

ENGLISH VERB TENSES FORMS, USES, AND EXAMPLES

Present Simple Tense

Base verb, 3rd Person Singular –s (I work, He works)

1. To refer to a situation or affairs as permanent (Water boils at 100°C.)
 2. To refer to a situation or state of affairs regarded as permanent. (He works in a bank.)
 3. To refer to repeated/habitual actions. (I take sugar in coffee. Do you smoke?)
 4. To discuss what happens in a book, play, movie, story, or an event. (He turns, shoots, and suddenly realizes he got the wrong target.)
 5. To express thoughts, feelings, immediate reactions to something at the present moment (God, he looks awful).
 6. In news headlines (Serial killer kills his 5th!)
 7. In explanations and instructions (You take the first turn left and then go straight ahead).
 8. With future reference as a part of a fixed schedule (The new semester starts on January 5)
- Spelling: Verbs ending in ss, sh, ch, x, and o get –es in 3rd person singular (kiss –kisses, rush –rushes, watch –watches, box –boxes, go –goes). Ending in y: carry –carries, copy –copies.*

Present Continuous (Progressive Tense)

To be + base verb + -ing (present participle) (I am working)

1. To express an action taking place at the moment of speaking (I'm trying to hear what he's speaking).
2. To indicate changes, trends, development, and progress (He is not improving, he is getting worse).
3. To indicate a temporary situation (She is travelling through Europe).
4. With adjunct of frequency to show disapproval and annoyance at how often the action takes place (He's always breaking things!)
5. With future reference as a part of personal arrangement (I am seeing John tomorrow).

*Spelling: if a verb ends in –e, it gets dropped before –ing: argue – arguing, hate – hating, *be – being. If a verb ends in double e, they stay: agree – agreeing, see- seeing. Monosyllabic verbs with one vowel and a consonant ending: sit – sitting, stop – stopping, swim – swimming. A final l after a short vowel always double: travel – travelling, signal – signaling. Verbs ending in c, add k: panic - panicking.*

Past Simple Tense

Verb + - ed (He worked)

1. Action completed at a particular time in the past (He flew to Boston yesterday. She tripped, fell, and landed on her bottom. She got that couple of years ago.)
 2. Action existing over a period of time in the past (He worked in a bank all his life. I lived in London from 2011 to 2017).
 3. Habitual or regular past action (When I was young, I went out every night) – *same thing can be expressed with would or used to.*
 4. With stative verbs (I thought she looked beautiful. I knew she was wrong.)
 5. Backshift past - sequence of tenses (I thought she looked beautiful. I knew she was wrong.)
 6. Hypothetical past (I wish I had a memory like yours. It's high time you stopped smoking)
 7. Attitudinal past – polite use (Hi, can I help you? – Yes, I wondered if you could help me.)
- Spelling changes: verbs ending in -y, when preceded by a consonant change to -i (rely-relied); when preceded by a vowel – no change (enjoyed)*

Past Continuous/Progressive Tense

Was/were + verb + -ing (He was working)

1. Action in progress at a particular time:
 - Background action (I was sleeping when he arrived).
 - Simultaneous action (I was trying to hear what the man was saying. Mary was waking up while Ann was cleaning).
2. Temporary action (may be regular) (We were sleeping in the kitchen during that cold winter. I was living with my parents waiting for my apartment to be redecorated.).
3. Changes, trends, developments and progress (I thought she looked thinner. Apparently, she was slimming. The weather was getting worse.).
4. To emphasize duration and continuity - but can be expressed with Past Simple (I was working all day last Thursday. I was watching TV all evening long. He was giving a lecture between 2 and 3 O'clock).
5. To express an incomplete action (He was reading a book that night. – *as opposed to a complete action* – He read a book that night.).
6. Backshift / Sequence of tenses (I knew what was going on).

Present Perfect Tense

Have/has + past participle (He has worked)

1. Action that happened in the past without stating the specific time. (I have raised \$500 for my swimming pool. I have noticed this trait in many photographers. She has had tremendous adventures.)
2. Action which started at some time in the past, continued, and is still happening now. (I have lived here for the last couple of years. She has not talked to me since yesterday. I have always liked cherry pies. I have not seen you for ages. – *but I see you now*)
3. Action in the indefinite past related to present situation (You seem terrified. What has frightened you? I have sprained my ankle. That is why I am limping.).
4. Recent action (I have just returned from work. We have missed out stop.).
5. In clauses of time to indicate a future completed action. (As soon as you have had your dinner, come over.)

*Present Perfect vs. Past Simple

Basic difference: Simple Past refers to a definite time in the past, whereas Present Perfect refers to an action in indefinite time reference that is in certain connection with the present moment. (Tom has had a bad car accident. – *He is probably still in hospital.*

Tom had a bad car accident. – *He is probably fine by now.*

With Simple Past you specify the time of past action, whereas with Present Perfect you emphasize that something has happened in the past, but not when. Therefore, Present Perfect cannot be used with adjuncts/adverbials of time, but can be used with adjuncts/adverbials of duration/frequency. (The settlers have left the bay forever. She has always been partial to sweets. I have often/frequently wondered why he moved.).

Unlike Simple Past, Present Perfect may indicate incompleteness (I have smoked for six years. – probably still smoke. VS. I smoked for six years. – I stopped smoking.).

Present Perfect Continuous

Have/has + been + present participle (He has been working)

Present perfect Continuous emphasizes duration, (Why are you crying? - I have been cutting onions for the last ten minutes) or (non)completion (Have you been reading the book?).

Compared to Present Perfect tense, little difference: I have worked here for two years now. vs. I have been working here for two years now).

Past Perfect Tense

Had + past participle (He had worked)

Expresses a past event/situation occurring before a particular time/event in the past - used not to express an action in distant past but only in comparison with another past action. (She had lost her job, so she was working as a waitress.)

Past Perfect Continuous

Had + been + present participle (He had been working)

...is used to emphasize the duration of a continuous activity that took place before or up to and including a particular time/event in the past. (He returned to Vienna where he had been negotiating. I thought he needed some fresh air. He had been sitting there all day.)

Future Simple Tense

Will + base verb (He will work)

1. Prediction (He will turn into a great player in two years' time. He will come home late tonight).
2. Promise (I will take you to the movies next time.).
3. Action which is not a part of a definite plan - *often with think, expect, wonder, perhaps, probably*. (I think he will go to live in the Netherlands. I will have my new car by June)
4. General Truth (Spring will come. When peace is available, people will go for it.).

Future Continuous Tense

Will + be = present participle (He will be working)

1. Action in progress at a particular time in the future (Do not call between 8 am and 10 am. I will be studying then. Will it still be raining like this when I get back?).
2. Series of future actions seen as temporary arrangements (She will be giving lectures across the country).
3. Introducing polite requests (Will you be going out tonight? I thought you could give me a lift.).
4. To emphasize certainty that something will happen because arrangements have been made. (I will be seeing you when I am finished with them. Next month he will be retiring.)

Future Perfect Tense

Will + have+ past participle (He will have worked)

Action which will happen before or until a particular time in future - it has not happened yet, but it will. (By the time we get there, they will already have started. I shall have been with the firm for 20 years by then. I will be tired when I arrive because I will have done an exam the day before.)

Future Perfect Continuous Tense

Will + have + been + present participle (He will have been working)

To indicate duration at a particular time in the future. (Tomorrow I shall have been working non-stop for over three weeks. By 2020 he will have been working with us for 10 years.)

*Other ways of expressing the Future

1. Present simple and present continuous: Simple Present with future reference: an action is regarded as part of a fixed schedule, often with verbs such as begin, stop, end, leave, depart, arrive, come, go, open, close: What time does the concert start? Vs. Present Continuous: personal arrangement (I am meeting Ali at 6 pm tomorrow.).
2. Present Simple: In adverbial clauses of time after: when, as soon as, after, before, until, once, by the time (He will tell you when he gets back.).
3. Present Simple: After conditional links: if, even if, providing, provided that, as, so long as, unless, supposing, whether (You will end up in trouble if you show your face there.).
4. Present Perfect: with future reference in adverbial clauses of time – an action that will be completed before the time indicated by context (I will join you after I have finished this lesson.).
5. **Going to:** - To express intention before a definite plan has been made (I'm going to see the doctor sometime next week.).
 - To express predictions (The plane is going to crash! It is going to snow soon!).
 - To express speaker's certainty and strong probability (She is going to have a baby.).