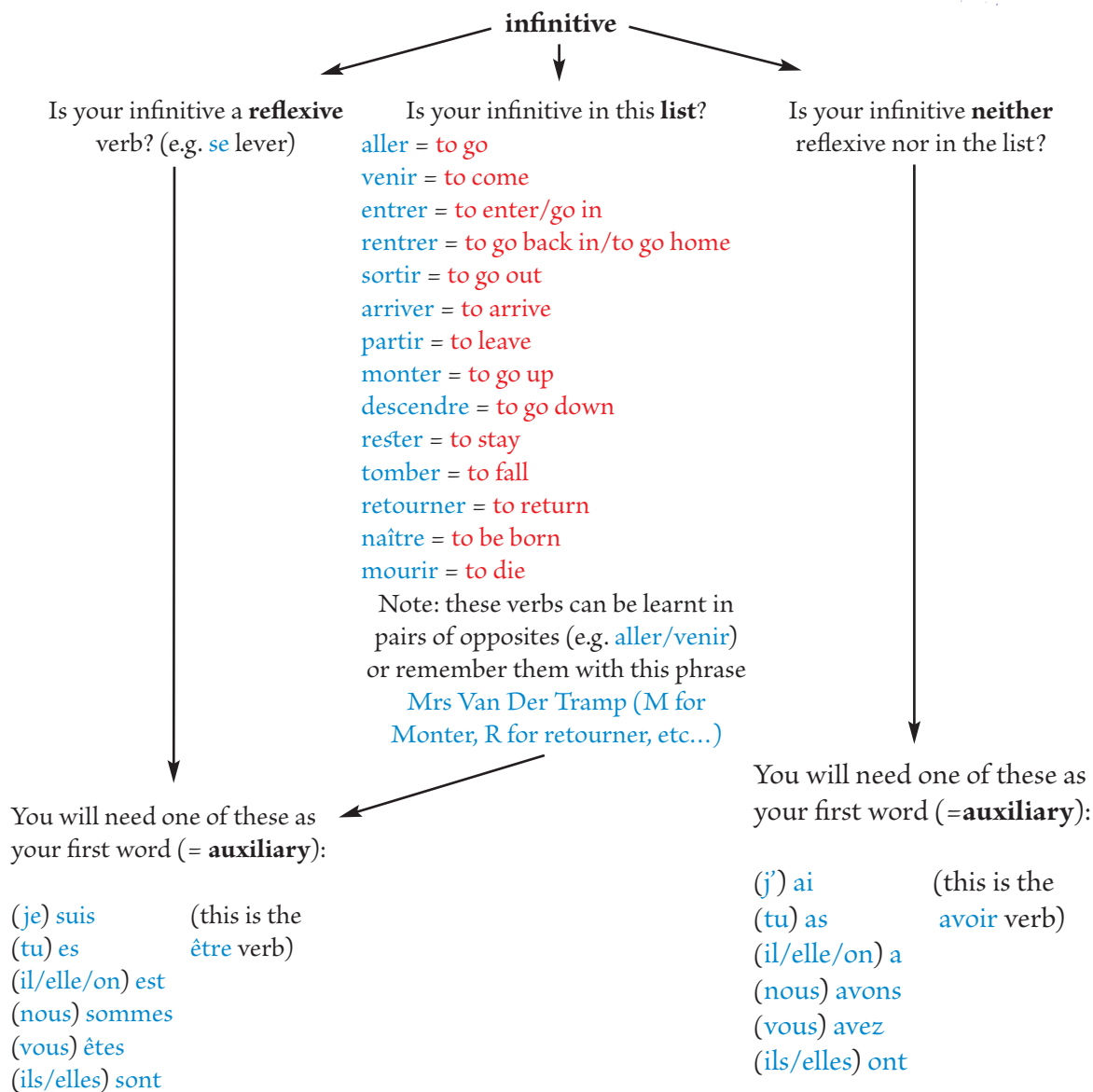The second word is called the **past participle**. It carries all the meaning, as in English.
For example, I have done that.
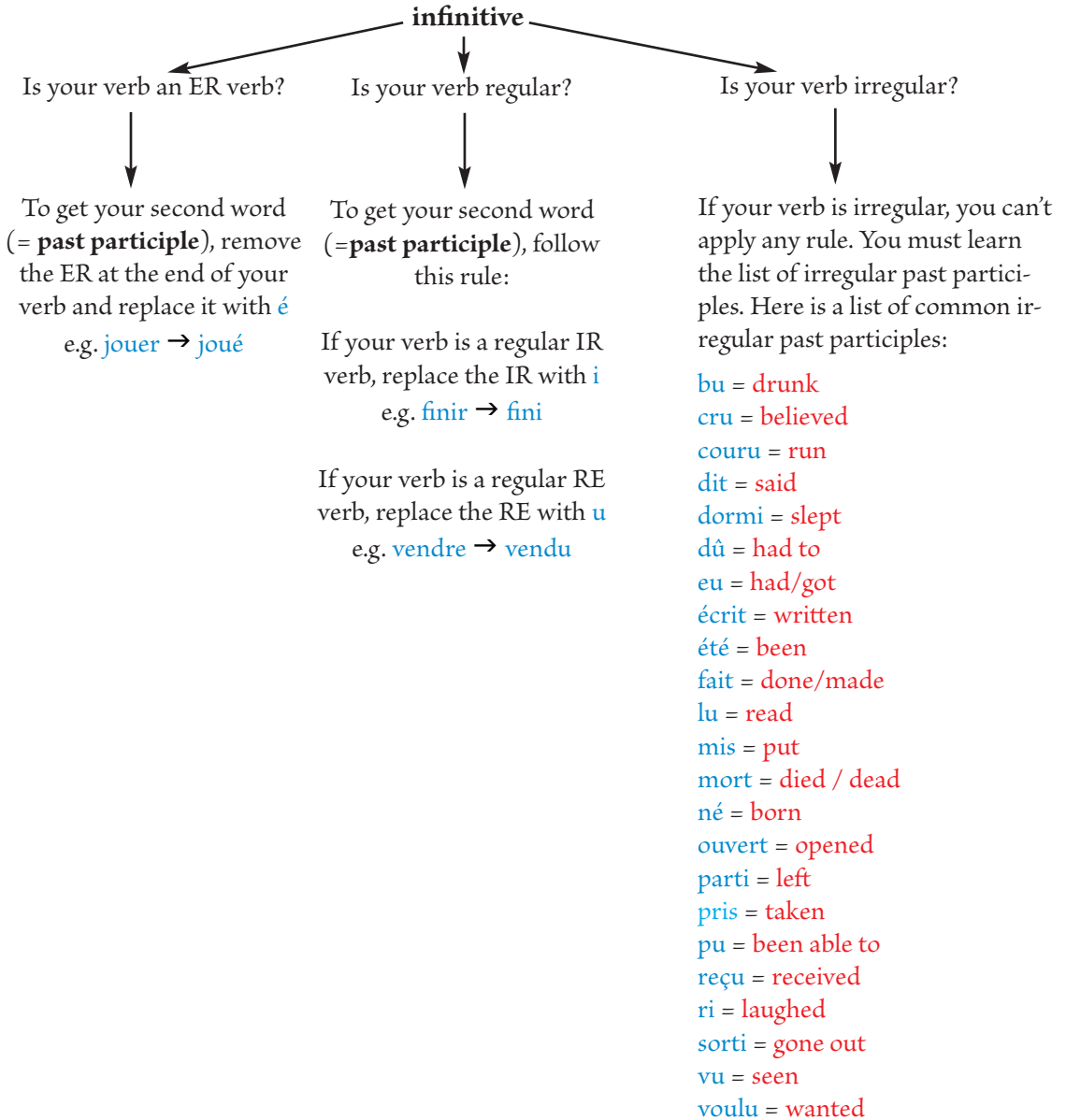Have = the auxiliary. Done = the **past participle.**
In French, you will always need **both** the auxiliary and the past participle.

First, find out the **infinitive** (= verb itself as in To do) of the verb you want to use. Then, you need to find out which **auxiliary** to use, so ask yourself the following questions:

infinitive

Is your infinitive a **reflexive** verb? (e.g. se lever)

Is your infinitive in this **list**?

aller = to go
venir = to come
entrer = to enter/go in
rentrer = to go back in/to go home
sortir = to go out
arriver = to arrive
partir = to leave
monter = to go up
descendre = to go down
rester = to stay
tomber = to fall
retourner = to return
naître = to be born
mourir = to die

Note: these verbs can be learnt in pairs of opposites (e.g. aller/venir) or remember them with this phrase
Mrs Van Der Tramp (M for Monter, R for retourner, etc…)

Is your infinitive **neither** reflexive nor in the list?

You will need one of these as your first word (= **auxiliary**):

(je) suis
(tu) es
(il/elle/on) est
(nous) sommes
(vous) êtes
(ils/elles) sont

(this is the être verb)

Note: Don't forget the reflexive bit, e.g. je me suis, if needed.

You will need one of these as your first word (=**auxiliary**):

(j') ai
(tu) as
(il/elle/on) a
(nous) avons
(vous) avez
(ils/elles) ont

(this is the avoir verb)

Now you need a second word, the **past participle**, so go back to your original verb in the infinitive and ask yourself these questions:

infinitive

Is your verb an ER verb?

Is your verb regular?

Is your verb irregular?

To get your second word (= **past participle**), remove the ER at the end of your verb and replace it with é

e.g. jouer ➜ joué

To get your second word (=**past participle**), follow this rule:

If your verb is a regular IR verb, replace the IR with i

e.g. finir ➜ fini

If your verb is a regular RE verb, replace the RE with u

e.g. vendre ➜ vendu

If your verb is irregular, you can't apply any rule. You must learn the list of irregular past participles. Here is a list of common irregular past participles:

bu = drunk
cru = believed
couru = run
dit = said
dormi = slept
dû = had to
eu = had/got
écrit = written
été = been
fait = done/made
lu = read
mis = put
mort = died / dead
né = born
ouvert = opened
parti = left
pris = taken
pu = been able to
reçu = received
ri = laughed
sorti = gone out
vu = seen
voulu = wanted

Now, put your first word (**auxiliary**) and your second word (**past participle**) together and you have a **passé composé**.

Example: You want to say I visited the Louvre and I saw the Mona Lisa. First, to visit is **visiter** and to see is **voir**.

Visiter is not reflexive (it's not *se visiter*) and it's not in the Mrs Van Der Tramp list, so we will need avoir as the **auxiliary**. The person (i.e. the subject of the verb) you want is I so you look for the je form in the avoir box and you find j'ai. Visiter is an ER verb so you remove the ER and replace it with é, this gives you visité. Put the two together and you get: **j'ai visité.**

Now, do the same with voir. It's not reflexive, it's not in the Mrs Van Der Tramp list so it's an avoir verb again. You start with j'ai again. Voir, however, is irregular so consult the irregular **past participles** list. There, you look for seen and you find vu. Put the two together and you get: **j'ai vu**.

The whole sentence is: **J'ai visité le Louvre et j'ai vu la Joconde** (la Joconde is what the French call the Mona Lisa.)

One last thing to take into account: if your auxiliary is être, your **past participle** will have to agree with the subject, i.e. take an e for the feminine singular, s for masculine and mixed plurals and es for feminine plurals.

Example: Julie says je suis allée

Thomas and Marc say nous sommes allés

Julie and Marc say nous sommes allés also

Julie and Florence say nous sommes allées.

When on is used as a casual nous, the past participle also agrees, e.g. on est parti(e)s.

EXERCICES

1. Fill in the gaps with the missing **auxiliary**:

(a) Tu _____ regardé la télé hier soir?

(b) On _____ partis à huit heures.

(c) Ils _____ vu la Joconde au Louvre.

(d) Je _____ descendue dans le sud de la France.

(e) Elle _____ joué au tennis avec son frère.

2. Fill in the gaps with a suitable **past participle**:

(a) Nous avons _____ le film.

(b) Il est _____ en ville.

(c) Vous avez _____ une lettre.

(d) J'ai _____ un garçon sympa en colonie de vacances.

(e) Elles sont _____ ce matin.

EXERCICES

3. Match an iten from Column A to an item from Column B to make five sentences.

A	B
Elle a	pris le train
Nous sommes	joué au fout
Tu as	monté dans l'avion
Il est	fini tes devoirs
Vous avez	arrivés en retard

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

(e) _____

The Imperfect

The expressions in the **imperfect** listed below are the most common.

It is worth learning these expressions as you will meet them (and write/say them) yourself.

J'étais = I was; **J'avais** = I had/I used to have; **C'était** = it was; **Il y avait**= there was; **Il faisait** = the weather was; **Il pleuvait** = it was raining

However, the **imperfect** is the *other* important past tense. Whereas the **passé composé** deals with what happened, the **imperfect** deals with **what <u>was</u> happening**, **what <u>used to</u> happen** and **how things were**. When it comes to telling a good story about something that has already happened, you will need both tenses.

How to Form the Imperfect

The way to form the **imperfect** is to identify the nous form of your verb in the **present tense** and remove the –ons ending (and the nous!). This gives you the **stem**.

To that stem, you will need to **add the correct ending**. The good news is that you use the same endings for an ER verb, an IR verb or an RE verb.

	Add this ending:
For **je** or **j'**	**ais**
For **tu**	**ais**
For **il; elle; ce; ça; on**	**ait**
For **nous**	**ions**
For **vous**	**iez**
For **ils; elles**	**aient**

Examples: You want to say I was watching TV. The verb to watch is regarder. You need we watch to find the stem ➜ nous regardons.

Remove the –ons. This gives the stem regard-

Check the grid for the correct ending. You need the I form, that's je in French, so the ending is –ais.

Put the two together: je regard- + -ais ➜ je regardais la télé.

You will notice that we did not translate the verb literally. There is no was and no watching. In fact, je regardais could mean I was watching or I used to watch. You need to know the context to know which one it means in English.

If you want to say it was, you need the verb être which has an exceptional stem.
You need to use ét-.

Check the grid for the correct ending. It is ce , so you'll need the ending –ait.

Put everything together and you get ce + ét- + -ait ➜ c'était. (ce will become c' because était starts with a vowel)

Examples: j'aimais; tu regardais; vous alliez; ils faisaient

EXERCICES

Put the verbs in brackets into the imperfect:

(a) Ils (aller) souvent au cinéma. _____

(b) Je (regarder) la télé quand Mathilde est arrivée. _____

(c) Vous (finir) de manger? _____

(d) Nous (étudier) le Latin quand j' (être) jeune.   Note: the stem of étudier is étudi-, so yes, you'll need to write the letter *i* twice! _____

(e) Il y (avoir) du brouillard sur la route. _____

Clash of the Titans: Passé Composé versus Imperfect

The main difficulty with these two past tenses is that they can occur in the same sentence. You need to be careful or your story could be very different to the one you intended to tell! Compare these two examples:

(a) Le téléphone a sonné quand je prenais un bain.

(b) Le téléphone a sonné quand j'ai pris un bain.

Example (a) means that the phone rang when *I was taking* a bath. In other words, I was already covered in suds when the phone rang.

Example (b) means that the phone rang when *I took* a bath. It sounds as if the phone waited for me to get in the bath before ringing!

This shows that you must decide which of the two tenses to use. It all depends on what you mean.

Look at the these example:

   (a) il pleuvait = it was raining

   (b) il a plu = it rained

In example (a), you're giving more of a description, it implies the rain was falling for a while.

In example (b), you're merely stating the fact that it rained, you're not passing judgement.

In most cases, there will be a clear choice to make between the two tenses.

To help you with that, have a look at the following checklist:

A

Are you being **factual, objective**, and saying **merely what happened**? That's the **passé composé**, e.g. Je suis allé en ville: I went into town

B

Are you referring to a **once-off event in the past**? That's also the **passé composé**, e.g. J'ai recontré le Président: I met the President

C

Are you **setting the scene** by saying **what you were doing** when something else happened? That's the **imperfect**, e.g. Je regardais la télé quand tu es arrivé: I was watching TV when you arrived

D

Are you referring to something you **used to do**, concentrating on the length or the **repetitive aspect** of the action and not just the fact that you did it? That's the **imperfect** e.g. J'aimais bien ce groupe mais plus maintenant: I used to like this band but not anymore

E

Are you offering an **opinion** or a **description**, in other words, are you being **subjective**? That's the **imperfect**, too, e.g. C'était super, il y avait plein de choses à faire: It was brilliant, there was lots to do

F

For these reasons, the **passé composé** carries a story forward but the **imperfect** doesn't, e.g. il faisait beau (**imperfect**), j'ai fait une promenade (**passé composé**): the weather was good (the story is static), I went for a walk (the story moves forward). You can think of it as a film: the **imperfect** is everything in the background, the **passé composé** is the action.

Here are two stories told using both the **passé composé** and the **imperfect**. The first one clearly illustrates the contrast between what **used to be** the case and **what happened** next:

Story 1

Quand j'**étais** plus jeune, j'**habitais** en Angleterre. Mon père **travaillait** pour une compagnie anglaise. On **avait** un appartement à Londres, c'**était** chouette! Il y a trois ans, on **a déménagé** et on **est venus** habiter ici. On **a acheté** une grande maison à la campagne et ça, c'est bien aussi!

Translation

When I was younger, I used to live in England. My father was working for an English company. We had/used to have an apartment in London, it was great! Three years ago, we moved and we came to live here. We bought a big house in the country and that's great too!

- J'étais = I was

  J'ai été = I have been would not work here as it does not make sense to say I have been young. (Note: Generally speaking, être is more likely to be used in the **imperfect** than in the **passé composé**.)

- J'habitais en… = I lived in …/I used to live in …

  In this case, we are setting the scene so I used to live (i.e. the **imperfect**) is the best translation as it implies that it was something you did for a while (i.e. you lived there for a while). I lived can be translated from English into French as j'ai habité if you want to state the fact that **at one time**, you lived in .. (e.g. I have lived in many different countries).

- Mon père travaillait = My father used to work/was working

  We're still setting the scene so we're using the **imperfect**. It's an explanation as to why they lived in England. Mon père a travaillé would not be right here as it would mean my father has worked.

- On avait = We had/we used to have

  If the verb phrase on a eu had been used, it would actually change the story because avoir in the **passé composé** is more likely to mean to get than to have, i.e. on a eu = we got. So on avait is the **imperfect**.

- C'était = it was

  This is one of the useful phrases in the **imperfect** given to you at the beginning of this section. It's used to give all kinds of opinions, e.g. c'était nul = it was rubbish, and other bits of background information, e.g. c'était l'hiver = it was winter. It's the past version of c'est, so it is very useful. Less useful, but still an option, is the phrase ça a été = it has been.

- On a déménagé = We moved (house)

  This is the **passé composé** because we're now talking about what happened, i.e something that happened once. As the house move happened once and was a completed action, on déménageait (**imperfect**) would not work here as it means either we were moving or we used to move.

- On est venus = We came

  Again, this is what happened just once. It doesn't suit the story to say on venait = we were coming/we used to come. **Passé composé**

- On a acheté = We bought

  This is clearly a once-off event that happened in the past, so it has to be **passé composé**. On achetait **imperfect** means we used to buy or we were buying, neither of which suits our story.

Here is another story in which the two tenses mix more freely:

Story 2

Samedi dernier, j'**étais** en ville pour faire quelques courses quand tout à coup, j'**ai entendu** une femme crier « Au voleur! Il m'a volé mon sac! » J'**ai vu** un jeune homme qui **s'enfuyait**. Il **était** grand et il **courait** vite. À un moment donné, un homme, qui **avait** de bons réflexes, lui **a fait** un croche-pied et le voleur **est tombé** par terre. Il **s'est relevé** très vite et il **est reparti** en laissant le sac derrière lui. La dame **était** très contente de retrouver son sac parce qu'il y **avait** tous ses papiers et ses cartes bancaires dedans. Le voleur, lui, **n'a pas été retrouvé**!

Translation

Last Saturday, I was in town to do some shopping when suddenly, I heard a woman scream 'Stop, thief! He stole my bag!' I saw a young man who was running away. He was tall and he was running fast. At one point, a man who had good reflexes tripped him up and the robber fell to the ground. He got back up quickly and he set off again leaving the bag behind. The lady was very happy to get her bag back because she had (there was) all her papers and bank cards inside. (As for) the robber, he has not been found again!

- J'étais = I was   We're setting the scene. **Imperfect**

- J'ai entendu = I heard   This is a once-off event in the past, we're saying simply what happened. So that's **passé composé**.

- J'ai vu = I saw   This is a once-off event in the past, it's what happened. Again, that's **passé composé**.

- (qui) s'enfuyait = (who) was running away
  This says that the young man had probably started running before our writer saw him and kept running (until he was tripped up in fact!). **Imperfect** If you say j'ai vu un jeune home qui s'est enfui, you're saying I saw a young man who ran away. This sounds as if he ran away as soon as you looked at him. This does not have the same meaning as I saw a young man who was running away.

- Il était = he was   You can't really say he has been tall, (il a été), can you?! **Imperfect**

- Il courait = he was running Again, that's part of the description. We're not saying he ran (il a couru). **Imperfect**

- (qui) avait = (who) had   That's another description. Descriptions require the **imperfect**.

- (un homme) a fait = (a man) did (faire un croche-pied à quelqu'un = to trip somebody up)
  This is, luckily perhaps for the young man, a once-off event in the past, we're stating what happened. A one-off event = the **passé composé**.

- Le voleur est tombé = the robber fell/il s'est relevé = he got back up again/il est reparti = he set off again
  All these relate what happened. **Passé composé** (Note: Adding re- to the start of a verb can give the meaning of again, e.g. partir → repartir; commencer → recommencer)

- La dame était = the lady was   This is a description. **Imperfect**

  (Note the two words used in the extract to refer to the poor victim: la femme = the woman;
  la dame = the woman/the lady, a bit more friendly than la femme.)

- Il y avait = there was

  This is another of the essential expressions in the **Imperfect**. You use it to describe plenty of things,
  e.g. il y avait du vent = it was windy (there was a lot of wind); il y avait beaucoup de monde au concert
  = the concert was packed (there were a lot of people at the concert).

- Le voleur n'a pas été retrouvé = the robber was not found again

  We're stating a fact, here. **Passé composé**

  Note the structures used: as you can see, it's in the **negative**, using ne and pas. To say he has been
  found, you'd write il a été retrouvé. But look more closely and you'll see that there are three words used
  for this **passé composé**. That's because the phrase is in the **passive voice**. The passive voice in French
  is formed much like in English: the verb être is used in various tenses, with a past participle, e.g. elle
  sera invitée = she will be invited.

EXERCICES

1. **Choose** between the **passé composé** and the **imperfect** in the following sentences
   and **explain** your choice.
   (a) **J'ai vu/Je voyais** un bon film hier soir. _____
   (b) On est allés à la plage mais **il a plu/il pleuvait**. _____
   (c) Avant, **ils ont joué/ils jouaient** au rugby, mais **ils ont arrêté/ils arrêtaient**.

   _____
   (d) **Tu as été/Tu étais** malade ? _____
   (e) **Il y a eu /il y avait** un accident sur l'autoroute A4 dimanche. _____

2. **Translate** the following sentences into French:
   (a) I fell when I was playing basket ball.
   (b) We went to a music festival, there were a lot of people there and we had a great
       time! (Note: To have a great time is bien s'amuser. The word bien comes after the
       verb in one-word tenses [e.g. je m'amuse **bien**, present tense] and after the **first** verb
       in constructions using more than one verb [e.g. je vais **bien** m'amuser, immediate
       future].)
   (c) He used to take his car to go to work, but last year, he started taking the bus. (Note:
       to start doing something is commencer à + infinitive.)
   (d) I saw the robber! He was fat, he had grey hair and he was wearing a blue jacket.
   (e) My parents and I were very sad when you left.

   (a) _____
   (b) _____
   (c) _____
   (d) _____
   (e) _____

The Immediate Past

This is not really a tense but a verb construction. It is very easy to use and will express that you have *just* done something. You use the verb **venir** in the **present tense** (be careful, venir is irregular), you add **de** and then your **infinitive**.

Example: You want to say I've just finished my exams.
The verb **venir** in the **present tense** with je is **je viens**; **de** comes next; then the verb to finish (the infinitive) which is **finir**.

Je viens de finir mes examens.

The interesting point with this structure is that you do not use a past tense. All you need to know is venir in the **present tense** and the infinitive of the verb you're using. Of course, on the downside, it can only be used for very recent events.

EXERCICES

Translate the following sentences into French:
- **(a)** We've just finished our exams. _____
- **(b)** She's just bought a new car. _____
- **(c)** They've just left. _____
- **(d)** Have you just arrived? _____
- **(e)** I've just seen a great film. _____

The Future

This is the tense you use to say you *will* do something. It is the tense you must use in **formal letters**. Unlike English, there is no word for **will** in French to show the verb is in the future. Instead you have to change the verb just like you do for other tenses.
The good news is that **all verbs** use the same set of **endings**:

	Add this ending:
For **je** or **j'**	**ai**
For **tu**	**as**
For **il; elle; ce; ça; on**	**a**
For **nous**	**ons**
For **vous**	**ez**
For **ils ; elles**	**ont**

Note: Did you notice that those endings look very like the verb avoir in the **present tense**? That might help you to remember them.

To get the **stem**, you need to know whether your verb is **regular** or **irregular**:

Regular verb stem:

You will actually use the full infinitive, e.g. manger. The only part you remove is the e of RE verbs because otherwise you'd have too many vowels together.

And watch out for acheter which will have a grave accent on the first e, e.g. j'ach**è**terai.

Irregular verb stem:

We're back to learning a list. Here are a few common irregular stems:

avoir ➔ **aur-**
être ➔ **ser-**
aller ➔ **ir-**
faire ➔ **fer-**
prendre ➔ **prendr-**
envoyer ➔ **enverr-**
pouvoir ➔ **pourr-**
devoir ➔ **devr-**
vouloir ➔ **voudr-**
voir ➔ **verr-**

Note: All stems in the future end in r.

Now, you put the **stem** and the **ending** together to get the future tense of the verb you want to use.

Examples:

You want to say I will travel. The verb to travel is voyager. It is a regular verb so you will keep the full infinitive. The person you're using is je so the ending you need is –ai.
I will travel ➔ je + voyager- + -ai ➔ je voyagerai

You now want to say we will go. To go is aller, which is irregular. Check the list of irregular stems and you find that for aller, you need the stem ir-. Next, you need to decide whether you're using on or nous for we. The on ending is –a and the nous ending is –ons.
We will go ➔ (i) on + ir- + -a ➔ on ira   (ii) nous + ir- + -ons ➔ nous irons

EXERCICES

Put the verbs in brackets into the Future:

(a) Ils (faire) la vaisselle plus tard. _____

(b) On (pouvoir) faire du bateau. _____

(c) Tu (aller) chez tes grands-parents cet été? _____

(d) Je te (téléphoner) ce soir, ok ? _____

(e) Elle (avoir) 16 ans en juillet. _____