



French A Level

Grammar Booklet: Read through the examples and complete the grammar exercises Q1 – Q8.

This revision over the summer holidays will help to prepare you for the A level course in

September. Complete on file paper.

Grammar Booklet

The present tense

The present tense is used to talk about:

- What is happening now
- What usually happens

E.g.: je regarde, *I watch*, *I am watching* or *I do watch*.

Regular verbs

The formation of regular verbs follows a pattern. Take the ending off the infinitive and add on the correct ending as shown:

-er verbs (e.g.: regarder *to watch*)

je regarde	nous regardons
tu regardes	vous regardez
il/elle/on regarde	ils/elles regardent

-ir verbs (e.g.: finir *to finish*)

je finis	nous finissons
tu finis	vous finissez
il/elle/on finit	ils/elles finissent

-re verbs (e.g.: attendre *to wait*)

j'attends	nous attendons
tu attends	vous attendez
il/elle/on attend	ils/elles attendent

Attention: A common mistake is to translate directly. People think that *I am studying* must include some part of 'être'. This is wrong! French works differently. Try to remember that what might be three words in English is not necessarily going to be three words in French. In fact, French verbs are much easier, you just have to get the right form.

Remember, you always learn verbs in the following order:

I-you-he-she-we-you-they!

Entraînez-vous

With a partner make up three imaginary verbs and conjugate them according to the patterns you have just revised.

Pronunciation of the present tense sometimes causes problems. Bear in mind that with all three types of verbs you will only hear -ez which sounds like 'ay' at the end in the 'vous' form. Also, you do not pronounce the -ent at the end of the plural form.

Practise saying these: j'aime, je déteste, j'étudie, je commence, ils aiment.

And finally 'on' is a top exam tip. The French often use 'on' instead of 'nous', it takes the same part of the verb as 'il/elle', e.g. on commence, on parle....

The partitive article 'some'

The words for 'some' are **du** (m), **de la** (f), **des** (plural).

Masculine	Feminine	Plural
Du	de la	des
De l'	de l'	

Du coca *some* cola, de la salade *some* salad, des bananes *some* bananas, de l'eau *some* water.

Irregular verbs

These verbs have their own unique pattern, and must be learned by heart.

Q1 Entraînez-vous

Refer to the regular verb patterns above, and then change these infinitives. Give two present tense meanings for each verb. E.g.: je (ranger) je range *I tidy, I am tidying*

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1 je (commencer) | 2 tu (aimer) |
| 3 il (finir) | 4 elle (aider) |
| 5 on (descendre) | |

Entraînez-vous

Use a verb table to translate these phrases:

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| 1 I go | 2 you have |
| 3 he does | 4 she is |
| 5 we take | |

Q2 Entraînez-vous

Translate these sentences into French.

- I study physics.
- She speaks German.
- I find maths boring.
- They (m) think that PE is great.
- We like ICT.
- He hates art.
- School finishes at 3.15.
- English lasts for two hours.
- Do you (vous) hate French too?
- They (f) find drama extremely difficult.

Attention: **Du** and **de la** shorten to **de l'** before a vowel or a mute 'h'.

The words for 'some' are used:

- When translating the word 'some', e.g.:
Donne-moi du papier.
Give me some paper.
- When there is no article in English, e.g.:
J'ai acheté du pain et de la glace.
I brought bread and ice-cream.

Q3 Entraînez-vous

Choose the correct ending each time. Look carefully at the words: you don't need the glossary!

1. Passe-moi du ... pain/tomates.
2. J'ai mangé de la ... haricots/tarte
3. Avez-vous des ... stylos/crayon?
4. Dans ma ville il y a des ... magasin/maisons.
5. Il a bu du ... Orangina/coca.

The perfect tense

The perfect tense is used to talk about something which happened in the past, e.g.:

J'ai regardé.
I watched, I have watched or I did watch.

Two parts are needed to form the perfect tense:

- The **present tense** of the verb **avoir** or **être**
- The **past participle** of the main verb

Avoir verbs

The vast majority of verbs form their perfect tense with **avoir**.

Regular verbs

The **past participle** of the main verb is formed as follows:

-er verbs: take off **-er** and add **é**,
e.g.: regardé *watched*

ir verbs: take off **-r**, e.g.: fini *finished*

-re verbs: take off **-re** and add **u**, e.g.: attendu *waited*

Irregular verbs

The past participle of irregular verbs should be learned by heart.

elle a **appris** *she learned*
j'ai **bu** *I drank*

on a compris	<i>we understood</i>
tu as connu	<i>you knew</i>
ils ont conduit	<i>they drove</i>
il a cru	<i>he believed, thought</i>
elles ont dû	<i>they had to</i>
elles ont écrit	<i>they wrote</i>
tu as été	<i>you were</i>
elle a eu	<i>she had</i>
il a fait	<i>he made/did</i>
j'ai fini	<i>I have finished</i>
on a lu	<i>we read</i>
vous avez mis	<i>I put</i>
nous avons pris	<i>we took</i>
ils ont pu	<i>they could</i>
nous avons su	<i>we know</i>
vous avez vu	<i>you saw</i>
j'ai voulu	<i>I wanted to</i>

Être verbs

Fourteen verbs form their perfect tense with **être**.

je suis allé	<i>I went</i>
je suis arrivé	<i>I arrived</i>
je suis descendu	<i>I went down</i>
je suis entré	<i>I entered</i>
je suis monté	<i>I went up</i>
je suis mort	<i>I died</i>
je suis né	<i>I was born</i>
je suis parti	<i>I left</i>
je suis rentré	<i>I went back in</i>
je suis resté	<i>I stayed</i>
je suis retourné	<i>I returned</i>
je suis sorti	<i>I went out</i>
je suis tombé	<i>I fell</i>
je suis venu	<i>I came</i>

Try to remember these in the following way:
MRS VANDERTRAMP verbs

Monté
Retourné
Sorti
Venu
Arrivé
Né
Descendu
Entré
Resté
Tombé
Rentré

Allé
Mort
Parti

Reflexive verbs also use **être**.

Je me suis couché à minuit
I went to bed at midnight.

Attention: With **être** verbs in the perfect tense, add **-e** to the past participle for feminine, add **-s** for plural, and add **-es** for feminine and plural, e.g.:

Elle est partie. *She left*
Marie et Laure sont sorties. *Marie and Laure went out.*

The imperfect tense

The imperfect tense is used to:

- describe what things were like in the past
- say what was happening at a given moment
- say what used to happen

Je regardais.
I was watching or I used to watch

It is formed from the **nous** part of the present tense, the **-ons** part is taken off.

The following imperfect endings are a sign that the imperfect tense is being used.

Person	Imperfect ending
je	-ais
tu	-ais
il/elle/on	-ait
nous	-ions
vous	-iez
ils/elles	-aient

j'avais un chien. *I used to have a dog.*
Il faisait beau. *The weather was nice.*

Attention: For **être** (to be), the imperfect endings are added on to the **ét-** stem.

J'étais triste. *I was sad.*
C'était chouette. *It was great.*

Q4. Entraînez-vous

What were they doing when the murder was committed? Translate the alibis.

E.g.: Je passais l'aspirateur
I was doing the hoovering.

1. Je lavais la voiture.
2. Je faisais mes devoirs.
3. Je regardais une vidéo.
4. Je jouais aux cartes avec des amis.
5. Je promenais le chien.
6. Je dormais.
7. Je mangeais un hamburger au McDo.
8. Je parlais au téléphone.
9. Je me douchais.
10. J'étais au cinéma

Q5. Entraînez-vous

Put these sentences into the imperfect, and then translate them into English.

Il (pleuvoir).
Ils (nager) dans la mer.
J'(étudier) l'allemand.
Il (regarder) le spectacle.
J'(avoir) souvent mal à la tête.

Q6. Entraînez-vous

Translate these sentences into French.

1. The hotel was great.
2. She had red hair.
3. You were too tired.
4. We were in France.
5. We were staying in a caravan.

Conditional tense

The conditional tense is used to say what would happen in the future.

Je regarderais. *I would watch.*

It is formed by adding imperfect endings to the future stem.

Person	Conditional tense endings		
Je	-ais	vous	-iez
Tu	-ais	ils	-aient
Il/elle/on	-ait	elles	-aient
Nous	-ions		

J'irais en Amérique, si j'étais riche.
I would go to America if I were rich.

Elles voudraient rester à la maison
They would like to stay at home.

This combination of conditional + imperfect is very impressive in exams or coursework

Q7. Entraînez-vous

What would you do if you won the Lottery?
Complete each sentence.

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1 J'achèterais... | 4 J'irais.... |
| 2 Je visiterais.... | 5 J'aurais.... |
| 3 J'habiterais.... | |

Q8. Entraînez-vous

Put the verbs in brackets into the conditional, and then translate the sentences into English.

1. J'(aimer) travailler dehors. Je pense que ce (être) moins ennuyeux.
2. Je (préférer) être hôtesse de l'air. Ce (être) plus amusant.
3. Je (vouloir) être PDG - ce (être) passionnant.
4. Il (aimer) être footballeur. Il (gagner) beaucoup d'argent.
5. Elle (vouloir) voyager autour du monde pour avoir de l'expérience.