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Preface

Verbs play a vital role in grammar, in sentences, in language and understanding them is key to understanding a language. We learn from a young age that verbs are *doing words*, *action words* or some other naïve and ambiguous definition that deprives verbs of the credit that they truly deserve - they are in fact much more important than that and I hope that, in learning them in great depth, you come to appreciate their true responsibility.

You may not yet realise how complex verbs can become, particularly if you have never studied a language in so much linguistic depth. It may seem strange to have to study in such detail something you do unconsciously in your mother tongue. But my aim is to simplify the world of verbs by stripping them back to the very basics and taking you on a journey that will allow you to eventually structure your own sentences with ease.

Linguistic terminology can be confusing for some and it may well be the reason why many people stop learning languages altogether. But avoiding the technical terms can be even more confusing than learning them and I believe that labelling helps us to understand the construction of language and eventually helps us to think independently when building sentences. Do not fret. Any such terminology is written in bold and is explained fully in the glossary at the back of this book.
Take your time when learning French and make sure that you understand everything you have learnt before you move on. Naturally, the topics in this book gradually become more complex and, if you do not understand the previous section, you will find it very difficult to understand the next. This book is not designed to be read in a day and it is important to spend time understanding and mastering each section before tackling a new aspect of verbs.

Most of all, enjoy language learning and do not let it become a source of stress. Re-read anything you do not understand and practise as much as you can in order to become as proficient in the language as possible.

Happy learning!
Tense and Aspect

The tense of a verb tells us when an action takes, took or will take place. There are three basic tenses:

- **Past**: happened
- **Present**: happens
- **Future**: will happen

Aspect is a little more difficult to grasp as it indicates whether the action is completed or in progress. The two basic forms of aspect are:

- **Perfective**: completed
- **Progressive**: in progress

It is not important that you understand the different aspects of a verb and you are not expected to be able to analyse the differences in meaning, but by combing both tense and aspect, we form six basic tenses that you will learn from this book:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Progressive</th>
<th>Perfective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present</strong></td>
<td>I play</td>
<td>I played</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Present Tense</em></td>
<td><em>Perfect Tense</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past</strong></td>
<td>I was playing</td>
<td>I had played</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Imperfect Tense</em></td>
<td><em>Pluperfect Tense</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future</strong></td>
<td>I will play</td>
<td>I will have played</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Future Tense</em></td>
<td><em>Future Perfect Tense</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TENSES
The Present Tense

The present tense expresses an action that happens on a regular basis, does happen or is currently happening:

I play
I do play
I am playing

In French, all three of these sentences are expressed in exactly the same way.

The French present tense is made up of just two parts: the subject and the verb. So, when it comes to translating I am playing is important that you do not try to translate each word individually. You should recognise this as the present tense and conjugate as follows:

1. Remove the -er, -ir or -re from the infinitive.
2. Add the appropriate, present tense ending:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>-er</th>
<th>-ir</th>
<th>-re</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>je</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-is</td>
<td>-s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu</td>
<td>-es</td>
<td>-is</td>
<td>-s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il / elle / on</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-it</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous</td>
<td>-ons</td>
<td>-issons</td>
<td>-ons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous</td>
<td>-ez</td>
<td>-issez</td>
<td>-ez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ils / elles</td>
<td>-ent*</td>
<td>-issent*</td>
<td>-ent*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* the -ent at the end of a third person, plural verb is not pronounced.
OK, so you've got to learn 18 different verb endings, but you will notice patterns that will make learning them much simpler.

Examples

She eats / She is eating / She does eat

she = elle
to eat = manger
1. remove the infinitive ending: manger
2. add the appropriate ending for elle - mange
3. she eats = elle mange

We finish / We are finishing / We do finish

we = nous
to finish = finir
1. remove the infinitive ending: finir
2. add the appropriate ending for nous: -finissons
3. we finish = nous finissons

They wait / They are waiting / They do wait

they = ils
to wait = attendre
1. remove the infinitive ending: attendre
2. add the appropriate ending for il - attendant
3. They wait = ils attendent
The Near Future

The near future tense is used to express an action that is going to happen:

I am going to play

This is by far the easiest way of expressing the future as it does not rely upon a list of endings like the other tenses. Instead, it is constructed in much the same way as English:

I am going to play

In order to construct this tense, it is important to familiarise yourself with the conjugation of the irregular verb aller to go:

aller - to go

je vais
tu vas
il/elle/on va
nous allons
vous allez
ils/elles vont

Once you have the present tense of aller (the I am going part) all you need is an infinitive.
Examples

She is going to eat

she = elle
to eat = manger
1. Present tense of aller in the elle form - elle va
2. Infinitive to eat - manger
3. She is going to eat = elle va manger

We are going to finish

We = nous
to finish = finir
1. Present tense of aller in the nous form - nous allons
2. Infinitive to finish - finir
3. We are going to finish = nous allons finir

They are going to wait

They = ils
to wait = attendre
1. Present tense of aller in the ils form - ils vont
2. Infinitive to wait - attendre
3. They are going to wait = ils vont attendre
What is a mood?

So far, we have been learning to conjugate verbs in the **indicative mood**, the mood of certainty, fact or question. Other moods exist to give commands (**imperative**), express emotions, doubt, wishes and uncertainty (**subjunctive**) and express an action which would or could happen (**conditional**). The conditional is often considered more of a tense than a mood as it conjugates by combining two other tenses, but it is technically a mood; the form of the verb that shows the mode or manner in which a thought is expressed$^1$.

Do not be intimidated by the concept of moods; for the most part, you'll simply learn when to use each one and never have to think about it. Listen, read and speak enough and they will eventually all come naturally without the need to think about the terminology.

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The Conditional Mood

The conditional mood is used to express an action that would or could take place, if the conditions were correct:

I would play
I would have played

The reason it is a mood and not a tense is that it can be expressed in both the present (the first of the two sentences above) and the perfect tense (the second sentence). However, many people consider it a tense because it is simply a combination of the future tense and the imperfect tense.

To conjugate in the present tense:

1. Take the future stem (usually the infinitive)
2. Add the appropriate imperfect ending

Examples

She would eat

she = elle
to eat = manger
1. infinitive form of the verb - manger
2. add the appropriate imperfect ending for elle - mangerait
3. she would eat = elle mangerait
The Subjunctive Mood

The subjunctive is rather a complex mood as it can be used in so many situations. Generally, it is used to express a will, wish, necessity or doubt although there are many other situations in which it can be used.

The subjunctive is dying out in English, although its use with the verb to be remains common:


I wish (that) I were younger
(as opposed to I wish I am younger)

It is important that you be there
(as opposed to It is important that you are there)

In French, the subjunctive only follows the word que. That is not to say that it always follows que, but cannot be used unless que appears before it.

Take the phrase: It is important that you be here

We are clearly expressing a necessity, which indicates that we need to use the subjunctive. The word que is the equivalent of the English that in this case. Therefore:

Il est important que tu sois ici

...is how to say it is important that you be here.
Glossary

affirmative statement  
a declarative sentence; a sentence which states something to be true.

auxiliary verb  
a verb that does not provide meaning to a sentence but helps to establish the tense in which the action takes place.

compound tense  
a tense that is made up of three parts: subject, auxiliary verb and past participle.

conditional  
a form of writing verbs when the action could or would happen if the conditions were sufficient to allow it to happen.

conjugation  
changing a verb's form so that it tells us more about the tense and subject of the action.
# recevoir - to receive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Imperfect</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>je reçois</td>
<td>je recevais</td>
<td>je recevrai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu reçois</td>
<td>tu recevais</td>
<td>tu recevras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il/elle/on reçoit</td>
<td>il/elle/on recevait</td>
<td>il/elle/on recevra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous recevons</td>
<td>nous recevions</td>
<td>nous recevrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous recevez</td>
<td>vous receviez</td>
<td>vous recevrez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ils/elles reçoivent</td>
<td>ils/elles recevaient</td>
<td>ils/elles recevront</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditional</th>
<th>Past Historic</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>je recevrais</td>
<td>je reçu</td>
<td>je reçoive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu recevrais</td>
<td>tu reçu</td>
<td>tu reçoives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il/elle/on recevrait</td>
<td>il/elle/on reçut</td>
<td>il/elle/on reçoive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous recevrions</td>
<td>nous reçûmes</td>
<td>nous recevions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous recevriez</td>
<td>vous reçûtes</td>
<td>vous receviez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ils/elles recevraient</td>
<td>ils/elles reçurent</td>
<td>ils/elles reçoivent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(tu) reçois!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(nous) recevons!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vous) recevez!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Present Participle:** recevant

**Auxiliary verb:** avoir

**Past Participle:** reçu

### Similar Conjugations

- percevoir *to perceive*
- apercevoir *to foresee*
- décevoir *to disappoint*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Imperfect</th>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Conditional</th>
<th>Past Historic</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>je sais</td>
<td>je savais</td>
<td>je saurai</td>
<td>je saurais</td>
<td>je sus</td>
<td>je sache</td>
<td>(tu) sache!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tu sais</td>
<td>tu savais</td>
<td>tu sauras</td>
<td>tu saurais</td>
<td>tu sus</td>
<td>tu sache</td>
<td>(nous) sachions!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>il/elle/on sait</td>
<td>il/elle/on savait</td>
<td>il/elle/on saura</td>
<td>il/elle/on saurait</td>
<td>il/elle/on sut</td>
<td>il/elle/on sache</td>
<td>(vous) sachiez!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nous nous savons</td>
<td>nous savions</td>
<td>nous saurons</td>
<td>nous saurons</td>
<td>nous sutes</td>
<td>nous sachions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vous vous savez</td>
<td>vous saviez</td>
<td>vous saurez</td>
<td>vous saurez</td>
<td>vous sutez</td>
<td>vous sachiez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ils/elles savent</td>
<td>ils/elles savaient</td>
<td>ils/elles sauront</td>
<td>ils/elles sauront</td>
<td>ils/elles sont</td>
<td>ils/elles sachent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Present Participle: sachant  
Auxiliary verb: avoir  
Past Participle: su
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similar Conjugations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>se souvenir* to remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soutenir to support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tenir to hold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devenir* to become</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prévenir to warn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appartenir to belong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contenir to contain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entretenir to maintain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>