

Telling friends what you did last weekend

French A2 (elementary) · Lesson

Quick answer: To talk about last weekend in French, use the passé composé: the present of avoir or être plus a past participle. Most verbs take avoir (j'ai mangé); movement verbs such as aller and rester take être and agree with the subject (elle est partie). Add markers like hier and samedi dernier.

Level: French A2 (CEFR elementary) · **Standards:** CEFR A2, Spoken production

What is the passé composé and when do you use it?

Definition

The passé composé reports a finished action: what you did, saw or decided. It has two parts, an auxiliary verb in the present (avoir or être) and a past participle. In conversation it replaces the English simple past (I ate) and the present perfect (I have eaten).

How do you form it with avoir?

Most verbs use avoir. Take the present of avoir, then add the participle: -er becomes -é, -ir becomes -i, -re becomes -u.

Subject	cuisiner	finir	attendre
je / j'	j' ai cuisiné	j' ai fini	j' ai attendu
tu	tu as cuisiné	tu as fini	tu as attendu
il / elle	il a cuisiné	il a fini	il a attendu
nous	nous avons cuisiné	nous avons fini	nous avons attendu
vous	vous avez cuisiné	vous avez fini	vous avez attendu
ils / elles	ils ont cuisiné	ils ont fini	ils ont attendu

Common irregular participles: faire → fait, prendre → pris, voir → vu, boire → bu, avoir → eu, être → été.



Three moments of a weekend, each with a *passé composé* sentence.

Which verbs use être?

Rule

About fifteen verbs of movement or change take être: aller, venir, arriver, partir, entrer, sortir, rentrer, rester, tomber, monter, descendre. So do all reflexive verbs (Je me suis levé tôt). The participle then agrees with the subject, like an adjective.

Examples

- Inès est allée au marché de Rabat. — Inès went to the Rabat market.
- Mes amis sont restés à Lille. — My friends stayed in Lille.
- Nous sommes rentrées à minuit. — We (two women) got home at midnight.



with être, the participle agrees with the subject

Every *passé composé* sentence is built from the same three blocks.

How do you make it negative and place the time?

Wrap the auxiliary: Je **n'ai pas** dormi. Elle **n'est pas** sortie. Time markers go at the start or end of the sentence:

French	English
hier, hier soir	yesterday, last night
samedi dernier, le week-end dernier	last Saturday, last weekend
il y a deux jours	two days ago
d'abord, ensuite, enfin	first, then, finally

Watch out

English speakers say j'ai allé because "I have gone" uses "have". In French, aller takes être: je suis allé(e). Also, j'ai regardé means both "I watched" and "I have watched".

Culture note

French speakers say le week-end, an English loanword. Sunday morning often means la grasse matinée (sleeping in) or a trip to the open-air market.

Zoé's tip

Picture a house: if you go in, out, up, down, or stay in it, the verb moves into the être house. Everything else lives with avoir.

Key points to remember

- Most verbs form the passé composé with avoir + participle: nous avons visité.
- About fifteen verbs of movement or change, plus reflexive verbs, take être: je suis allé(e).
- With être, the participle agrees with the subject: elles sont arrivées.
- Negation surrounds the auxiliary: je n'ai pas travaillé.
- Useful markers: hier soir, samedi dernier, le week-end dernier, il y a deux jours.

Telling Friends What You Did Last Weekend: frequently asked questions

How do you say "I went to the market" in French?

Say je suis allé(e) au marché. Aller takes être, so the participle agrees with the subject: allé for a man, allée for a woman.

How do you choose between avoir and être?

Use avoir for most verbs. Use être for about fifteen verbs of movement or change (aller, partir,

rester, sortir...) and for reflexive verbs. Learning them as a short list works best.

When does the past participle agree?

With être, it agrees with the subject: Inès est partie, ils sont partis. With avoir, it stays unchanged: elle a mangé, ils ont mangé.

How do you say “last weekend” in French?

Say le week-end dernier. For a specific day, put dernier after it: samedi dernier. For “yesterday” use hier, and for “two days ago” use il y a deux jours.

How do you ask someone about their weekend?

Ask Qu'est-ce que tu as fait ce week-end ? or, more formally, Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait ce week-end ?. Another friendly option is Tu as passé un bon week-end ?