# THE PERFECT TENSE

The perfect tense (*passé composé*) is the main tense used for talking about the past. In English it translates as ‘I played’ or ‘I have played’.

1. **The Perfect Tense With *Avoir***

The perfect tense is formed by using the auxilliary verb *avoir* and a past participle, for example:

 *j’ai mangé* I ate, I have eaten

 *j’ai fini* I finished, I have finished

The past participle is formed by removing the *–er*, *-re* or *–ir* from the infinitive and adding *é, u* or *i* as follows:

* for ‘er’ verbs, add ***é*** to the stem *donner → donné* (given)
* for ‘re’ verbs, add ***u*** to the stem *attendre → attendu* (waited)
* for ‘ir’ verbs, add ***i*** to the stem *finir → fini* (finished)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Infinitive : **parler** | Infinitive : **vendre** | Infinitive: **finir** |
| Past participle: ***parlé*** | Past participle: ***vendu*** | Past participle: ***fini*** |
| j’ai parlétu as parléil / elle / on a parlé | j’ai vendutu as venduil / elle / on a vendu | j’ai finitu as finiil / elle / on a fini |
| nous avons parlévous avez parléils ont parléelles ont parlé | nous avons venduvous avez venduils ont venduelles ont vendu | nous avons finivous avez finiils ont finielles ont fini |

## **Exercise 1**

Below are some common regular verbs. Translate the verbs in the exercise below into French.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **manger**  | to eat | **vendre** | to sell |
| **écouter** | to listen | **attendre** | to wait for |
| **demander** | to ask  | **répondre** | to answer |
| **travailler** | to work | **perdre**  | to lose |
| **réserver** | to reserve | **finir**  | to finish |
| **préparer** | to prepare | **dormir** | to sleep |
| **porter**  | to wear, carry | **choisir** | to choose |
| **oublier** | to forget | **remplir** | to fill  |

**1.** we have eaten

**2.** I wore

**3.** he finished

**4.** they (fem) slept

**5.** she filled

**6.** they prepared

**7.** you (informal, singular) sold

**8.** you (polite) forgot

**9.** I waited

**10.** he answered

**11.** she worked

**12.** they (feminine) chose

**13.** we listened

**14.** you (informal, singular) ate

**15.** they lost

1. **Irregular Past Particples**

Many verbs have an irregular past participle and these unfortunately just have to be learnt! Some common verbs with irregular past participles are given below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Verb** | **Meaning** | **Past Participle** |
| avoir | to have | eu |
| boire | to drink | bu |
| conduire | to drive | conduit |
| connaître | to know (person, place) | connu |
| devoir  | to have to | dû |
| dire  | to say/tell | dit |
| être  | to be  | été |
| écrire  | to write | écrit |
| faire  | to do, make  | fait |
| lire | to read | lu |
| mettre  | to put  | mis |
| ouvrir  | to open | ouvert |
| pouvoir  | to be able to | pu |
| prendre | to take | pris |
| recevoir | to receive | reçu |
| savoir  | to know (fact) | su |
| voir  | to see  | vu |
| vouloir  | to want | voulu |

**Exercise 2**

#### Translate the following verbs into French.

**1.** we wanted

**2.** you (polite) took

**3.** I made

**4.** he saw

**5.** they put

**6.** she drove

**7.** you (informal, singular) wrote

**8.** they (f.) said

**9.** you (formal) drunk

**10.** I have had

## **Exercise 3**

#### Translate the following sentences into French.

1. I spoke French in Belgium.

1. He worked on Sunday.

1. She drove to the station.

1. He finished the project.

1. The secretary reserved a room for 3 nights.

1. You (singular, informal) wrote a letter.

1. He took the train to the airport.

1. She wanted to play tennis on Saturday.

1. I chose the chicken.

1. You (formal) put the pen on the table.

1. I waited for my customers.

1. They made a cake.

1. We drank a bottle of red wine.

1. I saw the factory.

1. You (informal, singular) sold the computer.


## **Exercise 4**

Answer the following questions in French.

1. Qu’est-ce que vous avez mangé ce soir?

1. Qu’est-ce que vous avez fait hier?

1. Qu’est-ce que tu as fait ce matin?

1. Avez-vous lu le journal pendant le weekend?

1. Combien d’heures avez-vous travaillé aujourd’hui?

1. Avez-vous fini vos devoirs?

1. Est-ce que vous avez vu votre chef ce matin?

1. Vous avez reçu combien d’emails aujourd’hui?

1. **The Perfect Tense With *Être***

There are 13 verbs which use the verb *être* to form their perfect tense. These are:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| aller | to go | je suis allé(e) |
| venir  | to come | je suis venu(e) |
| entrer  | to enter | je suis entré(e) |
| sortir  | to leave, go out | je suis sorti(e) |
| arriver | to arrive | je suis arrivé(e) |
| partir | to leave | je suis parti(e) |
| monter | to go up | je suis monté(e) |
| descendre  | to go down | je suis descendu(e) |
| retourner | to go back | je suis retourné(e) |
| rester  | to stay  | je suis resté(e) |
| tomber | to fall | je suis tombé(e) |
| naître | to be born | je suis né(e) |
| mourir  | to die | il est mort |

 All compounds of the 13 verbs above also use *être* to form their perfect tense.

e.g. *revenir* (to come back) → *je suis revenu(e)*

 *devenir* (to become) → *je suis devenu(e)*

 *rentrer* (to return, go home) → *je suis rentré(e)*

## **Agreement Of The Past Participle**

With verbs which use *être* in the perfect tense, the past participle must agree in number and gender with the subject e.g. je suis allé (masculine speaker); je suis allée (feminine speaker).

e.g. je suis allé(e) nous sommes allé(e)s

 tu es allé(e) vous êtes allé(e)(s)(es)

 il est allé ils sont allés

 elle est allée elles sont allées

## **Exercise 5**

Translate the following verbs into French.

**1.** I went

**2.** you (singular, informal, m.) entered

**3.** the women arrived

**4.** he died

**5.** she was born

**6.** the men went out

**7.** you (polite, singular, f.) left

**8.** I became

**9.** she went up

**10.** we (m.) stayed

**11.** I returned

**12.** you (polite, sing, m.) fell

**13.** he went down

**14.** you (informal, f.) came

**15.** they (f.) went

## **Exercise 6**

#### Translate the following sentences into French.

1. He left at 6.15.

1. We went from the hotel to the airport.

1. They went out this evening.

1. She went to France the day before yesterday.

1. You (informal, f.) arrived at the station.

1. You (formal, plural, m.) came to England.

1. We stayed for a week.

1. They (f.) came back on 10 June.

1. I returned on Tuesday.

1. She left in the spring.

**11.** You came back from the office late.

1. He died yesterday.


## **Exercise 7**

Answer the following questions in French.

1. A quelle heure êtes-vous rentré(e) hier soir?

1. Combien de temps êtes-vous resté(e) en France lors de votre dernière visite?

**3.** Est-ce que vous êtes allé(e) en Belgique la semaine dernière?

1. Votre mari/femme/compagnon/ami(e), où est-ce qu’il/elle est allé(e) pendant le weekend?

1. Est-ce que vos clients sont venus vous voir la semaine dernière?

1. A quelle heure êtes-vous arrivé(e) au travail ce matin?


## **4. Reflexive Verbs In The Perfect Tense**

Reflexive verbs also form their perfect tense with *être*.

|  |
| --- |
| se lever – to get up |
| je me suis levé(e) | nous nous sommes levé(e)s |
| tu t’es levé(e) | vous vous êtes levé(e)(s)(es) |
| il s’est levé | ils se sont levés |
| elle s’est levée | elles se sont levées |

Below are some common reflexive verbs.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| s’appeler | to be called |
| se laver | to wash |
| se raser | to shave |
| se réveiller | to wake up |
| s’habiller | to get dressed |
| s’amuser | to enjoy oneself |
| se reposer | to rest |
| s’endormir | to go to sleep |
| se détendre | to relax |
| s’engager à | to commit to |

**Exercise 8**

Translate the following verbs into French.

**1.** he got up

**2.** I committed to

1. I got dressed

1. we (m.) enjoyed ourselves

1. she went to sleep

1. they (f.) woke up

1. you (informal, singular) shaved

1. you (formal, plural, f.) rested

1. they (f.) got washed

1. he committed to

1. I woke up
2. we relaxed

**Exercise 9**

Answer the following questions in French.

1. A quelle heure vous êtes-vous levé(e) ce matin?

1. A quelle heure vos enfants se sont-ils réveillés ce matin?

1. Tu t’es bien amusé(e) le weekend dernier?

1. Est-ce que vous vous êtes endormi(e) toute de suite hier?

1. Est-ce que tu t’es reposé(e) hier soir?

**Exercise 10**

*Qu’est-ce que tu as fait la semaine dernière au travail?*

*Qu’est-ce que tu as fait le weekend dernier?*

