

1 Change these verb forms from the present tense to the imperfect tense.

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|---------------------|--------------------|
| a je peux _____ | h j'écris _____ |
| b ils veulent _____ | i il lit _____ |
| c je dois _____ | j je vois _____ |
| d il sait _____ | k il connaît _____ |
| e je vais _____ | l je viens _____ |
| f j'ai _____ | m je suis _____ |
| g ils font _____ | n il y a _____ |

2 On a separate sheet of paper, write a–h in French, using imperfect tense verbs. Choose your verbs carefully.

- There were at least fifty-thousand spectators.
- When I was younger, I used to play football every Saturday.
- I used to know him well.
- I was unable to move.
- The sky was blue and it was sunny.
- I knew I was right.
- She used to be on a diet. (Use: *faire un régime*.)
- I used to walk to school.

3 Complete these French translations of the English sentences.

- I was in the middle of watching a great film when there was a power cut.*
_____ quand
il y a eu une panne d'électricité.
- I had just finished doing the washing up when she arrived.*
_____ quand elle est arrivée.
- How about going to see them?* _____ les voir?
- If I needed money, I would work every weekend of the year.*
_____, je travaillerais tous les week-ends de l'année.
- They had just got on to the plane when a delay was announced.*
_____ quand
un retard a été annoncé.
- I had been working for two hours when someone knocked at the door.*
_____ quand quelqu'un a frappé à la porte.
- If the weather was nice, we could go out tomorrow.*
_____ nous pourrions sortir demain.
- He was in the process of mowing the lawn when it started raining.*
_____ à pleuvoir.
(Use: *tondre la pelouse*.)

Grammaire

The imperfect tense is used to say something 'was happening' or 'used to happen'. It is also used for descriptions in the past: *C'était magnifique*.

To form the imperfect tense, use the *nous* form of the present tense, without the *-ons*, and add these endings: *-ais, -ais, -ait, -ions, -iez, -aient*. There are no irregular endings in the imperfect tense.

For the verb stem, the only exception to the rule (use the *nous* form of the present tense minus *-ons*) is *être*. Its imperfect stem is *ét-* giving: *j'étais*.

Other uses of the imperfect tense

- être en train de* + infinitive = to be in the process/middle of doing:

J'étais en train de lire quand il est entré. I was (in the middle of) reading when he came in.

- with *depuis* (more about this on page 31):

Je l'attendais depuis une heure. I had been waiting for her for an hour.

- with *venir de* + infinitive (more practice on page 31):

Je venais d'arriver quand ...
I had just arrived when ...

- after *si* when the main verb is in the conditional:

Si j'avais le temps, j'irais la voir.
If I had time, I would go to see her.

- as a suggestion that starts with *si*:

Si on allait au cinéma?
How about going to the cinema?