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Lesson 56

Notes

Elles sont allées au marché

Verbs that take *être* as their auxiliary verb in the perfect tense

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.

So far, we have been looking at the perfect tense conjugated with the auxiliary verb, *avoir*. In this week's lesson we are going to look at a specific group of verbs in the perfect tense. For these verbs, we use a different auxiliary verb: *être*. This group of verbs is generally known as '*être* verbs.'

Remember that the perfect tense is formed by taking the conjugated part of the auxiliary verb and adding the past participle. We are still using this same formula in today's lesson. The only thing that is changing is the auxiliary verb.

One very common French verb, whose auxiliary verb is *être* instead of *avoir*, is the verb meaning "to go", which we already know is *aller*. To put *aller* into the perfect tense, we take the present tense of *être* and add the past participle of *aller*. The past participle of *aller* is in fact regular, so we simply take off the *-er* and add *-é*, to give *allé*. So to say "I went" or "I have gone" we would say *je suis allé*.

A very important point to note is that when the auxiliary verb is *être*, the past participle sometimes changes. Depending on whether the person or thing "doing" the verb is masculine, feminine, singular or plural, the spelling of the past participle changes to make it "agree" with the subject.

If the subject is female, we add an extra *-e* to the end of the past participle. So to say "she went" or "she has gone" we would say:

elle est allée

she went / she has gone

This extra *-e* does not change the sound of the past participle but it makes a difference to the spelling.

So the singular forms of *aller* in the perfect tense would be as follows. Note that the extra *-e* is only added to *allé* if the person is female.

je suis allé(e)	I went / I have gone
tu es allé(e)	you went / you have gone
il est allé	he went / he has gone
elle est allée	she went / she has gone

Let's now move onto the plural forms of *aller*. As we know, the “we” part of the present tense of *être* is *nous sommes*. When there is more than one person, we add an -s onto the end of *allé* so it becomes *allés*. It still sounds exactly the same as *allé*. If the group of people were either all male or a mixture of male and female, we simply add an -s. So “we went” would be *nous sommes allés*. However if the group are all female, we need to add -es. The extra -e shows that the people are female and the extra -s shows that there are more than one of them. *Allé* becomes *allées* so the phrase would be *nous sommes allées*. Again the sound does not change.

The *vous* form works in exactly the same way as the *nous* form when we are talking to more than one person. However remember that *vous* can also be used to mean “you” when you are talking to just one person in a polite way. Therefore if you were talking to a male, you would say *vous êtes allé* and if you were talking to a female you would say *vous êtes allée*. So there are potentially four different versions of the past participle with *vous*.

The table below shows the various plural forms of *aller* in the perfect tense.

nous sommes allé(e)s	we went / we have gone
vous êtes allé(e)s	you went / you have gone (plural, informal or formal)
vous êtes allé(e)	you went / you have gone (singular, formal)
ils sont allés	they went / they have gone (all male or mixture of male & female)
elles sont allées	they went / they have gone (all female)

When talking about the past, you can obviously combine *être* verbs with ‘normal’ verbs. For example you could say *je suis allé(e) en ville et j’ai fait les magasins* (“I went into town and did some shopping”).

Aller is part of a group of verbs which take *être* as their auxiliary verb in the perfect tense. Another verb which belongs to this group of *être* verbs is *venir* (“to come”). *Venir* has a regular past participle, *venu*. So to say “I came” or “I have come” you would say *je suis venu*. Below is a table showing all the parts of *venir* in the perfect tense.

je suis venu(e)	I came / I have come
tu es venu(e)	you came / you have come
il est venu	he came / he has come
elle est venue	she came / she has come
nous sommes venu(e)s	we came / we have come
vous êtes venu(e)s	you came / you have come (plural, informal or formal)
vous êtes venu(e)	you came / you have come (singular, formal)
ils sont venus	they came / they have come (all male or mixture of male & female)
elles sont venues	they came / they have come (all female)

Mark gave us 5 sentences to translate from English into French to test our knowledge of the perfect tense of *aller* and *venir*.

I went to the market	je suis allé(e) au marché
we went to the beach	nous sommes allé(e)s à la plage
she came to the concert	elle est venue au concert
they have come to the hotel	ils sont venus à l'hôtel
Marie went to Spain	Marie est allée en Espagne

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	Je suis allé(e) en France.	I went to France.
2	Il est allé à l'hôpital	He went to the hospital.
3	Pourquoi est-ce que vous êtes venus?	Why did you come?
4	Les filles sont venues au concert.	The girls came to the concert.
5	Nous sommes venus à l'église mais tu n'es pas venu.	We came to the church, but you didn't come.
6	Did you go to the beach yesterday, Sandrine?	Tu es allée à la plage hier, Sandrine? / Est-ce que tu es allée à la plage hier, Sandrine? / Es-tu allée à la plage hier, Sandrine?
7	She went to Spain.	Elle est allée en Espagne.
8	Why did you go to the hotel this morning?	Pourquoi êtes-vous allés à l'hôtel ce matin? / Pourquoi est-ce que vous êtes allés à l'hôtel ce matin? / Vous êtes allés à l'hôtel ce matin pourquoi?
9	He came with us.	Il est venu avec nous.
10	Katia and Philippe came to the house.	Katia et Philippe sont venus à la maison.



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