



FRENCH TENSES EXPLAINED

This is not a list of all the French tenses but the most important ones for the Leaving certificate are explained.

Tenses	Explanations	Examples
Le présent de l'indicatif	This is the present tense in French. You use what saying what you are doing right now but also things you do regularly. In English, it would be used for I am doing something and I do something.	Je parle français – I speak French Je parle à mon professeur – I am speaking to my teacher.
Le futur proche	This tense is to express future events. There are two future tenses in French and this one would be used for the near future. In English, it would be like I am going to play football this afternoon.	Je vais manger une glace après la piscine. I am going to have an ice cream after swimming.
Le future simple	This is the second future tense. It is used to express future events. In English, it would be like I will go to France on my holidays.	J'étudierai l'espagnol pour le bac. I will study Spanish for my <i>bac</i> .
Le conditionnel présent	This tense is to express condition (i.e with sentences with <i>Si</i>). In English, it would be like I would go if ... It is also the tense use for politeness. Je voudrais / j'aimerais / Pourriez-vous Also note the verb Devoir conjugated in the conditionnel présent translate as should. Also note that Pouvoir conjugated in the conditionnel present translate as could.	Je serais à l'heure si les trains étaient ponctuels. I would be on time if trains were punctual. J'aimerais que tu travailles. I would you to work. Je devrais réviser mes verbes. I should revise my verbs. Je pourrais le faire ce week-end. I could do it at the weekend.



Le conditionnel passé	<p>This tense is used when you are talking in the past. In English, it would be like I would have.</p> <p>Also note Devoir used in the conditionnel passé it translates as should have.</p> <p>Also note Pouvoir in the conditionnel passé it translates as could have.</p>	<p>J'aurais pris le train mais les horaires ne correspondaient pas. I would have got the train but the times did not work out.</p> <p>J'aurais dû le faire plus tôt. I should have done it earlier.</p> <p>J'aurais pu le faire hier. I could have done it yesterday.</p>
L'imparfait	<p>This tense is one of the past tenses in French. It does not literally into English. It is used to express: used to; was/were +verb in ING, description in the past</p>	<p>Je jouais du piano quand j'étais jeune. I used to play piano when I was young.</p> <p>Je regardais la télé quand ma mère est arrivée. I was watching TV when my mum arrived.</p> <p>Le soleil brillait et il y avait beaucoup de monde. The sun was shine and tehre was a lot of people.</p>
Le passé composé	<p>This tense is another past tense. It usually translates in English as I have done or I did. You use it to talk about actions in the past.</p>	<p>J'ai pris le bus ce matin. I took the bus this morning.</p> <p>J'ai trop mangé. I have eaten too much.</p>
Le plus que parfait	<p>This tense is also a past tense. Its equivalent in English is had done. In some ways, it is the past from the past.</p>	<p>J'étais déjà arrivé quand il est arrivé. I had already arrived when he arrived.</p>
Le passé simple	<p>This past tense is used in literary pieces. You can use instead of the passé composé.</p>	<p>Je vins dès que j'eus su. I came as soon as I knew.</p>



Le futur antérieur	This is the past future. In English, it translates as will have done.	J'aurai fait mes devoirs d'ici ce soir.
L'impératif	This tense is used to give orders. In English, it translates as for example Do it!	Ferme-le ! Close it!
Le passé récent	This is a past tense to express something which just happened. In English, it would be have just done.	Je viens de passer mon épreuve de musique. I have just sat my music exam.
Subjonctif présent	This tense has no direct equivalent in English. It needs to be learnt and most importantly one should learn when to use (i.e. after which structures, expressions etc...)	Expression of desire: J'aimerais que tu fasses tes devoirs. I would like you to do your homework. Expression of surprise: Je suis étonné que tu sois si contente.
Subjonctif passé	This tense has no direct equivalent in English. It is the past version of the subjonctif présent. It needs to be learnt and most importantly one should learn when to use (i.e. after which structures, expressions etc...)	J'aurais aimé que tu l'aies fait tout de suite. J'étais étonné qu'il y soit arrivé.
L'infinitif	This is when the verb is not conjugated in any tense and has its ending still attached. Its English equivalent is to+verb.	Aller; finir; vendre To go, to finish, to sell
L'infinitif passé	This is a past infinitive. It used after certain preposition like après...	Après avoir mangé, j'ai fait la sieste. After having lunch, I had a nap.