

THE PAST TENSE IN FRENCH

IRREGULAR VERBS WITH **AVOIR**

(a.k.a. the perfect tense)

When to use it:

- when describing events that happened in the past
- when describing a single, completed action – ‘I ate breakfast’ etc
- when you would say “I went...” or “I have eaten...” or “I was bored...” in English



To conjugate a perfect tense verb, we must first revise the verb AVOIR (to have). Then we add our past participle: **‘we (have) + eaten our dinner’**

Here is the verb AVOIR:

ENGLISH Subject pronoun	French Subject pronoun	AVOIR to have
I	j'	ai
you (sgl.)	tu	as
he / she / we	il / elle / on	a
we	nous	avons
you (pl.)	vous	avez
they (m.) / (f.)	ils / elles	ont

RULE:

1. Use the right subject pronoun (I, you, he, she etc)
2. Add the right part of **AVOIR**.
3. Add the past participle next to this (check the verb grid below)
i.e. *J'ai eu = I (have) had*
il a ri = he (has) laughed
nous avons vu = we (have) seen/saw

Irregular verbs DO NOT follow a pattern and must be learnt by heart. The good news is, you will already have seen some of these, and will be using them frequently, so highlight them as you learn/use them and you'll see how quickly they become part of your French store of words ☺

<i>Avoir</i> (to have)	→ eu (had)	<i>Prendre</i> (to take)	→ pris (took)
<i>Boire</i> (to drink)	→ bu (drank)	<i>Pouvoir</i> (to be able to)	→ pu (was able to)
<i>Devoir</i> (to have to)	→ dû (had to)	<i>Recevoir</i> (to receive)	→ reçu (received)
<i>Dire</i> (to say)	→ dit (said)	<i>Rire</i> (to laugh)	→ ri (laughed)
<i>Écrire</i> (to write)	→ écrit (wrote)	<i>Savoir</i> (to know)	→ su (knew)
<i>Etre</i> (to be)	→ été (was)	<i>Suivre</i> (to follow)	→ suivi (followed)
<i>Faire</i> (to do/to make)	→ fait (did/made)	<i>Tenir</i> (to hold)	→ tenu (held)
<i>Lire</i> (to read)	→ lu (read)	<i>Voir</i> (to see)	→ vu (saw)
<i>Mettre</i> (to put)	→ mis (put)	<i>Vouloir</i> (to want)	→ voulu (wanted)

Examples:

I (have) had	= J'ai eu	We (have) done	= nous avons fait
You (have) said	= Tu as dit	You (plural) (have) written	= vous avez écrit
He (has) read	= il a lu	They (m.) (have) known	= ils ont su
She (has) taken	= elle a pris	They (f.) (have) wanted	= elles ont voulu