The past tense with the auxiliary être
Thirteenth lesson – Treizième lesson
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INTRODUCTION

• As seen previously, the past tense - passé composé – is mostly formed with the auxiliary avoir.

• However, all pronominal verbs and common intransitive verbs - are conjugated with être as a helping verb.
INTRODUCTION

- Remember:

1. The past participles of **–er** verbs end in **–é**
   - Manger (infinitive) ➔ mangé (past participle)

2. The past participles of **–ir** verbs end in **–i**
   - Finir (infinitive) ➔ fini (past participle)

3. The past participles of regular **–re** verbs end in **–u**
   - Perdre (infinitive) ➔ perdu (past participle)
1. The past tense of intransitive verbs

- Intransitive verbs such as

  - *Aller* (to go)  
  - *Arriver* (to arrive)  
  - *Entrer* (to enter)  
  - *Monter* (to climb)  
  - *Naître* (to be born)  
  - *Rester* (to stay)  
  - *Retourner* (to return)  
  - *Venir* (to come)  
  - *Partir* (to leave)  
  - *Sortir* (to go out)  
  - *Descendre* (to go downstairs)  
  - *Mourir* (to die)  
  - *Passer* (to pass, spend time)  
  - *Tomber* (to fall)

indicate motion or change of place, state or condition
1.1 VERBS SUCH AS SORTIR (TO GO OUT)

- When talking about the past intransitive verbs require the auxiliary être.

Ex.: sortir

Present tense of être + past participle of the main verb sortir:

sorti

- Samedi soir, nous sommes sortis avec des amis!
- Saturday night, we went out with friends
1.1 VERBS SUCH AS SORTIR (TO GO OUT)

Note:

- Verbs are conjugated with être only when they are intransitive (i.e. verbs that do not take a complement).

- However, when these verbs are used transitively (they need a complement), the auxiliary avoir is used.
1.1 VERBS SUCH AS SORTIR (TO GO OUT)

Observe:

- a) *Elle* est sortie. (intrans.)  
  *Elle* a sorti la voiture. (trans.)

  *He* went out
  *I* took the car out

- b) *Ils* sont descendus. (intrans.)
  *Ils* ont descendu la valise. (trans.)

  *They* went downstairs
  *They* took the suitcase downstairs
1.2. Agreement of the Past Participle

- For all verbs conjugated with the auxiliary être, in any compound tense, the past participle must agree in gender and number with the subject.

Ex.: intransitive verb **sortir** (to go out)

- *Il* est sorti (m. sg)
- *Elle* est sortie (f. sg)
- *Nous sommes sortis* (plural)
1.3 **Conjugating sortir (to go out)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Je suis sorti(e)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nous sommes sorti(e)s</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tu es sorti(e)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vous êtes sorti(e)(s)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Il/on est sorti</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ils sont sortis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elle est sortie</strong></td>
<td><strong>Elles sont sorties</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.4 Past tense of intransitive verbs & negative sentences

To form negative sentences with intransitive verbs in the past tense, use ne...pas (or another negative adverb) with the conjugated verb: in this case the auxiliary être.

- Je ne suis pas allé(e) en Afrique mais en Asie.
- I didn’t go to Africa, but I’ve been to Asia.
1.5 Past tense of intransitive verbs & yes/no questions

To ask yes/no questions with intransitive verbs, use the declarative word order, the construction est-ce que or inversion.

- Tu es déjà allé(e) en Afrique?
- Est-ce que tu es déjà allé(e) en Afrique?
- Es-tu déjà allé(e en Afrique?

→ Have you been in Africa?
2. **The Past Tense of Pronominal Verbs**

All **pronominal verbs** such as

- *Se baigner* (to bathe)
- *S’habiller* (to get dressed)
- *Se laver* (to wash oneself)
- *Se lever* (to get/wake up)
- *Se moquer* (to make fun of)
- *Se préparer* (to get ready/prepare oneself)
- *Se promener* (to walk)
- *Se raser* (to shave)
- *Se reposer* (to rest)

... require the auxiliary être when conjugated in the past tense.
2.1 VERBS SUCH AS S’AMUSER (TO HAVE FUN)

Ex.: s’amuser

*Present tense of être*  + past participle of the *main verb*

s’amuser: s’amusé

- *Samedi soir, nous nous sommes amusés!*
  - *Saturday night, we had fun!*
2.2 Agreement of the Past Participle

- For all verbs conjugated with the auxiliary être, in any compound tense, the past participle must agree in gender and number with the subject.

- Ex. : Pronominal verb s’amuser (to have fun)
  - Ils se sont amusés (m. pl.)
  - Elles se sont amusées (f. pl.)
  - Nous nous sommes amusés (plural)
2.3 Conjugating s’amuser
(to have fun/enjoy oneself)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Je me suis amusé(e)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nous nous sommes amusé(e)s</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tu t’es amusé(e)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vous vous êtes amusé(e)(s)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Il/on s’est amusé</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ils se sont amusés</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elle s’est amusée</strong></td>
<td><strong>Elles se sont amusées</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In negative sentences using pronominal verbs, **ne** precedes the reflexive pronoun and **pas** follows the auxiliary verb:

- *Je ne me suis pas amusé(e) à la soirée d’hier.*
- *I didn’t have fun at the party yesterday*
2.5 Past tense of pronominal verbs & yes/no questions

- To ask yes/no questions with pronominal verbs, use the usual word order, the construction est-ce que or inversion.

  - *Elles se sont amusées en Afrique?*
  - *Est-ce qu’elle se sont amusées en Afrique?*
  - *Se sont-elles amusées en Afrique?*

→ Did they have fun in Africa?
C’est tout pour aujourd’hui!

Au revoir!

Merci!