

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

EXAMPLES

Present

Jill works.
I work.

Past

Howard worked on the lawn.

Future

You will work overtime this week.

Present perfect

Gail has worked hard on the puzzle.
They have worked well together.

Past perfect

They had worked eight hours before their shift ended.

Future perfect

The volunteers will have worked many unpaid hours.

Present progressive

I am not working today.
You are working the second shift.
The clothes dryer is not working properly.

Past progressive

She was working outside.
The plumbers were working here this morning.

Future progressive

The sound system will be working by tonight.

Present perfect progressive

Married life has not been working out for that couple.

Past perfect progressive

I had been working overtime until recently.

Future perfect progressive

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 <u>talked</u> to him yesterday.		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 <u>was talking</u> to him yesterday.		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 <u>had talked</u> to him before I went to work.		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 <u>had been talking</u> to him when the doorbell rang.		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 living in 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 <u>talk</u> every day.		Now - present time	happening at the present time	you talk he, she talks we talk they talk third-person singular, + "s"
Present Continuous I <u>am talking</u> to you now.		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 <u>have talked</u> to her for several years.		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 <u>have been talking</u> to her for over an hour.		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 travels along 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 <u>will talk</u> to you tomorrow.		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 <u>will be talking</u> to her next week.		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 <u>will have talked</u> to her before the party next week.		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 <u>will have been talking</u> with her for an hour before the party next week.		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

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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.