

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**.

With avoir (to have):

- **J'ai mangé:** (I ate)
- **Tu as fini:** (You finished)
- **Il a regardé:** (He watched)
- **Nous avons parlé:** (We spoke)
- **Vous avez attendu:** (You waited)
- **Ils ont répondu:** (They responded)

With être (to be):

- **Je suis allé(e):** (I went)
- **Tu es venu(e):** (You came)
- **Il est parti:** (He left)
- **Nous sommes restés(es):** (We stayed)
- **Vous êtes sortis(es):** (You went out)
- **Ils sont devenus:** (They became)