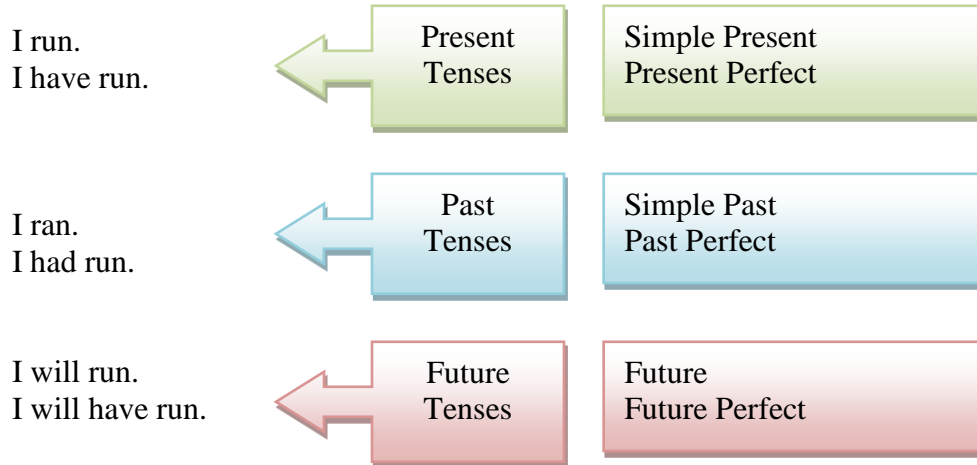


024 Grammar 06 - Verb Tense

The *tense* of a verb indicates when in time that verb's action takes place. Writers use verb tenses to give their readers a sense of time in their writing, indicating how the events and ideas they describe or develop are situated in time.

There are six major verb tenses in English, and they specifically designate the verb's action in the present, past, or future.



Present Tenses

Simple Present

This is the most basic present verb tense available in English. This tense indicates that the action is happening *at the present time* or immediately.



I run marathons.

I listen to bluegrass music.

Jay-Z plays Madison Square Garden every year.

My girlfriend changes her mind often.

I do my English 101 homework as soon as I get home from school.

Freshmen register after all upper-class students.

The university offers many choices in upper-level electives.

My dad enjoys minestrone soup and saltine crackers.

The museum opens at eleven.

Present Perfect

This tense indicates that the verb's action at first occurred in the past but is continuing at present or still is having an effect on the present. The sample sentences below are in the present perfect tense—the statements in brackets next to them indicate how their action is understood to continue into the present.

I have run marathons for several years. [and still do]

I have listened to bluegrass music since I was a teenager. [and still do]

Jay-Z has played Madison Square Garden every year. [and is expected to do so this year]

My girlfriend has changed her mind often. [and is expected to do so again]

I have done my English 101 homework as soon as I get home from school. [and continue to do so]

Freshmen have registered after all upper-class students. [and are still required to do so]

The University has offered many choices in upper-level electives. [and still does]

My dad has enjoyed minestrone soup and saltine crackers. [and still does]

Exercise: Identifying Present Tenses

In the following sentences, identify the type of **present** tense used.

1. My wife runs to the store when we get low on coffee. Tense: _____

2. Professor Kori's English 305 class is quite challenging. Tense: _____

3. My 1974 Jeep has run perfectly for the past six years. Tense: _____

4. The sidewalk on the north side of Monroe Street has cracked. Tense: _____
5. Peter's suggestion about how to resolve the company's I.T. infrastructure makes me nervous. Tense: _____
6. April's grandfather has lost his glasses. Tense: _____
7. The Appeals Committee has met on Tuesdays. Tense: _____
8. Steve's father, who is a coal miner, dreams of a less stressful and dangerous life for his kids. Tense: _____
9. The flash drive I keep my documents on makes a funny noise whenever I put it into a computer. Tense: _____
10. Blue has been my favorite color. Tense: _____

Exercise: Present and Present Perfect Tenses

Correct the following incorrect uses of the present and present perfect tenses. Note: each of these is intended to convey something in the present or present perfect tense—as written, they might be technically grammatically correct, but they *all* use the present tenses incorrectly.

1. I have saw the sunrise over the Atlantic Ocean many times.

2. Juliana's grandmother make hand-made blankets to sell at craft shows.

3. Most television news anchors have study for a degree in journalism at some point.

4. My cousin's fiancé Jason, a carpenter, have built many houses.

5. Kira and her partner George have runned a software company for six years.

6. Janice has runned the Boston Marathon six times.

7. I stubbed my toe on the edge of the door frame every night.

8. The museum close at five on Sundays.

9. I have enroll in Ms. Hazel's English 101 class.

10. Bert step on nails every time he goes out on a job site without adequate footwear on.

Past Tenses

Simple Past

The simple past tense depicts an event that happened at a definite or known (though not necessarily explicitly indicated) point in the past.

I saw a Baltimore Oriole bird in the park last week.

My dog dug a hole in my neighbor's yard, and his little son fell into it.

The kids in the neighborhood hit a baseball through my car's rear window, though I don't think they meant any harm.

My cousin Marissa gave a jazz concert at Club Nouveaux last weekend—it was fantastic!

The American Civil War was a catastrophe for a lot of ordinary civilians, both in the North and South.

The other day, it rained.

On my way to work this morning, I spilled hot coffee all over myself; it made my morning meetings with my staff very uncomfortable.

I dreamed I was a baseball player last night.

Andre got his bachelor's degree in 2009.



Past Perfect

This past tense depicts an event that took place *in relation* to another event. This is formed with the word “had” and the simple past tense of the verb.

I had walked six miles with the gas can in my hand before the state trooper picked me up and offered me a ride to a gas station.

We had discussed *The Birth of a Nation* in class, so I rented it.

By the time we'd arrived at the party, Clark and his three friends had eaten all of the guacamole.

I had dreamed of what it would be like to be a dad many times, but I still wasn't prepared for it.

I hadn't done the reading when the professor handed out the quiz for the day.

Maria had written to me before we got to Rome, so I knew what to expect.

By midway through the first season of *Lost*, I was, well, lost.

I was hoping to meet Kenny's aunts and uncles at the reunion, but they had gone home before we got there.

Exercise: Identifying Past Tenses

Identify the type of *past* tense—simple past or past perfect—used in each of the following sentences.

1. John's cousin Mirabelle lived in Houston for a long time. Past Tense _____
2. The offensive poster had been removed by the time we got to the hall. Past Tense _____
3. My Honda broke down. Past Tense _____
4. Corinne's mechanic had said it was impossible to fix her car with the parts he had on hand. Past Tense _____
5. The leaves had turned in the valley, so we got to see them. Past Tense _____
6. The movie had been rated NC-17, so my little brother was not allowed to go with us. Past Tense _____
7. I dropped a quart of milk on the kitchen floor yesterday. Past Tense _____
8. There was broken glass in the parking lot last night. Past Tense _____
9. I had dropped a quart of milk on the floor when my daughter ran into the kitchen. Past Tense _____

10. Robert complained about the lack of support for teachers in the meeting this morning. Past Tense _____

Exercise: Past Tenses

In the sentences below, correct the incorrect uses of the past tenses. Look carefully at the sentence to determine which tense, the past or past perfect, the writer intends.

1. Garvey's comments had riled up the audience last night.

2. Doctor Winningham traveled to Jamaica by the time his daughter was born.

3. Joseph change his mind after he saw how committed the activists were.

4. In the middle of the match, the boxer's trainer throw in the towel and ended the fight.

5. When LouAnne finished making her bed, her daughter had got up.

6. Mark and Zachary were suppose to change out the scuba tanks last night, but they did not get to it.

7. Anna regret not making cookies when her entire family surprised her on her birthday last year.

8. When the campus security guards arrived the people who were fighting left the party.

9. Amy walk home after the party, and her feet were sore afterwards.

10. Edward's temper got him in trouble before, and the principal knew it.

Proofreading and the Past Tense

Many student errors in tense are the result of inadequate proofreading. In some cases, students miss correcting errors in their tense usage—most times leaving off the “-ed” ending—because the *sound* of that ending is minimized in the spoken forms of some particular verbs.

Hearing the “-ed” sound in verbs with an “-ge” ending or an “-se” ending is particularly challenging: here are some examples:

“-ge” Verbs	“-aze” Verbs	“-ose” Verbs	“-use” Verbs
Arrange	Amaze	Suppose	Abuse
Change	Daze	Disclose	Use
Gauge	Faze	Foreclose	Muse
Range	Gaze	Diagnose	Fuse
Engage	Blaze	Dispose	
		Propose	

Exercise: Correcting Errors in Past Tense

In the passage below, identify and correct the errors in indicating past tense. There are 21 total errors in the passage. Assume that the writer intended to use some version of the past tense throughout.

Last week, my brother invite me to be his guest at a special event—the Academy Awards. Jacob

is an independent filmmaker, and one of his short movies had nominated for “Best Short Subject

Documentary.” When I first seen an early cut of the film, which focus on a group of Marines returning home from Afghanistan, I was not too impress, but I want to support my brother. I offer him some criticism, and he is a little upset about it. A couple days later, I get a call from him, asking if I could come over and see a new edit of the movie. I say of course, and went over to his studio. The new cut much better; the scenes flow better, and the viewer get a much better sense of the really compelling story my brother was trying to tell. Over the next six months, my brother take his film to several film festivals all around the country, and the response is pretty positive. He even was suppose to make a bit of money from a small distribution deal. I don’t hear anything else about the movie for a couple of months, but then two weeks ago, I answer the phone, and it’s my brother: his movie was nominate for an Oscar, and he want me to go with him to the Awards for good luck, as I gave him such honest feedback on the first version.

Future Tenses

The future tenses in English indicate that a verb’s action *will* take place at some point in time that has yet to occur.

Future Tense

This is the “simple” future tense. This indicates that the actor or subject of the sentence will do something at a definite or indefinite point in the future.

Tomorrow, I will buy some plums at the farmer’s market and cook them with pork chops for dinner.

The museum will open at eleven o’clock due to a power problem on its second level.

The Shins will release their fourth album on March 22nd.

Jason and Lilly will get married.

The economy will eventually recover from the recession of 2007 and the financial crisis of 2008.

Even if they never admit it, political analysts will make mistakes in predicting the outcome of elections.

Emitting carbon into the atmosphere will have an adverse effect on the planet's health.



Future Perfect Tense

A slightly more complicated use of the future tense is the future perfect tense, which designates that an action will have been completed by a definite point in the future. Like all the perfect tenses, this tense depends on the use of “have” as a helping verb.

By the time John completes work on my car, I will have missed my meeting.

I will have earned my master's degree by my thirtieth birthday.

The team will not have eaten prior to the game.

We will get to the party at 10 p.m.; most of the guests will have arrived by then.

In ten years, you will have forgotten me and all the good times we are having now.

After we get back to the house after our late dinner party, our daughters will have gone to bed.

Will the company have received our documents by the time our deposition is scheduled?

Exercise: Identifying Future Tenses

In the sentences below, identify the type of future tense used.

1. I will travel to New Brunswick on the twelfth of this month and to Vancouver on the thirtieth.
Type of Future Tense _____
2. John will have left the party by eleven, so we might not see him if we're late.
Type of Future Tense _____
3. Tamara will graduate with her law degree in 2013; we're very proud of her.
Type of Future Tense _____
4. The team will not have played a game on the road by the time their away uniforms are complete. Type of Future Tense _____
5. Kobe Bryant will not score 40 points against the Heat on Wednesday night; their defense will contain him. Type of Future Tense _____
6. The university will have invested millions in the computer infrastructure project at the time of its completion in 2017. Type of Future Tense _____
7. Kathleen and Lulu will have seen the movie by Wednesday, so we should choose another.
Type of Future Tense _____
8. I will see you on Tuesday, provided my car is running.
Type of Future Tense _____
9. I will not have had time to complete my homework by then.
Type of Future Tense _____

10. Markus, Vlad, Tim, Bryan, and Alex, if they are not tied down by their own work schedules and family commitments, will attend the gala. Type of Future Tense _____

Exercise: Correcting Uses of the Future Tense

In the passage below, identify and correct any incorrect uses of the future tenses.

Anatoly Karensky's film *Slow Burn* is a masterpiece of comic timing and dramatic tension. It is clear to this reviewer that the film will be view as a classic for many years to come. It will thrills audiences and critics alike as long as there are prints of it available. Given the ever-increasing pervasiveness of electronic media in our country, it will have been a shock if the film ever becomes unavailable. When a first-time viewer leaves the theatre the first time after seeing this wonderful movie, she will have been thrill by the top-rate performances by George Clooney, Don Cheadle, and Anne Hathaway; she will have been enthralled by the pitch-perfect dialogue by screenwriter Katherine Irena; she will have mesmerized by the almost hypnotic photography by cinematographer Juliet Brown. In short, this film will be remember as a modern classic, now and always.