

# INDICATIVE SIMPLE TENSES

## LE PRÉSENT (PRESENT TENSE)

### FORMS

A. The infinitive drops its ending and adds:

-er: -e, -es, -e, -ons, -ez, -ent  
-ir: -is, -is, -it, -issons, -issez, -issent  
-re: -s, -s, -, -ons, -ez, -ent

parle	finis	perds
parles	finis	perds
parle	finit	perd
parlons	finissons	perdons
parlez	finissez	perdez
parlent	finissent	perdent

B. Because of phonetic reasons, infinitives ending in:

- ger add an e to the stem in the first person plural: **nous mangeons** (we eat).
- cer add a cedille to the c in the first person plural: **nous commençons** (we begin).

### USE

A. The present indicative is used to express:

- an action or a condition which takes place or exists in the present: **Nous parlons français** (We speak French). **Henri est américain** (Henry is American).
- an action which is in progress: **Elle parle avec François** (She is speaking with François).
- an action which is to take place in the near future: **Nous allons au restaurant ce soir** (We are going to the restaurant this evening).

## L'IMPARFAIT (IMPERFECT)

### FORMS

A. The present tense "nous" verb form is utilized to form the imperfect tense. The -ons ending is dropped and the following endings are added:  
-ais, -ais, -ait, -ions, -iez, -aient

parlais	finissais	perdais
parlais	finissais	perdais
parlait	finissait	perdait
parlions	finissions	perdions
parliez	finissiez	perdiez
parlaient	finissaient	perdaient

### USE

- A. The imperfect tense is used for a condition, situation, or past action which is repeated and is not limited by time:
- To describe or to set a scene: **Il faisait froid et les étudiants parlaient ensemble** (It was cold and the students were talking to each other).
  - For habitual actions, where "used to" is used in English: **Elle allait à la plage quand elle habitait Nice** (She used to go to the beach when she lived in Nice).
  - To express an action that was taking place when something else (usually in the preterite) happened: **Je déjeunais quand il est arrivé** (I was eating lunch when he arrived).
  - To express time of day and age: **Il était trois heures** (It was three o'clock).

## LE PASSÉ SIMPLE (PAST DEFINITE)

### FORMS

A. The infinitive drops its ending and adds:  
-er: -ai, -as, -a, -âmes, -âtes, -èrent  
-ir/-re: -is, -is, -it, -îmes, -îtes, -irent

parlai	finis	perdis
parlas	finis	perdis
parla	finit	perdit
parlâmes	finîmes	perdîmes
parlâtes	finîtes	perdîtes
parlèrent	finirent	perdirent

### USE

A. The past definite is used for a past action limited by time. It is mostly used in literary writing.

## LE FUTUR (FUTURE)

### FORMS

A. The following endings are added to the entire infinitive: -ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ont

1. Verbs ending in -re drop the e:

parlerai	finirai	perdrai
parleras	finiras	perdras
parlera	finira	perdra
parlerons	finirons	perdrons
parlerez	finirez	perdrez
parleront	finiront	perdront

### USE

- A. The future tense indicates an action which is to take place in the future: **Sa soeur lui donnera un cadeau** (His sister will give him a gift).
- B. Unlike English, it is used when a sentence which indicates a future action begins with a temporal conjunction such as **quand** (when), **lorsque** (when), **dès que** (as soon as), **aussitôt que** (as soon as), or **tant que** (as long as): **Il partira dès qu'il sera prêt**. (He will leave as soon as he is ready).
- C. When a "si" (if) clause is used in the present, the result clause will use the future tense: **Si les livres arrivent demain, nous pourrons étudier** (If the books arrive tomorrow, we will be able to study).

## COMPOUND TENSES

### LE PASSÉ COMPOSÉ (COMPOUND PAST)

#### FORMS

A. The passé composé is formed with the present indicative form of an auxiliary verb (avoir or être) and the past participle of the main verb.

ai parlé	ai fini	ai perdu
as parlé	as fini	as perdu
a parlé	a fini	a perdu
avons parlé	avons fini	avons perdu
avez parlé	avez fini	avez perdu
ont parlé	ont fini	ont perdu

B. Regular past participles are formed as follows:  
Infinitives ending in:

- er, drop the ending and add -é: **parler/parlé**
- ir, drop the ending and add -i: **finir/fini**
- re, drop the ending and add -u: **perdre/perdu**

C. Some common irregular past participles include **avoir/eu; boire/bu; comprendre/compris; être/été; faire/fait; pleuvoir/plu; prendre/pris; voir/vu; vouloir/voulu**

D. While most verbs are conjugated with the auxiliary **avoir**, intransitive verbs and all reflexive verbs are conjugated with **être**. Most common non-reflexive verbs conjugated with **être** are: **aller/allé; arriver/arrivé; descendre/descendu; devenir/devenu; entrer/entré; monter/monté; mourir/mort; naître/né; partir/parti; rentrer/rentré; rester/resté; retourner/retourné; revenir/revenu; sortir/sorti; tomber/tombé; venir/venu**. When **descendre**, **sortir** and **monter** have a direct object, they are conjugated with **avoir**.

E. Agreement of the past participle of verbs using **être** is as follows:

- The past participle agrees in gender and number with the subject if the verb is intransitive but not reflexive: **Elle est arrivée hier** (She arrived yesterday). **Ils se sont dépêchés** (They hurried up). **Maurice est sorti, mais sa soeur est restée** (Maurice went out, but his sister stayed).
- It agrees with the reflexive pronoun if it is the direct object of the verb: **Nous nous sommes levés** (We got up). **Elles se sont trompées** (They were wrong).
- It does not agree with the reflexive pronoun if it is the indirect object of the verb: **Elle s'est lavé les**

**mains** (She washed her hands). **Nous nous sommes parlé** (We spoke to each other).

- It agrees with the subject of the verb if the reflexive pronoun is neither the direct nor the indirect object of the verb: **Ils se sont mariés** (They got married).
- When using **avoir** as an auxiliary, the past participle agrees with a preceding direct object: **Je la lui ai donnée** (I gave it [f] to him/her). **Ce sont les livres qu'elle a lus** (These are the books which she read).

### USE

A. The passé composé expresses an action which is completed and oftentimes limited by using words such as **hier** (yesterday), **la semaine passée** (last week), **l'année dernière** (last year) etc., all of which describe a specific time.

## LE PLUS-QUE-PARFAIT (PLUPERFECT)

### FORMS

A. The pluperfect is formed by using a form of **avoir** or **être** in the imperfect (translated as **had**) plus the past participle of the main verb.

avais parlé	avais fini	avais perdu
avais parlé	avais fini	avais perdu
avait parlé	avait fini	avait perdu
avions parlé	avions fini	avions perdu
aviez parlé	aviez fini	aviez perdu
avaient parlé	avaient fini	avaient perdu

### USE

- A. The pluperfect indicates a happening or situation which takes place before another stated past action (in the passé composé or imperfect): **Il avait déjà fini la leçon quand il a commencé à pleuvoir** (He had already finished the lesson when it started to rain).
- B. The choice of auxiliary verb and agreement of the past participle follow the same rules given above for the passé composé.

## PASSÉ ANTÉRIEUR (PAST ANTERIOR)

### FORMS

A. The passé antérieur is formed by using a form of **avoir** or **être** in the passé simple plus the past participle of the main verb.

j'eus parlé	eus fini	eus perdu
eus parlé	eus fini	eus perdu
eut parlé	eut fini	eut perdu
eûmes parlé	eûmes fini	eûmes perdu
eûtes parlé	eûtes fini	eûtes perdu
eurent parlé	eurent fini	eurent perdu

### USE

- A. The passé antérieur, like the pluperfect, describes a past action which had happened before another one occurred.
- B. It is used mostly in literary and formal writing.
- C. The choice of auxiliary verb and agreement of the past participle follow the same rules given above for the passé composé.

## LE FUTUR ANTÉRIEUR (FUTURE PERFECT)

### FORMS

A. The future perfect is formed by using the future form of **avoir** or **être** plus the past participle of the main verb.

aurai parlé	aurai fini	aurai perdu
auras parlé	auras fini	auras perdu
aura parlé	aura fini	aura perdu
aurons parlé	aurons fini	aurons perdu
aurez parlé	aurez fini	aurez perdu
auront parlé	auront fini	auront perdu

### USE

- A. The future perfect is used to express a future action which is to take place before another action also in the future.
- B. The choice of auxiliary verb and agreement of the past participle follow the same rules given above for the passé composé.



## LE PLUS-QUE-PARFAIT DU SUBJONCTIF (PLUPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE)

### FORMS

- A. The pluperfect subjunctive is formed by using the imperfect subjunctive form of avoir or être plus the past participle of the main verb.

eusse parlé	eusse fini	eusse perdu
usses parlé	usses fini	usses perdu
eût parlé	eût fini	eût perdu
eussions parlé	eussions fini	eussions perdu
eussiez parlé	eussiez fini	eussiez perdu
eussent parlé	eussent fini	eussent perdu

### USE

- A. The pluperfect subjunctive is used under the same circumstances as the imperfect subjunctive above, except that, with the pluperfect, the past action must have been completed.
- B. As it is the case with the imperfect subjunctive, the pluperfect is solely used for formal and literary writings. It is never used in conversation and does not even exist in English.

## SEQUENCE OF TENSES

### SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

- A. When the main verb is in the present or future indicative, the subordinate clause verb is, depending on the situation and mood required, as follows:
- For a simultaneous action: present indicative or present subjunctive  
**Je veux qu'il finisse ses devoirs** (I want him to finish his homework).  
**Je sais qu'il travaille le lundi** (I know that he works on Mondays).
  - For a subsequent action: future indicative or present subjunctive  
**Je veux qu'il vienne demain** (I want him to come tomorrow).  
**Nous partirons quand il arrivera** (We will leave when he arrives).
  - For a previous action: imperfect, passé simple, passé composé or pluperfect indicative, past subjunctive  
**Je dis qu'il est allé en Europe hier** (I am saying that he went to Europe yesterday).  
**Je dirai qu'il était en Europe** (I will say that he was in Europe).  
**Elle réussira à l'examen si elle a beaucoup étudié** (She'll pass the test if she has studied hard).
- B. When the main verb is in the passé composé, passé simple or imperfect indicative, the subordinate clause verb is, depending on the mood required, as follows:
- For a simultaneous action: imperfect or passé simple  
**J'ai entendu dire qu'elle dormait lorsque je lui ai téléphoné** (I heard she was sleeping when I telephoned her). **Il me parla au moment même où je tombai** (He spoke to me at the same moment that I fell).
  - For a subsequent action: future or future perfect  
**Nous avons dit qu'elle viendra demain** (We said that she will come tomorrow).  
**Nous avons dit qu'elle sera venue demain** (We said that she will have come tomorrow).
  - For a previous action: pluperfect or past anterior  
**Nous disions qu'elle était venue hier** (We were saying that she had come yesterday).  
**Aussitôt qu'elle fut venue, nous parlâmes avec son père** (As soon as she came, we spoke with her father).

### "SI" CLAUSES

- A. When the "si" (if) clause is in the present indicative, the main verb is in the present indicative, the future, or the imperative:  
**Si nous arrivons de bonne heure, je lui donne le cadeau** (If we arrive early, I am giving him/her the gift). **Si elle arrive de bonne heure, ma mère lui donnera le cadeau** (If she arrives early, my

mother will give him/her the gift). **Si vous arrivez de bonne heure, donnez-lui le cadeau!** (If you arrive early, give him/her the gift!).

- B. When the "si" clause is in the imperfect indicative, the main verb is in the conditional:  
**Si nous arrivions de bonne heure, nous lui donnerions le cadeau** (If we arrived early, we would give him/her the gift).
- C. When the "si" clause is in the pluperfect indicative, the main verb is in the conditional perfect:  
**Si nous étions arrivés de bonne heure, nous lui aurions donné le cadeau** (If we had arrived early, we would have given him/her the gift).

### PRONOMINAL VERBS

- A. Pronominal verbs describe an action where the subject and the object (direct or indirect) are the same:  
**Ils se lèvent de bonne heure** (They get up early).
- B. They may be used to express two types of action:
- reflexive: **Je me demande s'il viendra** (I wonder if he will come).
  - reciprocal: **Ils se parlent tous les jours** (They speak [to each other] every day).
- C. They require the use of a reflexive pronoun in addition to the subject pronoun.
- D. The placement of the verb and its reflexive pronoun follows the same rules given for the direct and indirect object pronouns.
- E. The verb être is used as auxiliary for the compound tenses: **Ils se sont dépêchés** (They hurried).
- F. Most commonly used pronominal verbs include: **s'appeler** (to be named), **s'arrêter** (to stop), **se coucher** (to go to bed), **se demander** (to wonder), **se dépêcher** (to hurry), **se détendre** (to relax), **s'endormir** (to fall asleep), **s'entendre** (to get along), **s'excuser** (to excuse oneself), **s'habiller** (to get dressed), **s'installer** (to settle down/in), **se laver** (to wash oneself), **se lever** (to get up), **se rappeler** (to remember), **se réveiller** (to wake up), **se reposer** (to relax), **se souvenir** (to remember), **se tromper** (to be wrong), **se trouver** (to be located).
- G. Most verbs used in a reflexive or reciprocal sense may also be used as transitive verbs: **Il se lave / Il lave la voiture** (He washes [himself] / He washes the car). **Elles se parlent / Elles parlent avec leurs amis** (They speak [to each other] / They speak with their friends).
- H. When a part of the subject's body is the direct object of a reflexive verb, a definite article is used instead of a possessive adjective: **Il se lave les mains** (He washes his hands).

### IRREGULAR VERBS

être - to be

Past Part.: été (conjugated with avoir)  
 Present: suis, es, est, sommes, êtes, sont  
 Imperfect: étais, étais, était, étions, étiez, étaient  
 Passé Simple: fus, fus, fut, fûmes, fûtes, furent  
 Future: serai, seras, sera, serons, serez, seront  
 Conditional: serais, serais, serait, serions, seriez, seraient

Pres. Subj.: sois, sois, soit, soyons, soyez, soient  
 Imperative: sois! soyons! soyez!

avoir - to have

Past Part.: eu (conjugated with avoir)  
 Present: ai, as, a, avons, avez, ont  
 Imperfect: avais, avais, avait, avions, aviez, avaient  
 Passé Simple: eus, eus, eut, eûmes, eûtes, eurent  
 Future: aurai, auras, aura, aurons, aurez, auront  
 Conditional: aurais, aurais, aurait, aurions, auriez, auraient

Pres. Subj.: aie, aies, ait, ayons, ayez, aient  
 Imperative: aie! ayons! ayez!

Other commonly used verbs conjugated in the present tense, with the past participle and auxiliary verb given in parentheses:

aller: to go (allé - être) - vais, vas, va, allons, allez, vont  
 boire: to drink (bu - avoir) - bois, bois, boit, buvons, buvez, boivent

faire: to do, make (fait - avoir) - fais, fais, fais, faisons, faites, font  
 prendre: to take (pris - avoir) - prends, prends, prend, prenons, prenez, prennent  
 vouloir: to want (voulu - avoir) - veux, veux, veux, voulons, voulez, veulent

## IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS WITH AVOIR AND FAIRE

Some of the most common idiomatic uses of the verbs avoir and faire are:

avoir ..... ans	to be ..... years old
avoir besoin de	to need
avoir chaud	to be warm (persons, animals)
avoir de la chance	to be lucky
avoir envie de + inf.	to feel like (doing something)
avoir faim	to be hungry
avoir froid	to be cold (persons, animals)
avoir hâte	to be in a hurry
avoir honte	to be ashamed
avoir l'air + adjective	to look + adjective, to seem to be in the habit of
avoir l'habitude de + inf.	to intend to
avoir le cafard	to have the blues
avoir mal	to feel sick
avoir mauvais mine	to look bad (persons)
avoir peur de	to be afraid of
avoir raison	to be right (persons)
avoir soif	to be thirsty
avoir sommeil	to be sleepy
avoir tort	to be wrong (persons)
faire attention (à)	to pay attention (to)
faire de l'autostop	to hitchhike
faire des achats	to go shopping
faire des courses	to go shopping
faire du shopping	to go shopping
faire du ski	to ski
faire du sport	to play sports
faire du vélo	to ride a bicycle
faire face à	to oppose
faire la connaissance de	to meet
faire la cuisine	to do the cooking
faire la lessive	to do the laundry
faire la queue	to stand in line, to line up
faire la vaisselle	to do the dishes
faire le ménage	to do the housework
faire les valises	to pack the suitcases
faire sa toilette	to wash up
faire ses adieux	to say goodbye
faire un voyage	to take a trip
faire une promenade	to take a walk

### CREDITS

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### NOTE TO STUDENTS

NOTE TO STUDENT: This QUICKSTUDY® chart is an outline of the major topics taught in French courses. Keep it handy as a quick reference source in the classroom, while doing homework, and as a memory refresher when reviewing prior to exams. Due to its condensed format, use it as a French guide, but not as a replacement for assigned class work.

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