

VEGA PUBLISHING

FRENCH GRAMMAR UNLOCKED

— LEVEL 2 —

Intermediate Edition

A2 -> B1



25 Chapters | 5 Mistake Clinics | 5 Mini Stories | 200 B1 Phrases

Level: Elementary (A2) to Intermediate (B1)

Includes: Subjunctive | Conditionals | Plus-que-parfait | Subjonctif

Audience: Adult Self-Study | **Edition:** 2026

VEGA PUBLISHING © 2026

French Grammar Unlocked: Level 2

Intermediate Edition — 2026 | Vega Publishing

Copyright © 2026 Vega Publishing. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted without prior written permission of the publisher, except brief quotations in critical reviews.

Contact: vegapublishing.com

How to Use This Book

THE SYSTEM

1. **Work chapter by chapter** — each one builds on the last. Do not skip.
2. **Read the Orientation box** at the top of each chapter before anything else.
3. **Study the tables** — cover, recite, then check. Repetition is everything.
4. **Do every drill** on paper before looking at the Answer Key.
5. **Read every Mistake Clinic** — these prevent the errors most learners repeat for years.
6. **Read the Mini Stories** with grammar notes active — passive reading without noticing grammar teaches nothing.

ICONS & SECTIONS

| ICON KEY | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| MISTAKE CLINIC | Errors to eliminate |
| MINI STORY | Grammar in context |
| SPACED REVIEW | Tests earlier chapters |
| TIP TIP | Shortcuts & memory tricks |
| Blue box | Example sentences |

TIP The 30-minute rule: 30 focused minutes daily beats 3-hour weekend sessions. One chapter, sleep, repeat.

TIP This is Level 2. You need Level 1 (A1-A2) before starting here. If you find Ch. 1 very easy, good — it is a fast review. If you struggle, finish Level 1 first.

Table of Contents

BLOCK ONE — TENSES & MOODS

Chapter 1: Passé Composé vs Imparfait — Deeper Mastery 5

Chapter 2: Le Plus-que-parfait 9

Chapter 3: Le Futur Simple & Futur Antérieur 13

Chapter 4: Le Conditionnel Présent 17

Chapter 5: Le Conditionnel Passé 21

Clinic: Mistake Clinic 1: Tense Confusion 25

Story: Mini Story 1: «Le Voyage Manqué» 26

BLOCK TWO — THE SUBJUNCTIVE

Chapter 6: Le Subjonctif Présent — Formation 29

Chapter 7: Subjonctif — Irregular Verbs 33

Chapter 8: Subjonctif — Triggers & Uses 37

Chapter 9: Subjonctif vs Indicatif 41

Chapter 10: Le Subjonctif Passé 45

Review: Spaced Review 1 (Chapters 1–10) 49

Clinic: Mistake Clinic 2: Subjunctive Traps 51

Story: Mini Story 2: «La Décision» 52

BLOCK THREE — PRONOUNS & STRUCTURES

Chapter 11: Y and En 55

Chapter 12: Double Object Pronouns 59

Chapter 13: Relative Clauses 63

Chapter 14: Passive Voice & Impersonal Expressions 67

Chapter 15: Reported Speech 71

Clinic: Mistake Clinic 3: Pronoun Placement 75

Story: Mini Story 3: «L'Entretien» 76

BLOCK FOUR — CONNECTORS & NUANCE

Chapter 16: Cause & Consequence 79

Chapter 17: Concession & Opposition 83

Chapter 18: Time Connectors & Clauses 87

Chapter 19: Comparatives & Superlatives 91

Chapter 20: Advanced Prepositions 95

Review: Spaced Review 2 (Chapters 11–20) 99

Clinic: Mistake Clinic 4: Connector Fails 101

Story: Mini Story 4: «Le Débat» 102

BLOCK FIVE — FLUENCY & PRODUCTION

Chapter 21: Discourse Markers 105

Chapter 22: Formal vs Informal Register 109

Chapter 23: Writing Workshop 113

Chapter 24: Spoken French 117

Chapter 25: Reading B1 French 121

Clinic: Mistake Clinic 5: Production Pitfalls 125

Story: Final Story: «La Soutenance» 126

REFERENCE & EXTRAS

B1 Conjugation Reference 129

200 Essential B1 Phrases 131

Answer Key 134

Glossary 136



BLOCK ONE

TENSES & MOODS

Chapters 1–5

WHAT YOU WILL MASTER

- The **true difference** between *passé composé* and *imparfait* — beyond the rules you already know
- The **plus-que-parfait** — the past of the past
- The **futur simple** and **futur antérieur** — all irregular stems
- The **conditionnel présent** — for politeness, hypotheticals, and reported speech
- The **conditionnel passé** — for past regret and the classic *si* clauses

PASSÉ COMPOSÉ VS IMPARFAIT

Deeper Mastery — Beyond the Basic Rules

WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING

You already know that the **passé composé** (PC) is for completed actions and the **imparfait** (Imp) is for habits and descriptions. At B1, you go deeper: foreground vs. background, interrupted actions, and — crucially — verbs that completely **change meaning** depending on which tense you use.

1. The Real Distinction: Foreground vs. Background

Think of a film. The **passé composé** moves the plot forward (foreground action). The **imparfait** provides the scene, atmosphere, and context (background). Both can appear in the same sentence.

Il pleuvait quand elle est arrivée.

It was raining (Imp = background scene) when she arrived (PC = plot event).

Nous étions fatigués, donc nous sommes rentrés tôt.

We were tired (background state), so we went home early (decision = event).

2. Key Cue Words

| PASSÉ COMPOSÉ | IMPARFAIT |
|---|--|
| soudain, tout à coup (suddenly) | toujours, souvent, d'habitude (always, often, usually) |
| un jour, un matin (one day, one morning) | chaque jour, tous les jours (every day) |
| enfin, finalement (finally) | quand j'étais enfant (when I was a child) |
| hier, l'année dernière (yesterday, last year) | pendant des années (for years) |

TIP Memory hook: PC = camera flash (one moment, caught). Imparfait = camera pan (slow, ongoing, describing).

QUICK CHECK — PC OR IMPARFAIT?

Every summer we went to Brittany. -> _____

Suddenly the lights went out. -> _____

She was reading when the phone rang. -> was reading = _____ / rang = _____

3. The Meaning-Changing Verbs (B1 Essential)

These verbs have **different English translations** depending on whether you use PC or Imparfait. This trips up learners at every level.

| VERB | IMPARFAIT (ONGOING STATE) | PASSÉ COMPOSÉ (NEW EVENT/CHANGE) |
|-----------|---|---|
| savoir | Je <i>savais</i> = I knew (all along) | J' <i>ai su</i> = I found out / I realized |
| connaître | Je <i>connaissais</i> = I knew him (was acquainted) | J' <i>ai connu</i> = I met him (for the first time) |
| vouloir | Je <i>voulais</i> = I wanted (general desire) | J' <i>ai voulu</i> = I tried to / I wanted and acted |
| pouvoir | Je <i>pouvais</i> = I was able to (in general) | J' <i>ai pu</i> = I managed to / I succeeded |
| devoir | Je <i>devais</i> = I was supposed to / I had to | J' <i>ai dû</i> = I had to (and did it) / I must have |

J'ai su la vérité hier soir.

I found out the truth last night. (It was new information.)

Je savais qu'il mentait.

I knew he was lying. (I already had this knowledge.)

Elle n'a pas voulu partir.

She refused to leave. (She tried not to — resistance to action.)

Elle ne voulait pas partir.

She didn't want to leave. (General feeling — no specific moment of refusal.)

TIP Test yourself: Could you say “all along” or “at that time” after the verb? -> Imparfait. Did something change or happen? -> PC.

CHOOSE THE CORRECT FORM

I finally managed to open the door. -> J' _____ (pouvoir) ouvrir la porte.

He met his professor at a conference. -> Il _____ (connaître) son professeur.

She was supposed to call but forgot. -> Elle _____ (devoir) appeler mais a oublié.

4. The Interrupted Past (L'Imparfait Interrompu)

One of the most important B1 patterns: an **ongoing action (Imp)** is interrupted by a **sudden event (PC)**. English uses “was doing ... when ... happened.”

FORMULA:

Imparfait [ongoing background] + **quand/lorsque** + **Passé Composé** [interrupting event]

Je dormais quand le téléphone a sonné.

I was sleeping when the phone rang.

Ils mangeaient quand quelqu'un a frappé à la porte.

They were eating when someone knocked at the door.

5. Telling a Story: Narrative Structure

Good French storytelling alternates between Imparfait (setting the scene) and Passé Composé (moving the plot). Read this short narrative and notice how the tenses work:

C'**IMP** *était* un mardi matin. Le soleil **IMP** *brillait* et les oiseaux **IMP** *chantaient*. Marie **IMP** *prenait* son café quand, soudain, elle **PC** *a vu* une enveloppe sous la porte. Elle **PC** *s'est levée*, **PC** *a ramassé* l'enveloppe et **PC** *l'a ouverte*.

IMP = imparfait (scene/state) | PC = passé composé (actions/events)

COMPLETE THE NARRATIVE

L'année dernière, nous _____ (habiter) à Lyon.

Un soir, nous _____ (décider) d'aller au cinéma.

Il _____ (faire) froid mais nous _____ (ne pas avoir) de manteaux.

Tout à coup, Lucas _____ (tomber) sur le trottoir.

6. Full Practice — Chapter 1

Put the verb in brackets into the correct tense: passé composé or imparfait.

Quand j' _____ (avoir) dix ans, je _____ (jouer) du piano tous les jours.

Hier soir, Paul _____ (rentrer) tard et _____ (aller) directement dormir.

Elle _____ (lire) quand son ami _____ (appeler).

Nous ne _____ (savoir) pas la vérité — c' _____ (être) un choc quand on nous _____ (le dire).

Je _____ (ne pas pouvoir) ouvrir la fenêtre; finalement, mon frère _____ (réussir).

D'habitude, ils _____ (prendre) le bus, mais ce jour-là ils _____ (décider) de marcher.

L'enfant _____ (pleurer) parce qu'il _____ (avoir) peur du chien.

Tout à coup, la lumière _____ (s'éteindre). Tout le monde _____ (se mettre) à crier.

Translation practice: Translate into French, choosing the correct past tense.

When she was a student, she always worked in a café.

I met Thomas for the first time at a conference. He was very kind.

They were supposed to arrive at 8 p.m. but the train was delayed.

[X] CHAPTER 1 CHECKLIST

I can explain foreground vs. background I know the 5 meaning-changing verbs I can write an interrupted-past sentence I can narrate a short past event correctly

LE PLUS-QUE-PARFAIT

The Past of the Past — What Had Already Happened

WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING

The plus-que-parfait (PQP) is used when one past action happened **before another past action**. In English: “had done.” In French, it is formed with avoir or être at the **imparfait** + past participle. Mastering this tense is essential for fluent B1 storytelling and for the *si* clauses you will use in Chapter 5.

1. Formation

avoir / être (imparfait) + past participle

WITH AVOIR — PARLER

| PRONOUN | PQP FORM |
|-----------|-------------------|
| je | j'avais parlé |
| tu | tu avais parlé |
| il/elle | il avait parlé |
| nous | nous avions parlé |
| vous | vous aviez parlé |
| ils/elles | ils avaient parlé |

WITH ÊTRE — PARTIR

| PRONOUN | PQP FORM |
|-----------|--|
| je | j'étais parti(e) |
| tu | tu étais parti(e) |
| il/elle | il était parti / elle était partie |
| nous | nous étions parti(e)s |
| vous | vous étiez parti(e)(s) |
| ils/elles | ils étaient partis / elles étaient parties |

TIP Same verbs take être as in PC: DR MRS VANDERTRAMP + all reflexive verbs. Agreement rules also apply: *elle était allée, ils étaient arrivés.*

BUILD THE FORM

nous / finir -> _____

elle / venir -> _____

ils / prendre -> _____

je / se lever (masc.) -> _____

2. Primary Use: Past Before Another Past

When you describe two past events and need to make clear which happened first, use the PQP for the **earlier** action and PC or Imparfait for the **later** one.

Quand je suis arrivé, ils avaient déjà mangé.

When I arrived (PC), they had already eaten (PQP — the eating happened first).

Elle n'avait jamais vu la mer avant ce voyage.

She had never seen the sea before this trip. (PQP marks the first-ever experience before a past reference point.)

Il a remarqué qu'il avait oublié son portefeuille à la maison.

He noticed (PC) that he had left (PQP) his wallet at home.

3. After “Avant que” / “Après que” in Past

In past narration, *après que* often takes the PQP to stress completion before the next event:

Après qu'il eut fini (or: avait fini) de parler, personne n'a répondu.

After he had finished speaking, no one answered. (The PQP is most natural in writing.)

TIP **Déjà** and **ne...jamais** are your strongest PQP signals. If something “had already” or “had never” happened before a past moment, PQP is the right choice.

4. Preview: The Si + PQP Structure

The PQP is half of the most important past conditional construction (fully covered in Chapter 5):

Si + plus-que-parfait -> conditionnel passé (what would have happened)

Si j'avais étudié, j'aurais réussi.

If I had studied (PQP), I would have passed (cond. passé). — Chapter 5 for full coverage.

TRANSLATE — USE THE PQP

When we arrived, the film had already started.

She had never tried sushi before last week.

He realized he had made a mistake.

5. The PQP in Storytelling

In literary and formal French, the PQP is used extensively to create temporal depth in a narrative. It allows a writer to flash back within a past story.

L'inspecteur **est entré** dans la salle. Il **a regardé** autour de lui. Quelqu'un **avait dérangé** les meubles. Une fenêtre **avait été cassée**. Il **avait vu** ce genre de scène auparavant, mais jamais aussi grave.

PC (entré, regardé) = the inspector's actions now in the story. PQP (avait dérangé, avait été cassée, avait vu) = what happened earlier, before he arrived.

6. Common Mistakes

Clinic: Mistake Alert — PC vs PQP

WRONG

X Quand il est arrivé, elle **est partie** déjà.

CORRECT

OK Quand il est arrivé, elle **était déjà partie**. — Her departure was earlier, so PQP is needed.

WRONG

X Avant ce voyage, je n'ai jamais visité Paris.

CORRECT

OK Avant ce voyage, je n'**avais** jamais visité Paris. — The reference is a past event, so we need PQP.

CORRECT THESE SENTENCES

Quand elle a téléphoné, j'ai déjà mangé.

Il a vu que quelqu'un a ouvert son courrier.

Elles ne sont jamais allées à Bordeaux avant cette année-là.

7. Full Practice — Chapter 2

Put the verb in brackets into the plus-que-parfait.

Quand nous sommes arrivés, le cours _____ (commencer) depuis dix minutes.

Elle a réalisé qu'elle _____ (perdre) son téléphone.

Il _____ (ne jamais voir) une telle tempête avant ce soir-là.

Ils _____ (partir) avant que nous n'arrivions.

J' _____ (oublier) de réserver une table — le restaurant était complet.

Tu _____ (se coucher) quand j'ai appelé?

Choose PC or PQP:

Hier, je ___ (comprendre) enfin pourquoi elle ___ (ne pas vouloir) venir. (PC / PQP)

Lorsqu'il ___ (ouvrir) la lettre, il ___ (lire) ce que tout le monde ___ (craindre) depuis des semaines. (PC / PC / PQP)

Translation:

By the time I arrived at the airport, the plane had already taken off.

She told me she had never been to Japan.

I recognised the man: I had seen him somewhere before.

CHAPTER 2 CHECKLIST

I can conjugate PQP with avoir and être I know agreement rules I can identify which of two past actions came first I avoid confusing PC and PQP