

French Grammar

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1 Imperative

Tell me **what** you want **Dites-moi ce que** vous voulez

Put it on the table **Mettez-le** sur la table

Wait for me **Attendez-moi**

Note: *what* in the middle of a sentence is usually translated to *ce que*.

With negation, direct objects like *it*, *them*, *some*, and the personal pronouns come before the verb.

Don't tell it to me Ne **me le** **dites** pas

Don't put it on the table Ne **le** **mettez** pas sur la table

Don't wait for me Ne **m'****attendez** pas

2 Tenses

2.1 Present Tense

2.1.1 verbs ending in *-er*

To conjugate verbs ending in *-er*, remove the *-er* and add one of the following endings:

	endings	manger
je	-e	mange e
tu	-es	manges e
il	-e	mange e
nous	-ons	mang ons
vous	-ez	mange ez
ils	-ent	mang ent

In terms of sound: je, tu, il, and ils are pronounced the same way.

spelling changing verbs

Verbs ending in *-cer* and *-ger* require a small spelling change in certain conjugations. For example:

- the *nous* form of the verb *effacer* (to erase) is *effaçons* and not *effacons*. This is to preserve the soft pronunciation of *c*, since *c* followed by *a* or *o* is pronounced as *k*.
- the *nous* form of the verb *bouger* (to move) is *bougeons* and not *bougons*. This is to preserve the soft pronunciation of *g*, since *g* followed by *a* or *o* is pronounced as the *g* in *gate*.

2.1.2 verbs ending in *-ir*

To conjugate verbs ending in *-ir*, remove the *-ir* and add one of the following endings:

	endings	finir
je	-is	fin is
tu	-is	fin is
il	-it	fin it
nous	-issons	fin issons
vous	-issez	fin issez
ils	-issent	fin issent

In terms of sound: je, tu, and il are pronounced the same way. For ils, we pronounce the consonant before the last *e*.

some exceptions

- A verb like *dormir* (to sleep) is conjugated as follows: dors, dors, dort, dormons, dormez, dorment. Other verbs in this category include *partir* (to leave), *sentir* (to feel, smell), *servir* (to serve), *mentir* (to lie).
- Most verbs that end in *-llir* and all that end in *-frir* or *-vrir* are conjugated like regular *-er* verbs. Verbs in this category include *couvrir* (to cover), *offrir* (to offer), *ouvrir* (to open), *souffrir* (to suffer), *cueillir* (to pick).

2.1.3 verbs ending in *-re*

To conjugate verbs ending in *-re*, remove the *-re* and add one of the following endings:

	endings	mettre	perdre
je	-s	met s	per d s
tu	-s	met s	per d s
il	-	met	per d
nous	- ons	mett ons	per d ons
vous	- ez	mett ez	per d ez
ils	- ent	mett ent	per d ent

In terms of sound: je, tu, and il are pronounced the same way. For ils, we pronounce the consonant before the last *e*.

2.1.4 very irregular verbs

These are verbs that we just have to learn.

	être	avoir	aller
je	suis	ai	vais
tu	es	as	vas
il	est	a	va
nous	sommes	avons	allons
vous	êtes	avez	allez
ils	sont	ont	vont

2.2 Future Tense

The future in French can be expressed in 3 ways.

2.2.1 simple future

To form the simple future, append the conjugated form of the verb *avoir* to the *r* of the infinitive form of the verb.

I will leave tomorrow	Je partirai demain
He will call you tonight	Il vous appellera ce soir
They will bring it with them	Ils l' apporteront avec eux

We have three sounds: **rai** (for je, vous), **ra** (for tu, il), **rons** (for nous, ils).

verbs ending in *oir*

Following the simple rule above, we would expect a verb like *pouvoir* (to be able to) to be *pouvoirai* in the future. However, it contracts to **pourrai**. Similarly:

- *devoir* (to have to) becomes **devrai**
- *avoir* (to have) becomes **aurai**.
- *savoir* (to know) becomes **saurai**.
- *voir* (to see) becomes **verrai**.

some exceptions

	être	aller	venir
je	serai	irai	viendrai
tu	seras	iras	viendras
il	sera	ira	viendra
nous	serons	irons	viendrons
vous	serez	irez	viendrez
ils	seront	iront	viendront

2.3 Past Tense

The French past tense consists of five verb forms.

2.3.1 compound past tense

The compound past tense (*passé composé*) represents the “equivalent” of the simple past and past perfect in English. In French, there’s no distinction between “I spoke” and “I have spoken”.

The compound past is formed by using the present conjugated form of the verb *avoir* or *être* followed by the past tense of the verb.

verbs ending in *-er*

For *er* verbs, we replace the *er* with *é*. For example, *manger* becomes mang*é*.

I have spoken	J'ai parlé
I have not spoken	Je n'ai pas parlé
Have you spoken?	Est-ce que vous avez parlé?
Did you speak?	Avez-vous parlé?

Direct objects like *it*, *them*, *some*, and the personal pronouns come before the *have*.

I have bought it	Je l'ai acheté	
I have not bought it	Je ne l'ai pas acheté	
Where did you buy them?	Où les avez-vous achetés?	
Did you buy it?	L'avez-vous acheté?	Est-ce que vous l'avez acheté?
At what time did you call me?	A quelle heure m'avez-vous appelé?	
Why did you call me?	Pourquoi m'avez-vous appelé?	
Why didn't you call me?	Pourquoi ne m'avaz-vous pas appelé?	

verbs ending in *-re*

For *re* verbs, we replace the *re* with *u*. For example, *vendre* becomes vend*u*.

He sold them	Il les a vendus
We sold some	Nous en avons vendu
I waited	J'ai attendu
I waited for them	Je les ai attendus

Some exeptions to be aware of include:

- The verb *prendre* (to take) becomes *pris*. Similarly, *comprendre* (to understand) becomes *compris*, *apprendre* (to learn) becomes *appris*, and so on.
- The verb *mettre* (to put) becomes *mis*. Similarly, *promettre* (to promise) becomes *promis*, *admettre* (to admit) becomes *admis*, and so on.
- *faire* becomes *fait*
- *dire* becomes *dit*
- *écrire* becomes *écrit*

verbs ending in *-ir*

For *ir* verbs, we simply drop the *r*. For example, *finir* becomes *fini*.

We finished	Nous avons fini
At what time did you finish?	A quelle heure avez-vous fini?
One served the dinner	On a servi le dîner
Dinner is served	Le dîner est servi

verbs ending in *-oir*

For *oir* verbs, we the *oir* is dropped and a *u* is added.

- *avoir* (to have) becomes *eu*
- *voir* (to see) becomes *vu*
- *savoir* (to know) becomes *su*
- *pouvoir* (to be able to) becomes *pu*

reflexive verbs

Reflexive verbs are used when the subject is also the recipient of the action. With reflexive verbs, *être* is the auxiliary verb used in forming the compound past.

I washed myself	Je me suis lavé
You dressed (yourself) up	Tu t'es habillé
He got (himself) up	Il s'est levé
She brushed her hair	Elle s'est brossé les cheveux
We prepared ourselves	Nous nous sommes préparés
You did not shave (yourself)	Vous ne vous êtes pas rasé
They fell asleep	Ils se sont endormis

movement and state verbs

–TODO–

2.3.2 imperfect tense

To form the imperfect, take the “nous” (we) form of the present tense, subtract the *-ons* suffix, and add the appropriate ending:

	endings	être (was)	avoir (had)	avoir (would have)	vouloir
je	-ais	étais	avais	aurais	voulais
tu	-ais	étais	avais	aurais	voulais
il	-ait	était	avait	aurait	voulait
nous	-ions	étions	avions	aurions	voulions
vous	-iez	étiez	aviez	auriez	vouliez
ils	-aient	étaient	avaient	auraient	voulaient

The prefix *aur* of “would have” is taken from **aurai**, which is the future form of *avoir*. Recall that for the future, we have the sounds **rai** (for je, vous), **ra** (for tu, il), **rons** (for nous, ils). For the imperfect, we have the sounds **ai** (for je, tu, il), **ion** (for nous), **iez** (for vous).

I was there last night	J'étais là hier soir
I didn't have the time	Je n'avais pas le temps
If I had seen it	Si je l' avais vu
I would have told you	Je vous aurais dit
I would wait for you	Je vous attendrais
If I had been there	Si j' avais été là
Nobody could wait	Personne ne pouvait attendre
He had to (must) wait	Il devait attendre
You don't have to wait	Vous n'avez pas besoin d'attendre
He didn't want to tell me	Il ne voulait pas me dire
If I had wanted to have it	Si j'avais voulu l'avoir
I was going to tell you	J'allais vous le dire
I was doing it	Je le faisais
I used to do it	Je le faisais

In grammatical terms, “perfect” means “complete”. So, the French imperfect tense is used to describe an incomplete or ongoing action or state of being.

We finished	Nous avons fini
We sold some	Nous en avons vendu
At what time did you finish?	A quelle heure avez-vous fini?
One served the dinner	On a servi le dîner
Dinner is served	Le dîner est servi

3 Sentences

Besides, I don't like to do it	D'ailleurs, je n'aime pas le faire
It is too far to go there by foot	C'est trop loin pour y aller à pied
At any rate, not tonight	En tout cas, pas ce soir
I like better staying here	J'aime mieux rester ici
I don't feel like going out	Je n'ai pas envie de sortir
It appears that it is very interesting	Il paraît que c'est très intéressant
It doesn't interest me at all	Ça ne m'intéresse pas du tout
In my opinion,	A mon avis,
It is worth the trouble to do it	Ça vaut la peine de le faire
How much of it do you want?	Combien en voulez-vous ?
Do you like it?	Ça vous plait?
I am looking for it	Je le cherche
I am going to get it	Je vais le chercher
I am late, therefore I must hurry	Je suis en retard, je dois donc me dépêcher
Do you have something to eat?	Avez-vous quelque chose à manger?
It doesn't do anything	Ça ne fait rien
I am exhausted, I must rest	Je suis épuisé, je dois me reposer
There's a too much noise	Il y a trop de bruit
It disturbs me	Ça me dérange
It seems to me that	Il me semble que
I agree with you	Je suis d'accord avec vous
One must go there	Il faut y aller
I need to have it	Il me faut l'avoir
That's all I want	C'est tout ce que je veux.
Do you need anything else?	Est-ce qu' il vous faut autre chose?
I am going to show you something else	Je vais vous faire voir autre chose
Would you let me know	Voulez-vous me faire savoir
I will let you know tomorrow	Je vous le ferai savoir demain
I am going to find out	Je vais me renseigner

There are still more of it	Il y en a encore
There aren't any of it	Il n'y en a pas
There aren't any more of it	Il n'y en a plus
I am getting along	Je me débrouille
I will manage	Je vais me débrouiller
I cannot decide to do it	Je ne peux pas <u>décider de</u> le faire
I am going to ask him to come with us	Je vais lui <u>demander de</u> venir avec nous
I am going to try it to bring it	Je vais <u>essayer de</u> l'apporter
I forgot to tell you	J'ai oublié de vous dire
May I see it?	Puis-je le voir?
I want to	Je veux bien
It is very nice of you	C'est très gentil de votre part