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FRENCH LESSON

Basic Conversation 2 · Chapter 12 · When Things Go Wrong

French Basic Conversation 2

Chapter 12 · When Things Go Wrong: Delays, Lost Items & Emergencies

When Things Go Wrong: Delays, Lost Items & Emergencies — Quand il y a un problème

Cope when something goes wrong: a late train, a lost bag, a stolen phone, or a real emergency. You need two things: the **passé composé** to say what happened (*J'ai perdu mon sac*, from Chapter 9) and the **imperative** to ask for help (*Appelez la police ! Aidez-moi !*). The emergency numbers are **15** (medical), **17** (police), **18** (fire brigade) and **112** (the European emergency number). Use *vous* with officials and strangers.

① A Late Train — Un train en retard

A:

Excusez-moi, mon train est en retard ?

Excuse me, is my train late?

B:

Oui, il a vingt minutes de retard.

Yes, it's twenty minutes late.

A:

Il arrive à quelle heure ?

What time does it arrive?

B:

À dix-sept heures dix.

At ten past five.

Hard words: retard ruh-TAR · minutes mee-NÜT · arrive ah-REEV · dix-sept dee-SET

② A Lost Bag — Un sac perdu

A:

Bonjour, j'ai perdu mon sac.

Hello, I've lost my bag.

B:

Où est-ce que vous l'avez perdu ?

Where did you lose it?

A:

Dans le train de Lyon.

On the Lyon train.

B:

Comment est-il ?

What is it like?

A:

Il est noir et grand.

It's black and big.

Hard words: perdu pair-DÜ · sac SAK · l'avez lah-VAY · noir NWAHR

③ A Stolen Phone — Un portable volé

A:

On m'a volé mon portable !

My phone has been stolen!

B:

Quand ça ?

When?

A:

Il y a dix minutes, dans le métro.

Ten minutes ago, on the metro.

B:

Venez avec moi au commissariat.

Come with me to the police station.

Hard words: volé vo-LAY · portable por-TAH-bluh · commissariat ko-mee-sah-RYAH · venez vuh-NAY

④ Calling the Ambulance — Le quinze

A:

Allô, c'est le quinze ? Venez vite !

Mon ami est tombé.

Hello, is that 15? Come quickly! My friend has fallen.

B:

Oui. Où êtes-vous ?

Yes. Where are you?

A:

Rue Victor Hugo, devant la gare.

Rue Victor Hugo, in front of the station.

B:

Ne bougez pas, on arrive.

Don't move, we're coming.

Hard words: quinze KÊZ · vite VEET · tombé tō-BAY · rue RÛ · bougez boo-ZHAY

⑤ Fire! — Au feu !

A:

Attention ! Il y a un feu !

Careful! There's a fire!

B:

Appelez les pompiers, vite !

Call the fire brigade, quickly!

A:

Je les appelle ! C'est le dix-huit.

I'm calling them! It's 18.

Hard words: attention ah-tā-SYŌ · feu FUH · pompiers pō-PYAY · dix-huit dee-ZWEET

⑥ A Lost Passport — Un passeport perdu

A:

J'ai perdu mon passeport. Qu'est-ce que je dois faire ?

I've lost my passport. What should I do?

B:

Allez à la police, puis au consulat.

Go to the police, then to the consulate.

A:

J'ai une photocopie dans ma valise.

I have a photocopy in my suitcase.

B:

Parfait, apportez-la.

Perfect, bring it.

Hard words: passeport pas-POR · consulat kō-sü-LAH · photocopie fo-to-ko-PEE · valise vah-LEEZ

Key Phrases at a Glance — Phrases clés

SITUATION	POLITE (VOUS)	INFORMAL (FRIENDS)
Train problem	Mon train est en retard.	Le train a du retard.
Lost item	J'ai perdu mon sac.	J'ai perdu mon sac.
Stolen item	On m'a volé mon portable.	On m'a volé mon portable.
Asking for help	Pouvez-vous m'aider, s'il vous plaît ?	Tu peux m'aider ?
Calling out	Au secours !	Au secours !
Calling for services	Appelez une ambulance !	Appelle une ambulance !



Travel Problems — Les problèmes de voyage

FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
Le train est en retard.	<i>luh trẽ eh tã ruh-TAR</i>	The train is late.	retard = delay
Le train est annulé.	<i>luh trẽ eh ah-nü-LAY</i>	The train is cancelled.	annulé / annulée
Il y a une grève.	<i>eel-ee-ah ün GREV</i>	There's a strike.	common on French rail
J'ai raté mon train.	<i>zhay rah-TAY mō TRÊ</i>	I missed my train.	rater = to miss
Quel est le prochain train ?	<i>kel eh luh pro-SHÊ TRÊ</i>	What's the next train?	



Lost, Forgotten, Stolen — Perdu, oublié, volé

FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
J'ai perdu mon sac.	<i>zhay pair-DÜ mō SAK</i>	I've lost my bag.	perdre → perdu
J'ai oublié mes clés.	<i>zhay oo-blee-AY may KLAY</i>	I've forgotten my keys.	oublier → oublié
On m'a volé mon portable.	<i>ō mah vo-LAY mō por-TAH-bluh</i>	My phone was stolen.	literally "someone stole me my phone"
Je l'ai laissé dans le train.	<i>zhuh lay leh-SAY dā luh TRĚ</i>	I left it on the train.	l' = the bag
Où est le commissariat ?	<i>oo eh luh ko-mee- sah-RYAH</i>	Where is the police station?	



Emergency Numbers — Les numéros d'urgence

All are free from any phone. **112** works across Europe and from a mobile with no credit. Say where you are first, then what happened.

NUMBER	SAY IT	SERVICE	FOR
15	<i>KĚZ</i>	SAMU	medical emergency, ambulance
17	<i>dee-SET</i>	Police	crime, danger, theft
18	<i>dee-ZWEET</i>	Pompiers	fire, accident, rescue
112	<i>sā DOOZ</i>	European number	any emergency, any country



Asking for Help — L'impératif

The imperative is the vous or tu form with no subject. For -er verbs the tu form drops its final s: tu appelles → appelle. Negative: Ne bougez pas.

VOUS FORM	SAY IT	TU FORM	ENGLISH
Appelez la police !	<i>ah-play lah po-LEES</i>	Appelle la police !	Call the police!
Aidez-moi !	<i>eh-day-MWAH</i>	Aide-moi !	Help me!
Venez ici !	<i>vuh-nay ee-SEE</i>	Viens ici !	Come here!
Attendez !	<i>ah-tă-DAY</i>	Attends !	Wait!
Ne bougez pas !	<i>nuh boo-zhay PAH</i>	Ne bouge pas !	Don't move!
Au secours !	<i>oh suh-KOOR</i>	Au secours !	Help!

Saying What Happened — Le passé composé

Chapter 9 gave you the pattern: *avoir* or *être* + a participle. These participles are common in a crisis.

INFINITIVE	PARTICIPLE	SAY IT	EXAMPLE
perdre	perdu	<i>pair-DÜ</i>	J'ai perdu mon sac.
oublier	oublié	<i>oo-blee-AY</i>	J'ai oublié mon passeport.
voler	volé	<i>vo-LAY</i>	On a volé mon sac.
rater	raté	<i>rah-TAY</i>	J'ai raté mon train.
tomber	tombé (être)	<i>tõ-BAY</i>	Il est tombé.
casser	cassé	<i>kah-SAY</i>	Il a cassé son téléphone.

Three Verbs You Just Used — Trois verbes

Perdre is a regular *-re* verb; *oublier* and *aider* are regular *-er* verbs.

WHO	PERDRE (TO LOSE)	SAY IT	OUBLIER (TO FORGET)	SAY IT	AIDER (TO HELP)	SAY IT
je	je perds	zhuh PAIR	j'oublie	zhoo-BLEE	j'aide	zhed
tu	tu perds	tü PAIR	tu oublies	tü oo-BLEE	tu aides	tü ED
il / elle / on	il perd	eel PAIR	il oublie	eel oo-BLEE	il aide	eel ED
nous	nous perdons	noo pair-DŌ	nous oublions	noo zoo-blee-YŌ	nous aidons	noo zeh-DŌ
vous	vous perdez	voo pair-DAY	vous oubliez	voo zoo-blee-YAY	vous aidez	voo zeh-DAY
ils / elles	ils perdent	eel PAIRD	ils oublient	eel zoo-BLEE	ils aident	eel zED

Vocabulary — Vocabulaire

20 key words and phrases from this chapter. Nouns are listed with their article.

#	FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE	NOTE
1	le retard	luh ruh-TAR	delay	noun, m.	en retard
2	la grève	lah GREV	strike	noun, f.	une grève de train
3	le sac	luh SAK	bag	noun, m.	un sac noir
4	le passeport	luh pas-POR	passport	noun, m.	perdre son passeport
5	le portable	luh por-TAH-bluh	mobile phone	noun, m.	on m'a volé mon portable
6	la police	lah po-LEES	police	noun, f.	le 17

#	FRENCH	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE	NOTE
7	le commissariat	luh ko-mee-sah- RYAH	police station	noun, m.	aller au commissariat
8	les pompiers	lay pō-PYAY	fire brigade	noun, m. pl.	le 18
9	l'ambulance	lă-bü-LĂS	ambulance	noun, f.	appeler une ambulance
10	l'urgence	lür-ZHĂS	emergency	noun, f.	en cas d'urgence
11	perdre	PAIR-druh	to lose	verb	j'ai perdu
12	oublier	oo-blee-AY	to forget	verb	j'ai oublié
13	aider	eh-DAY	to help	verb	Aidez-moi !
14	voler	vo-LAY	to steal	verb	on m'a volé
15	tomber	tō-BAY	to fall	verb	avec être
16	rater	rah-TAY	to miss	verb	j'ai raté mon train
17	annulé / annulée	ah-nü-LAY	cancelled	adj	train annulé
18	Au secours !	oh suh-KOOR	Help!	phrase	calling out
19	attention	ah-tă-SYŌ	careful; watch out	word	Attention !
20	vite	VEET	quickly	adv	Venez vite !

Where, Who, What

In an emergency say **where you are first** (*Rue Victor Hugo, devant la gare*), then **what happened** (*Mon ami est tombé*), then answer questions. Keep sentences short. The operator will ask *Qu'est-ce qui se passe ?* ("What's happening?") and *Où êtes-vous ?*.

The Imperative Has No Subject

Appelez la police is the *vous* form with *vous* removed. For *tu*, *-er* verbs lose the final *s*: *Appelle !*
Aide-moi ! In the negative put *ne ... pas* around the verb: *Ne bouge pas !*

Real French Tip — "On m'a volé"

On m'a volé mon sac literally means "someone has stolen my bag from me", and it's what French speakers actually say. Learn it as a whole phrase; it's simpler than it looks and you don't need to build it yourself yet.

Try It Yourself — Exercices

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Say "I've lost my bag."

▼ Show answer

J'ai perdu mon sac.

2. Say "My phone was stolen."

▼ Show answer

On m'a volé mon portable.

3. Tell a stranger to call the police (*vous*).

▼ Show answer

Appelez la police !

4. Which number do you call for the fire brigade?

▼ Show answer

Le 18 (dix-huit).

5. Say "My train is late."

▼ Show answer

Mon train est en retard.

6. Ask for help in two ways.

▼ Show answer

Aidez-moi ! / Au secours !



Course Complete — Ce que vous savez maintenant

You've finished French Basic Conversation 2. Here's what you can now do:

CHAPTER	YOU CAN NOW...
1 · Your Daily Routine	Describe your day with reflexive verbs and regular <i>-ir</i> / <i>-re</i> verbs, and use <i>d'abord</i> , <i>puis</i> , <i>ensuite</i> .
2 · Hobbies & Free Time	Say what you like with <i>aimer</i> + infinitive, and use <i>jouer à</i> / <i>de</i> and <i>faire du</i> / <i>de la</i> .
3 · Plans & Invitations	Use the near future, invite, accept and refuse, and use <i>pouvoir</i> , <i>vouloir</i> , <i>devoir</i> and <i>on</i> .
4 · Describing People	Use adjectives (agreement and position) and compare with <i>plus ... que</i> .
5 · Home & Neighbourhood	Use <i>il y a</i> , prepositions of place and <i>y</i> , and talk about renting.
6 · Weather & Seasons	Talk about the weather, the seasons and the temperature.
7 · Eating Out	Book, order, explain allergies, complain, and use <i>le</i> / <i>la</i> / <i>l'</i> / <i>les</i> .
8 · Doctor & Pharmacy	Say what hurts with <i>avoir mal à</i> , use <i>depuis</i> and <i>il faut</i> , and use <i>me</i> / <i>lui</i> .
9 · The Past	Use the passé composé with <i>avoir</i> and <i>être</i> , negatives and time words.
10 · Phone & Appointments	Answer the phone, leave messages, book appointments and spell a name.

CHAPTER**YOU CAN NOW...**

11 · Opinions &
Preferences

Give opinions, prefer, agree and disagree, and give reasons with *parce que*.

12 · When Things Go
Wrong

Deal with delays and lost items, call for help, and use the imperative.

Around 240 more vocabulary items, three more verb groups (-ir, -re, reflexives), the near future, the passé composé, and two sets of pronouns (*le / la / les* and *me / lui*).

What Comes Next — French Basic Conversation 3

The natural next step is **French Basic Conversation 3**. It would pick up what this course left open: the **imparfait** (the "was doing" past behind *c'était, il faisait, il y avait*), the pronoun **en**, more question words and questions with inversion, and short reading texts.