How to revise grammar

Tips for active revision of basic grammatical items

A lot of you will have been advised to “revise grammar”. You can spend hours *reading* notes and it will still make no difference to the quality of your writing/speaking. You need to adopt an ACTIVE approach when working on your grammar. The key here is to be efficient and productive.

How can you “revise grammar”?

|  |
| --- |
| Start with the basics. You can always consult an Advanced Grammar Book later, once you’ve mastered the basic structures and grammatical terminology. The grammar notes provided here are basic and aimed at a fresh start. But you can do the tasks below working from your own grammar notes too. In any case, your personal notes will complement any information or section not covered here. |

* Study the **examples** given: write them down again on a separate sheet, with their translation, and test yourself some time later. As you do this, you will also practise translation skills.

*“Faire d’une pierre deux coups”, ça c’est productif!*

*(“To hit two birds with one stone”)*

Do not use a dictionary when you translate grammar examples: your aim here is to understand how French works and how the words fit together.

* Learn the **formation of tenses**, and, here again, test yourself and check your answers with a verb table.
* Go over written work you have produced which has been marked. Copy your **mistakes** and their **corrections** next to the corresponding section in the Grammar notes where possible. This way, when you read the grammar note, you can see how it applies in context, and what sort of mistakes a non-native speaker can make.
* Read articles studied in class and focus on one particular grammar item (subjunctives, demonstrative adjectives, etc). Think about its **usage in context**. Then make a list of their occurrences in the text and copy some of these in the corresponding section of your grammar notes as further examples. As you do this, you will also revise Topics.

*“Faire d’une pierre deux coups”, ça c’est productif!*

* Once you’ve done one or two of the above, you can also test yourself online at *Tex’s French Grammar (La Grammaire de l’absurde :* exercises and their corrections)

LE MOT DE LA FIN: If you *actively* and *regularly* work on your grammar, in time you should find you’ve practised so much that you’ve actually memorised the structures.

1. Adjectives
* Demonstrative adjectives: *ce, cet, cette, ces*

*Ce, cet, cette, ces* are the determiners you use to say “this”, “that”, “these” or “those”. Being adjectives, they change according to gender and number.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Mascfem | **Singular**Ce/cetcette | **Plural**Cesces |

*Cet* is used before masculine singular words that begin with a vowel or a silent h (*cet étage, cet hôtel*)

To distinguish more clearly between “this and that”, or “these and those”, you can add *–ci* or *–là* after the noun:

*J’aime ce pull-ci mais je n’aime pas cette chemise-là*

I like this jumper but I don’t like that shirt

* Other indefinite adjectives

- ***Chaque*** *élève a un entretien* Every student has an interview

*- J’ai vu Sophie l’****autre*** *jour* I saw Sophie the other day

*- J’ai le* ***même*** *CD* I have the same CD

*- On trouve ça dans* ***n’importe quelle*** *encyclopédie* We can find this in any encyclopedia

*- Il travaille avec* ***quelques*** *collègues* He works with a few colleagues

*- Il a travaillé* ***plusieurs*** *mois en France* He has worked in France for several months

*- Il a lu* ***tous*** *les livres de Pagnol* He has read all the Pagnol books

*- je n’ai jamais vu un* ***tel*** *orage* I have never seen such a storm

*- un* ***certain*** *nombre de personnes ont téléphoné* A certain number of people have called

*- Personne n’avait connu un* ***pareil*** *succés* Nobody had had such success

2. Nouns

Most nouns referring to people have two forms. To make a masculine noun feminine:

* add an –e: *un employé > une employée*
* double the final consonant and add –e: *un Italien >> une Italienne*
* change *–eur* to *–euse* and *–teur* to *–trice*

Some nouns can be either gender: *un élève/une élève; un prof/une prof*

Some nouns are masculine even when they refer to a woman: *un professeur, un médecin*

The ending of nouns can help you work out its gender (but there are exceptions).

Nouns that end as follows are usually masculine:

|  |
| --- |
| *-é -eau -acle -age**-ege -eme -isme -asme*Nouns ending in a consonant |

Nouns that end as follows are usually feminine:

|  |
| --- |
| *-ée -ere -eur -ade -itude**-ace -ance/anse -ence/ense -ie -ise**-oire -ité -té -tié**-tion -sion -aison -ison*Nouns ending in a silent –e following two consonants |

Most French nouns add –s to make them plural but some nouns do not follow this regular pattern:

* nouns ending in *–al* usually change to *–aux*

*un animal > des animaux*

* nouns already ending in *–s, -x* or *–z* usually stay the same:

*le bras > les bras, le prix > les prix, le feu > les feux*

* nouns ending in *–eau* or *–eu* add –x

*un château > des châteaux, un jeu > des jeux*

* a few nouns change completely

*un monsieur > des messieurs*

Compound nouns (made up of more than one element):

*Un grand-parent > des grands-parents*

*Un porte-monnaie > des porte-monnaie*

3. Possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns are in English “mine”, “yours”, etc. In French the pronoun changes according to who owns the object and also according to whether the object is masculine, feminine, singular or plural.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **singular** | **Plural** |
|  | **masc** | **fem** | **masc** | **Fem** |
| Mine | Le mien | La mienne | Les miens | Les miennes |
| Yours | Le tien | La tienne | Les tiens | Les tiennes |
| His/hers | Le sien | La sienne | Les siens | Les siennes |
| Ours | Le nôtre | La nôtre | Les nôtres | Les nôtres |
| Yours | Le vôtre | La vôtre | Les vôtres | Les vôtres |
| Theirs | Le leur | La leur | Les leurs | Les leurs |

*J’aime bien tes parents.* ***Les miens*** *m’énervent!*

I like your parents. Mine get on my nerves!

*Je ne m’entends pas avec ma soeur mais je m’entends avec* ***la tienne****.*

I don’t get on with my sister but I get on well with yours.

4. Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns are used to link two parts of a sentence and avoid repetition.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| QuiQueOùDont | Who, which, thatWho, whom, which, thatWhere, whenWhose, of whom, of which |

* Use *qui* when the noun to be replaced is the subject of the verb:

*J’ai un frère. Mon frère s’appelle Ahmed >> J’ai un frère* ***qui*** *s’appelle Ahmed*

* Use *que* when the noun to be replaced is the object of the verb:

*J’ai un frère. J’aime beaucoup mon frère >> J’ai un frère* ***que*** *j’aime beaucoup.*

* Use *où* to mean “where” or “when”:

*C’est là* ***où*** *j’habite* That’s where I live

*C’était le jour* ***où*** *je suis arrivé* It was the day when I arrived

* Use *dont* to mean “of whom” or “whose”:

*C’est le prof* ***dont*** *je t’ai parlé* It’s the teacher I talked to you about

*Le directeur,* ***dont*** *le bureau est au bout du couloir, n’est jamais là.*

The director, whose office is at the end of the corridor, is never there.

* *Lequel, laquelle*, etc:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **singular** | **plural** |
| **masc** | **fem** | **masc** | **fem** |
| lequel | laquelle | lesquels | lesquelles |

These words mean “which” and are used after prepositions to refer to things or people. They often come after a noun and must agree with it:

*C’est le film pour* ***lequel*** *il a gagné un oscar*

*C’est la personne avec* ***laquelle*** *je suis allé en vacances*

After the prepositions *à* and *de*, the following forms are used:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **singular** | **plural** |
| **masc** | **fem** | **masc** | **fem** |
| auquelduquel | à laquellede laquelle | auxquelsdesquels | auxquellesdesquelles |

*C’est une machine grâce à* ***laquelle*** *on peut faire des calculs très rapidement*

It’s a machine thanks to which you can do calculations very quickly

*C’est le magasin près* ***duquel*** *il y a un grand café*

It’s the shop near which there’s a large café

5. Pronouns “y” and “en”

*Y* is used instead of *à* (or *en*) + name of a place

*Elle va* ***à la boucherie*** *>> Elle* ***y*** *va*

*On joue* ***au parc*** *>> on* ***y*** *joue*

*Y* is also used instead of *à*+ noun or *à* + infinitive, after a verb such as *penser à*, *s’attendre à*, etc

*Tu penses* ***à ton voyage****? Oui, j’****y*** *pense tout le temps*

Do you think **about your holiday**? Yes, I think about it all the time

*Il s’attendait* ***à obtenir*** *de bonnes notes. Il s’****y*** *attendait, et il n’a pas été déçu*

He expected to get good marks. He expected it, and he was not disappointed

*En* replaces *du/de la/des* + noun. It can mean “some/any”, “of it/them”

*Tu as* ***des devoirs*** *à faire? Oui, j’****en*** *ai. J’****en*** *ai trop!*

Do you have **any homework** to do? Yes I have **some**. I have too much **of it**.

*Je voudrais* ***des pommes****. Désolé, il n’y* ***en*** *a plus.*

I’d like **some apples**. Sorry, there aren’t **any** left

*En* is also used instead of *de* + noun, after a verb such as *discuter de , se souvenir de*

*Notez* ***vos idées****. Discutez-****en****.*

Note down your ideas. Talk about them

6. Indefinite pronouns

Commonly used indefinite pronouns are:

*Quelque chose* (something), *quelqu’un* (someone), *tout/tous* (all), *autre(s)* (other), *chacun(e)* (each)

Other indefinite pronouns:

*Quelques-uns* (some, a few), *plusieurs* (several), *certains* (some), *n’importe qui* (anyone), *n’importe quoi* (anything), *pas grand-chose* (not a lot)

7. Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns in English are used to say “the one(s) which…”, “the one(s) belonging to…”, or “this one/that one”, etc. In French, they include several different words: *celui, ce, cela, ça*

*Celui* changes to agree with the noun it replaces:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| mascfem | **Singular**celuicelle | **Plural**ceuxcelles |

*Je m’occupe de jeunes enfants,* ***ceux*** *qui ont moins de 5 ans*

I look after the small children, those who are not yet five.

*Ce/C’* is mostly used with the verb *être*

***Ce*** *sont mes amis*

***C’****est bon*

*Cela* (meaning “that/it”) is often shortened to *ça*

***Cela/ça*** *sera facile à faire*

8. Emphatic pronouns

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MoiToiLuiElleNousVousEuxelles | Me, IYouHim, heHer, sheUs, weYouThem (masc), theyThem (fem), they |

Use an emphatic pronoun:

* to emphasize a subject pronoun:

***Moi****, je trouve que c’est normal. Et* ***toi****?*

*Vous aimez le sport?* ***Nous****, on adore ça.*

* after prepositions like *devant*, *avec* and *chez*:

je vais chez **lui**

* after *c’est* and *ce sont*:

C’est **lui** qui me l’a dit It’s him who told me

Ce sont **elles** les responsables They are responsible

* as a one-word answer to a question:

Qui joue du piano? **Moi**!

* in a comparison

il est plus timide que **moi**

* to express possession

C’est à **toi**? Is it yours?

9. Direct and indirect object pronouns

* A direct object pronoun replaces a noun that is the object of a verb. It has the action of the verb done to it “directly”.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **me / m’****te / t’****le / l’****la****nous****vous****les** | MeYouHim, it (masc)Her, it (fem)UsYouthem |

*Je connais Ahmed. Je vois souvent Ahmed >> je connais Ahmed, je* ***le*** *vois souvent.*

I know Ahmed. I often see Ahmed >> I know Ahmed, I often see him.

* An indirect object pronoun replaces a noun (usually a person) that is the object of the verb, but linked to the verb by a preposition, usually *à* (or in English “to”)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **me / m’****te / t’****lui****lui****nous****vous****leur** | To meTo youTo him, to it (masc)To her, to it (fem)To usTo youTo them |

*Tu parles à Ahmed? Je parle à Ahmed souvent >> je* ***lui*** *parle souvent*

Do you speak to Ahmed? I speak to Ahmed often >> I often speak to him

You will need these pronouns after verbs such as *dire à, donner à, parler à, demander à, répondre à*

*Je* ***te*** *donnerai un peu d’argent*

*J’ai vu Alain et je* ***lui*** *ai demandé de venir me voir*

*Les profs sont sympas, on* ***leur*** *parle souvent.*

Some verbs take an indirect object in French but not in English: *téléphoner à quelqu’un*

1. Position of object pronouns

Object pronouns normally come immediately before the verb

*Je* ***les*** *aime bien*

*Je* ***lui*** *dit tout*

*J’****y*** *vais a pied*

*J’****en*** *voudrais un peu*

In a compound tense, the pronoun goes before the *avoir* or *être* part of the verb:

*Je ne* ***l’****ai pas écouté*

*Je* ***leur*** *ai donné mon adresse*

*Il* ***y*** *est déjà allé*

*J’****en*** *ai lu trois*

When there are two verbs together (a verb + an infinitive):

*Je vais* ***en*** *prendre un*

*Je ne peux pas* ***y*** *aller*

*Je voudrais* ***lui*** *donner ca*

When there are several object pronouns in the same sentence, they follow this order:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| metesenousvous | lelales | luileur | y | en |

With negative imperatives, the pronoun comes before the verb:

*Ne* ***les*** *appelle pas!*

With positive imperatives, it comes after the verb and a hyphen is added:

*Appelle****-les****!*

With positive imperatives, *me* and *te* become *moi* and *toi*:

*Ne me parle pas de travail, parle-****moi*** *plutôt de vacances!*

With positive imperatives, columns 1 and 2 of the position grid are reversed:

*Donne-le* ***moi****!*11. Comparisons

* The comparative with an adjective:

*Julien est* ***plus sportif que*** *Florence*

*La natation est* ***moins populaire*** *que le football*

*Elle est* ***aussi sportive que moi***

*Bon* and *mauvais* are exceptions:

*Bon >> meilleur mauvais >> pire*

*Les légumes sont* ***meilleurs*** *pour la santé que le chocolat*

*Les bonbons sont* ***pire*** *que le chocolat*

* The superlative with an adjective:

*C’est la destination de vacances* ***la plus populaire*** *chez les Français*

*C’est en banlieue que les associations sont* ***les plus actives***

Exceptions:

*Elle a* ***le meilleur mode*** *de vie*

*Fumer des cigarettes,* ***c’est le pire***

* The comparative and superlative with a noun:

Use *plus de, moins de, autant de* to talk about “more of/less of/fewer of/as much of”

*J’ai* ***plus d’expérience*** *que toi*

*Il a* ***moins d’argent*** *que moi*

*Il a* ***autant de patience*** *que**son père*

Add *le/la/les* to talk about “the most/the least/the fewest” of something

*C’est moi qui ai* ***le plus d’expérience***

*C’est elle qui a* ***le moins de temps*** *et pourtant elle travaille plus que nous*

*12. Adverbs*

Adverbs are words which you use to describe a verb, an adjective or another adverb

To form French adverbs, you usually add –*ment* to the feminine form of the adjective:

*Normal > normale >> normalement*

*Heureux > heureuse >> heureusement*

If the adjective ends in a vowel, add –*ment* to the masculine form:

*Timide >> timidement*

*Vrai >> vraiment*

A few exceptions:

- change the final –e to é before adding *–ment*

*Précis >> précisément*

- change final *–ent/-ant* to *–emment/-amment*

*Prudent >> prudemment*

*Brilliant >> brillamment*

Adverbs usually follow the verb:

*Elle y va* ***souvent***

Adverbs often come before an adjective or another adverb:

*C’est un* ***très*** *beau film. Je l’ai* ***vraiment*** *beaucoup aimé.*

Comparative and superlative with an adverb:

*Il parle* ***plus lentement que*** *le prof*

*Il parle anglais* ***moins couramment que*** *Marc*

*Il joue* ***aussi mal que*** *Delphine*

*Mon frère conduit* ***le moins prudemment***

*13. Negatives*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ne…pasNe… jamaisNe … rienNe … personneNe… plus | NotNeverNothing, not anythingNobody, not anybodyNo longer, no more, not any more |

*Il* ***ne*** *parle* ***jamais*** *en Français*

*Elle* ***ne*** *mange* ***rien***

*Je* ***ne*** *connais* ***personne*** *ici*

*Nous* ***n’****y allons* ***plus***

When you use *ne* + a negative with a noun, replace *un/une/des* with *de/d’:*

*Il n’y a plus de timbres*

*Je n’ai jamais d’argent*

The second part of a negative form can be used without the *ne* in a short phrase with no verb:

*Tu as déjà travaillé? Non,* ***jamais***

*Qu’est-ce que vous voulez?* ***Rien***

*Qui est dans la salle?* ***Personne***

***Ne…aucun*** means “no…” or “not a single…”. *Aucun* is an adjective and agrees with the noun that follows it.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| singularplural | **Masc**aucunaucuns | **Fem**aucuneaucunes |

*Il n’a* ***aucun*** *ami*

*Je n’ai* ***aucune*** *idée*

**Ne…ni…ni** means “neither…nor”; *ne* goes before the verb and *ni* goes (twice) before the words they relate to:

*Il* ***n****’a* ***ni*** *père* ***ni*** *mère*

*Je* ***ne*** *connais* ***ni*** *Anne* ***ni*** *son frère*

***Ne …que***is one way to say *“only”:*

*On* ***ne*** *travaillera* ***que*** *le samedi matin*

We will only work on the Saturday morning

*Il* ***n’****avait* ***qu****’un ami*

He had only one friend

In the perfect tense, *ne* goes before the part of *avoir/être*, and:

- *pas/plus/jamais/rien* go before the past participle:

*On n’a* ***rien*** *mangé*

- *personne/que/ni…ni/aucun* go after the past participle

*Nous n’avons vu* ***personne***

*Elle n’a attendu* ***que*** *5 minutes*

Negative + verb +infinitive:

*Ne* goes before the first verb and pas before the second verb (infinitive)

*On* ***ne*** *peut* ***pas*** *lire ce roman*

Useful expressions:

*Ne t’en fais pas* don’t worry

*Ne vous inquiétez pas* don’t worry

*Je n’ai pas de chance* I’m out of luck

*Il n’y a pas de quoi* that’s alright, not at all

*Il n’y en a plus* there’s no more left

*Ca ne me fait rien* it doesn’t matter

*Ca ne me dit rien* that doesn’t appeal tome/it doesn’t ring a bell

*Rien de plus facile* nothing could be simpler

*Il n’y a personne* there’s nobody there

*Personne ne le sait* nobody knows

*On ne sait jamais* you never know

*Jamais de la vie* never in my life

*Il ne reste que ça* that’s all that’s left

*Je n’en ai aucune idée* I’ve no idea

*Pas de problème* no problem

*Ni l’un ni l’autre* neither one nor the other

*Moi non plus* nor me

*14. Infinitives*

The infinitive is the basic, unconjugated form of a verb. Infinitives in French end with *–er, -ir, -re* or *–oir/-oire*. The infinitive of a reflexive verb include *se/s’* at the beginning.

To use a verb in a sentence, you usually change the infinitive to another form (ie, conjugate the verb), following patterns which you need to learn. Many verbs follow the same pattern (regular verbs). Others have their own pattern (irregular verbs).

Infinitives are used in several ways:

* as nouns

***Travailler****, quelle horreur!*

Working, how horrible!

* in instructions

***Mettre à*** *four chaud*

Place in a hot oven

* after another verb

When there are two verbs next to each other in a sentence, the second verb is in the infinitive

*On doit* ***faire*** *un exposé demain*

*Il faut* ***passer*** *un examen*

* verb + à + infinitive

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Aider (quelqu’un) à**S’amuser à**Apprendre à**Commencer à**Consentir à**Continuer à**Encourager à**Hésiter à**S’intéresser à**Inviter à**Se mettre à**Passer (du temps) à**Réussir à**S’attendre à**Arriver à**Se décider à**s’entrainer à**s’habituer à**penser à* | To help someone to To enjoy doingTo learn toTo begin to To agree toTo continue to To encourage toTo hesitate toTo be interested in To invite someone to To begin to To spend some time inTo succeed inTo expect to To succeed in, to manage toTo decide toTo train toTo get used toTo think of |

* verb + de + infinitive

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *arrêter de**cesser de**décider de**se dépêcher de**empêcher de**essayer de**éviter de**menacer de**être obligé de**oublier de**refuser de**accepter de**choisir de**envisager de**demander de**dire de**finir de* *oublier de**permettre de**promettre de**proposer de**risquer de**suggérer de* | To stopTo stopTo decide toTo hurryTo preventTo try toTo avoidTo threaten toTo be obliged to To forget toTo refuse toTo acceptTo chooseTo envisageTo askTo tellTo finishTo forgetTo allow toTo promiseTo suggestTo riskTo suggest |

Many expressions with *avoir* are followed by de + infinitive:

*Avoir besoin de* to need to

*Avoir l’intention de* to intend to

*Avoir peur de* to be afraid of

*Avoir le droit de* to have the right to, to be allowed to

*Avoir le temps de* to have the time to

*Avoir envie de* to wish, to want

* *pour / sans / avant de* + infinitive

*Je vais en France* ***pour*** *apprendre le francais*

*On ne peut pas progresser* ***sans*** *connaître la grammaire*

*Prenez votre temps* ***avant******de*** *répondre*

* *en train de* + infinitive

To say that something is happening at the time of speaking or writing, use *en train de* and an infinitive:

*Il est* ***en train de*** *manger*

**-** *Venir de* + infinitive:

To say that you “have just done” something, use the present tense of *venir* *+ de* + infinitive

*Je* ***viens de l****aisser un message*

I have just left a message

- The past infinitive:

A past infinitive is used after après to say “after doing/after having done” something. It is made up of *avoir* or *être* and a past participle

*Après* ***avoir mangé*** *il est parti*

*Après* ***être rentrées****, mes soeurs ont bu un café*

15. Impersonal verbs

The impersonal verbs are those that are only used in the 3rd person singular (the *il* form)

The most common ones are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Il reste*** *3 questions à faire****Il manque*** *une feuille**(****Il*** *me* ***manque*** *1 euro)****Il s’agit*** *de la période coloniale française****Il suffit*** *de bien réfléchir* | There remain 3 questions to doThere is a sheet missing(I am short of one euro)It’s about the French colonial periodYou just have to think carefully |

Other verb constructions to remember:

* Verbs which express the idea of getting something from someone take *à* before a person. These include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Acheter à**Arracher quelque chose à quelqu’un**Cacher qch à qn**Emprunter qch à qn**Enlever qch à qn**Prendre qch à qn**Voler qch à qn* | To buy sth from soTo snatch sth from soTo hide sth from soTo borrow sth from soTo take sth away from soTo take sth from soTo steal sth from so |

* Watch out for the prepositions that these verbs take:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Dépendre de**Se diriger vers**S’excuser de**Penser à**Profiter de**Remercier de**Rire de**Vivre de* | To depend onTo make forTo apologise forTo think of/aboutTo profit by/to take advantage ofTo thank forTo laugh atTo live on/off |

16. Present tense

Use the present tense to refer to an action or a fact:

* Which is taking place now

*Je* ***vais*** *au cinéma* I am going to the cinema

* Which takes place regularly

*Je* ***vais*** *au cinéma le lundi* I go to the cinema on Mondays

* Which started ion the past and carries on in the present

*J’****habite*** *ici depuis 3 ans* I have been living here for 3 years

* Which will happen in the near future

*Je* ***vais*** *au cinéma demain* I am going to the cinema tomorrow

* Which relates to historical events, bringing them to life

*Louis et Auguste Lumière* ***inventent*** *le cinématographe en 1895*

Louis and Auguste Lumière invented cinema in 1895

* Which refers to something timeless or “universal”

*La lune* ***tourne*** *autour de la Terre* The moon goes round the Earth

In the present tense, most French verbs follow the same pattern, ie they have regular endings.

-er verbs:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| J’aimeTu aimesIl/elle/on aime | Nous aimonsVous aimezIls/elles aiment |

Main exception: aller

-ir verbs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Je choisisTu choisisIl/elle/on choisit | Nous choisissonsVous choisissezIls/elles choisissent |

-re verbs:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| J’attendsTu attendsIl/elle/on attend | Nous attendonsVous attendezIls/elles attendent |

- *En train de* + infinitive

Use this instead of the present tense to emphasize that something is happening at the time of talking or writing

*C’est quoi ce bruit? Ils sont* ***en train de*** *refaire la route*

What’s that noise? – they are (in the process of) resurfacing the road

Some verbs ending in *–er* change slightly in certain tenses, reflecting the way the verb is pronounced. Changes may also occur in the imperative form, the imperfect tense, the subjunctive and the future tense.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| J’esp**è**reTu esp**è**res Il/elle/on esp**è**re | Nous espéronsVous espérez Ils/elles esp**è**rent |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Je commenceTu commencesIl/elle/on commence | Nous commen**ç**onsVous commencezIls/elles commencent |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Je partageTu partageIl/elle/on partage | Nous partag**e**onsVous partagezIls partagent |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| J’ach**è**teTu ach**è**tesIl/elle/on ach**è**te | Nous achetonsVous achetezIls/elles ach**è**tent |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Je reje**tt**eTu reje**tt**esIl/elle/on reje**tt**e | Nous rejetonsVous rejetezIls/elles reje**tt**ent |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| J’appe**ll**eTu appe**ll**esIl/elle/on appe**ll**e | Nous appelonsVous appelezIls/elles appe**ll**ent |

With verbs ending in –*oyer* or –*uyer*, -*y* changes to -*i* in certain forms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| J’emplo**i**eTu emplo**i**esIl/elle/on emplo**i**e | Nous employonsVous employezIls/elles emplo**i**ent |

Common irregular verbs:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ConduireOuvrirPartirRecevoirAcquérirAllerBoireConnaitreCroireDevoirDireÉcrireEnvoyerFaire | LireMettrePouvoirPrendreSavoirSuffirSuivreTenirValoirVenirVivreVoirvouloir |

17. Reflexive verbs

Reflexive verbs need an extra pronoun between the subject and the verb.

|  |
| --- |
| Je + me/m’Tu + te/t’Il/elle/on + se/s’Nous + nousVous + vousIls/elles + se/s’ |

The verb changes like any other verb.

|  |
| --- |
| Je m’amuseTu t’amusesIl/elle/on s’amuseNous nous amusonsVous vous amusezIls/elles s’amusent |

Some common reflexive verbs:

*Se reposer, s’ennuyer, se décider à, s’en aller, se mettre à*

* Negative form of reflexive verbs

The negative expression goes around the pronoun as well as the verb

*On* ***ne*** *s’ennuie* ***pas*** *ici* You don’t get bored here

*Je* ***ne*** *me couche* ***jamais*** *tôt* I never go to bed early

* In questions, the reflexive pronoun stays in the normal place in front of the verb
*Tu te couches à quelle heure?*
* Imperative form of reflexive verbs

In a positive imperative, *te* changes to *toi* and the pronoun goes after the verb:

*Habille-****toi****!*

In a negative imperative, the pronoun does not change:

*Ne* ***t’****habille pas!*

* Perfect tense of reflexive verbs

Reflexive verbs always make their perfect tense with *être* (so the past participle must agree with the subject of the verb). The pronoun stays in front of the verb:

*Elle* ***s’est reveillée*** *à six heures*

*Les enfants* ***se sont*** *bien* ***amusés***

18. Present participle

You recognise a present participle by the *–ant* ending which corresponds to « -ing » in English

Use it to :

- indicate that two actions are silmultaneous (« while/on doing »), with *en* :

*Je lis mon journal* ***en mangeant***

I read my paper while eating

***En*** *la* ***voyant****, il est parti*

Seeing her, he left

- Say how something is done (« by doing » something) with *en* :

*Il nous remonte le moral* ***en faisant*** *le clown*

He makes us feel better by clowning around

*Il s’est blessé* ***en skiant***

He injured himself skiing

- Explain the reason for the cause of something :

***Etant*** *d’origine algérienne, je parle un peu l’arabe*

Being of Algerian origin, I speak a bit of Arabic

***Ayant vécu*** *à Paris, je connais la ville*

Having lived in Paris, I know the city.

- Replace a relative pronoun (*qui/que*) in a sentence :

*Il s’occupe d’enfants* ***souffrant*** *de troubles mentaux (=qui souffrent de troubles...)*

He looks after children with mental problems

Take the *nous* form of the present tense, remove the *–ons* and add the ending *–ant*. Used as a verb, it is invariable, ie it has no other ending to add.

*Regarder > nous regardons >> regard- >>> (en) regardant*

Three exceptions :

*Avoir >>> ayant*

*Etre >>> étant*

*Savoir >>> sachant*

19. Imperative

The imperative is used to :

-give orders :

***Viens*** *ici ! Come here !*

- give instructions :

***Mélangez*** *les œufs et la farine* Mix the eggs and the flour

- give advice and make suggestions :

***Va*** *au cinéma si tu t’ennuies*

Go to the cinema if you get bored

***Essayez*** *de manger quelque chose*

Try eating something

***Allons*** *voir Catherine*

Let’s go and see Catherine

To form the imperative, simply leave out the subject pronouns *tu*, *vous* or *nous* in the present tense of the verbs. For *–er* verbs, leave out the final *–s* in the *tu* form.

*Tu éteins la télé > éteins la télé* Switch the TV off

*Tu restes ici > reste ici* Stay here

*Vous venez avec moi > Venez avec moi !* Come with me

*Nous allons y aller > Allons-y tous* Let’s all go !

Most verbs are regular, except a few :

*Avoir > aie, ayez, ayons*

*Être > sois, soyez, soyons*

*Savoir > sache, sachez, sachons*

To tell someone **not** to do something, put *ne…pas* round the command :

***Ne*** *regarde* ***pas****!* Don’t look !

***Ne*** *touchez* ***pas****!* Don’t touch

20. The perfect tense

A verb in the perfect tense describes a completed action which happened in the past. There is more than one way to translate the perfect tense in English.

*Ils* ***sont venus*** *me voir*

They came to see me / they have come to see me

The perfect tense is made up of 2 parts: the present tense of *avoir* or *être* + the past participle of the main verb.

Most verbs take *avoir* + past participle in the perfect tense

|  |
| --- |
| J’ai chantéTu as chantéIl/elle/on a chantéNous avons chantéVous avez chantéIls/elles ont chanté |

The regular pattern to obtain a past participle is to take the infinitive of the verb and change the ending:

* Infinitives ending in –*er*: *parlé*
* Infinitives ending in –*ir*: *choisi*
* Infinitives ending in –*re*: *descendu*

There are exceptions to these rules and you will need to learn them by heart. Some common irregular past participles:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Avoir* *Être**Mettre**Prendre**Dire**Écrire**Faire**Lire**Tenir**Venir**Voir**Recevoir**Boire**Croire**Devoir**Pouvoir**Savoir**Vouloir**Ouvrir**Suivre**vivre* | euétémisprisditécritfaitlutenuvenuvureçubucrudûpusuvouluouvertsuivivécu |

Some verbs make their perfect tense with *être* rather than *avoir*. They are mostly verbs that indicate movement.

|  |
| --- |
| *Arriver/partir**Entrer/sortir**Aller/venir**Monter/descendre**Tomber/rester**Naître/mourir* |

All reflexive verbs make their perfect tense with *être*, so do any of the verbs above with *re-* or *de-* added in front (eg: *revenir, devenir, rentrer*, etc)

|  |
| --- |
| Je suis sorti(e)Tu es sorti(e)Il est sortiElle est sortieOn est sorti(e)(s)Nous sommes sorti(e)sVous êtes sorti(e)sIls sont sortisElles sont sorties |

The ending of the past participle changes when it comes after *être* in the perfect tense. It agrees with whoever or whatever is doing the action.

The past participle normally doesn’t change when it comes after *avoir* in the perfect tense. One case when it does change is when a direct object comes before the verb.

*Marc a acheté une veste.*

The direct object (*une veste*) comes after the verb *a acheté*, so there is no agreement of the past participle.

*Où est la veste que Marc a acheté****e****? Je ne l’ai pas vu****e****.*

The direct object (*la veste*) comes before the verb *a achetée*, and the direct object pronoun (*l’*) comes before the verb *ai vue*, so the past participle agrees with it each time (*acheté****e****, vu****e***). Note that this agreement does not apply to indirect objects.

21. The imperfect tense

The imperfect tense is used:

* To describe what something or someone was like in the past

*La maison où j’****habitais*** *était moderne*

* To describe continuous actions or interrupted actions in the past

*Mon frère* ***faisait*** *ses devoirs quand je suis arrivée*

* To describe something that happened frequently in the past

*On* ***allait*** *voir ma grand-mère le dimanche*

* After suggestions and in conditional sentences

*Si on* ***allait*** *à la piscine?*

*Si tu* ***travaillais****, tu aurais de meilleurs résultats*

To form the imperfect tense, start with the verb stem: take the *nous* form of the present tense and remove the *–ons*.

*Regarder > nous regardons >> regard-*

*Aller > nous allons >> all-*

*Faire > nous faisons >> fais-*

*Voir > nous voyons >> voy-*

The only exception:

*Être >> ét-*

Then add the endings listed below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Je* *Tu* *Il/elle/on**Nous**Vous**Ils/elles* | *ais**ais**ait**ions**iez**aient* | *faisais commençais étais**faisais commençais étais**faisait commençait était**faisions commencions étions**faisiez commenciez étiez**faisaient commencaient étaient* |

Perfect or imperfect?

It can be quite difficult deciding whether to use the perfect or the imperfect tense.

* Use the perfect tense if you are talking about one particular event which took place at a particular time in the past, and which can still have implications in the present

*J’****ai mangé*** *une pomme (et je n’ai plus faim)*

 I have eaten an apple (and I am not hungry now)

* Use the imperfect if you are describing how something was or giving your opinion in the past, or if you are talking about what used to happen or what happened regularly in the past, stressing the duration

*Elle* ***se levait*** *tous les jours à sept heures*

She used to get up every day at 7

22. The pluperfect

The pluperfect tense is used to describe something that had already happened before something else occurred or before a fixed point in time.

*Elle* ***était*** *déja* ***partie*** *quand je suis arrivé*

She had already left when I arrived

The pluperfect tense is formed by using the imperfect tense of *avoir* or *être* and the past participle. The same rules about which verbs take *avoir* and which verbs take *être* and about agreement of the past participle apply to both the perfect and the pluperfect tense.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *J’avais dit (=I had said)**Tu avais dit**Il/elle/on avait dit**Nous avions dit**Vous aviez dit**Ils/elles avaient dit* | *J’étais arrivé(e) (=I had arrived)**Tu étais arrivé(e)**Il/elle/on était arrivé(e)**Nous étions arrivé(e)s**Vous étiez arrivé(e)s**Ils/elles étaient arrivé(e)s* |

23. The past historic

The past historic is a past tense reserved primarily for written discourse. It may, however, be used in very formal spoken language, such as presidential addresses, sermons, or news broadcasting. It has traditionally been used only for events completed in the distant, historical past; however, twentieth century writers sometimes use it for stylistic effect.

 *Ils* ***vécurent*** *heureux et* ***eurent*** *beaucoup d’enfants*

They lived happily ever after

The past historic will generally be translated into English by a the simple past: 'I talked'. But like the perfect tense, the past historic past is used in French only to mention changes and events, while the imperfect remains the tense used for describing the setting, the atmosphere, an ongoing state of mind, or the general situation.

It is formed from a stem (the infinitive of a verb minus the –er/-ir/-re ending) and the following endings:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| JeTu Il/elle/onNousVousIls/elles | **-er verbs**-ai-as-a-âmes-âtes-èrent | **-ir/-re verbs**-is-is-it-îmes-îtes-irent |

Many common verbs are irregular:

*Avoir: j’eus, tu eus, il eut, nous eûmes, vous eûtes, ils eurent*

*Être: je fus, tu fus, il fut, nous fûmes, vous fûtes, ils furent*

*Venir: je vins, tu vins, il vint, nous vînmes, vous vîntes, ils vinrent*

24. The future

Use the future tense :

* To describe plans for the future:

*Quand il* ***sera*** *à la retraite, il ira habiter en France*

* To say what you think the future will be:

*Dans moins de 10 ans tout le monde* ***aura*** *accès à l’internet*

In less than 10 years everybody will have access to the internet

* To say what will happen if…:

*Si j’ai mon bac, j’i****rai*** *à l’université*

If I pass my A-Levels, I will go to university

* To give an order:

*Vous* ***ferez*** *une rédaction sur le thème de la pollution*

You’ll write an essay on pollution

* To describe what will happen when… or as soon as…, in French you use a future tense (not a present tense as in English) after *quand* or *dès que*:

*Quand ils* ***arriveront****, on se mettra tout de suite à table*

When they arrive, we’ll eat straight away

*Dites-lui de me contacter dès qu’il* ***aura*** *ses résultats*

Tell him to contact me as soon as he has his results

To form the future tense, add these endings to the infinitive of regular verbs (if the infinitive ends in –e, take that off)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| JeTuIl/elle/onNousVousIls/elles | **Ending**-ai-as-a-ons-ez-ont | **Regarder**regarderai (il will look)regarderasregarderaregarderonsregarderezregarderont | **Répondre**répondrai (I will answer)répondrasrépondrarépondronsrépondrezrépondront |

Common irregular verbs:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Aller**Avoir**Devoir**Envoyer**Être**Faire**Il faut**Pouvoir**Savoir**Venir**Voir**vouloir* | *J’irai**J’aurai**Je devrai**J’enverrai**Je serai**Je ferai**Il faudra**Je pourrai**Je saurai**Je viendrai**Je verrai**Je voudrai* |

Other ways to talk about the future:

* *aller* + infinitive : the near future

Use the present tense of *aller* followed by an infinitive to talk about something that is sure to happen in the near future

*Je* ***vais regarder*** *le film ce soir*

I’m going to watch the film tonight

Il **va travailler** ce week-end

He’s going to work this week-end

* *Je voudrais / j’aimerais / je pense / j’envisage de* + infinitive

To talk about future plans which are not certain, wishes, ambitions or dreams :

*Je* ***voudrais rentrer*** *dans l’armée de l’air*

I would like to join the airforce

*J’****aimerais aller*** *à Paris le week-end prochain*

I’d like to go to Paris next week-end

*Je* ***pense acheter*** *un vélo cet été*

I’m planning to buy a bike this summer

* The present tense

Use the present tense to refer to an event in the near future or to something which is more than probable :

*Tu sors ce soir ? Oui, je* ***retrouve*** *Annie en ville*

Are you going out tonight ? Yes, I’m meeting Annie in town

*Je* ***vais*** *à l’université de Leeds l’année prochaine*

I’m going to Leeds University next year

25. The conditional :

The present conditional is used :

* To express a wish or make a suggestion :

*Je* ***voudrais*** *travailler dans un bureau*

 I’d like to work in an office

*Elle* ***devrait*** *faire ses études à l’étranger*

She should go and study abroad

*Je* ***prendrais*** *bien un café*

I’d quite like to have a coffee

* To make a polite request :

***Pourriez****-vous me dire où est la mairie ?*

Could you tell me where the town hall is ?

* To refer to an action which depends on another event or situation :

*J’irais chercher les enfants si j’avais une voiture*

I’d go and pick up the children if I had a car

To form the conditional use the same stem as for the future tense (the infinitive of the verb, dropping the –e in –re verbs) and add endings which are the same as for the imperfect tense

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| JeTuIl/elle/onNousVousIls/elles | **Ending**-ais-ais-ait-ions-iez-aient | **Finir**finirais (I would finish)finiraisfiniraitfinirionsfiniriezfiniraient | **Prendre**prendrais (I would take)prendraisprendraitprendrionsprendriezprendraient |

The past conditional is used to say something would have happened given certain circumstances (but actually didn’t happen). It is formed from the conditional of *avoir* or *être* and a past participle :

*Nous* ***aurions gagné*** *le match si...*

We would have won the match if...

*Il* ***serait******venu*** *s’il avait pu*

He would have come if he could

*J’****aurais dû*** *y aller*

I should have gone

*Vous* ***auriez pu*** *participer*

You could have taken part

26. Direct and indirect speech

* Use **direct speech** to report what someone says word for word

*Le prof dit :  « Faites l’activité 4 ». Un élève demande « il faut le faire pour quand ?»*

*Léa a dit « J’ai fait un stage en France ».*

Remember to use colons and speech marks

Use verbs like *dire, demander, ajouter, s’écrier*

* Use **indirect speech** to explain what someone says without quoting them in speech marks

*Le prof dit de faire l’activité 4. Un élève demande pour quand il faut le faire.*

*Léa a dit qu’alle avait fait un stage en France*

* Some changes are necessary when going from direct to indirect speech (use *que*, use of interrogative words, changes in pronouns and tenses)

*Mon père s’est écrié : « J’ai perdu mon porte-feuille ! »*

*Mon père s’est écrié qu’il avait perdu son porte-feuille*

*Le serveur a demandé : « Vous voulez autre chose ? »*

*Le serveur a demandé si nous voulions autre chose*

27. *If* clauses and tense rules

*Si*, meaning if, is used in sentences which express a condition

*Elle serait contente* ***si*** *tu venais en France*

She would be happy if you came to France

*Il serait venu* ***s’****il avait su*

He would have come if he had known

When si is used to express a condition, the following tense rules apply :

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Conditional clause** | **Result clause** |
| Si + presentSi + imperfectSi + pluperfect | Present, future or imperativeConditionalConditional perfect |

Examples :

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Si le projet échoue...*(If the project fails) | *...je pars* (PRESENT I’m leaving)/ *je partirai* (FUTURE I will leave)*Ne restez pas* (IMPERATIVE Don’t stay) *si le projet échoue* |
| *Si le projet échouait...*(If the project failed) | *je partirais* (CONDITIONAL I would leave) |
| *Si le projet avait échoué...*(If the project had failed) | *je serais parti* (CONDITIONAL PERFECT I would have left) |

28. Subjunctive

The subjunctive is used to express what you think, what you feel, what you wish, and how you consider events and actions (uncertain, possible, probable, impossible, etc)

The verbs usually appear in a subordinate clause (the second part of a sentence) introduced by *que*.

There are several tenses of the subjunctive, but the present and perfect subjunctive are the most commonly used.

It is used :

1. after many verbs expressing an emotion or an opinion :
* doubt or fear : *douter que, avoir peur que, ne pas être sûr, ne pas penser que,* etc

*Je ne pense pas qu’il* ***vienne*** *ce soir*

I don’t think he’ll come tonight

Note : *ne pas être sûr, ne pas penser que* : These verbs don’t need a subjunctive if used in a positive statement (without the *ne…pas*) : *Je pense qu’il vient ce soir*

* Wish, will, necessity : *vouloir que, ordonner que*

*Je voudrais que tu* ***partes*** *avec moi*

I’d like you to go away with me

*Le docteur ordonne que vous* ***restiez*** *au lit*

The doctor orders you to stay in bed

* Regret and happiness : *regretter que, être content que*

*Ils regrettent que tu ne* ***sois*** *pas là*

They’re sorry you are not here

*Moi, je suis contente qu’elle* ***soit*** *loin*

I’m happy that she’s far away

1. After impersonal expressions such as *il faut que, il est possible que, il est important que* :

*Il faut que tu* ***ailles*** *à la poste*

You must go to the post office

1. After certain conjunctions expressing :
* Time : *avant que* (before), *jusqu’à ce que* (until)

*Je veux partir avant qu’il* ***rentre***

I want to leave before he comes back

* Concession : *bien que* (although), *quoique* (although)

*Il est resté très simple bien qu’il* ***soit*** *très riche*

He’s remained simple although he’s very rich

* Aim : *afin que* (so that), *pour que* (so that)

*Je fais ça pour tu* ***ailles*** *mieux*

I’m doing this so that you get better

* Condition : *à condition que* (on condition that), *pourvu que* (provided that), *à moins que* (unless)

*J’irai à la cérémonie à condition que tu* ***viennes*** *avec moi*

I’ll go to the ceremony provided you come with me

1. After a relative pronoun (*qui* or *que*) when it follows a superlative or a negative :

*C’est le plus joli bébé que je* ***connaisse***

He’s the prettiest baby I know

*Je n’ai rien qui* ***puisse*** *t’aider*

I don’t have anything that you could help you

To form the present subjunctive, take the *ils* form of the present tense, leave off the final *–ent* and add these endings :

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| JeTuIl/elle/onNousVousIls/elles | **Ending**-e-es-e-ions-iez-ent | **Aimer**que j’aimeque tu aimesqu’il aimeque nous aimionsque vous aimiezqu’ils aiment | **Finir**que je finisseque tu finissesqu’il finisseque nous finissionsque vous finissiezqu’ils finissent |

The perfect subjunctive

The perfect subjunctive is a compound tense formed from the present subjunctive of *avoir* or *être* and a past participle. It refers to something which has (perhaps) happened.

*Il est possible qu’elle* ***soit*** *déjà* ***partie***

It’s possible she’s already left

*Je ne suis pas certain qu’elle* ***ait******pu*** *tout finir hier soir*

I’m not certain she managed to finish it all last night

29. Passive

The passive voice

When the subject of the sentence has the action of the verb **done to it** instead of doing the action, the sentence is said to be in the passive voice

The passive is used :

* When the person doing the action is unknown or not named

*Mon chien* ***a été*** *écrasé* My dog ‘s been run over

* When you want to focus on the person/thing receiving the action rather than on whoever is doing the action :

*La violence* ***est*** *souvent* ***présentée*** *comme acceptable (par les médias)*

Violence is often presented as being acceptable (by the medias)

* To highlight the drama of an event, especially in newspaper accounts

*Les deux jeunes* ***ont été arrêtés*** *par un détective parisien.*

The two youths were arrested by a Paris detective

To form a passive, use *être* and a past participle agreeing with the subject of the verb.

*Notre association aide les enfants en difficulté*

*>> Les enfants en difficulté* ***sont aidés*** *par notre association*

The passive can be used in several tenses :

Future : *les enfants* ***seront aidés*** *par l’association*

Perfect : *les enfants* ***ont été aidés*** *par l’association*

Imperfect : *les enfants* ***étaient aidés*** *par l’association*

Pluperfect : *les enfants* ***avaient été aidés*** *par l’association*

Sometimes, it is prefereble to avoid the passive when translating from English. You can use :

* *On* :

Speed limits are not respected
*(Les limitations de vitesse ne sont pas respectées) >* ***On*** *ne respecte pas les limitations de vitesse*

* An active sentence :

The house was burgled by two men

*(La maison a été cambriolée par deux hommes) > Deux hommes* ***ont cambriolé*** *la maison*

* A reflexive verb :

The passive is not often used in French

*(Le passif n’est pas beaucoup utilisé en français) >> Le passif ne* ***s’utilise*** *pas beaucoup en français*