**CHOOSING FRENCH VERB TENSES**

To use the correct form of a French verb, you have to use the right tense. The **indicative mood**, which deals with objectivity — things really happening — includes many time aspects called ***tenses****.* A tense defines the time frame in which the action of the verb takes place: past, present, or future.

The following French verb tenses chart explains when to use each tense. It shows how compound tenses build off simpler ones and conjugates two example verbs for each tense: **chanter**(*to sing*) and **se laver** (*to wash oneself*).

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| **Time Frame** | **French Tense** | **How to Build from Other Tenses** | **Examples** |
| What happens, is happening, or does happen | Present indicative/**présent de l’indicatif** |  | **je chante je me lave** |
| What just happened | Near past/**passé récent** | Present **venir** + **de**+ infinitive | **je viens de chanter je viens de me laver** |
| What is going to happen | Near future/**futur proche** | Present **aller** + infinitive | **je vais chanter je vais me laver** |
| What [has] happened precisely and completely | **Passé composé** | Present **avoir/être**+ past participle | **j’ai chanté je me suis lavé(e)** |
| What was happening or used to happen or just was a certain way | Imperfect/**Imparfait** |  | **je chantais je me lavais** |
| What had happened | Pluperfect/**plus-que-parfait** | **Imparfait** **avoir/être** + past participle | **j’avais chanté je m’étais lavé(e)** |
| What will happen | Simple future/**futur simple** |  | **je chanterai je me laverai** |
| What will have happened | Future perfect/**futur antérieur** | Simple future**avoir/être** + past participle | **j’aurai chanté je me serai lavé(e)** |