

The Perfect Tense in French

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The Perfect tense is used to talk about completed actions in the past. This is quite easy to form if you follow these simple steps:

STEP 1 Take the present tense of *AVOIR* or *ÊTRE*

STEP 2 Find the past participle of the verb

STEP 3 Add the two together

STEP 1 The Present Tense of *AVOIR* & *ÊTRE*

AVOIR - to have

j'ai	I have
tu as	you have
il a	he has
elle a	she has
on a	one has/we have

ÊTRE - to be

je suis	I am
tu es	you are
il est	he is
elle est	she is
on est	one is/we are

singular

nous avons	we have
vous avez	you have
ils ont	they have (boys)
elles ont	they have (girls)

nous sommes	we are
vous êtes	you are
ils sont	they are (boys)
elles sont	they are (girls)

plural

STEP 2 How to form the past participle

The past participle is the part of the verb we usually translate as having "ed" on the end, for example - I watcheded, I visiteded, I playeded, etc. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule but we'll look at these in more detail later. For now, however, you need to know how to form the past participle.

In French there are 3 different types of verb: -er verbs, -ir verbs and -re verbs, so called because these are the last two letters of the verbs in the infinitive form, e.g. jouer - to play, finir - to finish, attendre - to wait for. To find the past participles of regular verbs, follow these patterns:

ER	IR	RE	
take off the -er	take off the -ir	take off the -re	
add é	add i	add u	
jouer	finir	attendre	this bit is called the infinitive
jou	fin	attend	this bit is called the stem
joué	fini	attendu	this bit is called the past participle

Practice Exercise 1 Find the past participles of these verbs:

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. manger | 2. choisir | 3. descendre | 4. sortir | 5. visiter |
| 6. regarder | 7. saisir | 8. vendre | 9. rendre | |

STEP 3 Finally, you put steps 1 and 2 together to get a complete phrase in the perfect tense.

For example:

I have played

STEP 1

j'ai

STEP 2

joué

STEP 3

j'ai joué

example 2

we have given back

STEP 1

nous avons

STEP 2

rendu

STEP 3

nous avons rendu

Practice Exercise 1

Work out what the perfect tense of these phrases would be:

1. you have listened (1 person)
2. they (boys) have visited
3. he has chosen
4. she has finished
5. my parents have waited for
6. bob and I have watched tv
7. Sylvie lived in Dumbarton

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écouter	to listen to
regarder	to watch
visiter	to visit
habiter	to live
jouer	to play
manger	to eat
finir	to finish
choisir	to choose
saisir	to grab/sieze
sortir	to go out
rendre	to give back
vendre	to sell
attendre	to wait for

Être verbs

There are 16 verbs which do not take AVOIR as their helper verb in the perfect tense. There are various ways of remembering these verbs - find one that works for you and learn it!

The verbs are:

<u>infinitive</u>	<u>meaning</u>	<u>past participle</u>	<u>past participle meaning</u>
Monter	to climb	monté	climbed
Retourner	to return	retourné	returned
Sortir	to go out	sorti	went out
Venir	to come	venu	came
Arriver	to arrive	arrivé	arrived
Naître	to be born	né	was born
Descendre	to go down/descend	descendu	went down/descended
Entrer	to enter	entré	entered
Revenir	to come back	revenu	came back
Tomber	to fall	tombé	fell
Rentrer	to go back in	rentré	went back in
Aller	to go	allé	went
Mourir	to die	mort	died
Partir	to leave	parti	left
Devenir	to become	devenu	became
Rester	to stay	resté	stayed



Monté (went up)

Resté (stayed)

Sorti (went out)

Venu (came)

Arrivé (arrived)

Né (was born)

Descendu (went down)

Revenu (came back)

Retourné (returned)

Tombé (fell)

Rentré (went back in)

Allé (went)

Mort (died)

Parti (left)

Entré (entered)

Devenu (became)

Monter

Rester

Sortir

Venir

Arriver

Naître

Descendre

Revenir

Retourner

Tomber

Rentrer

Aller

Mourir

Partir

Entrer

Devenir

Voilà Mrs Van
Drr Tramped.

Utilisez ces verbes avec ÊTRE

Je suis

I am

Tu es

You are

Elle/Il est

She/He is

Nous sommes

We are

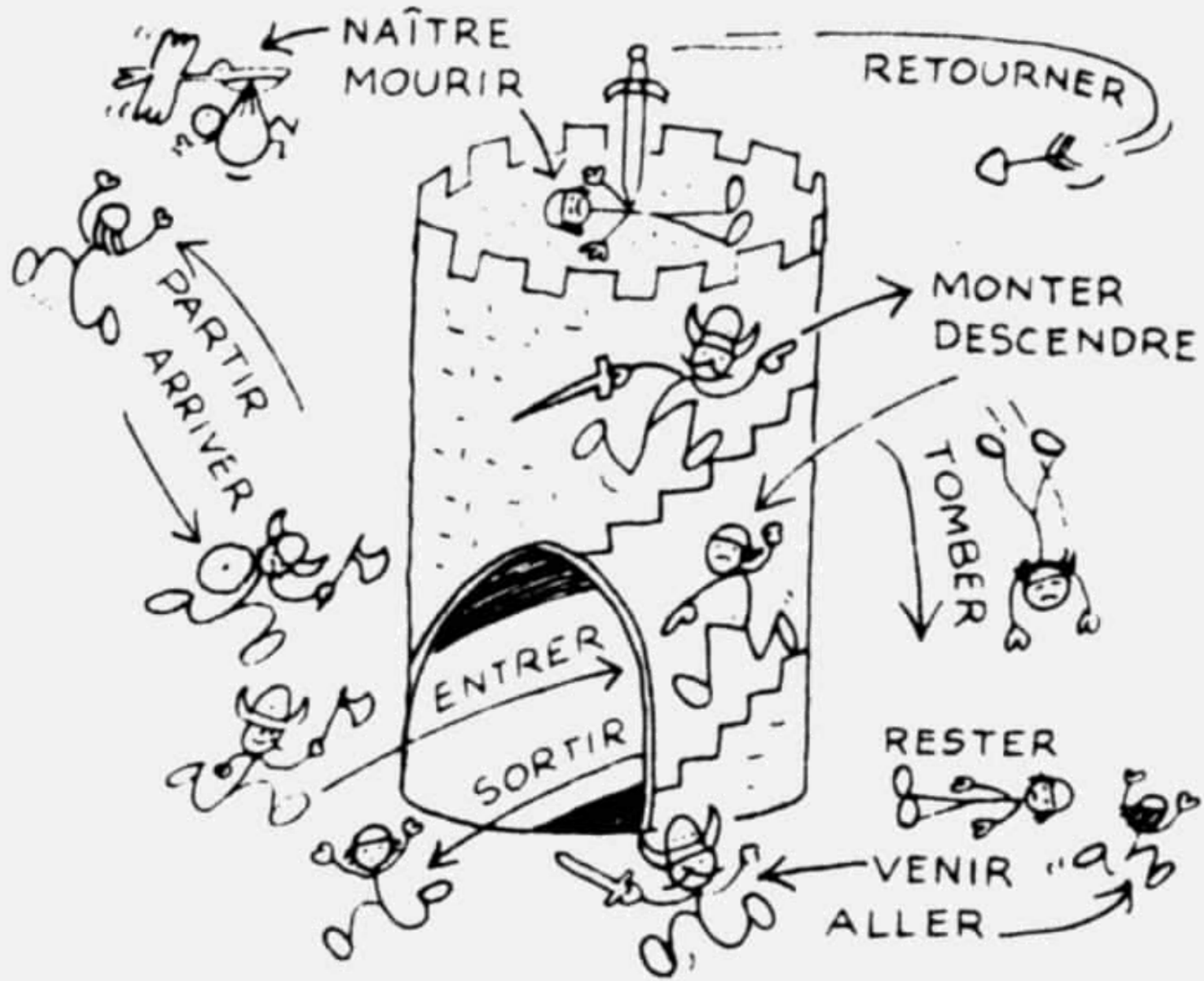
Vous êtes

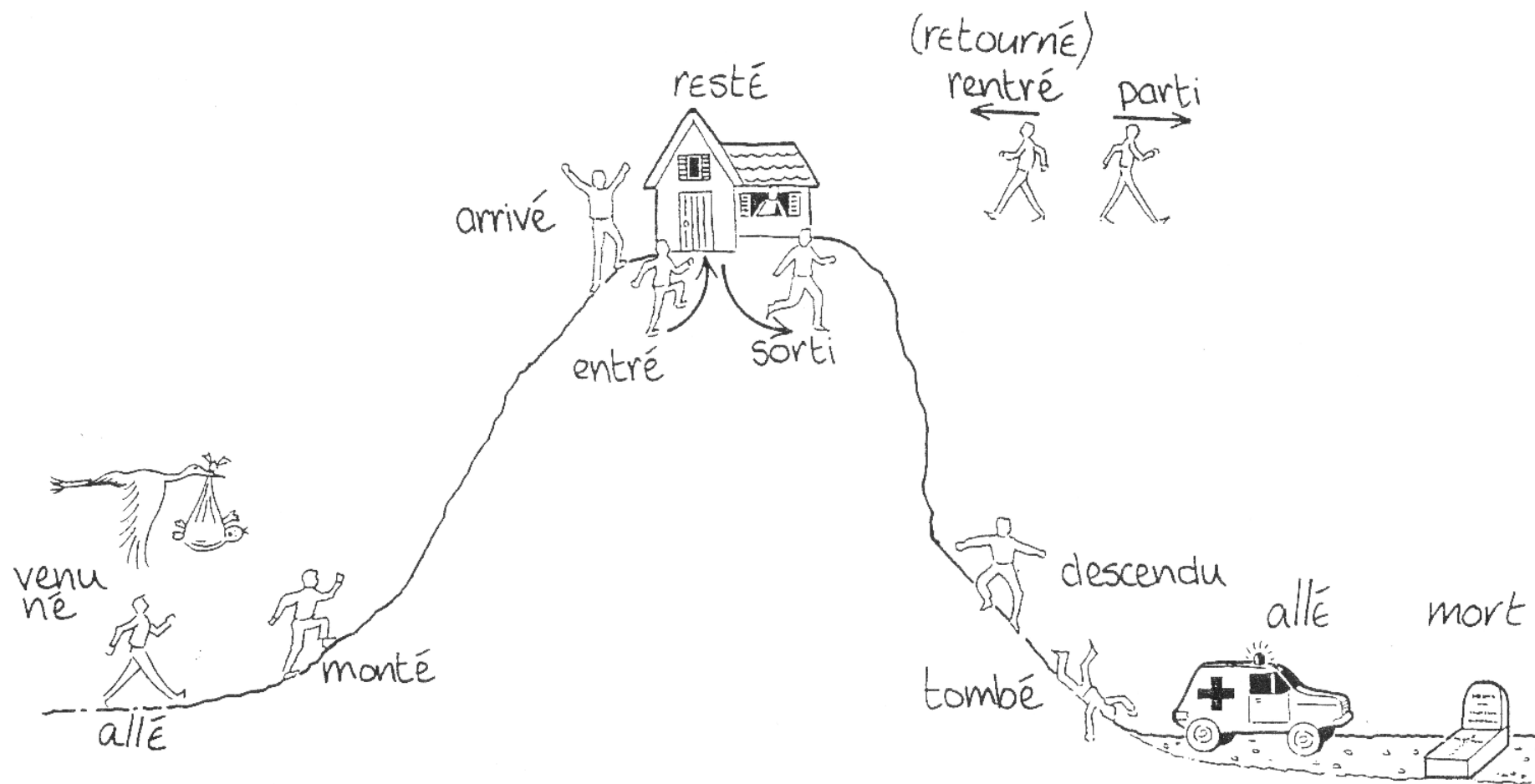
You (plural) are

Elles/Ils sont

They (fem)/(masc) are







Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs are verbs which do **NOT** follow the pattern you have learnt for making the past participle. Unfortunately, there is no pattern for these verbs and you just have to learn them individually. Here are some of the most common irregular verbs and their past participles that you need to know:

infinitive	past participle	meaning
avoir	eu	had
être	été	was
faire	fait	did/made
devoir	dû	had to
voir	vu	saw
boire	bu	drank
pouvoir	pu	was able to/could
dire	dit	said
lire	lu	read
savoir	su	knew
prendre	pris	taken/took
recevoir	reçu	received
écrire	écrit	written/wrote
vouloir	voulu	wanted

Practice Exercise 1

Write the French for these phrases:

1. I saw
2. you (s) wanted
3. he took
4. she knew
5. they (f) read
6. you (pl) said
7. we drank
8. I had to
9. it received
10. we wrote

So, for example, j'ai eu = I had; j'ai été = I was; j'ai fait = I did/I made

nous avons eu = we had; nous avons été = we were; nous avons fait = we did/we made

Agreement of past participles in the Perfect Tense

Like adjectives, some past participles must agree in **NUMBER** and **GENDER** with the thing they are describing. In the Perfect Tense this **ONLY** happens with the verbs which use être (Mrs Vandertramp Dr & Reflexive verbs).

example: je suis allé

I went

one person, masculine

je suis allée

I went

one person, feminine

vous êtes arrivés

you arrived

more than one person, masculine

elles sont arrivées

they arrived

more than one person, feminine

Fill in the blanks in these sentences. Remember to consider the following points:

- is the subject masculine or feminine?
- is the subject singular or plural?
- does the verb use AVOIR or ETRE as its helper verb?
- what bit of AVOIR/ETRE do I need?
- how do I find the past participle?
- do I have to make the past participle agree (in number and gender) with the subject?

1. Je suis arrivée (arriver) à l'hôtel

2. Tu _____ (parler) à ta mère déjà?

3. Sophie et moi _____ (entrer) dans le château

4. Les garçons _____ (jouer) au football dehors

5. Papa _____ (travailler) dans le jardin toute la journée

6. Mes grands-parents _____ (venir) nous visiter

To make something negative you have to sandwich the verb with ne and pas

J'ai  **Je n'ai pas**

J'ai regardé la télé

J'ai joué au tennis

J'ai fait mes devoirs

Je n'ai pas regardé la télé

Je n'ai pas joué au tennis

Je n'ai pas fait mes devoirs

Using all the vocab we have covered so far, write in English what these people are saying:

1. Hier soir j'ai fait mes devoirs mais je n'ai pas regardé la télé.
2. Le weekend dernier j'ai fait du skate avec mes amis, je n'ai pas fait du vélo.
3. Hier j'ai regardé la télé mais je n'ai pas joué au tennis
4. Le weekend j'ai regardé un bon film et j'ai visité mes grands-parents.