KS4 French. Imperfect tense

A What is it/what does it mean? -

The imperfect tense is used to describe something in the past which **used to happen** or what **was happening**. It is also the tense which is being used when using **was/were** and **had** and it is used when talking about **the weather in the past.**

B How to form it

**Step 1 – you need the NOUS form of any verb in the present tense. Then knock off the ONS ending and you’re left with the correct stem.**

E.g. Nous jouons = nous jou….

Nous finissons = nous finiss…

Nous avons = nous av…

Exception – être. Instead of using the nous form, you use ét for the stem and then add the correct ending on. I.e. I was = j’étais. It was = c’était

**Step 2 – You need the correct endings**

Je – ais (pronounced *ay*)

Tu – ais (pronounced *ay*)

Il/elle/on – ait (pronounced *ay*)

Nous –ions

Vous – iez

Ils/elles –aient (pronounced *ay*)

**Step 3 – putting it all together**

Example – I was playing/used to play = je jouais

I was finishing/used to finish = je finissais

I was having/used to have = j’avais

**Step 4 – Check you understand it**

Here is a list of verbs in the nous form to help you form your own.

1. I used to play tennis
2. She was playing rugby
3. We had a dog
4. I was 15 years old (careful!)
5. It was fantastic

Section 5. Now produce it and recognise it yourself!

**Support –** Here is a list of verbs in the nous form in the present tense with their meaning to help you. So all you need to do is knock off the *ons* and then add the correct imperfect ending.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| nous jouons | we play |
| nous mangeons | we eat |
| nous restons | we stay |
| nous regardons | we watch |
| nous passons | we spend (time) |
| nous allons | we go |
| nous ouvrons | we open |
| nous venons | we come |
| nous pouvons | we be able to |
| nous avons | we have |
| nous finissons | we finish |
| nous voyons | we see |
| nous conduisons | we drive |
| nous buvons | we drink |
| nous nous rencentrons | we meet |
| nous faisons | we do/make |
| nous chantons | we sing |
| nous habitons | we live |
| nous lisons | we read |

**Reading text**

L’année dernière j’allais en France et je restais chez ma famille. Je passais deux semaines avec ma famille qui habitait à Lyon. Ma tante allait me rencontrer à l’aéroport et elle me conduisait chez elle. Pour le premier repas, mon oncle mangeait du poulet et mes cousins mangeaient de la pizza et je mangeais une salade. Ma tante buvait du café. Le cinéma ouvrait tard, alors nous y sommes allés. C’était super ! *Marie*

1. The imperfect tense is not the only tense in there. Can you recognise and translate the other tense?
2. When did Marie go to France?
3. How many weeks was she spending there?
4. What was her uncle eating?
5. What was her aunt drinking?
6. What was the cinema doing?!

**Recognising the imperfect tense in a sentence**

* Underline/highlight/circle the imperfect tense in the text.
* Extend – translate the text

**Translate**

1. Yesterday I was reading a book and it was good
2. Last year I was singing and dancing
3. I used to spend time with my brother
4. My friend used to have a cat
5. We used to live in Germany
6. They used to play football at the weekend
7. I was eating but it was too cold
8. You were drinking my drink!

|  |  |
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Answers

**Step 4 – Try it yourself**

Here is a list of verbs in the nous form to help you form your own.

1. I used to play tennis – je jouais au tennis
2. She was playing rugby – elle jouait au rugby
3. We had a dog – nous avions un chien
4. I was 15 years old (careful!) – j’avais 15 ans
5. It was fantastic – c’était fantastique
6. The imperfect tense is not the only tense in there. Can you recognise and translate the other tense? alors nous sommes y allés. = so we went there
7. When did Marie go to France? Last year
8. How many weeks was she spending there? 2
9. What was her uncle eating? chicken
10. What was her aunt drinking? coffee
11. What was the cinema doing?! opening

**Translate**

1. Yesterday I was reading a book and it was good – hier je lisais un livre et c’était bon
2. **Last year I was singing and dancing - L’année dernière je chantais et je dansais**
3. **I used to spend time with my brother – je passais du** temps avec mon frère
4. My friend used to have a cat – ma copine avait un chat
5. We used to live in Germany – nous habitions en Allemagne
6. They used to play football at the weekend – ils jouaient au foot le weekend
7. I was eating but it was too cold – je mangeais mais il faisait trop froid
8. You were drinking my drink! Tu buvais mon boisson