

Past Tense

The passé composé, a common past tense in French, is formed by combining an auxiliary verb (either avoir or être) with the past participle of the main verb. The auxiliary verb agrees with the subject in person and number, while the past participle usually agrees with the subject when using être as the auxiliary.

Here's a breakdown:

1. Auxiliary Verb:

- Avoir (to have) is the most common auxiliary verb used in the passé composé.
- Être (to be) is used with certain verbs (usually those indicating movement or a change of state) and all reflexive verbs.
- The auxiliary verb is conjugated in the present tense.

2. Past Participle:

- The past participle is the form of the verb that indicates the action has been completed.
- For regular -ER verbs, the past participle is formed by replacing the -ER ending with -é (e.g., parler -> parlé).
- For regular -IR verbs, the past participle is formed by replacing the -IR ending with -i (e.g., finir -> fini).
- For regular -RE verbs, the past participle is formed by replacing the -RE ending with -u (e.g., vendre -> vendu).
- Many verbs have irregular past participles, which need to be memorised.

3. Agreement:

- With the auxiliary être, the past participle agrees in gender and number with the subject of the verb.
- With the auxiliary avoir, the past participle generally does not agree with the subject, but it may agree with a preceding direct object pronoun.

Examples:

- **J'ai mangé**
(I ate/I have eaten) - Avoir is used, and the past participle mangé does not agree with the subject je.
- **Elle est allée**
(She went/She has gone) - Être is used, and the past participle allée agrees with the subject elle.
- **Ils se sont amusés**
(They had fun) - Être is used (because it's a reflexive verb), and the past participle **amusés** agrees with the subject **ils**.