

WHAT ARE TENSES?

THE SIMPLE PRESENT

THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS/PROGRESSIVE

THE PRESENT PERFECT TENSE

THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

# VERB TENSES

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THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE, THE PAST CONTINUOUS  
TENSE

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THE PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS TENSE

SIMPLE FUTURE TENSE, THE FUTURE PERFECT TENSES

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# Verb Tenses

By **tenses**, we mean the relationship between our **concept of time** and the **forms of verbs**. Time can be seen basically in terms of **present, past** and **future**. This division corresponds to the present, past and future tenses. Each of these tenses has **the simple, the perfect, the progressive** and **the perfect progressive** tenses.



# The Simple Present

## Uses

a) To indicate things which may happen at the moment at any time in the present. This is common when one talks about **habits**, **routines** and **hobbies**. In this case, it is often accompanied by adverbials of time such as sometimes, never, always, often, usually, etc

Habit: He always drives to school.

Routine: The earth revolves around the sun.

Hobby: He likes to swim.

## Exercise

Complete the sentences below with the following words. (**until, plays, always, leaves, unless, knows**)

1. Wait \_\_\_\_\_ he comes.
2. When you dance, I \_\_\_\_\_ feel happy.
3. If John \_\_\_\_\_, we shall probably win.
4. I can't come \_\_\_\_\_ my mother agrees.
5. He \_\_\_\_\_ for Douala on Friday and returns on Sunday.
6. She \_\_\_\_\_ how to open the door

## The Present Continuous/Progressive

It is formed by adding the auxiliary “is, am or are” to the present participle of the verb. It is used in the following situations:

- When something is happening at the actual time of speaking or over a period of time which includes the actual moment of speaking. E.g.:

You are sitting in class.

- for planned future action, for example:

1. We are writing a test next week.
2. The prisoners are trying to escape.



## Exercise

Rewrite these sentences changing the words in brackets in the present continuous tense.

1. John is (eat) rice.
2. The children are (write) exams next week.
3. Lum is (sing)
4. They are (go) to school.
5. We are (pray) in the afternoon.
6. I am (play) a drum.

## The Present Perfect Tense

It is formed by adding the auxiliary “**have/has**” to the past participle of the verb. It is used in the following cases:

- when we talk about a recently completed action With **just**, **already**, **now**, and **recently** in statements and in questions.

e.g.: He has just/already gone to school.

- To answer questions which contain a verb in the present perfect.

e.g.: -Where have you been? I've been to see Paul.

-What has happened? He has lost his bag.

- to express an action which began in the past and is still taking place:

I have played handball for some years (which means, I still play)

He has worked here for a long time (meaning, he still works here).

It should be noted that the auxiliary can be shortened to ‘**ve**’ for ‘**have**’ and ‘**s**’ for ‘**has**’.



## Exercise

Use (**have, has, already**) to complete these sentences.

1. Peter \_\_\_\_\_ passed the examination.
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ finished cooking.
3. My mother \_\_\_\_\_ already gone to the market.
4. He \_\_\_\_\_ lost his pen.
5. They \_\_\_\_\_ been with us for many years.
6. My mother has \_\_\_\_\_ gone to the shop.

## The Present Perfect Continuous

Formed by adding 'has/have' + been + present participle.

It is used for an action which has been happening for some time and is still continuing or has just stopped. It is often used with "since" + a definite or point of time. We can also use it with "for" + a length or period of time.

1. I **have been waiting** for you for thirty minutes.
2. They **have been playing** football since morning.



## Exercise

Use **for** or **since** to complete these sentences.

1. I have been reading \_\_\_\_\_ three hours.
2. Jean has lived with us \_\_\_\_\_ she was small.
3. They have been dancing \_\_\_\_\_ morning.
4. Peter has been sick \_\_\_\_\_ a year now.
5. The choir has been singing \_\_\_\_\_ this church was inaugurated.

# The Simple Past Tense

## Uses

- Mainly for completed past actions when the time is known or stated:

I carried out an experiment last night.

John went to the hospital yesterday.

- To describe habitual past actions:

She always walked to school.

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## The Past Continuous Tense

**Form:** was/were + a present participle.

**Uses:**

- To express a past action which was happening when another action was completed:

I saw him when I was walking home.

She lost the keys when she was playing handball.

- To express two past actions which happened at the same time and which were both continuous:

I was singing while they were dancing.

- to show what was happening at a past time:

At ten o'clock last night, I was watching television.

- To replace the present continuous in reported speech:

**Direct:** He said, "I'm looking for my keys."

**Indirect/reported:** He said he was looking for his keys.

- used for a cancelled future action:

I was going to buy a test-tube when Mary said she has already bought one for me.

**Exercise:** Complete these sentences with these words (**going, playing, dancing, running, singing, Listening** )

1. I was \_\_\_\_\_ to school when the rain was falling.

2. They were \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

3. We were \_\_\_\_\_ to the radio news when he came in.

4. They said that they were \_\_\_\_\_ football.

5. He hurt his leg when he was \_\_\_\_\_



## The Past Perfect Tense

**Form:** had + a past participle

**Uses:**

•To show which of two past actions happened first. In this case, the verb of the second action is in the simple past tense.

1. She went to bed after she **had locked the door**.

2. I **had gone** to the market when you called.

•used in reported speech:

John told us that he **had just passed** his driving test.

•used in conditional sentences which refer to the past:

If you **had passed** your exams, you would have gone on holidays.

•used after “I wish, if only, I would rather and I would sooner” when referring to a past event:

1. I wish I **had not spent all the money**.

2. I would rather think you **had not given him much water**.

3. **If only the teacher had been here**.



# The Past Perfect Continuous Tense

**Form:** had been + a present participle.

We can use this tense when the first of two past actions were continuous:

1. We stopped for a rest after we **had been walking** for two hours.
2. By the time he came home, she **had been crying**.



## Simple Future Tense

**Form:** shall/will + infinitive without to.

In statements, we can use will with any subject but some people prefer to use shall after I and we. In questions, we must use shall before I and we.

- We will/shall go to the market tomorrow.
- Shall we go to the market tomorrow?
- I will/shall see you again.
- Shall I see you again?

The main use of the simple future tense is for planned or unplanned future events.

**Planned:** Mary's phone will arrive at two o'clock.

**Unplanned:** Who will win the race?

## Future Continuous

**Form:** shall/will + be + present participle.

**Uses:**

- To express action which will be in progress at some time in the future.

We **shall be waiting** for you at four o'clock.

- To express the future without intention (not especially planned).

He **will be coming** here tomorrow as usual.

**NB** To express doubt, we can use “**may**” in place of “**shall**” or “**will**”.

He **may be coming** here tomorrow.



## The Future Perfect Tenses

**Form:** shall/will + have + a past participle (non continuous)

shall + have + been + a present participle (continuous form).

The future perfect tense is used to express an action which will be completed or finished by some future time or date.

I shall have finished my assignment by ten o'clock. (*future perfect*)

By the end of the semester, I shall have been learning English for ten years (*future perfect continuous*).



## Subject/Verb Agreement

In constructing sentences in English language, the various parts of speech must agree with each other. The verb must agree with its subject in number. A singular subject takes a singular verb, while a plural subject takes a plural verb e.g. The **cups are** in the cupboard. **Cups** (**plural subject**) agrees with **are** (**plural verb**) Note that a verb that takes an (**s**) is not a plural verb. It rather agrees with singular pronoun subjects except for **I** and **you** which agree with the plural that does not take an “**s**” e.g.

He **makes** it

She **makes** it

It **makes** it

That/this **makes** it

Nobody **makes** it

Everybody **makes** it

Everyone **makes** it

They **make** it

We **make** it

I **make** it

You **make** it

