

The Imperfect Tense

L'Imparfait

Formation is easy if you know your present tense!



The imperfect tense is one of the past tenses. So far you will know the Passé Composé (Perfect Tense).

Here is the difference.

Passé Composé (Perfect)	L'Imparfait (Imperfect)
<p>Completed actions in the past. In English we would use <u>Perfect Simple</u> (I did) or <u>Present Perfect</u> (I have done)</p>	<p>Incompleted actions in the past. Things that used to happen Setting a past scene In English we would use <u>Perfect continuous</u> (I was doing) or we would use used to or sometimes I would</p>

Just focus on the **was doing / used to do** usage for now.

Here's how to form the IMPERFECT

1. Take the 'nous' form of your verb in the present tense.
2. Remove the 'nous' and the ending (usually ons).
3. Use what is left as your STEM.
4. Add the IMPERFECT endings (right)

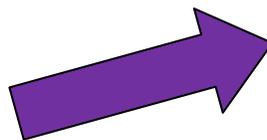
EXAMPLE: REGARDER

Present tense nous form:

Nous **regard**ons



Stem becomes: **regard**



Je	regard	ais
I was watching		
Tu	regard	ais
You were watching		
Il / elle / on	regard	ait
He / she / it was watching		
Nous	regard	ions
We were watching		
Vous	regard	iez
You were watching		
Ils / elles	regard	aient
They were watching		

Just watch out for être. It is the only real irregular imperfect verb as we don't take the present tense nous form to make the stem but we still use the same endings.

Je	ét	ais
I was		
Tu	ét	ais
You were		
Il / elle / on	ét	ait
He / she / it was		
Nous	ét	ions
We were		
Vous	ét	iez
You were		
Ils / elles	ét	aient
They were		

Notice how the meanings are slightly different. We use this verb to say what was.

J'étais content – I was happy

C'était bien – It was great

Then there are some other verbs that have spelling changes:

Verbs ending in **ger** such as **manger**:

Je	mange	ais
I was		
Tu	mange	ais
You were		
Il / elle / on	mange	ait
He / she / it was		
Nous	mang	ions
We were		
Vous	mang	iez
You were		
Ils / elles	mange	aient
They were		

These verbs lose the **e** in the nous and vous forms.

and verbs ending in **cer** such as **commencer**:

Je	commenç	ais
I was starting		
Tu	commenç	ais
You were starting		
Il / elle / on	commenç	ait
He / she / it was starting		
Nous	commenc	ions
We were starting		
Vous	commenc	iez
You were starting		
Ils / elles	commenç	aient
They were starting		

These verbs lose the ç in the nous and vous forms.

Some verbs look strange in the nous and vous forms because they end up with double i. This is normal.

Je	ri	ais
I was laughing		
Tu	ri	ais
You were laughing		
Il / elle / on	ri	ait
He / she / it was laughing		
Nous	ri	ions
We were laughing		
Vous	ri	iez
You were laughing		
Ils / elles	ri	aient
They were laughing		

Remember that ALL of these could be translated as *I used to...*