Verb Tenses

**Present Perfect**

(have**or** has+ **past participle)**

The present perfect tense expresses an action that began in the past and has recently been completed or is continuing in the present.

The city has just agreed on a contract with the sanitation workers.

Tony’s parents have lived in that house for twenty years.

Lola has watched *Star Trek* reruns since she was a little girl.

**Past Perfect**

(had+ **past participle)**

The past perfect tense expresses a past action that was completed before another past action.

Lola had learned to dance by the time she was five.

The class had just started when the fire bell rang.

Bad weather had never been a problem on our vacations until last year.

**Present Progressive**

(am, is, or are+ **the *—ing*****form)**

The present progressive tense expresses an action still in progress.

I am taking an early train into the city every day this week.

Karl is playing softball over at the field.

The vegetables are growing rapidly.

**Past Progressive**

(was or were + **the —*ing* form)**

The past progressive expresses an action that was in progress in the past.

I was spending twenty dollars a week on cigarettes before I quit.

Last week, the store was selling many items at half price.

My friends were driving over to pick me up when the accident occurred.

**Perfect tenses** = have, has, or had + the past participle (verb form ending usually in —ed)

**Progressive** = am, is, are, was or were + present participle (verb form ending in —ing)

**Perfect** **Progressive** = have been or had been + present participle

**TENSES**

**Present**

**Past**

**Future**

**Present perfect**

**Past perfect**

**Future perfect**

**Present progressive**

**Past progressive**

**Future progressive**

**Present perfect progressive**

**Past perfect progressive**

**Future perfect progressive**

**EXAMPLES**

Jill works.

Iwork.

Howard worked on the lawn.

You will work overtime this week.

Gail has worked hard on the puzzle.

They have worked well together.

They had worked eight hours before their shift ended.

The volunteers will have worked many unpaid hours.

I am not working today.

You are working the second shift.

The clothes dryer is not working properly.

She was working outside.

The plumbers were working here this morning.

The sound system will be working by tonight.

Married life has not been working out for that couple.

I had been working overtime until recently.

My sister will have been working at that store for eleven straight months by the time she takes a vacation next week.

Verb Tenses - Past

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TENSE | | TIMELINE | TIMEFRAME | | EXPLANATION | **FORM VERB** |
| Past Tense  I talked to him yesterday. | X  Past Present Future | | Past – action is finished | action is over and has no connection to present | | Use “ed” for regular verbs  Ex: you talked  he, she talked  we talked  they talked |
| Past Continuous  I was talking to him yesterday. | XXX  Past Present Future | | Past | action is over, but there was movement or progress at that time | | past tense of verb “to be” plus “ing” form of verb  Ex: you were talking  he, she was talking  we were talking  they were talking |
| Past Perfect  I had talked to him before I went to work. | XY  Past Present Future | | Past | two actions that happened in the past, one before the other | | Use “had” plus the past participle of verb  Ex: you had talked  he, she had talked  we had talked  they had talked |
| Past Perfect Continuous  I had been talking to him when the doorbell rang. | XXXY  Past Present Future | | Past | two actions happening in the past, one before the other, but there was movement or progress | | Use “had been” plus “ing” form of verb  Ex: you had been talking  he, she had been talking  we had been talking  they had been talking |

X = One Action  
Y = Another Action

Past Tense: Examples

When you write a **narrative** about **an event that occurred in the past,** you will use the different forms of the **past tense**. The different forms will allow you to show the difference between actions which may be completely finished, continue into the present, or actions which may have taken place over a period, or duration, of time in the past. Additionally, you may want to show that events or conditions occurred in a sequence (first, next, and last) in the past.

For example:

**I graduated from college in 2005.**

Your graduation was a single event. It is completely over; although you continue to be *a* graduate, the day you wore your cap and gown and received your degree is over. Use the **simple past** tense.

**I was preparing dinner when the phone rang.**

Each of the events is over. You prepared the dinner yesterday, and the phone rang yesterday. Show that a continuing action was interrupted by using the **past continuous** tense.

**I was livingin India at the time. I shopped at the outdoor markets every day.**

Again, each of these events is over. You no longer live in India, and you no longer shop in the markets. Use the **past continuous** tense to show that your life in India was a duration, or *period*, of time. *During* that time you shopped at the markets.

**I had viewed the film before I read the book.**

Both of these actions happened in the past. Use the **past perfect** tense to indicate that one event occurred before the other.

**I had been looking for my shoes when I found his lost wallet.**

Again, both of these actions are past. Use the **past continuous** tense to show that one action was in progress when another event occurred.

Verb Tenses - Present

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TENSE | TIMELINE | TIMEFRAME | EXPLANATION | **FORM VERB** |
| Present tense  I talk every day. | X  Past Present Future | Now – present time | happening at the present time | you talk  he, she talks  we talk  they talk  third-person singular, + “s” |
| Present Continuous  I am talking to you now. | X XX  Past Present Future | Now – present time | happening at the present time, but there is movement or progress (continuing action) | use verb to be-plus “ing” form of verb  Ex: you are talking  he is talking  we are talking  they are talking |
| Present Perfect  I have talked to her for several years. | XXXXX  Past Present Future | Past, but continues to have importance to the present | action happened in the past, but there is some connection to the present –action may still be happening in the present | use “have or has” and past participle of verb  Ex: you have talked  he, she has talked  we have talked  they have talked |
| Present Perfect Continuous  I have been talking to her for over an hour. | XXXXXX  Past Present Future | Past, but has connection to present, and there is movement or progress | action happened in past, but continues up to the present, and there is movement or progress (continuing action) | Use “have been or has been” plus “ing” form of verb  Ex: you have been talking  he, she has been talking  we have been talking  they have been talking |

X = One Action  
Y = Another Action

Present Tense: Examples

You may use the different forms of the **present tense** to show the progression and sequence of events that are occurring **right now.** The present tense may help you give directions (for instance, for a process analysis essay) or to organize an argumentative essay. Always use present tense when writing a literary analysis or when describing a work of art.

For example:

**I exercise in the morning.**

**I exercise every morning.**

In the above examples, the action occurs in the present.

In addition, use **present** tense for “general truths” (something that is usually true). Example: **Students study before a test**.

**I am looking for a job.**

The action occurs in the present and continues to occur, so use the **present continuous**.

**I have lived in the United States for a few years.**

Use the **present perfect** tense to show that an event or action continues from the past into the present.

**My mother has been a big help.**

Use the **present perfect continuous** tense to show that an event or action occurred over a period of time, or progressed, in the past and continues into the present.

**In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Huck travelsalong the river.**

Use **present** tense to write about the action, plot development, or literary elements in a novel.

Verb Tenses - Future

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TENSE | | TIMELINE | TIMEFRAME | | EXPLANATION | **FORM VERB** |
| Future Tense  I will talk to you tomorrow. | X  Past Present Future | | Future | action will happen at some future time | | Use “will” plus base form of verb  Ex: you will talk  he, she will talk  we will talk  they will talk |
| Future Continuous  I will be talking to her next week. | X X X  Past Present Future | | Future | action will happen at some future time, but there will be movement or progress  (The action will continue.) | | Use “will be” plus “ing” form of verb  Ex: you will be talking  he, she will be talking  we will be talking  they will be talking |
| Future Perfect  I will have talked to her before the party next week. | X Y  (Past)  Past Present Future | | Future | two actions happening in the future, but one will happen before the other | | Use “will have” plus past participle form of verb  Ex: you will have talked  he, she will have talked  we will have talked  they will have talked |
| Future Perfect Continuous  I will have been talking with her for an hour before the party next week. | XXXY  (Past)  Past Present Future | | Future | two actions happening in the future, but one will happen before the other AND there is movement or progress  (The action is continuing.) | | Use “will have been” plus “ing” form of verb  Ex: you will have been talking  he, she will have been talking  we will have been talking |

X = One Action  
Y = Another Action

Future Tense: Examples

Use the **future tense** to indicate events that will happen in the future. Even in the future, though, we can *imagine* that events have already happened or foresee their duration.

For example:

**I will look for a job very soon.**

Use the **simple future tense** to show that an action will occur in the future.

**I will be looking for work after the holidays.**

Use the **future continuous** to show that an action will occur in the future, over a period or duration of time.

**Hopefully, I will have found a job before the spring.**

Use the **future perfect** tense to show that something will happen in the future, and after it has happened, something else will happen. In other words, two things are going to happen: You will find a job. It will be spring. One of these events will happen before the other.

**I will have been looking for four months by May.**

Use the **future perfect continuous** to show that two things will be happening in the future. One will happen before the other, and it will have covered a duration of time.