

FRENCH PLUS-QUE-PARFAIT TENSE



French Plus-Que-Parfait Tense

Use the French PLUS-QUE-PARFAIT tense when you want to say that an action happened at some point in the past and it happened before something else did. In this lesson all of my examples will be short and simple so that you can really focus on this new French tense rather than a lot of unfamiliar vocabulary. In English, this tense is called the PAST PERFECT or PLUPERFECT.

Included in this lesson:

6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with AVOIR as helping verb

6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with AVOIR + NEGATION


6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with AVOIR and the adverbs DÉJÀ and BIEN

Formation of the plus-que-parfait with AVOIR as helping verb

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6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with ÊTRE as helping verb
6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with ÊTRE + NEGATION
6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with REFLEXIVE VERBS + DÉJÀ and BIEN
Formation of the plus-que-parfait with ÊTRE as helping verb

6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with AVOIR as a helping verb

Here are some examples of actions that happened before something else did. It is important to understand when to use the plus-que-parfait before we begin to look at how to form it.

J'avais fini.	I had finished.
Tu avais parlé.	You had spoken.
Il avait répondu.	He had responded.
Nous avions choisi.	We had chosen.
Vous aviez mangé.	You had eaten.
Ils avaient attendu.	They had waited.

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6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with

AVOIR + NEGATION

Je n'avais pas mangé.	I had not eaten.
Tu n'avais pas appris tes leçons.	You had not learned your lessons.
Elle n'avait pas gagné d'argent.	She had not earned any money.
Nous n'avions pas rangé la cuisine.	We had not cleaned up the kitchen.
Vous n'aviez pas acheté de lait.	You had not bought any milk.
Ils n'avaient pas fait leur lit.	They had not made their bed.

Notice in the English translations you see the word HAD followed by the past participle. That's a good thing to remember when trying to decide whether you should use the passé composé or the plus-que-parfait.

6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with

AVOIR and the adverbs DÉJÀ and BIEN

J'avais DÉJÀ vendu ma	I had already sold my car.
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voiture.	
Tu avais DÉJÀ sorti le fromage.	You had already taken out the cheese.
Il avait DÉJÀ donné son avis.	He had already given his opinion.
Nous avons BIEN compris la leçon.	We understood the lesson well.
Vous aviez BIEN lavé les légumes.	You had washed the vegetables well.
Ils avaient BIEN fait leurs devoirs.	They had done their homework well.

The adverbs DÉJÀ and BIEN are often used with the plus-que-parfait. Note that they are placed after the first conjugated verb which in this case is the helping verb AVOIR.

Formation of the plus-que-parfait with AVOIR as helping verb


Once you know the passé composé and imperfect tenses the actual formation of the plus-que-parfait is a breeze. All you need to do is put the helping verb AVOIR in the imperfect tense and then follow it with a past participle.

**Here's a chart of the verb AVOIR in the imperfect.
Remember, this will be your helping verb in the plus-que-parfait.**

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j'avais	nous avions
tu avais	vous aviez
il avait	ils avaient

Let's use regular -ER, -IR and -RE verbs as examples.


SUBJECT PRONOUN AND INFINITIVE OF THE VERB	HELPING VERB IN THE IMPERFECT	PAST PARTICIPLE
JE - REGARDER	J'AVAIS	REGARDÉ
TU - GROSSIR	TU AVAIS	GROSSI
IL - ENTENDRE	IL AVAIT	ENTENDU
NOUS - GROSSIR	NOUS AVIONS	GROSSI
VOUS - ENTENDRE	VOUS AVIEZ	ENTENDU
ILS - PERDRE	ILS AVAIENT	PERDU

6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with ÊTRE as a helping verb

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Even though the helping verb is ÊTRE we still translate it as HAD in English.

J'étais rentré(e)	I had gone home
Tu étais sorti(e)	You had gone out
Il était mort	He had died
Nous étions revenu(e)s	We had come back
Vous étiez parti(e)(s)	You had left
Ils étaient tombés	They had fallen

6 examples using the plus-que-parfait with ÊTRE + NEGATION

Je n'étais pas devenu(e) actrice.	I had not become an actress.
Tu n'étais pas resté(e) longtemps.	You had not stayed a long time.
Il n'était pas monté.	He had not gone upstairs.
Nous n'étions pas passé(e)s chez eux.	We had not stopped by their house.
Vous n'étiez pas arrivé(e)(s)	You had not arrived early.

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early.	
Ils n'étaient pas entrés dans la salle.	They had not entered the room.

6 examples with REFLEXIVE and RECIPROCAL VERBS + DÉJÀ and BIEN

Je m'étais déjà couché(e).	I had already gone to bed.
Tu t'étais bien lavé les cheveux.	You had washed your hair well.
Il s'était déjà regardé dans la glace.	He had already looked at himself in the mirror.
Nous nous étions bien lavé les mains.	We had washed our hands well.
Vous vous étiez déjà rencontré(e)s.	You had already met each other.
Ils s'étaient bien coupé les ongles.	He had cut his fingernails well.

Formation of the plus-que-parfait with ÊTRE as helping verb

All you need to do is put the helping verb ÊTRE in the imperfect tense and then follow it with a past participle.

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**Here's a chart of the verb ÊTRE in the imperfect.
Remember, this will be your helping verb in the
plus-que-parfait.**

j'étais	nous étions
tu étais	vous étiez
il était	ils étaient

SUBJECT PRONOUN AND INFINITIVE OF THE VERB	HELPING VERB IN THE IMPERFECT	PAST PARTICIPLE
JE - VENIR	J'ÉTAIS	VENU(E)
TU - DESCENDRE	TU ÉTAIS	DESCENDU(E)
IL - ALLER	IL ÉTAIT	ALLÉ
NOUS - RETOURNER	NOUS ÉTIONS	RETOURNÉ(E)(S)
VOUS - RESTER	VOUS ÉTIEZ	RESTÉ(E)(S)
ILS - SORTIR	ILS ÉTAIENT	SORTIS

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