

Quand vs Lorsque



Both **quand** and **lorsque** can mean “*when*”, and in many cases, you can use either one. But they’re not always perfect substitutes. Here’s how to know which fits best.

1. In most cases, they mean the same thing

You can use **quand** or **lorsque** to talk about **time** to say when something happens or happened.

Examples:

- **Quand / Lorsque** j’étais petit, je passais mes vacances à la campagne.
- **When** I was little, I spent my holidays in the countryside.

- Je t’appellerai **quand / lorsque** j’arriverai.
- I’ll call you **when** I arrive.

In these sentences, both sound natural. However, **lorsque** feels a bit more formal or written, while **quand** is what you’ll hear most often in everyday speech.

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2. Use only *quand* for questions

If you're asking "when?", **quand** is the only correct choice.

Examples:

- **Quand** est-ce que tu pars ?
- **When** are you leaving?

- Tu viens **quand** ?
- **When** are you coming?

Never say: "*Lorsque est-ce que tu pars ?*"

3. Use *lorsque* to emphasize a specific moment

Sometimes, **lorsque** helps emphasize a **particular instant**, especially in writing, storytelling, or formal speech.

Examples:

- **Lorsque** la porte s'est ouverte, tout le monde s'est tu.
- **When** the door opened, everyone fell silent.

- **Lorsque** j'ai vu la mer pour la première fois, j'étais émerveillé.
- **When** I saw the sea for the first time, I was amazed.

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You could use **quand** here too, but **lorsque** gives a slightly more elevated, literary tone.

4. Quick way to remember

- **Quand** → everyday French, common in speech and questions
- **Lorsque** → more formal, often used in writing or narration

If you're not sure which one to use, **quand** is always a safe choice.