

# Present Tense Verb -er Changes

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Most -er verbs follow the following rules, where you remove the verb ending and add the corresponding postfix:

**TABLE 1 Verb Rules of Conjugation Using *Parler* (to Speak)**

je	tu	il, elle	nous	vous	ils, elles
- e	- es	- e	- ons	- ez	- ent
<i>parle</i>	<i>parles</i>	<i>parle</i>	<i>parlons</i>	<i>parlez</i>	<i>parlent</i>

However, some seemingly regular verbs require spelling changes when conjugating. You'll re-familiarize yourself with the 4 distinct verb categories where this is necessary, and learn *why* a change is required.

## Stem endings (c, g)

If a verb base, like *commenc* (from *commencer*), ends in **c**, **g**, or **y**, we need to change their spelling **in order to keep their pronunciation the same**.

## -cer, -ger, -yer Verbs

Rules:

change the **c** to **ç** when conjugating in the *nous* form

change the **g** to **ge** when conjugating in the *nous* form

change the **y** to **i** when conjugating in the *je*, *tu*, *il*, and *ils* forms (optional)

Example: [Manger, Commencer, Payer]

Je mange, nous mangeons

Tu commences, nous commençons

Je pa(i/y)e, vous payez

## -cer Verbs

Explanation: In French, if a *c* is followed by *e*, *i*, or *y*, it is pronounced like /s/, but if it's followed by anything else, it makes a /k/ sound. For example, *con* is pronounced /kɔ̃/.

while *cent* is pronounced *sã*. To make sure that the *c* is always pronounced like /s/, we need to make sure that when *c* is followed by an *o* (like in *-ons*), it's changed to *ç* (*c* with cedilla), which always makes the /s/ sound.

### **-ger Verbs**

Explanation: In French, if a *g* is followed by an *e*, it sounds like /ʒ/ (like *mange*), but if it's followed by an *o*, it becomes the hard consonant /g/. To avoid this, we simply add an *e* before any *o* in the conjugation, which only appears in the *nous* form.

### **Verbs with a mute e as the stem vowel**

Rule: change the mute *e* to *è* in the *je, tu, il, ils* forms  
if the last consonant in the base is *t* or *l*, it is doubled instead of changing the *e*

Example: [Acheter] J'achète, vous achetez.

Explanation: The stem vowel can never be a mute *e* if that's the last syllable. To force it to be pronounced, we can add an accent grave (*è*).

### **Verbs with é as the stem vowel**

Rule: change the *é* to *è* in the *je, tu, il, ils* forms

Example: [Espérer] J'espère que vous espérez que je vais bien.

Explanation: The reason is the same as the mute *e* exception, except with *é*.