

Irregular Verbs

There are a number of verbs that do not follow the expected spelling patterns when tense changes. Because of this, they are called “irregular.”

For most regular verbs, one would simply add “d,” “ed,” or “ied” to show past tense.

For example: walk = walked, play = played, taste = tasted, and study = studied.

Irregular verbs, however, do not follow this rule.

Some common irregular verbs are:

Tell	Eat	Make	Do	See	Give
Speak	Drink	Take	Be	Say	Know
Run	Think	Shake	Go	Get	Come

* These verbs are currently in present tense.

If we were to take those same verbs and convert them to past tense, they would look like this:

Told	Ate	Made	Did	Saw	Gave
Spoke	Drank	Took	Been	Said	Knew
Ran	Thought	Shook	Went	Got	Came

* These verbs have been converted to show simple past tense. The verbs may change even further as the tense changes. Be sure to consult the Verb Tense handout for further clarification of these topics

The same verbs in present progressive tense (an action is in progress) and past continuous tense (an action was in progress in the past):

Telling	Eating	Making	Doing	Seeing	Giving
Speaking	Drinking	Taking	Being	Saying	Knowing
Running	Thinking	Shaking	Going	Getting	Coming

* Notice that in these cases, the continuous tense utilizes the “ing” form of the present tense of the verb.

* When verbs are in this form, the “be” verb is often used as a **helping verb** with the **main verb**.

For example:

I **am telling** you the truth. They **are making** sandwiches. They **are seeing** a play.
She **is speaking** to you. I **am taking** a nap. I understand what you **are saying**.
We **are running** away. We **are shaking** the tree. He **is getting** tired.

The “Do” Verb

Do is an irregular verb. Do may be used as a *main* verb or as a *helping* verb. Whenever a single word form of “do” is used, or if “do” is the *last* word in a phrasal verb then it is the principal verb in the sentence.

- Main verb example: I do the dishes. I can do the dishes.
“Do” is the main verb in the phrasal verb “can do.”

When any form of “do” is the first word in a phrasal verb, then “do” is the helping verb.

- Helping verb example: I do think that my daughter should wash the dishes.
“Do” is the helping verb; “think” is the main verb.

Person & Number	Present	Past	Future
	Action happening now	Action is completed	Action to come
	do	did	will do
1st Person Singular	I do the dishes.	I did the dishes.	I will do the dishes.
2nd Person Singular	You do	You did	You will do
3rd Person Singular	He/she/it does third person singular rule - add “es”	He/she/it did	He/she/it will do
1st Person Plural	We do	We did	We will do
2nd Person Plural	You do	You did	You will do
3rd Person Plural	They do	They did	They will do

Person & Number	Present Perfect	Past Perfect	Future Perfect
	← Action began in the past & continues into present→	One action completed • before another one took place ←	Action will be complete • before a specific time →
	have/has + done	had + done	will + have + done
1st Person Singular	I have done the dishes many times.	I had done the dishes before I watched TV.	I will have done the dishes by the time you arrive.
2nd Person Singular	You have done	You had done	You will have done
3rd Person Singular	He/she/it has done third person singular rule - use the “s” form of the helping “have” verb	He/she/it had done	He/she/it will have done
1st Person Plural	We have done	We had done	We will have done
2nd Person Plural	You have done	You had done	You will have done
3rd Person Plural	They have done	They had done	They will have done

Person & Number	Present Continuous	Past Continuous	Future Continuous
	Present “be” verb + doing	Past “be” verb + doing	Will + be + doing
1st Person Singular	I am doing the dishes.	I was doing the dishes.	I will be doing the dishes.
2nd Person Singular	You are doing	You were doing	You will be doing
3rd Person Singular	He/she/it is doing third person singular rule -use the “s” form of the “be” verb	He/she/it was doing	He/she/it will be doing
1st Person Plural	We are doing	We were doing	We will be doing
2nd Person Plural	You are doing	You were doing	You will be doing
3rd Person Plural	They are doing	They were doing	They will be doing

The “Do” Verb: Common Use and Practice

Using “do” to form questions:

- Do you like to wash dishes?
 - Yes, I do. / No, I don't.
- Does she like to wash dishes?
 - Yes, she does. /No, she doesn't.
- Do they like to help with cleaning up?
 - Yes, they do. /No, they don't.

Using “do” for emphasis:

- Do you like to write poems?
 - I do! Writing poetry is my favorite hobby.
- Does John want to go fishing on his day off?
 - He does! He is really looking forward to it.
- People who smoke cigarettes do have increased health risks.

Idioms that include “do” and their meaning:

- **Do over** - repeat; redecorate
- **Do without** - to not have something
- **Do away with** - eliminate
- **Do a double take** - take a second look
- **Do a one - eighty** - to make a change; one hundred and eighty degree turn; opposite
- **Does a heart good** - satisfying feeling
- **Do you read me** - do you understand; do you hear me
- **Easy does it** - stay calm, take your time
- **That does it** - something is finished; might imply angry frustration
- **How does that grab you?** - What do you think?
- **Do your thing** - be yourself; be active in the activities that are of interest to you

Practice Exercises:

Select the form of the verb “do” that is most appropriate for each situation.

There are some sentences that may have more than one correct answer. For instance, in the first sentence, both “do” and “did” are grammatically correct. The selection of “do” indicates that the subject (I) still does exercises every morning. The use of “did” indicates that the subject used to do exercises every morning but has stopped. In this instance, either could be correct. Context clues can be used to determine which should be used in a larger body of work. Consult with a tutor to get some help building strategies for this type of situation. You may also work with a tutor to determine why one answer might be chosen over another in these examples.

I (do/did) does/ doing) strengthening exercises every morning.

She (do/ did/ does/ doing) strengthening exercises every morning but doesn't any more.

They (had done/ has done/ have done) this before.

They (do play / did play / does play / doing play) baseball last summer.

She (had done/ has done/ have been doing) her homework for this chapter.

She (has done/ had done/ had been doing/ have been doing) her homework for this chapter when the phone rang.

She (have done/ had done / has been doing) her calculus homework.

The “Be” Verb

To Be is an irregular verb that often acts as a “**linking verb.**” Meaning, it links the subject of a sentence to a word or group of words that renames or describes the subject For example: Bob **is** happy, or I **am** exhausted. “Is” and “am” are forms of the “Be” verb. “It can also act as a “**helping verb.**” It will come before the main verb. This is often the case with present continuous, and future tenses: I **am running**. I **will fold** the laundry. In these examples, “running” and “fold” are the main verbs, while “am” and “will” are forms of the verb “Be.” Note that in the present tense, the “-ing” form of the main verb is used.

Person & Number	Present	Past	Future
	Action happening now	Action is completed	Action to come
	is	was	will be
1st Person Singular	I am	I was	I will be
2nd Person Singular	You are	You were	You will be
3rd Person Singular	He/she/it is	He/she/it was	He/she/it will be
1st Person Plural	We are	We were	We will be
2nd Person Plural	You are	You were	You will be
3rd Person Plural	They are	They were	They will be

Person & Number	Present Perfect	Past Perfect	Future Perfect
	← Action began in the past & continues into present →	One action completed • before another one took place ←	Action will be complete • before a specific time →
	have/has + been	had + been	will + have + been
1st Person Singular	I have been washing many dishes.	I had been washing the dishes before I watched TV.	I will have been finished the dishes by the time you arrive.
2nd Person Singular	You have been washing many dishes	You had been washing	You will have been finished
3rd Person Singular	He/she/it has been third person singular rule – use the “s” form of the helping “have” verb	He/she/it had been washing	He/she/it will have been finished
1st Person Plural	We have been washing many dishes	We had been	We will have been finished
2nd Person Plural	You have been washing many dishes	You had been	You will have been finished
3rd Person Plural	They have been washing many dishes	They had been	They will have been finished

Person & Number	Present Continuous	Past Continuous	Future Continuous
	Present “be” verb + doing	Past “be” verb + doing	Will + be + doing
1 st Person Singular	I am doing the dishes.	I have been doing the dishes.	I will be doing the dishes.
2 nd Person Singular	You are doing	You were doing	You will be doing
3 rd Person Singular	He/she/it is doing third person singular rule – use the “s” form of the “be” verb	He/she/it was doing	He/she/it will be doing
1 st Person Plural	We are doing	We were doing	We will be doing
2 nd Person Plural	You are doing	You were doing	You will be doing
3 rd Person Plural	They are doing	They were doing	They will be doing

The “Be” Verb: Common Use and Practice

Using “be” to form questions:

- **Are** you going to wash dishes?
 - Yes, I am. / No, I am not.
- **Is** she going to wash dishes?
 - Yes, she is. /No, she is not.
- **Will** they help with cleaning up?
 - Yes, they will. /No, they will not.

Idioms that include forms of “be” and their meaning:

- **Be on time.** – Arrive at the scheduled time; be punctual.
- **I am broke.** – I do not have any money.
- **I will be back.** - I will return.
- **This is out of date.** – This (food) is no longer fresh; this (clothing) is no longer fashionable.

Practice Exercises:

Select the form of the verb “be” that is most appropriate for each situation.

There are some sentences that may have more than one correct answer. For instance, in the first sentence, both “am mowing” and “was mowing” are grammatically correct. The selection of “am mowing” indicates that the subject (I) is **still** mowing the lawn **at this moment**, while “was mowing” indicates that **the subject mowed the lawn earlier but has stopped**. In this instance, either could be correct. Context clues can be used to determine which should be used in a larger body of work.

Consult with a tutor to get some help building strategies for this type of situation. You may also work with a tutor to determine why one answer might be chosen over another in these examples.

I (am mowing /is mowing /are mowing /was mowing /were mowing) the lawn.

I (am mowing /is mowing /are mowing /was mowing /were mowing) the lawn this morning.

She (am /is /are /was /were) a cake decorator before she started working here.

He (am /is /are /was /were) a cake decorator.

They (am /is /are /was /were) at the baseball game.

They (have been attending / had been attending / has been attending) classes regularly.

She (have been attending / had been attending / has been attending) classes regularly.

She (have been attending / had been attending / has been attending) classes regularly before she broke her leg.

Practice Exercise Answer Key:

The “Do” Verb

Select the form of the verb “do” that is most appropriate for each situation.

I (do) did/ does/ doing) strengthening exercises every morning.

She (do) did/ does/ doing) strengthening exercises every morning but doesn't anymore.

They (had done/ has done/ have done) this before.

They (do play/ did play/ does play / doing play) baseball last summer.

She (had done/ has done/ have been doing) her homework for this chapter.

She (has done/ had done/ had been doing) have been doing) her homework for this chapter when the phone rang.

She (have done/ had done/ has been doing) her calculus homework.

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Select the form of the verb “be” that is most appropriate for each situation.

I (am mowing/ is mowing /are mowing /was mowing /were mowing) the lawn.

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She (have been attending / had been attending / has been attending) classes regularly before she broke her leg.