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more on the  
perfect tense

# Lesson 54

## Notes

### J'ai vendu la maison

#### The perfect tense continued

##### Programme Notes

Welcome to Coffee Break French, the podcast aimed at independent learners of French. Our regular podcasts will introduce you to the French language in easy steps.

Last week we were looking at the perfect tense and we are going to continue with this tense in this week's lesson. So far we have looked at the perfect tense of regular *-er* verbs. To form the perfect tense, we take the auxiliary verb and follow it with the past participle. In this case the auxiliary verb is *avoir* ("to have"). To form the past participle of regular *-er* verbs, we take off the *-er* and add *-é*. For example, to say "I have eaten" we would say *j'ai mangé*.

Today we are going to look at the past participles of regular *-re* and *-ir* verbs. Let's begin by looking at *-re* verbs. We have come across many of these already in Coffee Break French, for example the verb *vendre*, meaning "to sell." To form the past participle of a regular *-re* verb, we take off the *-re* and add *-u*. So *vendre* becomes *vendu*. Unlike regular *-er* verbs where the past participle sounds the same as the infinitive (eg *dansé* and *danser*), the past participle of a regular *-re* verb sounds different to the infinitive.

Below are some examples of the perfect tense using regular *-re* verbs.

Infinitive	Past Participle	"I have..."	French phrase	English translation
<i>vendre</i> (to sell)	vendu	j'ai vendu	j'ai vendu la maison	I have sold the house
<i>perdre</i> (to lose)	perdu	j'ai perdu	est-ce que tu as perdu ton livre?	have you lost your book?
<i>répondre</i> (to answer / to reply)	répondu	j'ai répondu	nous avons répondu hier	we have answered yesterday
<i>attendre</i> (to wait for)	attendu	j'ai attendu	nous avons attendu deux heures	we have waited for two hours

If you wanted to reply to the question *est-ce que tu as perdu ton livre?* by saying "no, I have not lost my book," you could say *non, je n'ai pas perdu mon livre*.

Note that since *attendre* means "to wait **for**" we do not need to add a word meaning "for" in the last phrase, *nous avons attendu deux heures*.

Let's now move on to look at some regular *-ir* verbs. To form the past participle of a regular *-ir* verb, you take off the *-ir* and add *-i*. Some examples are listed below.

Infinitive	Past Participle	"I have..."
<i>finir</i> (to finish)	fini	j'ai fini
<i>choisir</i> (to choose)	choisi	j'ai choisi
<i>réussir</i> (to succeed / to be successful)	réussi	j'ai réussi
<i>obéir</i> (to obey)	obéi	j'ai obéi

Once we know the past participle of a verb, we can conjugate all parts of the perfect tense. Let's take *finir* as an example. Note that only the auxiliary verb, *avoir*, changes for each part. The past participle stays exactly the same.

finir (to finish) - perfect tense	
j'ai fini	nous avons fini
tu as fini	vous avez fini
il / elle a fini	ils / elles ont fini

We have of course only been looking at verbs with regular past participles so far. Some verbs have irregular past participles and we will take a look at some of these in the next lesson.

For the moment let's look at another use of the perfect tense. So far we have used the perfect tense to translate "I have done something." However in French this tense is also used in another very common situation: to describe a simple past narrative tense. This is essentially the tense you use to "tell a story" ie. instead of what someone "has done," we can simply say what someone "did." For example, *j'ai mangé* can mean "I have eaten" but it can also mean "I ate."

The table below shows how the perfect tense in French can be translated into English in these two different ways.

<b>j'ai chanté</b>	I have sung / I sang
<b>j'ai fini mes devoirs</b>	I have finished my homework / I finished my homework
<b>j'ai parlé (en) français ce matin</b>	I have spoken French this morning / I spoke French this morning
<b>nous avons mangé des cuisses de grenouille</b>	we have eaten frogs' legs / we ate frogs' legs
<b>l'année dernière nous avons mangé des cuisses de grenouille</b>	last year we ate frogs' legs

We can therefore think of the perfect tense both as a narrative tense and as the tense you use to say what you “have done.” These are the two principal uses of the perfect tense in French.

Mark gave Anna a quick test on the perfect tense by asking her to translate the following phrases into French:

yesterday we watched television	<b>hier nous avons regardé la télé</b>
I have spoken with your mother this morning	<b>j’ai parlé avec ta mère ce matin</b>
I spoke to your father yesterday	<b>j’ai parlé avec ton père hier</b>
we listened to some music	<b>nous avons écouté de la musique</b>
she has sold the car	<b>elle a vendu la voiture</b>
she sold the car	<b>elle a vendu la voiture</b>



Note that the information listed below is part of the test in the bonus podcast. We would advise you to listen to the podcast before you read the content below.

Bonus episode test		
1	<b>J'ai vendu la maison.</b>	I sold the house / I have sold the house.
2	<b>Elle a choisi le livre bleu.</b>	She chose the blue book / She has chosen the blue book.
3	<b>Nous avons fini nos devoirs.</b>	We finished our homework / We have finished our homework.
4	<b>Il a chanté la chanson pour toi.</b>	He sang the song for you / He has sung the song for you.
5	<b>Le garçon a obéi.</b>	The boy obeyed / The boy has obeyed.
6	<b>Have you sold your car?</b>	Est-ce que tu as vendu ta voiture?
7	<b>He lost the book during the weekend.</b>	Il a perdu le livre pendant le week-end.
8	<b>I didn't hear the song.</b>	Je n'ai pas entendu la chanson.
9	<b>They thought (reflected) today.</b>	Ils ont réfléchi aujourd'hui.
10	<b>We waited for the train.</b>	Nous avons attendu le train.



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