The Perfect Tense (often known as **le passé composé**) is used to talk about single, completed actions in the past – eg. I ate, I drank, I left, I bought.

To form **le passé compose**, you need a helping hand from an **auxiliary** verb. In most cases, this is **avoir**.

We then add the **past participle** to the present tense of the auxiliary verb.

**How do we form a past participle?**

For regular verbs, this is quite straightforward…

***-er*** verbs eg. manger *take off* ***–er****, add* ***–é***  mang**é**

***-ir*** verbs eg. finir *take off* ***–ir****, add* ***-i*** fin**i**

***-re*** verbs eg. attendre *take off* ***–re****, add* ***–u*** attend**u**

As I’m sure you’ve guessed by now, there are some exceptions to this rule…

the usual suspects have irregular past participles!

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *avoir* | **eu** |  | *offrir* | **offert** |
| *être* | **été** |  | *couvrir* | **couvert** |
| *prendre* | **pris** |  | *pouvoir* | **pu** |
| *faire* | **fait** |  | *devoir* | **dû** |
| *recevoir* | **reçu** |  | *vouloir* | **voulu** |
| *boire* | **bu** |  | *dire* | **dit** |
| *écrire* | **écrit** |  | *lire* | **lu** |
| *mettre* | **mis** |  | *voir* | **vu** |
| *ouvrir* | **ouvert** |  | *venir* | **venu(e)** |

Right, so now we have our **auxiliary verb** and we have our **past participle**.

Let’s put them together and see what we get…

J’**ai** **mangé** I ate

Nous **avons** **fini** We finished

Elle **a attendu** She waited

However, there are **16** verbs (plus **all** reflexive verbs) whose helping verb is **être**. You can learn these in any way you like (by rote, by acronym or as opposites)…

but you **must** learn them!

**aller arriver descendre partir**

**naître tomber retourner sortir**

**entrer monter rester venir**

**rentrer revenir devenir mourir**

The basic principle is the same: present tense of **auxiliary verb** plus **past participle**

Je **suis** **arrivé** I arrived

Je **suis** **monté** I went up

Verbs which take **être** need to make their **past participle** agree with the subject

Sophie est allé**e**

Elles sont venu**es**

It is the same with reflexive verbs

Je me suis lav**ée** à sept heures *(if I am female)*

Estelle s’est habill**ée**

**Negatives**

To make a sentence negative, the **negative** must ‘hug’ the **auxiliary verb**.

Il **n**’**a** **pas** mangé les legumes

Je **ne** **suis** **pas** allé au cin­éma

**Questions**

To form a question, you can: Use *est-ce que* Est-ce qu’il a fini?

Invert the verb A-t-il fini?

**Pronouns**

**Pronouns** go **before** the **auxiliary verb**. If the sentence is also **negative**, then the **negative** ‘hugs’ the **auxiliary verb** and **pronoun** together.

Je **l**’**ai** mang­é Je **ne** **l**’**ai** **pas** mangé