

Making plans and promises in the simple future

French 3 (high school) · Lesson

Quick answer: The simple future (le futur simple) says what will happen. For most verbs, keep the whole infinitive and add -ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ont; for -re verbs, drop the final e first. About a dozen common verbs use irregular stems, such as ser-, aur-, ir-, fer- and pourr-. After quand, French uses the future too.

Level: French 3 (high school, ACTFL Intermediate Low) · **Standards:** ACTFL Intermediate Low, WL 1.1 Interpersonal, WL 1.2 Interpretive, WL 1.3 Presentational

How do you form the simple future?

Definition

The *futur simple* is one word, not two. Take the infinitive, keep its final *r*, and add the endings of the present tense of avoir: **-ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ont**. Verbs ending in *-re* lose their final *e* first.

Subject	parler	finir	vendre
je / j'	parler ai	finir ai	vendr ai
tu	parler as	finir as	vendr as
il / elle / on	parler a	finir a	vendr a
nous	parler ons	finir ons	vendr ons
vous	parler ez	finir ez	vendr ez
ils / elles	parler ont	finir ont	vendr ont



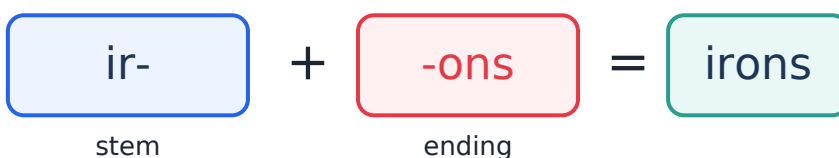
The simple future looks ahead from today.

When do you use the simple future?

Use it for plans, predictions and promises: Samedi, Inès jouera contre Laval. — On Saturday, Inès will play against Laval. Je t'écirai dès que possible. — I'll write to you as soon as possible. In conversation, aller + infinitive often replaces it for near plans, but the simple future sounds better for promises, predictions and writing.

Which verbs have irregular stems?

Infinitive	Stem	Example
être	ser-	je serai
avoir	aur-	tu auras
aller	ir-	elle ira
faire	fer-	nous ferons
pouvoir	pourr-	vous pourrez
voir	verr-	ils verront
venir	viendr-	je viendrai
vouloir	voudr-	tu voudras
savoir	saur-	elles sauront



Irregular stem, regular ending.

Same endings, new stem

Demain, nous **serons** à Dakar et nous **ferons** du bateau. — Tomorrow we will be in Dakar and go boating.

What happens after quand?

Rule

When the action happens later, French puts *both* verbs in the future after quand (when):
Quand Kofi **arrivera** à Montréal, il **goûtera** la poutine.

Watch out

English says *When he arrives* (present). French cannot copy that: *Quand il arrive, ...* would mean *whenever he arrives*. Also remember a few spelling changes: j'achèterai, j'appellerai, je paierai, j'enverrai.

The same logic works with other time words that look ahead: *Dès que j'aurai fini, je sortirai.* — As soon as I have finished, I will go out. *Lorsque vous serez prêts, nous partirons.* — When you are ready, we will leave. In each case the English present tense becomes a French future.

Zoé's tip

Say the infinitive in your head, then add ai, as, a, ons, ez, ont like a train hooking on its cars. For irregular verbs, learn the stem by heart: it ends with an *r* sound.

Culture note

Weather forecasts on French radio are full of the simple future: *Demain, il pleuvra sur le nord et le soleil reviendra dans le Midi.*

Key points to remember

- Regular verbs: infinitive + -ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ont (-re verbs lose the final e).
- The endings are the same for every verb, regular or irregular; only the stem changes.
- Key irregular stems: être ser-, avoir aur-, aller ir-, faire fer-, pouvoir pourr-, voir verr-.
- After *quand*, French uses the future when the action is still ahead, unlike English.
- Every future stem ends in -r, so the sound of an *r* always comes before the ending.

Making Plans and Promises in the Simple Future: frequently asked questions

How do you form the futur simple of regular verbs?

Start from the infinitive and add -ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ont. For -re verbs, drop the final e first: *vendre* becomes *je vendrai*.

Which French verbs have irregular future stems?

The most useful are être (ser-), avoir (aur-), aller (ir-), faire (fer-), pouvoir (pourr-), voir (verr-), venir (viendr-), vouloir (voudr-) and savoir (saur-). The endings stay regular.

Do you use the future after *quand* in French?

Yes, when the action has not happened yet. Say *Quand j'arriverai, je t'appellerai*, not *Quand*

j'arrive. English uses the present here, but French does not.

What is the difference between the futur simple and aller + infinitive?

Aller + infinitive is the near future and is common in speech for immediate plans. The simple future fits promises, predictions, formal writing and plans that are further away.

How do you pronounce the future endings?

The endings -ai and -as sound alike in many accents, while -a, -ons and -ont are distinct. The final -ai of je parlerai sounds like the é of café.