

# Imperfect Tense

The French imperfect tense, or "l'imparfait," describes ongoing or habitual actions in the past. Examples include "je parlais" (I was speaking/I used to speak), "tu étais" (you were), and "il regardait" (he was watching/he used to watch). It's used for descriptions, repeated actions, and background information in past narratives.

The 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".

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

What it is: The imperfect tense in French is used to talk about:

- **Ongoing actions in the past:** "J'étudiais quand tu es arrivé" (I was studying when you arrived).
- **Habitual actions in the past:** "Quand j'étais petit, j'aimais les bonbons" (When I was little, I liked candy).

- **Descriptions in the past:** "Il faisait beau" (The weather was nice).
- **Background information in a story:** "Le soleil brillait et les oiseaux chantaient" (The sun was shining and the birds were singing).

Examples of imperfect tense verbs:

- **Être (to be):**  
"J'étais," "tu étais," "il/elle/on était," "nous étions," "vous étiez," "ils/elles étaient".
- **Avoir (to have):**  
"J'avais," "tu avais," "il/elle/on avait," "nous avions," "vous aviez," "ils/elles avaient".
- **Parler (to speak):**  
"Je parlais," "tu parlais," "il/elle/on parlait," "nous parlions," "vous parliez," "ils/elles parlaient".
- **Faire (to do/make):**  
"Je faisais," "tu faisais," "il/elle/on faisait," "nous faisions," "vous faisiez," "ils/elles faisaient".
- **Finir (to finish):**  
"Je finissais," "tu finissais," "il/elle/on finissait," "nous finissions," "vous finissiez," "ils/elles finissaient".
- **Regarder (to watch):**  
"Je regardais," "tu regardais," "il/elle/on regardait," "nous regardions," "vous regardiez," "ils/elles regardaient".
- **Aller (to go):**  
"J'allais," "tu allais," "il/elle/on allait," "nous allions," "vous alliez," "ils/elles allaient".

How it's formed:

1. Take the "nous" (we) form of the present tense of the verb.
2. Remove the "-ons" ending.
3. Add the imperfect endings: -ais, -ais, -ait, -ions, -iez, -aient.

Irregular verb example:

- **Être:** "J'étais," "tu étais," "il/elle/on était," "nous étions," "vous étiez," "ils/elles étaient".