

A Review of Verb Tense

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Summary: Describes the four categories of verb tense (simple, perfect, progressive, and perfect progressive) and how present, past, and future function within each category.

Learning Objectives: To define the four categories of verb tense.

The tense of a verb indicates the time of the action or state of being that is expressed by the verb. Each of the six tenses has a basic form. All basic forms are derived from the principal parts: present (base), present participle (*be* verb plus *-ing*), past (*-ed*), and past participle (*-en* plus *have, had, has*). Using the correct tense of verbs when you speak and write is essential to understanding in what time period actions took place.

There are four categories of verb tenses: simple, perfect, progressive, and perfect progressive, with a version of the present, past, and future in each category. Each tense has its own meaning. When the actions take place (completed, ongoing, continuing into the future, has yet to occur) determines which tense to use.

Simple Forms

Let's start with the simple tenses.

Present

First is the present tense, which indicates actions or conditions occurring now. Present tense is often used to state general information as well as thoughts and opinions.

Ex. Water *freezes* at 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

Ex. They *are* angry about the decision.

Past

Next is the past tense, which indicates actions or conditions that have occurred already and do not extend into the present.

Ex. She *felt* better after her test.

Ex. Germany *invaded* Poland on September 1, 1939.

Future

The last one of the simple tenses is the future that indicates actions that have yet to begin. To form the future tense, you will use *will* or *shall* plus the base or the present principal part of the verb.

Ex. I *will graduate* the year after next.



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Ex. The exhibition *will come* to Houston in September.

**The question of when to use *shall* has been asked for many years, for it is often not used here in U.S. *Shall* should be used when discussing legal documents, meetings, and obligations. *Shall* is also often used when the speaker is being polite or offering an invitation. **

Exercise 1

Let's test your knowledge of the information above before moving on. In each blank below, write the tense of the verb in parenthesis.

1. She _____ around the living room. (run-present)
2. We _____ our plans for the weekend. (discuss, past)
3. The boat _____ as soon as the cargo of machinery is loaded. (sail, future)
4. Natasha _____ listening to music. (enjoy, past)
5. He _____ musical comedies. (like-present)
6. I _____ you my new leather jacket. (lend, future)
7. These arguments _____ you that I am right. (convince, future)
8. Although the car is old, it _____ well. (run-present)
9. The shopper _____ to see the manager. (ask, past)
10. The man in the corner _____ lead guitar in the band. (play, present)

Self-Check: Exercise 1 Answers

Use the answer key below to check your answers:

1. She **runs** around the living room. (run-present)
2. We **discussed** our plans for the weekend. (discuss, past)
3. The boat **will sail** as soon as the cargo of machinery is loaded. (sail, future)
4. Natasha **enjoys** listening to music. (enjoy, past)
5. He **likes** musical comedies. (like-present)
6. I **will lend** you my new leather jacket. (lend, future)
7. These arguments **will convince** you that I am right. (convince, future)
8. Although the car is old, it **runs** well. (run-present)
9. The shopper **asked** to see the manager. (ask, past)
10. The man in the corner **plays** lead guitar in the band. (play, present)

Exercise 2

Identify the tense of the underlined verb in each sentence.

1. She will attend a conference in Washington.
2. Barbara and Marie refused to sign the petition.
3. The dancers rehearse everyday.
4. Storytelling existed before written history.
5. Blue jays have many unusual habits.
6. A squirrel drops its nuts when it gets frightened.
7. A good story will have action and drama.
8. We spotted a bird with red wings and tail.
9. The animals' unpleasant shrieks warn other animals of danger.
10. We will practice our math skills this year.



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Self-Check: Exercise 2 Answers

Use the answer key below to check your answers:

1. She will attend a conference in Washington. **Future**
2. Barbara and Marie refused to sign the petition. **Past**
3. The dancers rehearse everyday. **Present**
4. Storytelling existed before written history. **Past**
5. Blue jays have many unusual habits. **Present**
6. A squirrel drops its nuts when it gets frightened. **Present**
7. A good story will have action and drama. **Future**
8. We spotted a bird with red wings and tail. **Past**
9. The animals' unpleasant shrieks warn other animals of danger. **Present**
10. We will practice our math skills this year. **Future**

Perfect Forms

The next tenses to consider are the perfect tenses, which give information about the time frame of an action's completion. The perfect tenses indicate the action of the verb has been completed by a specific point in the past, present, or future.

Present Perfect

The present perfect tense describes an event that has already been completed in the present. It is formed using *have* or *has* plus the *past participle* form of the verb (*-ed, -en*).

Ex. I *have walked* to school for five years.

Ex. Dad *has written* many stories of his childhood.

Past Perfect

The next tense is the past perfect, where the action was completed before a specified time in the past. To form the past perfect tense, you will use *had* plus the *past participle* form of the verb.

Ex. We *had considered* several alternative plans.

Ex. Bill *had finished* packing before the taxi arrived.

Future Perfect

The last one of the perfect tenses is future perfect, which states that the action will have been completed by a specified time in the future. To form the future perfect tense, you need to use *will have* or *shall have* plus the *past participle* form of the verb.

Ex. In ten years the original investment *will have doubled*.

Ex. The students *will have used* all their paper by December.

Exercise 3

Again, let's test your knowledge before we move on. Underline the verb in each of the following sentences. Then identify the tense of each verb.

1. They had notified us of their arrival.
2. Our dogs have bitten no one.
3. The family will have finished dinner by seven.
4. We have seen that movie twice.
5. Tom will have departed before Brain's arrival.



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6. Janet has refused any credit for the team's success.
7. By this evening, I will have cleaned the whole downstairs.
8. We had avoided each other for 20 years.
9. We had considered several alternate plans.
10. I have memorized two poems by Walt Whitman.

Self-Check: Exercise 3 Answers

Use the answer key below to check your answers:

1. They had notified us of their arrival. **Past Perfect**
2. Our dogs have bitten no one. **Present Perfect**
3. The family will have finished dinner by seven. **Future Perfect**
4. We have seen that movie twice. **Present Perfect**
5. Tom will have departed before Brain's arrival. **Future Perfect**
6. Janet has refused any credit for the team's success. **Present Perfect**
7. By this evening, I will have cleaned the whole downstairs. **Future Perfect**
8. We had avoided each other for 20 years. **Past Perfect**
9. We had considered several alternate plans. **Past Perfect**
10. I have memorized two poems by Walt Whitman. **Present Perfect**

Exercise 4

Write the basic form of the verb as directed in parenthesis.

1. The Johnsons _____ three times in the past year. (move-present perfect)
2. They _____ everything they wanted to by the end of their vacation. (see-past perfect)
3. By the end of their tour, the group _____ in eleven cities. (perform-future perfect)
4. Sharon _____ to her counselor earlier in the day. (talk-past perfect)
5. We _____ very fond of our new neighbors. (grow-present perfect)
6. Margie _____ before the spring semester. (graduate-future perfect)
7. We _____ three times this week. (exercise=present perfect)
8. The manager _____ to the pitcher twice by that time. (talk-past perfect)
9. I _____ the whole kitchen by the time Mom returns. (clean-future perfect)
10. The rescuers _____ the area for the past three hours. (search-present perfect)

Self-Check: Exercise 4 Answers

Use the answer key below to check your answers:

1. The Johnsons **have moved** three times in the past year. (move-present perfect)
2. They **had seen** everything they wanted to by the end of their vacation. (see-past perfect)
3. By the end of their tour, the group **will have performed** in eleven cities. (perform-future perfect)
4. Sharon **had talked** to her counselor earlier in the day. (talk-past perfect)
5. We **have grown** very fond of our new neighbors. (grow-present perfect)
6. Margie **will have graduated** before the spring semester. (graduate-future perfect)
7. We **have exercised** three times this week. (exercise-present perfect)
8. The manager **had talked** to the pitcher twice by that time. (talk-past perfect)
9. I **will have cleaned** the whole kitchen by the time Mom returns. (clean-future perfect)
10. The rescuers **have searched** the area for the past three hours. (search-present perfect)



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Progressive Forms

The next set of tenses is known as the progressive forms, which means the action or conditions are unfinished (ongoing, continuing).

Present Progressive

Present progressive indicates actions are ongoing even as we speak. It is formed with the *present participle* with *-ing* plus *is*, *am*, or *are*.

Ex. The kids *are playing* outside.

Ex. Sam *is attending* church.

Past Progressive

With the past progressive, the action was going on during a past period being discussed. It is formed with *-ing* (the present participle) plus *was* and *were*.

Ex. By the 1970s, many Americans *were buying* smaller cars.

Ex. I *was writing* to you when you telephoned me.

Future Progressive

The last one of the progressive tenses is future progressive, which indicates that the action will be ongoing during some future time frame. To form the future progressive, you will use *will be* or *shall be* plus the present participle form of the verb (*-ing*).

Ex. A team of observers *will be monitoring* the elections.

Ex. Clarissa *will be studying* music at a special camp this summer.

Exercise 5

Supply the progressive form of the verb as directed in parenthesis.

1. Despite her height, Kate _____ to make the basketball team. (hope-present progressive)
2. The rain _____ all of our plans. (ruin-present progressive)
3. The last ferry _____ soon. (leave-future progressive)
4. The workers _____ the building. (repair-future progressive)
5. The architect _____ his plans. (explain-present progressive)
6. They _____ important political issues. (discuss-present progressive)

Self-Check: Exercise 5 Answers

Use the answer key below to check your answers.

1. Despite her height, Kate **is hoping** to make the basketball team. (hope-present progressive)
2. The rain **is ruining** all of our plans. (ruin-present progressive)
3. The last ferry **will be leaving** soon. (leave-future progressive)
4. The workers **will be repairing** the building. (repair-future progressive)
5. The architect **is explaining** his plans. (explain-present progressive)
6. They **are discussing** important political issues. (discuss-present progressive)



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Perfect Progressive Forms

There are also perfect progressive tenses that use a combination of perfect and progressive forms. Perfect progressive emphasizes the duration or the continuousness of the action. To write in the perfect progressive tense, you will use a form of *have* (perfect) followed by a *be* verb and *-ing* (progressive).

Present Perfect Progressive

The present perfect progressive describes something that began in the past, continues into the present, and may continue into the future. It is formed with *has* or *have* plus *been* and *-ing* form of the verb.

Ex. Kim *has been writing* a novel since she left high school.

Ex. The Smiths *have been breeding* dogs since 2000.

Past Perfect Progressive

The past perfect progressive tense describes something that began in the past, continued in the past, and concluded in the past. It is formed with *had* and *been* plus the *-ing* form of the verb.

Ex. I *had been riding* the bus until I got my license.

Ex. Frank *had been leaving* get well notes to his uncle.

Future Perfect Progressive

The future perfect progressive describes something that begins in the present and continues into the future. It is formed with *will have* and *been* plus the *-ing* form of the verb.

Ex. By the time the class ends, the students *will have been working* for 10 minutes without a break.

Ex. Hannah *will have been playing* the piano for five years this June.

Exercise 6

Write the correct form of the verb as stated in parenthesis.

1. She _____ all afternoon. (study-past perfect progressive)
2. Susan _____ for two hours by 9 a.m. (work-future perfect progressive)
3. Diane _____ us a folk tale. (tell-present perfect progressive)
4. Reggie _____ a heavy course load this year. (carry-present perfect progressive)
5. I was very relieved because I _____ a much lower grade. (expect-past perfect progressive)
6. He _____ for two hours by noon. (swim-future perfect progressive)
7. Nick _____ second thoughts about the concert. (have-present perfect progressive)
8. We _____ the dancer carefully all evening (watch-past perfect progressive)

Self-Check: Exercise 6

Check your answers using the sentences below.

1. She **had been studying** all afternoon. (study-past perfect progressive)
2. Susan **will have been working** for two hours by 9 a.m. (work-future perfect progressive)
3. Diane **has been telling** us a folk tale. (tell-present perfect progressive)
4. Reggie **has been carrying** a heavy course load this year. (carry-present perfect progressive)
5. I was very relieved because I **had been expecting** a much lower grade. (expect-past perfect progressive)
6. He **will have been swimming** for two hours by noon. (swim-future perfect progressive)
7. Nick **has been having** second thoughts about the concert. (have-present perfect progressive)
8. We **had been watching** the dancer carefully all evening (watch-past perfect progressive)



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Verb Tense Final Review

Review 1

Identify the tense of each of the following verbs.

1. will be going
2. ride
3. was bringing
4. had kept
5. had been leaving
6. wrote
7. will have written
8. has given
9. will ride
10. will have been crying

Review 2

Conjugate the following regular and irregular verb using the given pronouns as the subject.

visit (with *he*)

Ex. He visits

Present:

Past:

Future:

Present Perfect:

Past Perfect:

Future Perfect:

Present Progressive:

Past Progressive:

Future Progressive:

Present Perfect Progressive:

Past Perfect Progressive:

Future Perfect Progressive:

begin (with *they*)

Present:

Past:

Future:

Present Perfect:

Past Perfect:

Future Perfect:

Present Progressive:

Past Progressive:

Future Progressive:

Present Perfect Progressive:

Past Perfect Progressive:

Future Perfect Progressive:



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Review 3

Some of the verbs in this paragraph are in the wrong tense. Decide which verbs must be changed, then rewrite those sentences, correcting those verbs.

1) Last year for my birthday, my parents took me to New York City. 2) We visit the Empire State Building and take a boat to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. 3) I will like best the boat ride through the harbor to the Statue and Ellis Island. 4) It made me think of the boat ride my great-grandfather took to come to Ellis Island as an immigrant. 5) My father says he remembers his grandfather telling him the story of the ocean voyage. 6) When great-grandfather arrives in New York, he sees the statue. 7) I am sure that I had always remembered that story too.

Final Review Answers

Review 1

1. will be going: **Future Progressive**
2. ride: **Present**
3. was bringing: **Past Progressive**
4. had kept: **Past Perfect**
5. had been leaving: **Past Perfect Progressive**
6. wrote: **Past**
7. will have written: **Future Perfect**
8. has given: **Present Perfect**
9. will ride: **Future**
10. will have been crying: **Future Perfect Progressive**

Review 2

visit (with *he*)

Present: **He visits**

Past: **He visited**

Future: **He shall/will visit**

Present Perfect: **He has visited**

Past Perfect: **He had visited**

Future Perfect: **He will have visited**

Present Progressive: **He is visiting**

Past Progressive: **He was visiting**

Future Progressive: **He will/shall be visiting**

Present Perfect Progressive: **He has been visiting**

Past Perfect Progressive: **He had been visiting**

Future Perfect Progressive: **He will have been visiting**

begin (with *they*)

Present: **They begin**

Past: **They began**

Future: **They will/shall begin**



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Present Perfect: **They have begun**

Past Perfect: **They had begun**

Future Perfect: **They will/shall have begun**

Present Progressive: **They are beginning**

Past Progressive: **They were beginning**

Future Progressive: **They will/shall be beginning**

Present Perfect Progressive: **They have been beginning**

Past Perfect Progressive: **They had been beginning**

Future Perfect Progressive: **They will have been beginning**

Review 3

1) Last year for my birthday, my parents took me to New York City. 2) We **visited** the Empire State Building and **took** a boat to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. 3) I **liked** best the boat ride through the harbor to the Statue and Ellis Island. 4) It made me think of the boat ride my great-grandfather took to come to Ellis Island as an immigrant. 5) My father says he still remembers his grandfather telling him the story of the ocean voyage. 6) When great-grandfather **arrived** in New York, he **saw** the statue. 7) I am sure that I **will** always **remember** that story too.



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