

LE PASSE COMPOSÉ ET L'IMPARFAIT

PAST COMPOUND & IMPERFECT

SUMMARY

In order to make sentences in the **PAST TENSE**,
we have learned two different tenses :
« **LE PASSÉ COMPOSÉ** » and « **L'IMPARFAIT** ».

HOW TO CHOOSE?

« **L'IMPARFAIT** » is used to describe :

A CONTEXT

Je **mangeais**...
Tu **parlais**...
Il / Elle **jouait**...
Nous **parlions**...
Vous **voyagiez**...
Ils / Elles **chantaient**...

(I was eating...)
(You were speaking...)
(He / She was playing...)
(We were talking...)
(You were traveling...)
(They were singing...)

« **PASSÉ COMPOSÉ** » will be used to describe :

An EVENT = SOMETHING HAPPENED

Je **suis arrivé**.
Tu **as posé** une question.
Il / Elle **a travaillé**.
Nous **avons cuisiné**.
Vous **avez aidé**.
Ils / Elles **ont acheté**.

(I arrived.)
(You asked a question.)
(He / She worked.)
(We cooked.)
(You helped.)
(They bought)

SUMMARY

So, as you can see,

« L'IMPARFAIT » and « LE PASSÉ COMPOSÉ » can be complementary :

CONTEXT	EVENT
Je mangeais...	...quand tu es arrivé.
I was eating...	...when you arrived .

EXTRA TIP #1

Since « L'IMPARFAIT » is used to describe the **context** of a situation

and « LE PASSÉ COMPOSÉ » is used to describe an **event** :

the action of the verb conjugated in « L'IMPARFAIT »
will always **start before** (and possibly **end after**)
the verb conjugated in « LE PASSÉ COMPOSÉ »

Je mangeais ... (I was eating...)

... quand tu **es** arrivé.
(... when you arrived.)

LET'S APPLY THIS TIP TO MORE EXAMPLES

J'**étais** au bureau... (I was at the office...)

... quand tu **as appelé**.
(...when you called.)

Elle **cuisinait**... (She was cooking...)

... quand je suis rentré.
(...when i went back.)

Je **dormais**... (I was sleeping...)

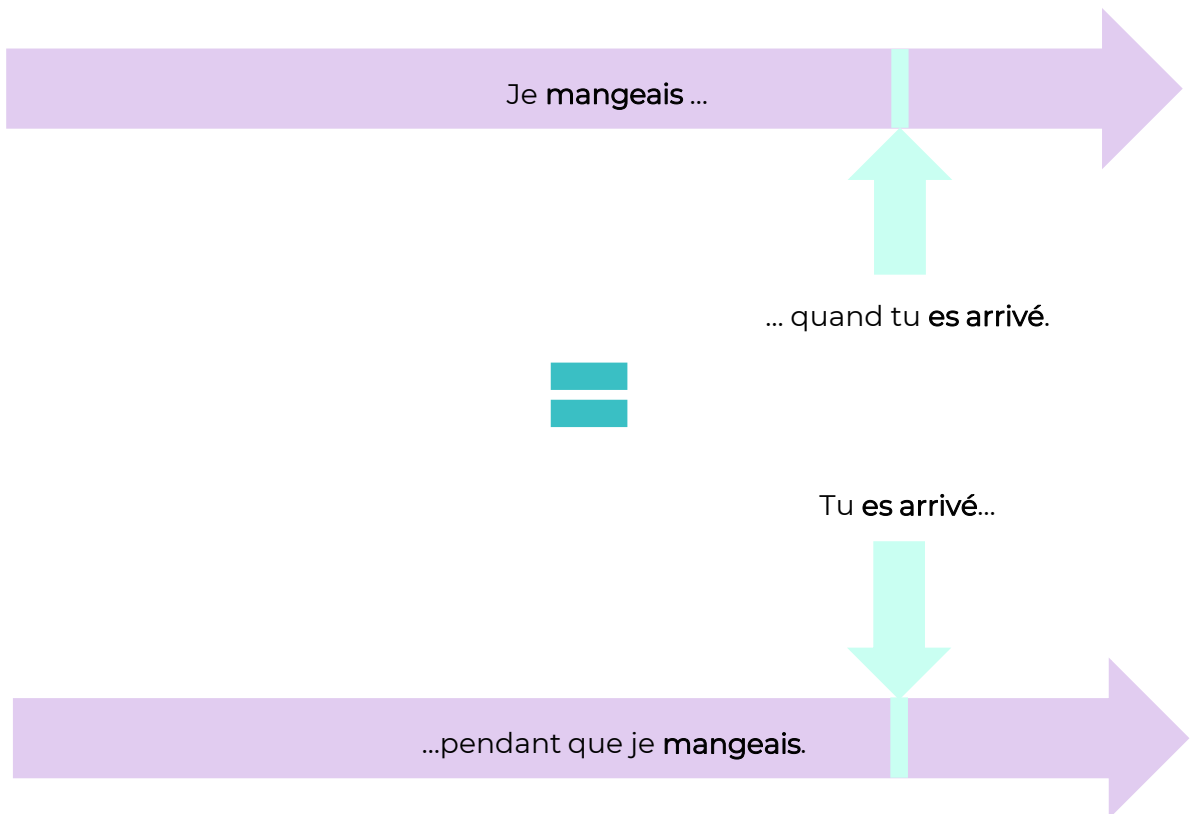
... quand tu es parti.
(...when you left.)

TIP #2

There are **no rules** about **which tense you should use first** in your sentence, meaning that the two following sentences **are correct** :

Je mangeais quand tu es arrivé.	=	(I was eating when you arrived.)
Tu es arrivé pendant que je mangeais.		(You arrived while i was eating.)

Either way, « **L'IMPARFAIT** » is used to describe the **context**, and « **LE PASSÉ COMPOSÉ** » describes the **event** or **what happened**.



TIP #3

The only case where you might want to use
« **L'IMPARFAIT** » without « **LE PASSÉ COMPOSÉ** »
is when you want to describe a **HABIT** in the **past** :

Quand j'**étais** en France, je **faisais** du sport tous les jours.

(When I was in France, I used to do sport every day.)

Quand j'**étais** enfant, j'**allais** à la piscine tous les dimanches.

(When I was a child, I used to go to the swimming pool every Sunday.)