

# 3 tips to LEARN CONJUGATIONS FASTER

*Do you speak mostly in the present tense because you don't know the other conjugations? Does the idea of conjugating a verb in a sentence create stress and block you? You know the rules, but you don't know when to apply them?*

DON'T WORRY, IT'S NORMAL! The problem is not with you, but probably with the way you have studied conjugations until now.

### **IN MY EXPERIENCE, HERE ARE THE MAIN POINTS THAT BLOCK LEARNERS WHEN CONJUGATING VERBS IN FRENCH.**

- You don't understand in which situation to use each conjugation so even if you learn the verbs, you don't use them.
- You don't have a system, you think you have to learn all the verbs and forms in the textbook and you are discouraged by the amount.
- You are so afraid of making mistakes that you block and speak in the present tense

As a consequence, you always speak in the present tense (and maybe sometimes in the past tense) or, worse, you don't dare to speak French!

*These tips are based on neuroscientific principles. They encourage you to deepen your understanding and also to develop your intuition.*

# 1- CREATE YOUR OWN LOGICAL SYSTEM TO LEARN CONJUGATIONS

The system seems so obvious to native teachers! So, often the model is mentioned, but it is so quick that learners don't have time to analyze it and make it their own.

In class, we often don't take the time to apply it to multiple examples.

The biggest flaw in traditional teaching, in my opinion, is that the big picture is not explained. The teachers explain small pieces successively, but they don't insist enough on the logical temporal relations.

And they don't use enough examples. That's why you don't know when to use which conjugation.

## HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU CREATE YOUR OWN SYSTEM

- Have you ever tried to understand the temporal logic of your native language or English? - Do conjugations exist? If not, what words do you use to mark time?
- How do we talk about past, present, future, certainty and uncertainty, politeness, intention, etc., in your language?
- What are the intentions expressed by each conjugation? (think of examples and explain or draw your feelings for example)
- If you speak several languages, what are the similarities and differences?

***"By learning French, you will also deepen your knowledge of your own language!"***

**NUGGET OF NEUROSCIENCE: NEUROPLASTICITY, our brain evolves every day, no matter how old we are**

*Here, we are looking to create connections in your brain. To use all the information you already know! If a concept is familiar, it will be easier to add the French in the "box" of this concept in your brain. If the concept is unfamiliar, you will have to create a new "box" and a pathway in your brain. It will take more time and practice, but it is possible!*

**YOUR TURN!** Draw your own mindmap of verb tenses, in your mother tongue or in English. You may add French as well, or draw another one for French with what you know.

**The present (now)**

## 2- ALWAYS LEARN CONJUGATIONS IN CONTEXT, WITH EXAMPLES THAT MAKE SENSE IN YOUR DAILY LIFE

In French, there are several conjugations that are not used orally even though they are still listed in textbooks and dictionaries. Did you know that? Do you know which ones to prioritize?

Here is a gift to save you time and effort, the list of priority tenses you should study when you are at the beginner and intermediate level if your goal is to speak French:

### THE ESSENTIALS to communicate (level 1)

- Présent
- Passé composé + Imparfait
- Futur proche
- Conditionnel

### INCREASE THE COMPLEXITY of sentences, ADD NUANCES (level 2, required at B2 and above)

- Futur simple
- Conditionnel passé
- Impératif
- Introduction to plus que-parfait (dans les hypothèses avec «si»)
- Introduction to subjonctif (main uses and irregular verbs)
- Introduction to participe présent / gérondif (en ~ant)
- Concordance des temps des hypothèses avec «si»
- Voix passive

## ADD DEEPER NUANCES and SUBJECTIVITY, Develop native-like syntax (level 3, advanced)

- Subjonctif (usages avancés)
- Plus-que-parfait
- Futur antérieur

*Each tense is formed on the same pattern so you just need to focus on:*

- Memorizing the pattern
- Memorizing the irregular verbs (about 20 verbs only)

There are many methods to memorize or acquire things. Pick the best one for you (even if no one else does it like that).

To know when to use them, you can for example: read or listen to lots of examples that clarify the context and practice yourself by creating your own sentences in the context of your life and your personal history!

**NUGGET OF NEUROSCIENCE: NEUROPLASTICITY,  
our brain evolves every day, no matter how old we are**

**OUR BRAIN MEMORIZES FASTER WHAT IS REAL AND PERSONAL.**

Our brain's main mission is to keep us alive. This is an energy-intensive task! So, to save energy, our brain selects the information that seems most useful for its survival. Good communication is essential, either to complete a transaction or to create a relationship.

Therefore, focus your efforts on the conjugation points that you will use in your daily life. Since you will practice them often, learning will be faster. Then you can move on to other less frequent points.

**YOUR TURN!** Create your own sentences in the tense or tenses that are a priority for you (pick 1 to 3 tenses to start with)

### 3- ACCEPT IT IS OK TO MAKE MISTAKES

*This is perhaps the MOST IMPORTANT point, especially when you are just starting out. The French conjugation system is incredibly complex, with irregular verbs that sometimes have no logical explanation. Indeed, French is an ancient language, which comes from Latin, and has changed a lot over the years. Even native French speakers still need a dictionary and regularly make mistakes!*

French children study conjugation in school for several years, from 6 to 11 or 12 years old, and on top of that we are exposed to the language since we are babies, so we internalize a lot of rules thanks to that. It's normal if it takes longer when you are a learner who is not exposed to the language much.

Focus on the message you want to express and speak as much as you can! The more you talk and the more you consume, the more you will internalize the conjugations.

Trust your ear and your intuition! If possible, make sure you have sessions where you can practice conjugations in a focused way, in a caring space, and with someone who is able to explain the nuances.

## **NUGGET OF NEUROSCIENCE: FLUENCY IN A LANGUAGE IS INDEPENDENT OF OUR GRAMMATICAL KNOWLEDGE.**

Of course, if we know grammar, we have the potential to speak better, BUT, if we don't have the confidence to dare to speak, all this knowledge is useless. Stress can block us completely. Conversely, we can have terrible grammar and be able to speak and be understood!

The brain mobilizes two different systems (the "thinking brain" in the prefrontal cortex and the unconscious brain that has already stored and automated a lot of information).

With my 3 tips, you will start to feel the difference when you use your conscious brain or your intuition or both.

**YOUR TURN!** Challenge yourself! On which conjugations will you make mistakes next time you speak?

*Making mistakes is a sign you're trying :)*

***Now, look for situations where you can practice.***

## WHO AM I?

### SELF-CONFIDENCE ACCELERATOR:

I help intermediate and advanced learners find their French voice.

First we analyze your strengths and weaknesses. Then we create a plan to work on the areas that will have the most impact on your ability to express yourself in French.

With a French coach for intermediate and advanced levels, you can improve your French effectively. I will help you get past the plateau effect to move to the next level or pass a test.

Cathy Intro, French coach

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