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Summary of Verb Tenses

In English, there are three [basic tenses](#): present, past, and future. Each has a [perfect form](#), indicating completed action; each has a [progressive form](#), indicating ongoing action; and each has a [perfect progressive form](#), indicating ongoing action that will be completed at some definite time. Here is a list of examples of these tenses and their definitions:

	Simple Forms	Progressive Forms	Perfect Forms	Perfect Progressive Forms
Present	take/s	am/is/are taking	have/has taken	have/has been taking
Past	took	was/were taking	had taken	had been taking
Future	will/shall take	will be taking	will have taken	will have been taking

Simple Forms

Present Tense

Present tense expresses an unchanging, repeated, or reoccurring action or situation that exists only now. It can also represent a widespread truth.

Example	Meaning
The mountains <u>are</u> tall and white.	Unchanging action
Every year, the school council <u>elects</u> new members.	Recurring action
Pb <u>is</u> the chemical symbol for lead.	Widespread truth

Past Tense

Past tense expresses an action or situation that was started and finished in the past. Most past tense verbs end in **-ed**. The irregular verbs have

special past tense forms which must be memorized.

Example	Form
W.W.II <u>ended</u> in 1945.	Regular -ed past
Ernest Hemmingway <u>wrote</u> "The Old Man and the Sea."	Irregular form

Future Tense

Future tense expresses an action or situation that will occur in the future. This tense is formed by using **will/shall** with the **simple form** of the verb.

The speaker of the House will finish her term in May of 1998.

The future tense can also be expressed by using **am, is, or are** with **going to**.

The surgeon is going to perform the first bypass in Minnesota.

We can also use the **present tense form with an adverb** or adverbial phrase to show future time.

The president speaks tomorrow. (Tomorrow is a future time adverb.)

Progressive Forms

Present Progressive Tense

Present progressive tense describes an ongoing action that is happening at the same time the statement is written. This tense is formed by using **am/is/are** with the verb form ending in **-ing**.

The sociologist is examining the effects that racial discrimination has on society.

Past Progressive Tense

Past progressive tense describes a past action which was happening when another action occurred. This tense is formed by using **was/were** with the verb form ending in **-ing**.



The explorer was explaining the latest discovery in Egypt when protests began on the streets.

Future Progressive Tense

Future progressive tense describes an ongoing or continuous action that will take place in the future. This tense is formed by using **will be** or **shall be** with the verb form ending in **-ing**.

Dr. Jones will be presenting ongoing research on sexist language next week.

Perfect Forms

Present Perfect Tense

Present perfect tense describes an action that happened at an indefinite time in the past or that began in the past and continues in the present. This tense is formed by using **has/have** with the **past participle** of the verb. Most past participles end in **-ed**. Irregular verbs have **special past participles** that must be memorized.

Example	Meaning
The researchers <u>have traveled</u> to many countries in order to collect more significant data.	At an indefinite time
Women <u>have voted</u> in presidential elections since 1921.	Continues in the present

Past Perfect Tense

Past perfect tense describes an action that took place in the past before another past action. This tense is formed by using **had** with the **past participle** of the verb.

By the time the troops arrived, the war had ended.

Future Perfect Tense

Future perfect tense describes an action that will occur in the future before some other action. This tense is formed by using **will have** with the **past participle** of the verb.

By the time the troops arrive, the combat group will have spent several weeks waiting.



Perfect Progressive Forms

Present Perfect Progressive

Present perfect progressive tense describes an action that began in the past, continues in the present, and may continue into the future. This tense is formed by using **has/have been** and the **present participle** of the verb (the verb form ending in **-ing**).

The CEO has been considering a transfer to the state of Texas where profits would be larger.

Past Perfect Progressive

Past perfect progressive tense describes a past, ongoing action that was completed before some other past action. This tense is formed by using **had been** and the **present perfect** of the verb (the verb form ending in **-ing**).

Before the budget cuts, the students had been participating in many extracurricular activities.

Future Perfect Progressive

Future perfect progressive tense describes a future, ongoing action that will occur before some specified future time. This tense is formed by using **will have been** and the **present participle** of the verb (the verb form ending in **-ing**).

By the year 2020, linguists will have been studying and defining the Indo-European language family for more than 200 years.



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