Pluperfect Tense

The French pluperfect tense, or plus-que-parfait, describes an action completed before another past action.

The pluperfect tense is also known as the "plus-que-parfait," and is formed by combining the imperfect tense of either avoir or être (depending on the verb) with the past participle of the main verb. In essence, it's the imperfect tense of "have" or "be" followed by the past participle.

Here's a breakdown:
1. **Choose the auxiliary verb:**
   ◦ Most verbs use avoir as the auxiliary verb.

   ◦ Reflexive verbs and a specific group of verbs (often remembered by the acronym DR & MRS VANDERTRAMP) use être.

2. **Conjugate the auxiliary verb in the imperfect tense:**
   ◦ This means using the imperfect forms of avoir (j'avais, tu avais, il/elle/on avait, nous avions, vous aviez, ils/elles avaient) or être (j'étais, tu étais, il/elle/on était, nous étions, vous étiez, ils/elles étaient).

3. **Add the past participle of the main verb:**
   ◦ For regular verbs: -er verbs become -é, -ir verbs become -i, and -re verbs become -u.
   ◦ There are irregular past participles that need to be memorised.

Example:
- To say "I had eaten," you would use the imperfect of avoir (j'avais) and the past participle of manger (mangé), resulting in: "J'avais mangé".

- To say "She had gone," you would use the imperfect of être (elle était) and the past participle of aller (allé), resulting in: "Elle était allée".

Here are some more examples:
Using avoir

- **J'avais mangé** - I had eaten

- **Tu avais fini** - You had finished

- **Il avait regardé** - He had watched

- **Nous avions attendu** - We had waited

- **Vous aviez dormi** - You had slept

- **Ils avaient pris** - They had taken

Using être

- **Je/J'étais allé(e)** - I had gone

- **Tu étais venu(e)** - You had come

- **Il/Elle était sorti(e)** - He/She had gone out

- **Nous étions restés** - We had stayed

- **Vous étiez partis** - You had left

- **Ils/Elles étaient arrivés(es)** - They had arrived

Key points about the pluperfect:

- **Imperfect of avoir/être:** The auxiliary verb (avoir or être) is conjugated in the imperfect tense.

- **Past participle:** The past participle of the main verb follows.

- **Agreement with être:** When using être, the past participle agrees in gender and number with the subject.

- **Sequence of events:** The pluperfect describes an action that happened before another past action, which is often in the passé composé.

- **Example:** "Quand il est arrivé, j'avais déjà mangé" - When he arrived, I had already eaten.