



Coffee Break French

Season 3, Lesson 6

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Lesson 6 Notes

In lesson 5, Alf told us that his teacher, Mme Soulabaille, had been working on the future tense. In this lesson we'll take a break from the texts of Alf, Katie and Veronica so that we can have a closer look at the future tense. By the end of this lesson you will understand how to form the future tense of regular and irregular verbs, and when to use the future tense. We'll also consider a number of specific situations where the future is used, and spelling changes which occur with certain verbs in the future.

USING THE FUTURE TENSE

The future tense is used to talk about what "will happen" in the future. In English we use the word "will" combined with the infinitive of the verb, eg. "I will arrive", "she will leave", etc. In French, the future tense is conjugated in a similar way to other tenses, with different endings for each person.

THE FUTURE TENSE OF REGULAR VERBS

Unlike other verbs, there is only one set of endings for the future tense, and in most cases these are added to the infinitive. Some verbs have an "irregular future stem", as we saw in lesson 5. In this lesson we will learn most of the common irregular future stems.

The endings of the future tense are as follows:

Endings of the future tense	
-ai	-ons
-as	-ez
-a	-ont

Let's have a look at the full conjugation of a regular -er verb with these endings:

parler (to speak) - FUTURE	
je parler ai	nous parler ons
tu parler as	vous parler ez
il parler a	ils parler ont

The endings are also used with -ir and -re verbs. In each case, the endings are added to the end of the infinitive. Note that with -re verbs the final -e is removed before adding the ending. Here is the full conjugation of three sample verbs in the future tense: **parler** ("to speak"), **finir** ("to finish"), **vendre** ("to sell").

	parler	finir	vendre
je	parlerai	finirai	vendrai
tu	parleras	finiras	vendras
il	parlera	finira	vendra
nous	parlerons	finirons	vendrons
vous	parlerez	finirez	vendrez
ils	parleront	finiront	vendront

Note that in speech, the -e- of the -er infinitives can disappear, eg. **je laverai** ("I will wash") can sound like **je lavrai**.

VERBS WITH IRREGULAR FUTURE STEMS

Some verbs have irregular future stems, but even with these verbs the same endings are used. The most common future stems are listed below.

infinitive	translation	future stem	conjugated verb
aller	to go	ir-	j'irai, tu iras, il ira ...
avoir	to have	aur-	j'aurai, tu auras, il aura ...
devenir	to become	deviendr-	je deviendrai, tu deviendras ...
devoir	to have to	devr-	je devrai, tu devras, il devra ...
être	to be	ser-	je serai, tu seras, il sera ...
envoyer	to send	enverr-	j'enverrai, tu enverras, il enverra ...
faire*	to do/make	fer-	je ferai, tu feras, il fera ...
pouvoir	to be able to	pourr-	je pourrai, tu pourras, il pourra ...
recevoir	to receive	recevr-	je recevrai, tu recevras, il recevra ...

infinitive	translation	future stem	conjugated verb
savoir	to know	saur-	je saurai, tu sauras, il saura ...
tenir	to hold	tiendr-	je tiendrai, tu tiendras, il tiendra ...
venir	to come	viendr-	je viendrai, tu viendras, il viendra ...
voir*	to see	verr-	je verrai, tu verras, il verra ...
vouloir	to want	voudr-	je voudrai, tu voudras, il voudra ...

*The verbs **faire** and **voir** in the future present interesting pronunciation issues. In the future tense of **faire** (**je ferai, tu feras, il fera**, etc.) the -e- is the same as the -e sound in the word **je**. This sound is known as a “schwa” in the study of phonetics.

With the future tense of **voir** (**je verrai, tu verras, il verra**, etc.) and **envoyer** (**j'enverrai, tu enverras, il enverra**, etc.) the -e- sounds like the -e- in **mes**. You should note, however, that this can change from region to region: in some places it sounds more like the -è- in **père**. However, this -e- is never a schwa sound (as in **je ferai**).

VERBS ENDING IN -OYER AND -AYER

There are some additional irregularities of the future tense which need to be taken into account. These mainly involve subtle spelling changes.

With verbs ending in **-oyer** (with the exception of **envoyer**), the **-y-** changes to **-i-** in the future tense. Consider the example of **aboyer**, meaning “to bark”:

aboyer (to bark) - FUTURE	
j'aboierai	nous aboierons
tu aboieras	vous aboierez
il aboiera	ils aboieront

A similar situation occurs with verbs ending in **-ayer**. However, in this case the change is optional, so both **je payerai** and **je paierai** are correct. Consider the full conjugation of **payer** (“to pay”):

payer (to pay) - FUTURE	
je payerai OR je paierai	nous payerons OR nous paierons
tu payeras OR tu paieras	vous payerez OR vous paierez
il payera OR il paiera	ils payeront OR ils paieront

Another common verb following this pattern is the verb **essayer**.

VERBS ENDING -ETER

Verbs which end in **-e-** + consonant + **-er** such as **acheter** change the middle **-e-** to **-è-** giving the following pattern:

acheter (to buy) - FUTURE	
j'achèterai	nous achèterons
tu achèteras	vous achèterez
il achètera	ils achèteront

Note that in the infinitive of **acheter** the middle **-e-** often disappears in speech. However, in the future tense it is this **-e-** which carries the accent.

APPELER AND JETER

With these verbs the **-l-** and the **-t-** are doubled:

appeler (to call) - FUTURE	
j'appellerai	nous appellerons
tu appelleras	vous appellerez
il appellera	ils appelleront

jeter (to throw) - FUTURE	
je jetterai	nous jetterons
tu jetteras	vous jetterez

jeter (to throw) - FUTURE	
il jettera	ils jetteront

THE FUTURE IN CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

The future tense is used to say what will happen if something else happens. Consider the following examples:

si nous avons le temps, nous le ferons

"If we have the time, we will do it".

je ferai une promenade ce soir s'il fait beau

"I will take / go for a walk this evening if the weather is nice".

Note that it is the result which is in the future, and the condition is in the present.

THE FUTURE AFTER QUAND

One significant difference in the use of the future tense in French, compared to the situation in English, is that it is used after **quand** and other constructions which refer to the future. Consider the following examples:

Jennifer sera contente de choisir le papier-peint elle-même quand elle arrivera

"Jennifer will be pleased to choose the wallpaper herself when she arrives". Again, "when she arrives" in English is in the present, but in French it must be in the future because it is a future action after **quand**.

nous viendrons te dire au revoir quand tu partiras

"We will come to say goodbye (to you) when you leave". In this example, "you leave" is considered a future in French, so the literal translation would be "we will come to say (to you) goodbye when you will leave".

OTHER CONSTRUCTIONS WHICH REQUIRE THE FUTURE

The same happens with other similar constructions including **après que** ("after"), **aussitôt que** ("as soon as"), **dès que** ("as soon as"), **lorsque** ("when"), and **une fois que** ("once") when they refer to the future:

je finirai le travail après que tu partiras / après que tu seras parti

“I will finish the work after you leave / after you have left”. Literally, “after you will leave” or “after you will have left”.

aussitôt qu’elle arrivera nous nous mettrons en route

“As soon as she arrives we’ll set off”. Literally “as soon as she will arrive”. The expression **se mettre en route** means “to set off on a journey”.

je t’appellerai dès que je pourrai

“I’ll call you as soon as I can”.

lorsque tu finiras cette leçon tu comprendras le temps du futur

“When you finish this lesson you will understand the future tense!”

une fois que tu finiras / auras fini tes devoirs nous pourrons regarder le film

“Once you finish / have finished your homework we will be able to watch the film”.

THE FUTURE TENSE USED IN FACTUAL NARRATION

In certain types of writing including journalism and the narration of biographical facts, the future tense can be used. In this case it is normally translated as a past tense in English. Consider the following example:

Né en 1953, Francis Cabrel deviendra un des plus grands chanteurs français du vingtième siècle...

“Born in 1953, Francis Cabrel became one of the biggest French singers of the 20th century”. This use of the future tense can sometimes be translated as “Cabrel was to become...”

Exercise

The following sentences are used as an exercise in the audio lesson.

Translate into French:

1. I will call you this evening.
2. We will have to set off early tomorrow morning.
3. As soon as I have the money I will buy the car.
4. If he can help you, he will help you.
5. Once we arrive in Strasbourg we will try to finish the recording.

The answers to this exercise can be found overleaf.



Answers

1. Je t'appellerai ce soir.
2. Nous devons nous mettre en route tôt demain matin.
3. Dès que / Aussitôt que j'aurai l'argent j'achèterai la voiture.
4. S'il peut t'aider il t'aidera.
5. Une fois que nous arriverons à Strasbourg nous essayerons / essaierons de finir l'enregistrement.

This final sentence is interesting because there is an alternative translation since the subject of both clauses is the same: as an alternative to **une fois que nous arriverons à Strasbourg** would be **une fois arrivé(e)s à Strasbourg...** This literally means “once arrived in Strasbourg” and can only be used in the situation where the subject is the same. Consider this slightly different example:

une fois que nous arriverons à Strasbourg tu pourras venir nous voir

“Once we arrive in Strasbourg you will be able to come to see us.”

In this example, the subjects are different: “we” will arrive in Strasbourg and “you” will come to see us.

