

Finishing, choosing and waiting: -ir and -re verbs

French 1 (high school) · Lesson

Quick answer: Regular -ir verbs like finir drop -ir and add -is, -is, -it, -issons, -issez, -issent. Regular -re verbs like vendre drop -re and add -s, -s, nothing, -ons, -ez, -ent. In the present tense the stem stays steady, so je finis and je vends follow a predictable pattern.

Level: French 1 (high school, ACTFL Novice) · **Standards:** ACTFL Novice Mid, WL 1.1 Interpersonal, WL 1.2 Interpretive, WL 1.3 Presentational

How do you conjugate regular -ir verbs?

Rule: -ir verbs

Remove -ir to find the stem (fin-). Add -is, -is, -it in the singular and -issons, -issez, -issent in the plural.

Verbs that follow this pattern: finir (to finish), choisir (to choose), réussir (to succeed), remplir (to fill in), grandir (to grow up).

How do you conjugate regular -re verbs?

Rule: -re verbs

Remove -re (vend-). Add -s, -s, *nothing*, -ons, -ez, -ent.

Subject	finir	vendre
je / j'	finis	vends
tu	finis	vends
il / elle / on	finit	vend
nous	finissons	vendons
vous	finissez	vendez
ils / elles	finissent	vendent

-IR : fin + ending		-RE : vend + ending	
je	-is	je	-s
tu	-is	tu	-s
il / elle / on	-it	il / elle / on	(rien)
nous	-issons	nous	-ons
vous	-issez	vous	-ez
ils / elles	-issent	ils / elles	-ent

Both families share the same stem all through the present tense.

More -re verbs: attendre (to wait for), répondre (to answer), perdre (to lose), entendre (to hear).

Examples

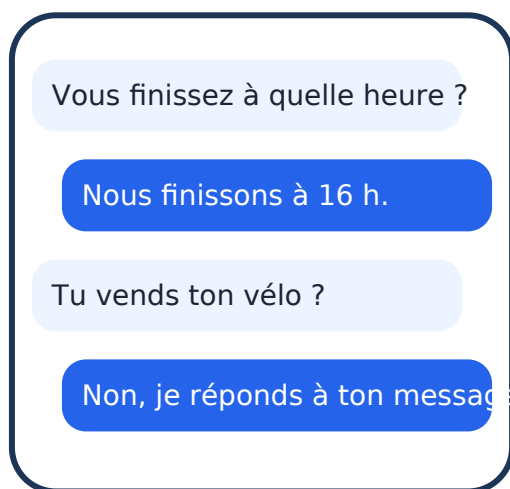
- Nous finissons le match à 16 h. — We finish the game at 4 p.m.
- Sofia choisit un gâteau à la pistache. — Sofia picks a pistachio cake.
- Mon oncle de Dakar vend des mangues. — My uncle in Dakar sells mangoes.
- Vous répondez au prof ? — Are you answering the teacher?

How do you ask questions and say no with these verbs?

For a yes-or-no question, put *est-ce que* in front of the sentence: *Est-ce que tu finis à 15 h ?* — Are you finishing at 3 p.m.? For a negative sentence, wrap the verb with *ne ... pas*: *Je ne vends pas mon vélo.* — I'm not selling my bike. Before a vowel, *ne* shortens to *n'*: *Elle n'attend pas Lucas.* — She isn't waiting for Lucas. The stem never changes when you add a negative or a question word, so the work is only in choosing the right ending for the subject.

A quick method: first find the subject, then the verb family, then the ending. For *Mes cousines* (*choisir*), the subject is *elles*, the family is *-ir*, so write *Mes cousines choisissent*.

What is a typical use in a text conversation?



Two friends text each other with *-ir* and *-re* verbs.

Common mistake

English speakers write *il vendt* or *il attende*. The correct forms are *il vend* and *il attend*. Also, *attendre* already means "wait for": say *J'attends le bus.*, not *J'attends pour le bus.*

Culture note

In French, *réussir un examen* means to *pass* a test. To *take* a test, say *passer un examen*. The two verbs are easy to confuse.

Zoé's tip

Listen for the hiss! Plural *-ir* verbs say a snake sound: *nous finiSSons*, *ils finiSSent*. For *-re* verbs, the *il* form is the stem alone, ready to use.

Key points to remember

- Regular *-ir* verbs add *-iss-* in the plural: *nous finissons*, *ils finissent*.
- Regular *-re* verbs have no ending in the *il/elle/on* form: *il vend*.
- Common *-ir* verbs: *finir*, *choisir*, *réussir*, *remplir*.
- Common *-re* verbs: *vendre*, *attendre*, *répondre*, *perdre*.
- *Attendre* means "to wait for", so no extra word is needed.

Finishing, Choosing and Waiting: -IR and -RE Verbs: frequently asked questions

How do you conjugate *finir* in the present tense?

Use je finis, tu finis, il finit, nous finissons, vous finissez, ils finissent. Notice the -iss- that appears in the plural.

Why do -ir verbs add -iss- in the plural?

That is the pattern of this verb family: nous, vous and ils/elles use the longer stem finiss-. Only the regular -ir verbs do this; verbs like partir and dormir follow a different pattern.

How does the il form of an -re verb end?

It has no ending at all. Say il vend and elle répond. Adding -t or -e is a typical learner mistake.

Do I need a preposition after attendre?

No. Attendre means "to wait for", so you say J'attends Léa without pour.

How do you make an -ir or -re verb negative?

Put ne ... pas around the verb: Je ne finis pas and Il n'attend pas.