

Cause & Effect Verbs — Grammar Capsule

Companion for the Cause & Effect Verbs drill (Levels 1-6): the Subject Seat framework, three families of near-synonyms, the causative toolkit, nominalization, and the causative-swap register upgrade, worked all the way through.

Part 1 — The Rule: The Subject Seat

Every cause-effect statement has two participants — a cause and an effect — and French gives real, everyday choices about which one sits in the subject seat. The verbs in this topic split cleanly along exactly that line: some commit to putting the cause in the subject seat (the arrow points forward), others commit to the effect (the arrow points backward). This single question — is the cause or the effect in the subject seat? — is the diagnostic the rest of this topic hangs off.

Direction	Verbs	Example
Cause → Effect cause is the subject, arrow points forward	causer, entraîner, provoquer, produire, occasionner, impliquer, avoir pour conséquence (de), avoir pour effet de, déclencher, susciter, engendrer, mener à, aboutir à	<i>Le retard entraîne des pénalités.</i> (the delay leads to penalties)
Effect ← Cause effect is the subject, arrow points backward	être causé par, être occasionné par, être dû à, résulter de, découler de, provenir de	<i>Les pénalités résultent du retard.</i> (the penalties result from the delay)

Six of these verbs — *déclencher*, *susciter*, *engendrer*, *mener à*, *aboutir à* (cause-subject) and *découler de*, *provenir de* (effect-subject) — are this topic's newest vocabulary. Level 1 (Directionality) tests this exact seat-identification question in isolation, across all sixteen verbs, before any of them get bundled with verb-chunk production.

Why English misleads you

English has "causes" and "results from"/"is due to" too, so at first this looks like a direct vocabulary swap. Two things are different. First, English "due" quietly carries two unrelated senses — the causal one ("the delay is due to traffic") and the deadline one ("the payment is due Friday") — and native speakers switch between them without noticing. French's *être dû à* does the same double duty, and treating the two senses as interchangeable is exactly the trap below. Second, English's usual signal of formality is a shift into the passive ("the delay was caused by..."); spoken French's habit runs the other way — reaching for *on* or an active causative verb instead of a passive. That means English instincts point the wrong direction in exactly the situations where French wants you to move away from the passive, not toward it (see Part 5).

The three-way preposition trap

Three different prepositions mark the cause across the effect-as-subject group — don't assume one preposition generalizes to the others.

Verb	Preposition	Example
être causé par	par	<i>Le rhume est causé par de nombreux virus.</i>
être occasionné par	par	<i>Le retour est occasionné par une erreur.</i>
être dû à	à	<i>Le retard est dû à une panne électrique.</i>
résulter de	de	<i>Le problème résulte d'une mauvaise gestion.</i>

Two of the four (être causé par, être occasionné par) are true passives — être + past participle, agrees with the subject. Résulter de is not passive morphology at all — it's a plain active intransitive verb + de, so there's no agreement question with it, ever. Two more verbs also take de — découler de and provenir de — see Part

2 for how the three *de*-verbs split apart by meaning. (General *par/de* passive mechanics for any verb, not just this toolkit, are covered in this drill's companion, *Passive Voice*.)

Trap: être dû à's false friend

Être dû à has a completely separate, extremely common everyday sense — "owed/payable at [a time]" — with nothing causal about it at all: *Le loyer est dû le premier du mois* (rent is due on the first). Tell them apart by asking: is there a cause on the other side of *à*, or a deadline?

Sentence	Reading
Le solde est dû à une erreur de facturation.	Causal — a cause follows <i>à</i>
Le solde restant sera dû à la fin du mois.	Deadline — a time follows <i>à</i> , not a cause

Part 2 — Three Families of Near-Synonyms

Six of this topic's newest verbs don't just split by direction — they cluster into three tight groups of near-synonyms that share one complement shape but differ in nuance. Getting the direction right (Part 1) isn't enough inside these groups; the real skill is choosing the one verb whose flavor actually matches the sentence, the way *result from*, *stem from*, and *come from* aren't interchangeable in English either — French just draws the lines in different places. Level 2 drills exactly this, one small group at a time.

2a — The direct-object triad: déclencher, susciter, engendrer

All three take a bare direct object, no preposition — so the only signal telling them apart is the verb's own semantic weight, not its grammar.

Verb	Nuance	Example
déclencher	rapid, explosive, instantaneous trigger — a single spark that sets something off all at once	<i>Une étincelle a déclenché un incendie majeur dans l'entrepôt.</i> (a spark triggered a major fire in the warehouse)
susciter	an emotional, intellectual, or social reaction — interest, concern, questions, debate; intangible	<i>Leur présentation a suscité de l'intérêt pour les nouvelles stratégies.</i> (their presentation sparked interest in the new strategies)
engendrer	deep-seated, widespread, or structural long-term consequence — not a single spark but a slow structural effect	<i>La croissance démographique de la ville a engendré un besoin accru en logements.</i> (the city's population growth generated an increased need for housing)

2b — The de-complement triad: résulter de, découler de, provenir de

All three take *de* and are effect-as-subject — the grammar is identical across the group, so the choice comes down purely to how abstract or concrete the derivation is.

Verb	Nuance	Example
résulter de	generic, register-neutral result — the plain "results from," no particular flavor	<i>Le problème résulte d'une mauvaise gestion.</i> (the problem results from poor management)
découler de	logical/analytical derivation — a conclusion or state of affairs that follows from a prior fact, closer to "it follows that"	<i>Cette décision difficile découle de plusieurs échecs successifs.</i> (this difficult decision follows from several successive setbacks)

Verb	Nuance	Example
provenir de	tangible, physical, or historical origin — where something literally comes from	<i>Le charme de cette vieille maison provient de ses murs de pierre irréguliers.</i> (the charm of this old house comes from its irregular stone walls)

2c — Same preposition, different vector: mener à, aboutir à vs. être dû à

The real trap here isn't the preposition — all three verbs take à — it's direction. *Mener à* and *aboutir à* are cause-subject; *être dû à* (Part 1's false friend) is effect-subject. A learner who leans on "which preposition" alone gets nothing to go on; only the verb itself tells you which noun phrase belongs in the subject seat.

Verb	Vector	Nuance	Example
mener à	cause-subject	cumulative progression toward an outcome — a process building toward something	<i>Persévérer quand tout semble perdu mène souvent à une vraie réussite.</i>
aboutir à	cause-subject	near-synonym of mener à, more formal/definitive — the process has reached its endpoint (negotiations, discussions, long efforts)	<i>Des mois de négociations ont abouti à un compromis acceptable.</i>
être dû à	effect-subject	already met in Part 1 — same preposition à, opposite direction	<i>Les pénalités sont dues au retard.</i>

Part 3 — The Causative Toolkit

French also has a set of everyday verbs whose entire job is naming a cause-effect relationship directly, without any passive construction at all — no être, no past participle, no agent preposition. *Le retard entraîne des pénalités* is a plain active sentence: subject, verb, object, done. The twelve verbs from Part 1's Cause -> Effect row are the core of that vocabulary. Because they split cleanly along the Subject Seat line — some put the cause first, others put the effect first — learning one of these verbs really means learning two things: what it means, and which side of the cause/effect line it puts in the subject seat. Two of them also hide a second trap: their complement can take more than one grammatical shape depending on what follows.

impliquer's three patterns

Pattern	What it means	Example
Transitive	requires/involves + direct object	<i>Ce projet implique un ingénieur agréé.</i>
Impersonal	implies/entails + de + infinitif	<i>Une bonne stratégie implique souvent d'intégrer une marge.</i>
Reflexive	to get involved (s'impliquer)	<i>Tout le monde s'implique sérieusement.</i>

avoir pour conséquence / avoir pour effet — two complement shapes

Shape	Pattern	Example
Infinitif	avoir pour conséquence/effet DE + infinitif	<i>Ce phénomène a pour conséquence de réchauffer la planète.</i>
Bare-noun-object	avoir pour conséquence (no de) + noun	<i>Tout manquement aura pour conséquence la suspension de la procédure.</i>

Same idea, two different grammatical shapes — the *de* is there before an infinitive but disappears before a bare noun. Mixing the two shapes up (adding a stray *de* before a noun, or dropping it before an infinitive) is the trap.

Part 4 — Nominalization: Naming the Trigger

This is a different skill from Parts 1-3 — not new causative-verb vocabulary, but spelling and gendering correctly the noun form of an ordinary, everyday action verb, while one of the causative verbs from this topic does the connecting work. Given two related sentences — an action, then its consequence — the task is to fold the action into a noun and drop it into a single blank: *L'usine a fermé plus tôt que prévu. Cela a entraîné la perte de 200 emplois.* becomes *La fermeture de l'usine a entraîné la perte de 200 emplois.* The blank tests real agreement, not just vocabulary: *la fermeture* needs its article and gender exactly right, the same way any other noun does.

Verb	Noun	Gender
fermer	la fermeture	fem
augmenter	l'augmentation	fem
diminuer	la diminution	fem
chuter	la chute	fem
retarder	le retard	masc
annuler	l'annulation	fem
réduire	la réduction	fem
licencier	le licenciement	masc
manifester	la manifestation	fem
hausser	la hausse	fem

On a augmenté les impôts. Cela a provoqué des grèves. -> L'augmentation des impôts a provoqué des grèves. (taxes went up; that triggered strikes -> the tax increase triggered strikes) — the nominalization (l'augmentation) is what gets typed; provoquer, already conjugated, does the causal connecting exactly as it does throughout Parts 1 and 3.

Part 5 — Choosing Naturally: the Causative Swap

Passive, effect-as-subject sentences (*être causé par*, *être dû à*, *résulter de*) are grammatically correct, but they read stiffer and more written than everyday spoken French tends to reach for. A fluent speaker very often swaps that construction for its cause-as-subject twin from Part 3 instead — same information, same two participants, just the other one sitting in the subject seat. This isn't fixing an error; it's a register choice, the same way an English speaker might say "the delay caused the problem" instead of "the problem was caused by the delay" without either one being wrong.

Written / formal (effect-as-subject)	Natural / spoken (cause-as-subject)
Les pénalités sont dues au retard.	Le retard entraîne des pénalités.
Le rhume est causé par de nombreux virus.	De nombreux virus provoquent le rhume.

Nothing about the effect-as-subject version is wrong — it's simply the more formal register choice. Building the reflex to reach for the cause-as-subject version instead, the way a French speaker's ear naturally would in conversation, is the real goal here.

Part 6 — Compare & Contrast Cheat Sheet

You want to say	Right	Wrong (and why)
The problem is caused by a system issue.	Le problème est causé par un problème de système.	Le problème est causé de... — causer's passive always takes par, never de.
This is due to a mistake.	C'est dû à une erreur.	C'est dû par une erreur — dû takes à, not par, even though it's a true passive-shaped construction.
The rent is due Friday. (deadline sense)	Le loyer est dû vendredi.	Reading this as causal — dû here has nothing to do with cause and effect at all.
You want to say	Right	Wrong (and why)
The problem results from a mistake.	Le problème résulte d'une erreur.	Le problème est résulté par une erreur — résulter is never passive; it's a plain active verb + de.
This project requires an engineer. (transitive)	Ce projet implique un ingénieur.	Ce projet implique d'un ingénieur — the transitive pattern takes a direct object, no de.
The news sparked concern among residents.	La nouvelle a suscité des inquiétudes chez les habitants.	La nouvelle a engendré des inquiétudes chez les habitants — engendrer fits a slow, structural effect, not a quick emotional reaction; susciter is the better fit here.
The delay stems from a technical failure. (logical inference)	Le retard découle d'une panne technique.	Le retard provient d'une panne technique — provenir de fits a physical or historical source, not a logical inference; découler de is the better fit here.
Negotiations led to an agreement.	Les négociations ont abouti à un accord.	Les négociations sont dues à un accord — être dû à is effect-subject, which would make the agreement the cause instead; that reverses who's actually in the subject seat.

Ties to the rest of the site: this drill's companion, *Passive Voice*, covers general *par/de* passive mechanics for any verb (not just this toolkit), the *avant que* -> *avant de* subject-collision trap, and *on* as the everyday spoken alternative to a heavy passive — the other main ways French avoids or reshapes a heavy passive.