LES VERBES FRANÇAIS

**A few useful facts**

- There are 3 groups of verbs in French, -er, -ir and -re verbs.

- This means that if you look for “to play” in the dictionary, you find “jouer”, which ends in -er: this is an “-er” verb.

- “To finish” is “finir”, an “-ir” verb.

- “To sell” is vendre, a “-re” verb.

- Most of these verbs have a pattern for all the tenses commonly used in French. However some of them will not follow any sort of pattern at all. and will have to be learnt off by heart.

- Verbs are not terribly exciting but are essential to help you develop your independence in French so hang in there!

LE PRÉSENT

When you describe what you do or are doing in French, you use the present tense.

example: I usually play tennis everyday but today I’m playing football instead.

**En général, je joue au tennis tous les jours mais aujourd’hui je joue au football à la place**.

The following pattern is best being learnt off by heart. In the first few weeks you will have to keep learning it over and over again but gradually it will become easier to remember.

|  |
| --- |
| -**er -ir -re** |
| je joue finis vends |
|  |
| tu joues finis vends |
|  |
| il joue finit vend |
| elle joue finit vend |
|  |
| nous jouons finissons vendons |
|  |
| vous jouez finissez vendez |
|  |
| ils jouent finissent vendent |
| elles jouent finissent vendent |

THE MOST COMMON IRREGULAR VERBS (in the present tense!)

* aller (to go) je vais, tu vas, il/elle va, nous allons, vous allez, ils/elles vont
* s’appeler (to be called) je m’appelle, tu t’appelles, il/elle s’appelle, nous nous appelons, vous vous appelez, ils/elles s’appellent.
* avoir (to have) j’ai tu as il/elle a, nous avons, vous avez, ils/elles ont.
* boire (to drink) je bois, tu bois, il/elle boit, nous buvons, vous buvez, ils/elles boivent.
* commencer (to begin) je commence, tu commences, il/elle commence, nous commençons, vous commencez, ils/elles commencent.
* connaître (to know) je connais, tu connais, il connaît, nous connaissons, vous connaissez, ils/elles connaissent.
* devoir (to owe or must/have to) je dois, tu dois, il doit, nous devons, vous devez, ils doivent.
* dire (to say) je dis, tu dis, il dit, nous disons, vous dites, ils disent.
* dormir (to sleep) je dors, tu dors, il dort, nous dormons, vous dormez, ils/elles dorment
* écrire (to write) j’écris, tu écris, il/elle écrit, nous écrivons, vous écrivez, ils/elles écrivent.
* être (to be) je suis, tu es, il/elle est, nous sommes, vous êtes, ils/elles sont
* faire (to make, to do) je fais, tu fais, il/elle fait, nous faisons, vous faites, ils font.
* falloir (to be necessary) il faut aller/manger/faire...
* lire (to read) je lis, tu lis, il lit, nous lisons, vous lisez, ils lisent.
* mettre (to put) je mets, tu mets, il met, nous mettons, vous mettez, ils mettent
* ouvrir (to open) j’ouvre, tu ouvres, il ouvre, nous ouvrons, vous ouvrez, ils ouvrent
* partir (to leave) je pars, tu pars, il part, nous partons, vous partez, ils partent
* pleuvoir (to rain) il pleut
* pouvoir (to be able,can) je peux, tu peux, il peut, nous pouvons, vous pouvez, ils peuvent.
* prendre (to take) je prends, tu prends, il prend, nous prenons, vous prenez, ils prennent
* savoir (to know) je sais, tu sais, il sait, nous savons, vous savez, ils savent.
* sortir (to go out) je sors, tu sors, il sort, nous sortons, vous sortez, ils sortent
* venir (to come) je viens, tu viens, il vient, nous venons, vous venez, ils viennent
* voir (to see) je vois, tu vois, il voit, nous voyons, vous voyez, ils voient
* vouloir (to wish,want) je veux, tu veux, il veut, nous voulons, vous voulez, ils veulent

REFLEXIVE VERBS IN THE PRESENT TENSE

Reflexive verbs are listed in a dictionary with the pronoun “se” in front of the infinitive (the verb in -er, -ir, -re). The “se” means “self” or “each other” or “one another”.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **Pronoun** | **Verb** |
| Je | me | lève/couche/rase |
| Tu | te | lèves/couches/rases |
| Il/Elle/On | se | lève/couche/rase |
| Nous | nous | levons/couchons/rasons |
| Vous | vous | levez/couchez/rasez |
| Ils/Elles | se | lèvent/couchent/rasent |

You can find a full list of reflexive verbs on page 4...

**Some common reflexive verbs:**

s’amuser to have fun

s’appeler to be called

s’approcher de to get close to

s’arrêter to stop

se baigner to bathe

se brosser (les dents) to brush

se coucher to go to bed

se débrouiller to get by

se dépêcher to hurry

se demander to ask

se déshabiller to get undressed

se disputer avec... to fight with

s’échapper to escape

s’entendre avec to get on with

se fâcher to get angry

se faire mal to hurt

s’habiller to get dressed

s’intéresser (à) to be interested in

se laver to wash

se lever to get up

se marier to marry

se mettre à to start (doing something)

s’occuper (de) to look after

se promener to walk

se raser to shave

se reposer to rest

se réveiller to wake up

se sauver to flee, run away

se sentir to feel

se trouver to be located in

How many have you already used? Can you think of any more?

LE PASSÉ COMPOSÉ

- In French, to talk of what you did or have done, you will need to use the

perfect, which is called **“Le Passé composé”.**

- The passé composé is formed by combining the present tense of the verbs

“être” or “avoir” with the past participle of verbs (ex mangé, écouté, vendu, pris,

bu, fini....).

- The end result, the “passé composé” will be as follows : j’ai mangé, tu as mangé,

j’ai écouté, il a écouté, j’ai vendu, nous avons vendu...but also for a few verbs je

suis allé(e), nous sommes descendus...

- Remember the formula: **Perfect tense = S + A +P.P** (e.g. J'ai entendu)

- So the first step you have to take is to revise “être” and “avoir”. Here they are for

you again :

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **avoir** | **être** |
| j'ai | je suis |
| tu as | tu es |
| il/elle/on a | il/elle/on est |
| nous avons | nous sommes |
| vous avez | vous êtes |
| ils/elles ont | ils/elles sont |

- Most verbs will be conjugated with “avoir”. There are only about sixteen which

you may need to use that will go with “être” instead (see list next page).

VERBS WHICH GO WITH ÊTRE INSTEAD OF AVOIR

Remember, only about **16 common verbs** go with “être” instead of “avoir” in the past. Here they are:

**D**escendre (to go down) turns into : descendu

**R**ester (to stay) resté

**A**rriver (to arrive) arrivé

**P**artir (to leave) parti

**E**ntrer (to go in) entré

**R**etourner (to return) retourné

**S**ortir (to exit, go out) sorti

**V**enir (to come) venu

**A**ller (to go) allé

**N**aître (to be born) né

**1** Devenir (to become) devenu

**2** Revenir (to come back) revenu

**3** Rentrer (to go in again, come back) rentré

**M**ourir (to die) mort

**M**onter (to go up) monté

**T**omber (to fall down) tombé

These 16 verbs will also agree with masculine, feminine and plural words i.e :

(Sophie would write) Je suis allé**e**

(Tom would write) Je suis allé

(Sophie and Tom) Nous sommes allé**s**

(Sophie and Sarah) Nous sommes allé**es**

**Remember that apart from these verbs, all the other ones you need will use avoir as their auxiliary verb**

**Check-up time...**

- Imagine that you want to write about what you did yesterday. You are very likely

to check a few verbs in the dictionary. To write the sentence “I ate my dinner at

6 p.m” in French, you need to find “to eat” in the dictionary: manger. This is an

-er verb and in the past you take the -er off and add -é instead (mangé). It goes with “avoir” to form the past tense :

- ***J’ai mangé mon repas du soir à 6 heures.*** is therefore the end result.

- Now try the same with “I listened to the radio”.

- Regular verbs ending in -ir (finir) will take their -r off : fini. How do you write

“I’ve finished” and “we’ve finished” ?

- Regular verbs ending in -re (vendre) will take their -re off and add a “u” instead :

vendu. How do you write: “I sold my house” and “they sold their house”?

IRREGULAR PAST PARTICIPLES

Remember the S.A.P.P formula? Past participles can also be irregular and the good news is that you probably know most of them by now... However here is a little reminder about the most common irregular PPs.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| avoir = eu | être = été | faire = fait |
| boire = bu | conduire = conduit | connaître = connu |
| courir = couru | croire = cru | devoir = dû |
| dire = dit | dormir = dormi | écrire = écrit |
| falloir = fallu | lire = lu | mettre = mis |
| ouvrir = ouvert | pleuvoir = plu | prendre = pris  comprendre = compris  apprendre = appris |
| pouvoir = pu | recevoir = reçu | rire = ri |
| savoir = su | tenir = tenu | vivre = vécu |
| voir = vu | vouloir = voulu | suivre = suivi |

So I made = J'ai fait and I received = J'ai reçu... Get my drift?

REFLEXIVE VERBS IN THE PASSE COMPOSÉ

Reflexive verbs form the passé composé with “être”. The past participle appears to agree with the subject : add an -e if the subject is feminine and an-s if it is plural.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **Pronoun** | **Etre** | **Past participle** |
| Je | me | suis | levé(e) |
| Tu | t' | es | réveillé(e) |
| Il | s' | est | rasé |
| Elle | s' | est | maquillée |
| Nous | nous | sommes | approchés/approchées |
| Vous | vous | êtes | disputé/disputée/disputés/disputées |
| Ils | se | sont | disputés |
| Elles | se | sont | disputées |

ONLY FOR FOOLHARDY SCHOLARS....REFLEXIVE VERBS in the

LESS-THAN-PERFECT TENSE AND PARTS OF THE BODY

Reflexive verbs are often used when referring to a part of the body:

Je me suis coupé le pied

Elle s’est lavé la tête

Elle s’est lavé les mains avant de manger

AÏE AÏE AÏE !!!!

*Have you noticed that when reflexive verbs are used with a part of the body in the passé composé, the P.P does not agree with the reflexive pronoun or the subject? To put it very simply, this is because you can only agree it with what comes before, not after. Tough huh?*

**L'IMPARFAIT**

*Bam bas bat, Mr Bass was, were-ing, used to*

The imperfect is another past tense.

The imperfect is used for description in the past (to describe something that happened frequently or regularly in the past) or to set the scene for something when using the past is required .

examples:

- Quand j’étais petit, j’allais chez mes grands-parents tous les week-ends.

- Quand j’étais en vacances, il faisait beau tous les jours

- A quoi ressemblait l’homme qui a volé la voiture?

- Est-ce qu’il portait des lunettes?

It describes how things used to be :

- A cette époque, il y avait moins de circulation sur les routes.

- En 1965, ma mère était étudiante.

It often translates “was .......ing”/ “were ..........ing”.

- J’étais dans la douche quand le téléphone a sonné.

- Je faisais mes devoirs quand il est arrivé.

It can be used to describe what you wanted to do but couldn’t

- Je voulais aller à Londres mais il y avait une grève des transports.

“C’était + adjective” can be used for making excuses :

- Ce n’était pas de ma faute

- Je pensais que les devoirs étaient pour demain

It can be used to say what you thought of something/somebody :

- C’était affreux/ il était désagréable

**La formation de l'imparfait:**

To form the imperfect tense, you take the “nous” form of the present tense, e.g. nous allons. Take away the *nous* and the *-ons* ending. This leaves the stem *all-*.

THEN add the imperfect endings :

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **Verb** |
| j' | allais |
| tu | allais |
| il/elle/on | allait |
| nous | allions |
| vous | alliez |
| ils/elles | allaient |

Nearly all verbs form the imperfect tense in this way but of course there are exceptions (well this is French after all...). The most important exception is être.

j’étais, tu étais, il/elle/on était, nous étions, vous étiez, ils/elles étaient

Another exception is verbs in -ger e.g. *je mang****e****ais, tu mang****e****ais, il mang****e****ait* ***but*** *nous mangions, vous mangiez, ils mangeaient.*

**Using the perfect and the imperfect tenses together...**

The imperfect and the perfect are often used together. One way to help you decide which tense to use is to imagine a river running along, with bridges crossing over it at intervals. The river represents something going on continuously, a state of affairs. The bridges cut across the river: they represent single actions, things that happened and are completed. The imperfect describes the state of things, what was going on (il faisait beau, j’étais assise dans le jardin...). The perfect tense is like the bridges, it is used for actions and events, for single things, which happened and are completed (...quand une abeille m’a piqué!).

*J'étais heureux et en train de m'amuser avec mes amis quand Mme Roberts m'a donné ma prep...*

LE FUTUR IMMÉDIAT

Use aller in the present tense followed by the verb in the infinitive :

Je vais + manger

Tu vas + aller

Il va + écouter

Elle va + finir

On va + regarder

Nous allons + attendre

Vous allez + sortir

Ils vont + sourire

Elles vont + se réveiller

Reflexive verbs with the immediate future:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **Aller** | **Pronoun** | **Infinitive** |
| Je | vais | me | lever |
| Tu | vas | te | réveiller |
| Il | va | se | raser |
| Elle | va | se | maquiller |
| Nous | allons | nous | approcher |
| Vous | allez | vous | disputer |
| Ils | vont | se | disputer |
| Elles | vont | se | disputer |

LE FUTUR SIMPLE

Despite its name, this one is slightly harder than the one above, but not too much!

For **regular** –er and –ir verbs: add the following endings to the verb in the infinitive:

Je finir**ai**

Tu finir**as**

Il finir**a**

Elle finir**a**

On finir**a**

Nous finir**ons**

Vous finir**ez**

Ils finir**ont**

Elles finir**ont**

For **regular** –re verbs, take off the last –e before adding these endings

ex : J’attendrai, tu attendras etc

**Irregular verbs...**

Irregular verbs have their own stem in the future and must be learnt off by heart (je **verr**ai, je s**aur**ai, j’**ir**ai, j’**aur**ai, je **devr**ai, je **dir**ai, je **ser**ai, je **fer**ai, il **faudr**a, je **pourr**ai, je **recevr**ai, je **tiendr**ai, je **viendr**ai, j’**enverr**ai, je **voudr**ai). Note that they all have a « r » before the endings! The same stems are used for the conditional present so they are well worth learning!

**The essential irregular stems in the future are:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **acheter** | **achèter** |
| **aller** | **ir** |
| **avoir** | **aur** |
| **courir** | **courr** |
| **devoir** | **devr** |
| **être** | **ser** |
| **envoyer** | **enverr** |
| **falloir** | **faudr** |
| **faire** | **fer** |
| **se lever** | **se lèver** |
| **pouvoir** | **pourr** |
| **recevoir** | **recevr** |
| **savoir** | **saur** |
| **venir** | **viendr** |
| **voir** | **verr** |

LE CONDITIONNEL PRESENT

The conditional present is used pretty much in the same way in French as in English (would, could, should).

1- Most of the time it expresses a condition. It is usually accompanied by a "Si" clause:

e.g. S'il faisait beau, j'irais à la plage

2- It can also express a future-in-the-past:

e.g. Elle a dit qu'elle partirait vers 9 heures

FORMATION:

The conditional is formed by taking the future stem of the verb and combining it with the imperfect endings:

e.g.     VENIR    =        VIENDR     +     imperfect endings

1- je       \_\_\_\_   ais            je viendrais

2- tu     \_\_\_\_    ais              tu viendrais

3-  il      \_\_\_\_  ait               il viendrait

4- nous   \_\_\_\_  ions            nous viendrions

5- vous  \_\_\_\_   iez             vous viendriez

6-  ils     \_\_\_\_    aient ils viendraient