

Verb Tenses

The Simple Tenses		
Tense		Example
Present Simple verb verb+s (for he, she, it)	a fact that is true now	The U.S. has 50 states.
	a recurring event (happening usually)	I go to school every day.
	state or condition	He feels sick.
	a planned future action (with a future time word), especially referring to scheduled events	The train leaves in an hour.
Past Simple verb+ed the past verb form for irregular verbs	a completed action or state in the past	Lisa composed a poem yesterday.
	an activity that took place regularly in the past	In the 1990s, I took the bus to work almost every day.
Future Simple will + verb	a prediction about a future event	The prices will go up.
	a decision at the time of speaking (not planned in advance)	Sure, I will call you.

The Progressive (or Continuous) Tenses		
Form: be + verb+ing (present participle)		
Meaning: These tenses convey that an event is in progress at a particular time.		
Tense	Meaning	Example
Present Progressive am/is/are + verb+ing	an action happening now	It's raining hard now.
	an action <i>this</i> (<i>week, month, etc.</i>)	I am working at the beach this week.
	a future action (with a future time word)	They are flying to Texas tomorrow.
Past Progressive was/were + verb+ing	an action in the past that was interrupted in the past by another action	I was playing chess when the phone rang.
	a repeated past action (an activity took place long time ago)	We were planning our wedding for many months.
Future Progressive will + be + verb+ing	an action that will be in progress at a particular time in the future	Matt will be writing his novel over the summer.

The Perfect Tenses		
Form: have + past participle		
Meaning: These tenses convey that an event took place before now or before another time or event.		
Tense	Meaning	Example
Present Perfect have/has + past participle	an action that occurred "before now," at some unspecified time in the past	She has already read that book.
	a recent action that is important to the current situation or conversation	- What's wrong? - I have lost my keys.

	activities that were repeated several or many times in the past	They have seen that movie many times.
Past Perfect had + past participle	an action that occurred before another time or another action in the past.	Courtney had written several screenplays by the time she was accepted to graduate school.
Future Perfect will + have + past participle	a future action that will happen before a particular time or action in the future.	Sonja will have written her lesson plans before the school year starts.

Note: In speech, the past perfect and future perfect tenses are often substituted by past simple and future simple correspondingly.

The Perfect Progressive Tenses

Form: have + been + verb+ing

Meaning: These tenses convey that an event is in progress immediately before and up to another time or event. They express *the duration* of the first event.

Tense	Meaning	Example
Present Perfect Progressive have/has + been + verb+ing	an action that began in the past, has continued in the present, and may continue into the future (when the duration is emphasized)	She has been waiting for almost an hour.
	an action that began in the past and has recently ended	I 've been writing the paper for two hours, and now I can rest.
Past Perfect Progressive had + been + verb+ing	an action that occurred before another action in the past (when the duration is emphasized)	Eve had been writing for two years before her novel was published.
Future Perfect Progressive will + have + been + verb+ing	A long action that is taking place in relation to another future event (when the duration is emphasized)	Tracy will have been writing for two hours by the time we have to leave.

Note: In speech, the past perfect progressive and future perfect progressive tenses are often substituted by past simple and future simple correspondingly.

The information in this handout is adapted from Folse, K. S. (2009). *Keys to teaching grammar to English language learners: A practical handbook*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Practice

Determine the correct tense for the verbs in brackets. In some cases, more than one correct answer is possible.

- I _____ (drive) to GMU tomorrow.
- I _____ (cook) dinner when I realized that I _____ (leave) my textbook at school.
- I _____ (wear) my favorite sweater to the game last night.
- She _____ (not sleep) for two days. She looks tired.
- They _____ (date) for seven years, but they are not ready for marriage yet.
- I _____ (listen) to my iPod every day on my way to work.
- I _____ (won) a lot of money in Las Vegas this month.
- We _____ (play) tennis at this time tomorrow.
- I _____ (enjoy) my time studying abroad, but I cannot wait to go home.

10. Mike _____ (email) you by 5 o'clock.
11. I _____ (work) on my car engine for several hours before the car mechanic comes.
12. I _____ (not feel) well today.
13. Brian _____ (hear) about the incident yesterday.
14. He _____ (practice) his guitar for 10 years before he became a renowned musician.
15. She _____ (talk) very loudly! I can't stay in this room any more.
16. My professor _____ (give) me a 'B' on my paper.
17. (The phone rings) Don't worry, I _____ (answer) the phone.
18. The assignment _____ (be) due yesterday.
19. She _____ (write) her book by the end of next year.
20. Tomorrow we _____ (eat) dinner at Olive Garden.

Answers

1. am driving (if the action was planned in advanced) / will drive (if it was decided at the time of talking) 2. was cooking - had left 3. wore 4. has not slept 5. have been dating 6. listen 7. have won 8. will be playing 9. am enjoying / enjoy 10. will have emailed 11. will have been working 12. am not feeling (if the current state is reported) / don't feel (in general) 13. heard 14. had been practicing 15. is talking 16. gave 17. will answer 18. was 19. will have written 20. are eating / will eat

Last updated 1/4/2018