

# Les temps de verbes / Understanding verb tenses

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French verb tenses can seem daunting at first, but once you understand their structure and usage, they become a powerful tool for expressing yourself clearly. [In today's lecture](#), we explored the most commonly used French verb tenses - **eight** out of the fifteen. Let's break them down one by one with examples to help you master them.

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## 1. Present Tense

In French, the present tense is primarily expressed through:

- **Présent de l'indicatif:** This is the simple present tense, used to describe actions happening now or general truths.  
*Example: Je mange une pomme.* (I eat an apple.)

- **Impératif:** This is used to give commands or make requests, often without a subject.  
*Example: Mange ta pomme ! (Eat your apple!)*
  - **Être en train de:** *This construction is the equivalent of the English “-ing” form, used to emphasize an ongoing action.*  
*Example: Je suis en train de manger.\* (I am eating.)*
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## 2. Past Tense

The past tense in French is divided into three main forms:

- **Passé composé:** This is the most common past tense, formed with the auxiliary verbs *avoir* (for most verbs) or *être* (for 16 specific verbs, like *aller* or *venir*), followed by the past participle.  
*Example: J’ai mangé une pomme. (I ate an apple.)*
  - **Imparfait:** This tense describes ongoing or habitual actions in the past. It sets the scene or provides background information.  
*Example: Quand j’étais enfant, je mangeais des pommes tous les jours. (When I was a child, I ate apples every day.)*
  - **Plus-que-parfait:** This tense is used to describe an action that occurred before another past action. It is formed with the imperfect tense of *avoir* or *être* and the past participle.  
*Example: J’avais déjà mangé une pomme quand tu es arrivé. (I had already eaten an apple when you arrived.)*
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### 3. Future Tense

The future tense in French includes:

- **Futur proche:** This is used for near future actions and is formed with *aller* + infinitive.  
*Example: Je vais manger une pomme.* (I am going to eat an apple.)
- **Futur simple:** This is used for definite future actions. The endings (-ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ent) are added to the infinitive form of the verb.  
*Example: Je mangerai une pomme.* (I will eat an apple.)
- **Futur antérieur:** This tense describes an action that will be completed before another future action. It is formed with the future tense of *avoir* or *être* and the past participle.  
*Example: J'aurai mangé une pomme avant que tu arrives.* (I will have eaten an apple before you arrive.)