

**Les verbes « to leave »**  
*partir, s'en aller, sortir, quitter, laisser*

These verbs can mean « to leave » but are used in different situations.

1. **Partir** is an intransitive verb and cannot have an object. The place that is being left cannot be directly named.

C'est l'heure de partir.      Partez à l'heure.      Les coureurs sont partis.

If the place is named, the preposition de is used before the place being left:

Je pars toujours de la maison à 8 heures.

2. **S'en aller** shows more immediate departure than *partir*. If the verb to leave is in the “-ing” form, (leaving), it is best to use *s'en aller*.

Le train part à 19h45.	The train leaves at 19h45.
Vite! Le train s'en va!	Quick! The train is leaving.
C'est l'heure. Je m'en vais.	It's time. I'm leaving /going.

- In the imperative, *s'en aller* is preferred to *partir*.

Va-t'en!    Allez-vous-en!    Leave!

3. **Sortir** is also intransitive and can't have an object, so the place that is being left cannot be directly named. If the place is named, the preposition de is used.

- Unlike *partir*, *sortir* emphasizes physical movement out of a place, a container for example.

Le poussin sort de l'oeuf.      The chick comes out of the egg.

- Used alone, *sortir* can mean “to go out” as a social event.

Nous sortons toujours le samedi soir.	We always go out on Saturday night.
Pierre et Julie sortent ensemble.	Pierre and Julie are dating.

- *Sortir* can also be used as a transitive verb (with a direct object) to express “to get / take (something) out” of a place.

Il sort la poubelle.	He takes the trash can out.
Elle sort ses clés de son sac.	She's taking her keys out of her purse.

4. **Quitter** is a transitive verb and must have an expressed object. It means to leave a person or a place.

Ne me quitte pas.      Nous quittons la maison vers midi.

5. **Laisser** is also transitive, and must have an expressed object. It means to leave something behind, on purpose or accidentally.

Elle laisse son bébé à la crèche tous les matins.      J'ai laissé mes gants dans la voiture.

In compound tenses, such as the *passé composé*, *partir* and *sortir* take *être*, and the past participle agrees with the subject. When *sortir* is used as a transitive verb, it takes *avoir* as its auxiliary.

Quand êtes-vous partis?      Elles sont sorties.      Marie a sorti le chien de la maison.

*Quitter* and *laisser* take *avoir* in compound tenses.

Nous avons quitté la gare à 3h.      Tu as laissé ton livre sur ton lit.

*S'en aller* is very rarely used in the past tense; *partir* is used instead.