

KS4 French - Knowledge Organiser 9 – The Imperfect Tense

The Imperfect Tense is used to describe actions in the past that are **unfinished**.

For example: I **was watching** the television / I **was doing** my homework.

It is also used to describe actions in the past that happened **repeatedly** over a period of time.

For example: I **used to go** to swimming lessons / We **used to go** to Devon for our holidays.

In order to form this we use the nous form in the present tense take off the –ons ending and add the imperfect endings.

There is only one exception in the imperfect tense (you probably know it already!) the verb être uses ét as the stem in the imperfect tense. You will know this from **c'était = it was** or **j'étais = I was**.

je	-ais
tu	-ais
Il/elle/on	-ait
nous	-ions
vous	-iez
ils/elles	-aient

-er verbs	-ir verbs	-re verbs
Jouer	Finir	Vendre
Nous jouons	Nous finissons	Nous vendons
Stem = jou	Stem = finiss	Stem = vend

Examples:

I was playing tennis

Je jouais au tennis

I used to play tennis

Je jouais au tennis

We used to play tennis

Nous jouions au tennis

They were playing football

ils jouaient au football

We were finishing the washing up when

Nous finissions la vaisselle quand.....

My brother used to sell magazines

Mon frère vendait les magazines

A great high scoring tip! Can be used in the Future tense and also in the Past tense

To make your work more interesting and to create a complex sentence use aller in the imperfect tense to say what you **were going to do**. Use aller in the imperfect then add the infinitive of the next verb.

Example:

J'allais aller au cinéma **mais maintenant** nous allons aller au café. Future Tense Example

I was going to go to the cinema but now we are going to go to the cafe.

Nous allions acheter un Volkswagen **mais enfin** nous avons acheté un Audi. (Past Tense Example)

We were going to buy a Volkswagen but in the end we bought an Audi.