**Le Passé Composé- The Past Tense**

It is called ‘the composed tense’ because you need 3 things to form it:

1. the subject (who did the action) HE
2. the helping/ auxiliary verb HAS
3. the past participle EATEN
4. **The Subject:**

Je (I) nous (we)

Tu (you) vous (you plural)

Il (he) ils (they- boys)

Elle (she) elles (they- girls)

1. **The Helping Verb**

* ‘avoir’:

The verb ‘avoir’ (to have) in the present tense is the helping verb usually:

J’**ai** mangé nous **avons** mangé

Tu **as** mangé vous **avez** mangé

Il **a** mangé ils **ont** mangé

Elle **a** mangé elles **ont** mangé

* ‘être’

However the verb ‘être’ (to be) in the present tense is used as the helping verb for these two occasions:

1. All Reflexive Verbs (e.g. se laver, se lever, s’habiller)

2. These 13 movement verbs:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Infinitive in French | Infinitive in English | Past tense |
| **M**ourir | To die | Je suis mort(e)\* |
| **R**etourner | To return | Je suis retourné(e) |
| **S**ortir | To go out | Je suis sorti(e) |
| **V**enir | To come | Je suis venu(e)\* |
| **A**rriver | To arrive | Je suis arrivé(e) |
| **N**aître | To be born | Je suis né(e)\* |
| **D**escendre | To go down | Je suis descendu(e) |
| **E**ntrer | To enter | Je suis entré(e) |
| **T**omber | To fall | Je suis tombé(e) |
| **R**ester | To stay | Je suis resté(e) |
| **A**ller | To go | Je suis allé(e) |
| **M**onter | To go up | Je suis monté(e) |
| **P**artir | To leave | Je suis parti(e) |

* When être is the helping verb, you **NEED** agreement:
* Add an extra ‘e’ if a girl did the action (elle est allé**e**- she went)
* Add an ‘s’ if more than one boy did the action (ils sont allé**s**- they boys went)
* Add an ‘es’ if more than one girl did the action (ells sont allé**es**- they girls went)
* There is no change to the past participle if a boy did the action (il est allé- he went)

**je suis** allé(e) **nous sommes** allé(e)s

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

**il est** allé **ils sont** allés

**elle est** allée **elles sont** allées

* Look at the full paradigm of ‘se laver-to wash oneself’ (a reflexive verb) :

(\*note : the reflexive pronouns have been added e.g. me, te, se, se, nous…)

**je** me **suis** lavé(e) **nous** nous **sommes** lavé(e)s

**tu** t’**es** lavé(e) **vous** vous **êtes** lavé(e)s

**il** s’**est** lavé **ils** se **sont** lavés

**elle** s’**est** lavée **elles** se **sont** lavées

1. **The Past Participle**

To form the past participle for :

* + - ER verbs : knock the ‘ER’ off the infinitive and add ‘é’ e.g. manger> mang**é**
    - IR verbs : knock the ‘IR’ off the infinitive and add ‘i’ e.g. choisir> chois**i**
    - RE verbs : knock the ‘RE’ off the infinitive and add ‘u’ e.g. perdre> perd**u**

However, the following verbs are irregular and their past participles must be learnt off :

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Infinitive** | **Past Tense** |
| Boire (to drink) | J’ai **bu** (I drank) |
| Devoir (to have to) | J’ai **du** (I had to) |
| Avoir (to have) | J’ai **eu** (I had) |
| Lire (to read) | J’ai **lu** (I read) |
| Pouvoir (to be able to) | J’ai **pu** (I was able to) |
| Pleuvoir (to rain) | Il a **plu** (It has rained) |
| Savoir (to know-info.) | J’ai **su** (I knew- info.) |
| Voir (to see) | J’ai **vu** (I saw) |
| Croire (to believe) | J’ai **cru** (I believed) |
| Connaître (to know-people) | J’ai **connu** (I knew-people) |
| Courir (to run) | J’ai **couru** (I ran) |
| Recevoir (to receive) | J’ai **reçu** (I received) |
| Tenir (to keep) | J’ai **tenu** (I kept) |
| Vivre (to live) | J’ai **vécu** (I lived) |
| Vouloir (to want) | J’ai **voulu** (I wanted) |
| Conduire (to drive) | J’ai **conduit** (I drove) |
| Dire (to say) | J’ai **dit** (I said) |
| Écrire (to write) | J’ai **écrit** (I wrote) |
| Mettre (to put) | J’ai **mis** (I put) |
| Prendre (to take) | J’ai **pris** (I took) |
| Rire (to laugh) | J’ai **ri** (I laughed) |
| Être (to be) | J’ai **été** (I was) |
| Faire (to do) | J’ai **fait** (I did) |
| Ouvrir (to open) | J’ai **ouvert** (I opened) |

Le passé composé négatif

To say that you didn’t do something in the past :

* + Add **‘ne’** before the helping verb & **‘pas’** after :

e.g. il a mangé (he has eaten)

il **n’**a **pas** mangé (he has not eaten)

elle est allée (she has went)

elle **n’**est **pas** allée (she has not went)