

FRENCH VERBS.

2073

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Oxford New York

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford New York Toronto

Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi

Petaling Jaya Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo

Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town

Melbourn Auckland

and associated companies in

Berlin Ibadan

Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press

© Oxford University Press 1991

First published 1991

First issued as an Oxford University Press paperback 1991

Reprinted 1992

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Rowlinson, William 1931-

French verbs.— (Oxford mini reference).

1. French language. Verbs—Lists

I. Title

445

ISBN 0-19-282772-3

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Data available

Printed in Great Britain by

Clays Ltd,

Bungay, Suffolk

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank Micheline Windsor, Head of French at Sheffield Polytechnic, for her careful reading of the manuscript, and the editorial staff of Oxford University Press for their unfailing support, meticulous copy-reading, sound advice, good humour, and encouragement.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

1 Look up the verb about which you need information in the verb directory.

This lists alphabetically all irregular verbs in current use and all commonly used regular verbs. It also lists reflexive verbs separately where these differ substantially in meaning from the simple verb, or where the reflexive verb has a different prepositional construction, or where the simple verb is not in common use.

2 You will find there:

- the preposition or prepositions (if any) that the verb takes with a following infinitive
- the preposition or prepositions (if any) that it takes with a following noun or pronoun
- its commonest meaning or meanings
- the auxiliary (or auxiliaries) with which the compound tenses are formed
- whether the verb is regular or irregular
- the pattern verb on which the verb is conjugated
- the number of that verb in the pattern table

3 If the directory has not yet given you all the information you need about the verb you are looking up, turn to the pattern verb given.

4 The pattern verb shows:

- the present and perfect infinitives, the

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present, past and perfect participles, and the imperative

- all the active tenses of the verb in full
- any special peculiarities of the pattern verb
- verbs similarly conjugated that have slight changes from the pattern verb

If the pattern verb to which you are referred is preceded in the directory by an asterisk, the verb you are looking up will show a slight deviation from the pattern. It will be listed at the foot of the second page of the pattern verb, and full details of its deviation from the pattern will be given there.

If you need a passive tense of the verb, turn to the pattern for passive tenses on pages xx-xxii.

VERB FORMATION

Verb conjugations

There are three patterns of regular verb in French, and about seventy patterns of irregular verb. The three regular patterns, or conjugations, have infinitives ending:

- er (first conjugation)
- ir (second conjugation)
- re (third conjugation)

As even a quick glance at the verb directory will reveal, by far the greatest number of regular verbs are first conjugation, following the pattern of the verb **donner**, 30. A much smaller number are second conjugation, following the pattern of the verb **finir**, 36, and a very few are third conjugation, following the pattern of **vendre**, 70.

All verbs in all tenses have six forms, according to the subject, **je**, **tu**, or **il** (these are sometimes called the first, second, and third persons of the verb); and according to whether the subject is singular (**je**, **tu**, **il**) or plural (**nous**, **vous**, **ils**).

All singular nouns and all singular subject-pronouns other than **je** and **tu** are followed by the **il** form of the verb. This includes the pronouns **elle** and **on**.

Plural nouns and pronouns (including **elles**) are

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followed by the *ils* form of the verb, unless the sense demands a *nous* or *vous* form (*ma femme et moi partons maintenant, my wife and I are leaving now*).

Reflexive verbs

Reflexive verbs have the same object as their subject. In English the object is either one of the *-self* words (*he scratches himself*) or *each other* (*they dislike each other*). Verbs with the latter type of object are sometimes called reciprocal verbs in English. In French both reflexive and reciprocal verbs use the reflexive pronouns: *me, te, se*, (singular) and *nous, vous, se* (plural). These stand in the usual position for pronouns, in front of the verb:

il gratte, he scratches

il se gratte, he scratches himself

ils se grattent, they scratch themselves, or, they scratch each other (one another)

In cases like the last one French relies on the context to distinguish between the two possible meanings, or if necessary adds *l'un l'autre* to indicate *each other*:

ils se grattent l'un l'autre. they scratch each other

Reflexive verbs are listed separately in the verb directory if they have a completely different meaning from the simple verb, if the simple verb

is no longer in current use, or if they have a special prepositional construction following them.

First-conjugation irregularities

Several very large groups of first-conjugation verbs have slight but predictable irregularities. They conform to one or other of the four following patterns.

● Verbs ending **-e[consonant]er**

First-conjugation verbs ending **-e[consonant]er** change the **e** to **è** before a syllable with a mute or unstressed **e** in it. This is in order to prevent a weak 'e' sound at the end of the stem of the verb; the verbs are otherwise regular. The pattern verb to which such verbs are referred is **acheter**, 2 (**j'achète**, etc.). As well as single consonants, the consonant combination **vr** is also found after the **e** in this group of verbs.

In the case of some verbs ending **-eler** and **-eter** the same sound change is produced by keeping the **e** without an accent and doubling the following **l** or **t**. The pattern verbs to which they are referred are **appeler**, 5 (**j'appelle**, etc.) and **jeter**, 40 (**je jette**, etc.).

● Verbs ending **-é[consonant]er**

First-conjugation verbs ending **-é[consonant]er** change the **é** to **è** before a syllable with a mute **e** in the same way as those ending **-e[consonant]er** do.

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The pattern verb to which such verbs are referred is **préférer**, 52 (*je préfère*, etc.). This type of verb only makes the change before a mute **e**, not before an unstressed **e**. It therefore does not make the change in the future or conditional tenses, where it keeps its **é**: *je préférerai*, etc, *je préférerais*, etc.

As well as single consonants, the consonant combinations **br**, **ch**, **cr**, **gl**, **gn**, **gr**, and **tr** may be found after the **é** in this group of verbs. The combinations **gu** and **qu** are also found in this position.

- Verbs ending **-ayer**, **-oyer**, **-uyer**

First-conjugation verbs ending **-ayer**, **-oyer**, and **-uyer** change the **y** to **i** before a syllable containing a mute or unstressed **e**. The pattern verb to which these verbs are referred is **appuyer**, 6. In the case of **-ayer** verbs the change is optional (so, *je paie* or *je paye*, etc.)

- Verbs ending **-cer** and **-ger**

First-conjugation verbs ending **-cer** and **-ger** change the **c** to **ç** and the **g** to **ge** before the letters **a** and **o**. This is to keep the **c** as an 's' sound and the **g** as a 'j' sound, as elsewhere in the verb. The pattern verbs to which such verbs are referred are **commencer**, 13 and **manger**, 42.

- Double irregularities

Verbs ending **-ecer**, **-écer**, and **-éger** show both the **e** changes and the **c/g** changes discussed

above. The pattern verbs to which such verbs are referred are **dépecer**, 27, **rapiécer**, 55 and **protéger**, 54. No verbs end **-eger**.

Compound tenses

Compound tenses of most French verbs are formed with **avoir** plus their past participle, in exact parallel to English compound tenses: **j'ai donné**, *I have given*; **j'avais donné**, *I had given*.

A number of French verbs, however, form their compound tenses with **être** instead of **avoir**. The auxiliary verb (or verbs) that each verb takes is given individually in the verb directory.

The following are the groups of verbs that take **être** instead of **avoir**.

- All reflexive verbs:

se battre: **je me suis battu**, *I have fought*
je m'étais battu, *I had fought*

- A small number of intransitive verbs, many of them expressing some form of motion:

aller , <i>go</i>	monter , <i>go up</i>
accourir , <i>run up</i>	mourir , <i>die</i>
arriver , <i>arrive</i>	naître , <i>be born</i>
décéder (rare), <i>die</i>	partir , <i>depart</i>
descendre , <i>go down</i>	rester , <i>stay</i>
échoir (rare), <i>fall due</i>	retourner , <i>return</i>
éclore (rare), <i>hatch</i>	sortir , <i>go out</i>
entrer , <i>enter</i>	tomber , <i>fall</i>
	venir , <i>come</i>

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aller: je suis allé, *I have gone*
j'étais allé, *I had gone*

Most intransitive compounds of these verbs also take être:

devenir: je suis devenu, *I have become*
j'étais devenu, *I had become*

Note that some of the above verbs can also be used transitively (with a direct object). In this case they are always conjugated with **avoir**:

sortir = *take out*: j'ai sorti une pièce de dix francs, *I've taken out a ten-franc coin*

The verb directory indicates such verbs.

Some intransitive verbs conjugated with **avoir** are also found with être:

passer, go past: j'ai passé or je suis passé, *I have gone past*

The verb directory indicates such verbs.

Agreement of the past participle

Past participles show gender and plurality in the same way as adjectives, by adding **e** for feminine singular, **s** for masculine plural, **es** for feminine plural. They agree as follows.

- Verbs (other than reflexives) forming their compound tenses with être

The past participle agrees with the subject:

aller: *elle est allée, she has gone*

● Verbs forming their compound tenses with **avoir**

The past participle rarely changes. This is because, with **avoir** verbs, the past participle agrees with the direct object, but only if this precedes the verb:

donner: *les cadeaux que je t'ai donnés, the presents I've given you*
je te les ai donnés, I've given them to you
quels cadeaux m'as-tu donnés?, what presents did you give me?

Les cadeaux, les, and quels cadeaux are the direct objects of the three sentences. They precede the verb, so the past participle agrees in each case. But

je t'ai donné des cadeaux, I've given you presents

Here, the direct object, **des cadeaux**, comes after the verb, so in this case (much the commonest with **avoir** verbs) the past participle does not agree.

● Reflexive verbs

These also agree with a direct object that precedes the verb. In the case of most reflexive verbs this

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is the reflexive pronoun, which is the same as the subject:

se lever: *ils se sont déjà levés, they have already got up*

The past participle agrees with **se** (= *themselves*), which is the same as the subject, **ils**.

This is by far the commonest case with reflexives. However, notice the following examples, where the reflexive pronoun is a dative object, not a direct object. The past participle does not agree with it:

se casser: *il s'est cassé la jambe, he has broken his leg*

quelle jambe s'est-il cassée?, which leg has he broken?

In the first sentence the past participle, **cassé** does not agree, because the direct object, **la jambe**, does not precede the verb. In the second sentence the past participle agrees with the direct object, **quelle jambe**, which precedes the verb. It adds an **e**, since **jambe** is feminine singular.

The passive

The passive is formed in French exactly as in English, by using the appropriate tense of **être**, *to be*, plus the past participle:

il est détesté, he is hated—present

il était détesté, he was hated—imperfect etc.

In the passive the past participle behaves as an adjective and always agrees with the subject:

elle est détestée, *she is hated*

ils étaient détestés, *they were hated*

Overleaf you will find the complete conjugation of a verb in the passive.

PASSIVE FORMS OF THE VERB

aider, to help

present infinitive	être aidé (e) (s)	<i>to be helped</i>
perfect infinitive	avoir été aidé (e) (s)	<i>to have been helped</i>
present participle	étant aidé (e) (s)	<i>being helped</i>
past participle	été aidé (e) (s)	<i>been helped</i>
perfect participle	ayant été aidé (e) (s)	<i>having been helped</i>
imperative	sois aidé (e)	<i>be helped</i>
	soyons aidé(e)s	<i>let's be helped</i>
	soyez aidé (e) (s)	<i>be helped</i>

present

je suis aidé(e)
I am helped
tu es aidé(e)
il/elle est aidé(e)
nous sommes aidé(e)s
vous êtes aidé(e)(s)
ils/elles sont aidé(e)s

perfect

j'ai été aidé(e)
I have been helped
tu as été aidé(e)
il/elle a été aidé(e)
nous avons été aidé(e)s
vous avez été aidé(e)(s)
ils/elles ont été aidé(e)s

imperfect

j'étais aidé(e)
I was helped
tu étais aidé(e)
il/elle était aidé(e)
nous étions aidé(e)s
vous étiez aidé(e)(s)
ils/elles étaient aidé(e)s

pluperfect

j'avais été aidé(e)
I had been helped
tu avais été aidé(e)
il/elle avait été aidé(e)
nous avions été aidé(e)s
vous aviez été aidé(e)(s)
ils/elles avaient été aidé(e)s

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future

je serai aidé(e)

I shall be helped

tu seras aidé(e)

il/elle sera aidé(e)

nous serons aidé(e)s

vous serez aidé(e)(s)

ils/elles seront aidé(e)s

past historic

je fus aidé(e)

I was helped

tu fus aidé(e)

il/elle fut aidé(e)

nous fûmes aidé(e)s

vous fûtes aidé(e)(s)

ils/elles furent aidé(e)s

conditional

je serais aidé(e)

I should be helped

tu serais aidé(e)

il/elle serait aidé(e)

nous serions aidé(e)s

vous seriez aidé(e)(s)

ils/elles seraient aidé(e)s

present subjunctive

je sois aidé(e)

I may be helped

tu sois aidé(e)

il/elle soit aidé(e)

nous soyons aidé(e)s

vous soyez aidé(e)(s)

ils/elles soient aidé(e)s

future perfect

j'aurai été aidé(e)

I shall have been helped

tu auras été aidé(e)

il/elle aura été aidé(e)

nous aurons été aidé(e)s

vous aurez été aidé(e)(s)

ils/elles auront été aidé(e)s

imperfect subjunctive

je fusse aidé(e)

I might be helped

tu fusses aidé(e)

il/elle fût aidé(e)

nous fussions aidé(e)s

vous fussiez aidé(e)(s)

ils/elles fussent aidé(e)s

conditional perfect

j'aurais été aidé(e)

I should have been helped

tu aurais été aidé(e)

il/elle aurait été aidé(e)

nous aurions été aidé(e)s

vous auriez été aidé(e)(s)

ils/elles auraient été aidé(e)s

perfect subjunctive

j'aie été aidé(e)

I may have been helped

tu aies été aidé(e)

il/elle ait été aidé(e)

nous ayons été aidé(e)s

vous ayez été aidé(e)(s)

ils/elles aient été aidé(e)s