

PASSÉ COMPOSÉ OU IMPARFAIT?
07/18/25

The French imperfect is used when neither the beginning point nor ending point are important. It can be a general description, refer to a repeated activity/habit, a secondary action (providing background for the main clause), or may describe simultaneous activities (that happened in the past). Can describe a mental state (comprendre, vouloir, adorer, penser).

The Passé Composé is used when there is a precise action in the past or an action which happened only once in the past. It is used to describe the principal action (whereas the imperfect is used to provide the less important background information). It is also used to describe several successive actions (as when making a list)

1. Did you hear what happened to the neighbor? (voisin/voisine)
2. My dad only shaved twice a week. (se raser)
3. I wanted to ask you a question. (se poser)
4. I was at the bank when I remembered to pay the bill. (payer la facture)
5. It was raining but she had an umbrella. (un parapluie)
6. She went to the hairdresser last week. (le coiffeur)
7. Did you always go on vacation to Spain?
8. The carpet was white when we bought it. (La moquette)
9. I don't believe that he did his homework. (This one is tricky).

10. When I was 6 years old, I was often sick.
11. The landlord used to decide everything. (le propriétaire, décider de)
12. I got changed (as in clothing) before leaving. (se changer)
13. I had just gotten home when you called.
14. If only I won the lottery! (le loto)
15. The letter I wrote to my friend made her happy. (rendre)
16. It's been 30 years since anyone corresponded by mail. (corresponder)
17. As soon as/when she arrived home, the telephone rang.
18. When I was little, I ate my breakfast in front of the television. (prendre)
19. Every day we went to school, except when there was too much snow.
20. She listened to a podcast while he drove.