

Exercises for Raising Quality of Language



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1. Making nouns and adjectives from verbs

Make nouns and adjectives from verbs and vice versa, e.g. intéresser – s'intéresser à – l'intérêt (m) – intéressant

Sometimes, it is only possible to make a noun **or** an adjective, not both, and sometimes you can make more than one noun or adjective.

Exercise A

Try these (you will need to use a dictionary):

acheter	attirer	créer	entretenir	nettoyer	prendre
apprendre	se baigner	découvrir	finir	partir	trembler
arriver	connaître	disparaître	mourir	préférer	vendre

You can make many more of your own if you want further practice. You can easily extend your vocabulary by doing this with relatively simple verbs. You will often find that an adjective can be made from a past participle.

2. Using conjunctions

Here is a list of conjunctions which you can use to join two ideas together:

alors	so (= therefore)	ou	or
car	for (= because)	parce que	because
cependant	however	pourtant	however
dès que	as soon as	puis	then
depuis que	since	quand	when
donc	therefore	sinon	if not
mais	but	tandis que	whilst

e.g. Il veut aller aux Etats-Unis; **pourtant** il n'y connaît personne.

Exercise B

Try putting any two parts of the following together with an appropriate conjunction:

1. Je ne fume pas	a. ça ne peut pas être vrai
2. Il a dû rester chez lui	b. tu es là
3. Nous avons deux examens	c. il va échouer
4. Tout le monde le dit	d. il est allé à la fac (= université)
5. Je suis très content	e. tu es contente
6. On m'a donné un téléphone portable	f. j'adore boire
7. Il doit vraiment bosser	g. il attend l'arrivée de sa mère
8. On va tous les jours à la piscine	h. je ne suis jamais au bureau
9. Il a eu des problèmes	i. on s'entraîne pour les jeux
10. Tu n'as presque pas d'argent	j. il faut travailler

3. Using correct tenses

You should be at ease using all basic tenses. There are many books full of verb exercises. If you are still not certain about endings or even the correct tense to use, get one of these books and work your way through it. Good advice is to use a verb table when writing or preparing anything and to keep on looking things up – check, **Check, CHECK**.

4. Using the conditional

Learn how to make proper conditional sentences – outlining hypothetical situations enables you to talk about possibilities – essential if you are to draw conclusions. Anyone can make a simple conditional sentence, using the present and future tenses: **S'il pleut, je resterai chez moi** – because it translates directly from the English.

True conditional sentences are no more difficult. Learn the formula:

(si + imperfect) + (conditional)

e.g. **(s'il pleuvait), (je resterais chez moi)**

If it rained, I would stay at home

This works equally well in the past tense (conditional perfect):

(Si + imperfect of auxiliary and past participle) + (conditional of auxiliary and pp)

e.g. **(S'il avait plu) (je serais resté chez moi)**

If it had rained, I would have stayed at home

Exercise C

Look at the list below and write a conditional sentence for each item,

e.g. **Carla Bruni** Si elle était moins intelligente, elle ne serait pas la femme du président.

1. Catherine Deneuve, Claude Monet, Nicolas Sarkozy (or other famous person)
2. L'Art Nouveau dans l'architecture française (or other artistic school)
3. L'arrivée de la "mal-bouffe" en France
4. Toulouse – ma ville/une ville que j'aime (or any other French-speaking town)
5. Le développement du tourisme dans ... (any area or town of France)

6. Le Centre Pompidou, Le Louvre, La Tour Eiffel (or other famous landmark)
7. Molière/Pagnol (or other French writer)
8. La guerre en Iraq (or other topical issue – these change all the time)
9. Le système politique en France/les élections législatives en France
10. L'extrême droite en France
11. La publicité à la télévision française
12. "Au revoir les enfants", film français (or other French film)
13. Les Français en vacances
14. Le sport en France

Now, say what they mean in English.

Exercise D

Now re-write your sentences in the conditional perfect,

e.g. – **La mal-bouffe**

Si on permettait aux enfants de toujours manger des hamburgers et des frites, on aurait une nation de malades.

Si on avait permis aux enfants de ... on **aurait eu** une ...

Give the English translation of each.

5. Using the subjunctive

Top grades are just not possible without being able to handle at least the present subjunctive. Just before the exams is too late to start, as it needs to embed itself in your mind. This is why you must know your basic tenses really well.

The subjunctive is about introducing subtlety into your language, expressing emotion, uncertainty and desire. And, linked to this, it is used after certain expressions (which often themselves imply a degree of uncertainty). Its form is simple, its use more complex.

To form the subjunctive, take the 3rd person plural of the present tense of a verb, remove the 'ent' and add a set of endings, as follows:

Je – e	Nous – ions	Nous and Vous often have exactly the same form of the verb as the imperfect except in some, which have special forms as shown below	
Tu – es	Vous – iez		
Il – e	Ils – ent		
Elle – e	Elles – ent		

e.g. Finir	ils finissent	que tu finisses	que nous finissions
Prendre	ils prennent	que tu prennes	que nous prenions

Notice that the subjunctive is virtually always introduced by 'que'.

There are a few very common verbs (the same ones as usual!), which have a special stem:

Pouvoir	puisse	que tu puisses	que vous puissiez
Faire	fasse	que nous fassions	que je fasse
Vouloir	veuille	que nous voulions	qu'elles veuillent
Savoir	sache	que vous sachiez	que tu saches

Avoir	QUE	j'aie, tu aies, il ait, elle ait, nous ayons, – vous ayez, ils aient, elles aient –
Être	QUE	je sois, tu sois, il soit, elle soit, nous soyons, vous soyez, ils soient, elles soient
Aller	QUE	j'aille, tu ailles, il aille, elle aille, nous allions , vous alliez , ils aillent, elles aillent

Exercise E

Learn the set of endings and the special forms shown above.

Then learn the really common phrases, which always use the subjunctive. They are:

Il faut que	It is necessary that
Il est nécessaire que	It is necessary that
Pourvu que	Provided that
À condition que	On condition that
Après que	After
Avant que ... ne	Before
Bien que	Although
Quoique	Although
Jusqu'à ce que	Until
Pour que	(In order) that
Afin que	(In order) that
À moins que ... ne	Unless
De peur que ... ne	For fear that
Sans que	Without
De sorte que	So that (indicates intention to do something)

Exercise F

For each of these topics, write 2 subjunctive sentences, employing the phrases provided:

e.g. Pourvu que tu t'entendes bien avec au moins un de tes parents, la vie n'est pas trop dure.

1. les relations familiales – pourvu que tu ... /il est nécessaire que ...
2. le baccalauréat – sans qu'ils ... /pour que ...
3. la disparition des espèces – il faut qu'on ... /quoique ...
4. la Martinique – bien que le tourisme ... /sans que ...
5. la politique et les jeunes – afin qu'ils ... /il faut que ...
6. la cuisine française – pour qu'on ... /à moins que ... ne ...
7. parler breton à l'école – il semble que ... /de sorte que ...
8. l'abus d'alcool – à moins que les victimes ne ... /pourvu que ...
9. l'importance d'internet – jusqu'à ce que tu ... /bien que ...
10. le sport – il est nécessaire que le passionné de cyclisme ... /de peur que ...

Exercise G

Using the same topics, rewrite subjunctive sentences, using your own choice of phrase.

When to use the subjunctive

1. after certain expressions which take the subjunctive, **e.g. pour que**
2. when two verbs in two clauses of a sentence are closely bound by meaning but have different subjects,
 - i. **e.g. je regrette que tu sois en retard (2 subjects)**
 - ii. **but not je regrette que je sois en retard**
same subject in each part, so you would probably say:
je regrette d'être en retard
3. when expressing ideas of emotion, desire and uncertainty and there are two subjects, as above,
e.g. Je veux qu'il finisse ce travail – I want him to finish this work
but Je veux finir ce travail – I want to finish this work

Exercise H

Translate these sentences into French

1. The government is sorry that the minister isn't succeeding.
2. The government is sorry not to succeed.
3. We don't think that you have understood.
4. We don't think that we've understood.

The biggest pitfalls are **wanting, thinking** and **believing**, so learn these phrases and use them as templates which you can alter to suit the circumstances:

Je veux que + subjunctive	je veux qu'il l'écrive	I want him to write it
Je crois (pense) que + indicative	je crois qu'il le fait	I believe/think he's doing it
Je ne crois (pense) pas que + subj.	je ne crois pas qu'il le fasse	I don't believe/think he's doing it

Exercise I

e.g. Je veux qu'il finisse – I want **him** to finish. Learn this and now use this example to translate the following:

1. They want us to help.	6. The government wants everyone to vote.
2. We don't want him to hear it.	7. The school wants us to arrive on time.
3. She wants her mother to send it.	8. The director wants you to play a part in his play.
4. Do you want me to make them?	9. I want you to wait here.
5. I want you to sell it to me.	10. The boss wants us to pay attention.

Exercise J

e.g. Je crois que tu as raison (positive statement, indicating certainty – don't use subjunctive) Je ne crois pas que tu aies raison (statement suggests lack of certainty – use subjunctive).

1. We don't believe he can do it.	6. They don't believe it's possible.
2. She thinks I understand it.	7. He doesn't think there's a problem.
3. You don't believe we are right.	8. They believe he knows.
4. He doesn't think there is enough time.	9. No-one believes we can win the election.
5. Don't you believe he wants to help us?	10. We don't believe it plays an important role.

Exercise K

Further examples of using the subjunctive:

1. She wants me to go to the town hall.	6. You (tu) would like him to be there.
2. They are afraid of his doing that.	7. I'm afraid of your getting hurt.
3. We'd prefer him to arrive in the morning.	8. They would like you to prepare a speech.
4. We want her to help us.	9. No-one wants him to know.
5. I want you (vous) to listen.	10. They prefer you to write to them.

Whether you are good at using the subjunctive or find it difficult, make sure that the examiner knows you are familiar with it. Is this cheating? No – if you can do this, you **Have** reached the required level. At the lowest level, you could use a couple of phrases, which you learn by heart and find a way of including:

- L'artiste – pourvu qu'on **compre**ne ses idées...
- La cuisine – bien que le plat **soit** très populaire...
- L'éducation – je ne crois pas qu'il y **ait** la même attitude en...
- Une ville – on veut que les touristes **puissent** éprouver...
- La politique – que ce **soit** aujourd'hui ou dans dix ans, cela arrivera.

At AS level, the examiner is looking for some familiarity with this, so show it. At the very least, learn the forms for avoir, être and pouvoir; 'qu'il y ait' is always impressive, as people so often confuse avoir and être in this. You could try linking with a useful phrase, as:

- Pourvu qu'on soit ...
- Bien que je sache ...
- Je ne crois pas qu'on puisse ...

Learn a few and use them regularly to give confidence.

You should then set out to extend your repertoire gradually.

Learning by heart and using regularly is a quick way of doing what happens when one learns a language naturally – fixing patterns in the brain.

6. Using relative pronouns to link two parts of a sentence

- When to use 'qui' – when you wish to join two ideas with 'which', 'that' or 'who' and the noun or person which comes immediately before it is the subject of the main verb.
e.g. Ce sont **les médias** qui **intéressent** les jeunes.
J'ai vu **l'acteur** qui **était d'accord** pour être interviewé.
Puis, on est entré au **bâtiment** qui **se trouve** à droite de la mairie.
- When to use 'que' – when you wish to join two ideas with 'which', 'that' or 'who(m)' and the noun or person which comes immediately before is the object of the main verb.
e.g. Voici **une série de publicités** que **j'ai vue** hier. (Note this verb has a subject – je)
L'exposition qu'on a **montée** dans la grande salle nous a vraiment plu.
- When to use 'dont' – when you wish to convey the idea 'of which', 'of whom', 'about whom' or 'whose'.
e.g. **Le journaliste dont** j'ai parlé n'est pas très content de la situation de la presse. (about whom)
Le journaliste dont les articles sont toujours très réussis, n'est pas content. (whose)
Le journaliste dont j'ai besoin ne travaille plus ici. (of whom)
- When to use 'où' – when you wish to join two ideas with 'where' and in certain time expressions.
e.g. Le jour où je suis arrivé, il est parti. (the day when I arrived, ...)
C'est le bâtiment où il travaille, normalement. (where)
Je l'ai trouvé là où tu avais dit. (where, but combined with là because no place has been mentioned)

Exercise 1

Choose a correct relative pronoun for each sentence:

1. Le député _____ parlait s'appelait M. Brun.
2. Celui _____ j'ai entendu est gauchiste /de gauche.
3. Les élections _____ auront lieu dimanche changeront beaucoup de choses.
4. La politique est un sujet _____ m'a toujours intéressé.
5. C'est la Guadeloupe _____ tu parlais?
6. La végétation _____ tu vois sur la photo en est typique.
7. Les marchandises _____ on peut exporter passent par cette compagnie maritime.
8. Les liens _____ nous maintenons avec l'entreprise restent chaleureux.
9. Les renseignements _____ j'ai besoin sont importants.
10. M. Leclerc _____ le secrétaire nous attend, a beaucoup de pouvoir dans la compagnie.

Exercise M

Translate these sentences into French:

1. The boys, whose letter you received, would like to start work immediately.
2. I understood the most important ideas, which I found interesting.
3. The facts, which he explained carefully, are a little different.
4. Those new ideas, which were also explained, seem much more progressive.
5. The information which I need, however, has not been revealed to anyone else.

Exercise N

Using the following topics to inspire you, write a sentence containing a relative clause about each one – you need not mention the topic words themselves.

e.g. Le baccalauréat – qui: L'arrivée rapide des résultats permet l'inscription aux universités et aux écoles **qui** recrutent très rapidement

1. un grand artiste (Debussy, Piaf, Monet, etc) – que
2. les sports dans la rue – qui
3. boire ou conduire – qu'
4. la radio plutôt que la télé – dont
5. faire du stop – qui
6. la publicité à la télé – où
7. les devoirs de vacances – que
8. un job d'été – où
9. le téléphone portable – dont
10. un séjour au pair – que

7. Using other pronouns

me	te	nous	vous	-	le	la	les	-	lui	leur	-	y	-	en
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This is the correct order of pronouns

Direct: me, te, le, la, nous, vous, les

- e.g.** je **les** ai étudiés – I studied **them** (simple, but note the agreement with the pronoun, which is a preceding direct object of the verb)
on peut **le** voir – you can see **him** (more complex because 2 verbs – note its position)
il va **nous** aider – he's going to help **us**

Use these when your meaning is 'me, you, him or it, her or it, us, you, them'.

Indirect: me, te, lui, nous, vous, leur

- e.g.** On devrait **lui** donner une idée claire de la situation
Nous sommes obligés de **le lui** envoyer. (direct and indirect)
Le candidat **leur** a parlé avec enthousiasme.

Use these when your meaning is 'to me, to you, to him or it, to her or it, to us, to you, to them'. Sometimes this idea of 'to' is not expressed in English –

give him it means give it **to** him.
I sent her some means I sent some **to** her and so on – you have to be alert

y – there I waited **there** j'y ai attendu

Also used with certain verbs, such as penser à – to think about – j'y pense tous les jours – I think about it every day

en – some, any, of it, of them, about it or them

j'en ai trois – I have three (of them – you must use this when there is only a number and no noun)
Il n'y en a pas – there aren't any
J'en ai entendu parler – I've heard talk about it/them

Are you sure of the order of pronouns? Look at the first line again:

me	te	nous	vous	–	le	la	les	–	lui	leur	–	y	–	en
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If you use more than one pronoun with the same verb, this is your order, except in positive commands, where you are using a direct and an indirect pronoun together. Look at these:

- Ne me le donnez pas – donnez-le moi
- Ne nous l'envoie pas – envoie-le nous

Y and **en** are unaffected by this:

- Ne m'en parle pas – parle m'en
- N'y allez pas – allez-y

Exercise 0

Choose a correct pronoun (there may be several possibilities) for each of these sentences:

1. Le président _____ a reçus dans le palais.
2. On est obligé de _____ compter.
3. Personne ne doit _____ sortir du bâtiment.
4. Il _____ a montrés hier soir.
5. Pouvez-vous _____ demander d'attendre ici.
6. N'importe qui _____ sait.
7. L'achat de ces actions _____ a rendue riche.
8. Elle _____ a laissé la plupart à ses filles.
9. Je _____ ai parlé avant-hier.
10. Dis- _____ de _____ parler demain.

Exercise P

Translate these sentences into French. Take care! – it is not only pronouns which you are practising here:

1. We wrote to them to explain it.
2. It's necessary for you to send them the details as soon as possible.
3. Everyone should be aware of it.
4. I studied them (in order) to learn their methods.
5. The headteacher wants them to do it at home.
6. Provided he understands it, there will be no problem.
7. The strike which you mentioned demonstrates it clearly.
8. No-one could get them in time.
9. Everyone's talking about it.
10. The information you need isn't available at the moment.
11. No-one understands him.
12. Most people try to complete them the next day.
13. She managed to write it in two hours.
14. Although he understands the problem, he is unable to resolve it.
15. Many young people prefer him to his father.

8. Infinitive constructions

These are verbs which are linked to another infinitive, either directly or by the insertion of the prepositions *à* or *de*. They have to be learnt, so you may as well go about it in an efficient way. As with the subjunctive expressions, you should start with a few basics and then gradually add to the core.

Exercise Q

Make a list of 10 verbs in each category and learn them really thoroughly. Here is a useful list of frequently needed verbs (s.o. = someone)

Aider à – to help to do	Avoir envie de – to feel like doing	Aimer – to like doing
S'amuser à – to enjoy doing	Conseiller de – to advise s.o. to	Devoir – to have to do
Apprendre à – to learn to do	Décider de – to decide to do	Espérer – to hope to do
Avoir du mal à – to find it difficult to do	Empêcher de – to prevent s.o. from doing	Faire – to have something done
Commencer à – to begin to do	Essayer de – to try to do	Pouvoir – to be able to do
Continuer à – to continue to do	Finir de – to finish doing	Préférer – to prefer doing/to do
S'habituer à – to get used to doing	Permettre de – to permit/allow s.o. to do	Savoir – to know how to do
S'intéresser à – to be interested in doing	Promettre de – to promise to do	Sembler – to seem to do
Passer son temps à – to spend time doing	Refuser de – to refuse to do	Voir – to see an activity happening
Réussir à – to succeed in, manage to do	Regretter de – to be sorry about doing	Vouloir – to want to do

Until you know them really well, keep on looking them up to check you have chosen the right form, and set out to use them in different tenses, in all the work you do.

Exercise R

Translate these sentences into French:

1. He wants to speak.
2. They tried to send them.
3. We spent our time listening to the news.
4. I find it difficult to get interested in politics.
5. She seems to understand them.
6. They will promise to have the grass cut.
7. We feel like learning to sing.
8. My father doesn't allow me to see these friends.
9. I am so sorry not to be able to come.
10. He would advise you to wait, if you asked him.
11. She succeeds in having a good time.
12. We were hoping to come with you.
13. She knows how to make a good speech.
14. We are getting used to listening carefully.
15. Promise me to ask him about it immediately.

Exercise S

Use this list of topics to write sentences, using your list of infinitive constructions – and do vary the tenses. Translate each of your sentences into English.

1. Les Alpes
2. Le développement du tourisme – un phénomène de la fin du vingtième siècle
3. L'ordinateur dans la vie de tous les jours
4. Le développement d'une politique verte
5. Les problèmes de transport en ville
6. L'arrivée du scooter
7. La marée noire
8. Le réchauffement de la planète
9. Tout le monde parle anglais aujourd'hui!
10. La ville de Bordeaux, reine des vins français
11. Le cinéma français
12. L'augmentation des incendies de forêt dans le Midi de la France.