How to Say What You're Doing Right Now in French

KS3 MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES Ages 11-14 ⏰ 3 min read

What's the Present Tense?

When you want to talk about what you're doing **right now**, you use something called the **present tense**. In English, we say things like "I am reading" or "She is playing." French does something similar, but with its own special rules.

The **present tense** in French describes actions that are happening at this very moment, habits you do regularly, or things that are generally true. It's one of the most useful verb forms you'll learn because you use it every single day when you speak!

Think of it like a video that's playing right now on your screen. The present tense is like pressing play and describing what you see happening in real-time.

Regular French Verbs in the Present

In French, **verbs** (action words) change their ending depending on who is doing the action. There are three main types of regular verbs, sorted by their endings: **-er verbs**, **-ir verbs**, and **-re verbs**.

Let's look at **parler** (to speak), which is an **-er verb**. Here's how it changes:

Je parle (I speak/I am speaking)
Tu parles (You speak)
Il/Elle parle (He/She speaks)
Nous parlons (We speak)
Vous parlez (You all speak)
Ils/Elles parlent (They speak)

Notice how the endings change? That tells you who is doing the action. This pattern works for most **-er verbs** like **jouer** (to play), **manger** (to eat), and **danser** (to dance).

Think of it like a puzzle where each person gets a different ending piece that fits with them. "Je" always needs one piece, "tu" needs a different one, and so on.

Some Verbs Are Tricky!

Not all verbs follow the same pattern. Some **irregular verbs** are a bit rebellious and don't follow the rules. The most important ones are **être** (to be), **avoir** (to have), and **aller** (to go).

These super-common verbs pop up all the time, so it's worth learning them well. Don't worry—the more you use them, the easier they become!

Quick Tip for Speaking

The secret to sounding natural in French is **listening** to native speakers and **practising** out loud. Don't just read the words—say them! This helps your brain remember the patterns and makes speaking feel much more natural.

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