

Stem-Changing -ER Verbs Intro/Notes

We've already learned to conjugate regular -ER verbs. We know to remove the -er from the end of the stem, and add the correct ending for each subject pronoun, as in the example below:

Chanter			
Je	chante	Nous	chantons
Tu	chantes	Vous	chantez
Il/Elle/On	chante	Ils/Elles	chantent

There are some verbs, however, that change a little bit from this pattern. The endings will never change; if a verb ends in -er, then the endings are always e, es, e, ons, ez, and ent. Let's look at a few different types of special -ER verb.

-GER Verbs

Verbs that end in -ger are easy. Only one of the conjugations changes: Nous. In the nous form, your stem gets an extra e on the end of it before you add ons. Some examples of this are arranger, bouger, changer, corriger, manger, nager, and voyager. For example:

Manger			
Je	mange	Nous	mangeons
Tu	manges	Vous	mangez
Il/Elle/On	mange	Ils/Elles	mangent

So if you see a verb that ends in -ger, then you know to change nous. None of the other subject pronouns are affected.

You try!

Nager			
Je		Nous	
Tu		Vous	
Il/Elle/On		Ils/Elles	

-CER Verbs

-CER verbs are a lot like -GER verbs. This group includes verbs like avancer, commencer, effacer, lancer, prononcer, and remplacer. It's still the nous form that changes, but the difference is that instead of adding an e, we change the c to ç, like this:

Lancer			
Je	lance	Nous	lançons
Tu	lances	Vous	lancez
Il/Elle/On	lance	Ils/Elles	lancent

You try!

Commencer			
Je		Nous	
Tu		Vous	
Il/Elle/On		Ils/Elles	

-YER Verbs

There are several verbs in this category, including appuyer, balayer, employer, essayer, payer, and renvoyer. This type of verb changes for several subject pronouns. In fact, the only ones that DON'T change are nous and vous. Fortunately, it's the same change every time: the y turns into an i. See the example below.

Nettoyer			
Je	nettoie	Nous	nettoyons
Tu	nettoies	Vous	nettoyez
Il/Elle/On	nettoie	Ils/Elles	nettoient

You try!

Payer			
Je		Nous	
Tu		Vous	
Il/Elle/On		Ils/Elles	

-ETER/-ELER

Many verbs that end in -eter/-eler double the t/l for most subject pronouns. Some common verbs that follow this pattern are appeler, épeler, feuilleter, jeter, hoqueter, projeter, rappeler. Here's an example:

Rejeter			
Je	rejet te	Nous	rejetons
Tu	rejet tes	Vous	rejetez
Il/Elle/On	rejet te	Ils/Elles	rejet tt ent

Note: not all verbs ending in -eter follow this pattern. Some common **exceptions** are the verbs acheter, celer, fileter, geler, haleter, and harceler.

You try!

Rappeler			
Je		Nous	
Tu		Vous	
Il/Elle/On		Ils/Elles	

-É_ER

For this type of verb, it doesn't matter what letter fills in the blank. These verbs change in all forms except nous and vous, and the change is that é becomes è. Some examples of these verbs are célébrer, compléter, espérer, modérer, préférer, répéter, and suggérer.

Répéter			
Je	rép è te	Nous	répétons
Tu	rép è tes	Vous	répétez
Il/Elle/On	rép è te	Ils/Elles	rép è tent

Please be careful to only change the SECOND é, if there are 2. It's always the one closest to the -er part of the verb.

You try!

Préférer			
Je		Nous	
Tu		Vous	
Il/Elle/On		Ils/Elles	

-E_ER

There's one more type. This set of verbs can look different, and I recommend that you just memorize which ones they are as you see them. Some common verbs included in this group are amener, acheter, peser, enlever, geler, lever, peler, and promener.

The change here is that the e before the consonant (whatever filled in the blank) changes to è. See the example below.

Peser			
Je	pèse	Nous	pesons
Tu	pèses	Vous	pesez
Il/Elle/On	pèse	Ils/Elles	pèsent

You try!

Lever			
Je		Nous	
Tu		Vous	
Il/Elle/On		Ils/Elles	

One last thing

The verbs that change stems for je, tu, il/elle/on, and ils/elles follow what is sometimes called a “boot” pattern. If you see/hear this term, it is referring to verbs that change for those specific subject pronouns. Here's an illustration of why it is called the “boot”:



The “boot” demonstrates which conjugations in the table are similar. It is pretty common in French for nous and vous to be different from the others.