Imperfect Tense

The French imperfect tense (l'imparfait) is formed by taking the "nous" form of the present tense, removing the "-ons" ending, and then adding the appropriate imperfect endings: -ais, -ais, -ait, -ions, -iez, -aient. Essentially, you start with the stem of the verb and then attach the correct ending based on the subject pronoun.

Here's a breakdown:

1. **Find the "nous" form of the present tense:** For example, for "jouer" (to play), the "nous" form is "nous jouons".

2. **Remove the "-ons":** From "nous jouons", remove "-ons" to get the stem "jou".

3. **Add the imperfect endings:**
   - **je:** -ais (e.g., je jouais)
   - **tu:** -ais (e.g., tu jouais)
   - **il/elle/on:** -ait (e.g., il/elle/on jouait)
   - **nous:** -ions (e.g., nous jouions)
   - **vous:** -iez (e.g., vous jouiez)
   - **ils/elles:** -aient (e.g., ils/elles jouaient)

Exception: The verb "être" (to be) is an exception and has its own stem in the imperfect tense: "étais", "étais", "était", "étions", "étiez", "étaient".