

In this edition:  
talking about  
what you do at  
the weekend  
and learning  
about the  
present tense

# Lesson 41

## Notes

### Qu'est-ce que tu fais...?

### Learning about the present 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. In this week's notes we'll be covering regular verbs in the present tense within the context of what you do at the weekend.

#### Qu'est-ce que tu fais?

Mark began by asking the question:

#### Qu'est-ce que tu fais (pendant le week-end)?

The word *fais* is linked to a similar word which we've already come across in the phrases *il fait chaud* and *il fait du vent*. Both *fais* and *fait* are linked to the French verb *faire*, meaning "to do" or, in some cases, "to make". *Qu'est-ce que tu fais?* means "what do you do?" or "what are you doing?" Note then that *tu fais* can mean both "you do" or "you are doing". This goes for all present tense verbs in French. Likewise, *je fais* means both "I do" and "I am doing":

#### je fais mes devoirs

I do my homework (at 5pm every night)  
I am doing my home work (at the moment)

A number of example verbs were included in the episode as answers to the question *qu'est-ce que tu fais pendant le week-end?*

Infinitive	Conjugated verb	English
regarder	je regarde (la télévision)	to watch; I watch the television
danser	je danse	to dance; I dance
chanter	je chante	to sing; I sing
travailler	je travaille	to work; I work

Following the above pattern, to form the *je* part of a verb, take off the -er of the infinitive and add -e. Examples of these verbs in full sentences are provided below:

Example sentences		
je travaille dans le jardin	I work in the garden	infinitive: <i>travailler</i>
je chante avec mes copains	I sing with my friends	infinitive: <i>chanter</i>
je regarde la télé	I watch the TV	infinitive: <i>regarder</i>

As in many languages, the endings of French verbs change slightly depending on who is doing the particular action, and indeed when the particular action is being done. Something similar happens in English: consider “I walk” but “he walks”. Equally, in the past we can say “the girl walked past the house”. By changing the ending of the verb, different subjects and tenses can be conveyed.

In French, the system is a little more complicated. There are normally six forms of a verb. As we learn to “conjugate” verbs, we’ll be saying these verbs in these six forms. Have a look at the table below which will help you identify the order and pattern of each part.

Singular	Plural
I	we
you (singular, informal)	you (plural, informal) you (singular, formal) you (plural, formal)
he, she, it	they

These parts of the verb can be referred to in different ways. In some text books they are simply numbered 1-6, and in other texts they’re referred to as “1st person singular”, “2nd person singular”, etc. as shown below.

Singular	Plural
1 or 1st person singular	4 or 1st person plural
2 or 2nd person singular	5 or 2nd person plural
3 or 3rd person singular	6 or 3rd person plural

Each of these ‘persons’ can be associated with a subject pronoun:

Singular	Plural
je	nous
tu	vous
il / elle	ils / elles

We can now conjugate a full verb, based on the table above. You will notice that for each part of the verb the ending changes slightly. In the case of *chanter*, “to sing”, below, you will see that parts 1 and 3 have the same ending. Note too, as explained in the recording, parts 1, 2, 3 and 6 all sound exactly the same.

Singular	Plural
je chante	nous chantons
tu chantes	vous chantez
il / elle chante	ils / elles chantent

This pattern is used in literally hundreds of French verbs. This group of verbs is known as “regular -er verbs”. In each case the *-er* ending is removed, leaving you with what is known as “the stem”, and the following endings are added:

Singluar	Plural
-e	-ons
-es	-ez
-e	-ent

So, the verb *danse*, meaning “to dance”, can be conjugated as follows:

Singluar	Plural
je danse	nous dansons
tu dances	vous dansez
il / elle danse	ils / elles dansent

Likewise, the verb *travailler*, meaning “to work”, can be conjugated as follows:

Singluar	Plural
je travaille	nous travaillons
tu travailles	vous travaillez
il / elle travaille	ils / elles travaillent

Remember that verbs in the present tense can be translated in two main ways:

**il travaille dans un café**  
 he works in a café (on a Saturday)  
 he is working in a café (at the moment)

Some further examples of regular *-er* verbs are listed in the table below and tested in the quiz which forms part of the bonus episode for lesson 41.

Further examples of regular -er verbs		
<b>parler</b>	to speak	
<b>bavarder</b>	to chat	
<b>étudier</b>	to study	Note that the present tense is formed by taking off the <i>-er</i> , so the stem of the verb is <i>étudi-</i>
<b>arriver</b>	to arrive	
<b>quitter</b>	to leave	
<b>chercher</b>	to look for	

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>Nous cherchons l'office de tourisme.</b>	We are looking for the tourist information office.
2	<b>Elle bavarde avec Claude.</b>	She is chatting to/with Claude.
3	<b>Vous ne parlez pas français?</b>	Don't you (plural, formal) speak French?
4	<b>Nous étudions à Paris</b>	We are studying in Paris.
5	<b>Tu travailles au café?</b>	Do you work at the café?
6	<b>Mes filles travaillent au supermarché.</b>	My daughters work at the supermarket.
7	<b>Je regarde la télé le lundi soir.</b>	I watch television on a Monday evening.
8	<b>Nous dansons ensemble.</b>	We dance together.
9	<b>Elle quitte la maison.</b>	She's leaving the house.
10	<b>Lucie et Jean-Michel chantent demain.</b>	Lucie and Jean-Michel are singing tomorrow.



CoffeeBreak  
French

All materials ©Copyright Radio Lingua Ltd 2009

