

VERBS

PART TWO

VERB TENSES

Verb tenses show when an action took place, as well as how long it occurred. The main verb tenses are the past, present, and future.

There are also additional aspects that give extra details, such as the length of time the action occurred, which actions happened first, or whether a past action has an impact on the present. These grammatical aspects are the simple tense, perfect tense, continuous tense, and perfect continuous tense.

Past tenses

1. Simple past

We use the simple past to show actions completed in the past, with no extra emphasis.

For regular verbs, you form the simple past tense by adding the suffix *-ed* to the end of the verb (or just *-d* if the past tense verb already ends in an *e*).

Be careful of irregular past tense verbs, however. These don't follow the normal rules and use their own unique forms for the past tense. For example, the past tense of the irregular verb *go* is *went*.

Regular verbs: *I **picked** up the glass, but it **dropped** from my hand.*

Irregular verbs: *This morning I **went** to the store, but I **forgot** the milk.*

2. Past perfect

[*had*] + [past participle]

What if you're talking about two different actions in the past and want to show that one happened before the other? The past perfect shows that one past action happened earlier than another one.

*She **had arrived** at the office before she realized it was Sunday.*

*I ran to my car when I noticed my wife **had left** already.*

3. Past continuous

[*was/were*] + [present participle]

Use the past continuous to show an ongoing action in the past, especially if the action was interrupted by another action. It's also used for habitual actions that occurred in the past but not in the present.

*My dog **was whimpering in his sleep** when the TV woke him up.*

*As kids, my friends and I **were** always **getting** into trouble.*

4. Past perfect continuous

[*had*] + [*been*] + [present participle]

The past perfect continuous tense is used just like the past perfect tense, except it describes ongoing actions that happened in the past instead of a one-time occurrence. It's often used with the words *when*, *until*, and *before* to connect it to another past action.

*Before he got his first job as a writer, he **had been working** as a proofreader.*

*I **had been living** on my friend's couch for a year until they kicked me out.*

Present tenses

1. Simple present

The simple present is the most basic of the English tenses. It's used for individual actions or habitual actions in the present.

Often the simple present is just the root verb with no changes or additions. The main exception to this is when the subject is third person and singular. In this case you add the suffix *-s*. If the verb ends in *o*, *ch*, *sh*, *th*, *ss*, *gh*, or *z*, you add *-es*. If the verb ends in a consonant and *y* (and the subject is third-person singular), drop the *y* and add *-ies*.

*Today I **feel** like a million bucks!*

*My brother **carries** the groceries while my sister **stays** on the couch.*

2. Present perfect

[*have/has*] + [past participle]

Although it's quite common, the present perfect is one of the most difficult English verb tenses. It is used to describe a few different types of actions, including:

- an ongoing action started in the past that is not yet completed
- the same action completed multiple times in the past and likely to be completed again
- an action completed very recently (usually with *just* or *now*)
- an uncompleted action that is expected to be finished (in the negative)

Additionally, the present perfect can be used to emphasize the significance of a completed action, especially one that happened over time.

*We **have tricked** him every April Fool's Day since we were kids.*

*My niece **has grown** so much this year!*

3. Present continuous

[*am/is/are*] + [present participle]

Use the present continuous to show an action happening right now or in the near future.

I am reading The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy *for the fifth time!*

We are eating pizza tonight.

4. Present perfect continuous

[*have/has*] + [*been*] + [present participle]

The present perfect continuous shows an ongoing action in the present that was started in the past. It is often used to emphasize the length of time.

We have been waiting for over an hour!

The team has been practicing nonstop for the tournament.

Future tenses

1. Simple future

Use the simple future for actions that have not happened yet but will later. To form the simple future, just place the modal verb *will* before the root form of the main verb. (Note that if the action will happen in the **near future**, you can use the present continuous instead.)

She will be president one day.

I will not go to the wedding without a date!

2. Future perfect

[*will*] + [*have*] + [past participle]

The future perfect shows an action that will be completed in the future by a specified time. Because it depends on another time.

By the time you read this, I will have already left.

She will have eaten lunch before her sister even wakes up.

3. Future continuous

[*will*] + [*be*] + [present participle]

Use the future continuous tense for future actions happening over a period of time, especially when a specific time is mentioned. The future continuous tense also shows more certainty and likelihood than the simple future.

By this time tomorrow, I will be drinking margaritas on the beach.

We will be attending a meeting from noon until 3 p.m.

4. **Future perfect continuous**

[*will*] + [*have*] + [*been*] + [present participle]

The future perfect continuous depicts future ongoing actions that continue up until a certain point. Like the future perfect and future continuous, it's used with a specified time.

*In ten minutes, my parents **will have been waiting** in traffic for four hours.*

*I **will have been eating** healthy for a whole year by September.*