



## What Does the Word 'Tense' Mean?

In the [English language](#), the word 'tense' is used to denote a characteristic of the [verb](#) in a sentence. The tense of a verb is used to depict the particular time in which a specific event is taking place.

### Definition of Tense

According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, the term 'tense' is defined as "any of the forms of a verb that may be used to show the time of the action or state expressed by the verb." The Merriam-Webster Dictionary provides a slightly different definition. According to it, the word 'tense' is defined as "a distinction of form in a verb to express distinctions of time or duration of the action or state it denotes."

"The tense of a verb group is its form, which usually shows whether you are referring to past, present, or future time", according to the Collins Dictionary, and the Cambridge Dictionary defines 'tense' as "any of the forms of a verb which show the time at which an action happened."

## How Important Is It to Know about Tenses?

Tenses are often considered to be the backbone and the most fundamental element of the English language. Without tense, everything seems to be absurd. Tenses help you describe actions that take place at different times. It helps to give clarity to your context and the information you are trying to convey. It also allows you to build complex sentence structures. So, if you want to be able to convey information clearly and promptly, you should know all the twelve tenses and how they are used.

## Different Tenses in English

In [English grammar](#), there are three main tenses, and they are each further classified into four different forms, which sum up to twelve tenses in total. The three tenses in English are:

- [Present Tense](#)
- [Past Tense](#)
- [Future Tense](#)

The four different forms are:

- Simple Tense Form
- Continuous Tense Form
- Perfect Tense Form
- Perfect Continuous Tense Form

So, the twelve tenses in English are as follows:

- Simple Present Tense
- Present Continuous Tense
- Present Perfect Tense
- Present Perfect Continuous Tense
- Simple Past Tense
- Past Continuous Tense
- Past Perfect Tense
- Past Perfect Continuous Tense
- Simple Future Tense
- Future Continuous Tense
- Future Perfect Tense
- Future Perfect Continuous Tense

## Tips and Techniques to Master English Tenses

To improve your knowledge and usage of tenses, there are just a few things you have to keep in mind. Take a look at the following points.

- Keep a clear mind. Be ready to unlearn and relearn.
- Understand what tenses are and how they are used.
- There are particular patterns in which each tense is conjugated. The whole process would become a lot easier if you try to identify the patterns and understand them. For example, the continuous tense takes a [helping verb](#) and verb in the present participle form (verb+ ing).
- Go through as many examples as you can find. Practice as much as you can, and you will know how exactly each tense works out in different contexts.
- There are, of course, a few exceptions. You just have to go through them keenly and apply them. It will surely take time, but you will be able to master it with your determination and continuous effort.
- Above all, there is one thing that you should add to your list of to-do things. Read books (anything that is informative and interests you), watch movies, videos or even series. Without even your knowledge, you will be able to develop your vocabulary and learn so many different sentence structures that use various tense forms.

## Frequently Asked Questions on Verb Tenses in English

## Q1 What is tense?

In the English language, the word 'tense' is used to denote a characteristic of the verb in a sentence. The tense of a verb is used to depict the particular time in which a specific or event is taking place.

Q2

## What is the definition of a tense?

According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, the term 'tense' is defined as "any of the forms of a verb that may be used to show the time of the action or state expressed by the verb." The Merriam-Webster Dictionary provides a slightly different definition. According to it, the word 'tense' is defined as "a distinction of form in a verb to express distinctions of time or duration of the action or state it denotes." "The tense of a verb group is its form, which usually shows whether you are referring to past, present, or future time", according to the Collins Dictionary, and the Cambridge Dictionary defines 'tense' as "any of the forms of a verb which show the time at which an action happened."

Q3

## What are the 12 different English tenses?

The twelve tenses in English are as follows:

- Simple Present Tense
- Present Continuous Tense
- Present Perfect Tense
- Present Perfect Continuous Tense
- Simple Past Tense
- Past Continuous Tense
- Past Perfect Tense
- Past Perfect Continuous Tense
- Simple Future Tense
- Future Continuous Tense
- Future Perfect Tense
- Future Perfect Continuous Tense

## Present Tense

Present Tense can be defined as an expression for an activity that is currently in action or is habitually performed. It is used for a state that generally exists or is currently ongoing.

- Simple Present

Simple Present Tense	
<b>Singular</b>  <b>Rule: Subject + V1 + s/es + Object</b>  <b>Example: The girl sings a song</b>  Here the subject is Girl (singular) and “s” has been added to the verb (sing), followed by the object (song)	<b>Plural</b>  <b>Rule: Subject + V1 + Object</b>  <b>Example: The girls sing a song</b> Here the subject is Girls (plural) and no changes have been made with V1 (first form of verb) and the object

- Present Continuous

Present Continuous Tense
<b>Rule: Subject + is/am/are + V1 + ing + object</b>
<b>Example: She is eating food</b>  Here the subject is She, followed by “is”  The first form of verb (V1) here is “eat” and “ing” has been added to it, followed by the object “food”

- Present Perfect

Present Perfect Tense	
<b>Singular</b>  <b>Rule: Subject + has + V3 + Object</b>  <b>Example: He has cleaned the utensils</b>  Here, “He” is the subject + has  “Cleaned” is the third form of verb and utensils is the object	<b>Plural</b>  <b>Rule: Subject + have + V3 + Object</b>  <b>Example: They have cleaned the utensils</b> Here, “They” is the subject + have  “Cleaned” is the third form of verb and utensils is the object

- Present Perfect Continuous Tense

Present Perfect Continuous Tense	
Singular	Plural
<b>Rule: Subject + has been + V1 + ing + Object</b>	<b>Rule: Subject + have been + V1 + ing + Object</b>
<b>Example: She has been practising since morning</b>  Here "She" is the subject + has been, followed by "ing" added to the the first form of verb "practise" and then the object	<b>Example: They have been practising since morning</b>  Here "They" is the subject + have been, followed by "ing" added to the the first form of verb "practise" and then the object

Given below are a few examples that may help you differentiate between the four sub parts of present tense easily:

1. Raj speaks German (Simple Present for Singular)
2. They speak German (Simple Present for Plural)
3. She is speaking German (Present Continuous)
4. He has learnt German (Present Perfect for Singular)
5. They have learnt German (Present Perfect for Plural)
6. She has been learning German (Present Perfect Continuous for Singular)
7. They have been learning German (Present Perfect Continuous for Plural)

## Past Tense

Any event or action that took place in the past can be referred to as the past tense. Below we have discussed in detail the four sub parts of past tense in English grammar.

- Simple Past

Simple Past Tense
<b>Rule: Subject + V2 + Object</b>
<b>For example: He ran away</b>

Here, the subject is “He” and “ran” is the second form of verb (V2) of “run” followed by the object

- Past Continuous

Past Continuous Tense	
<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>Rule: Subject + was + V1 + ing + Object</b>	<b>Rule: Subject + were + V1 + ing + Object</b>
<b>For example: She was going shopping</b>  Here, the subject is “She” + was  It is followed by the first form of verb (V1) “go” + “ing” and then the object “shopping”	<b>For example: They were going shopping</b> Here, the subject is “They” + were  Followed by the first form of verb (V1) “go” + “ing” and then the object “shopping”

- Past Perfect

Past Perfect Tense
<b>Rule: Subject + had + V3 + Object</b>
<b>For example: Sumit had left the job</b>  Here the subject is “Sumit” + had  Then “left”, which is the third form of verb (V3) “leave” is given followed by the object

- Past Perfect Continuous

Past Perfect Continuous Tense
<b>Rule: Subject + had been + V1 + ing + Object</b>
<b>For example: They had been preparing for their performance for two months</b>

Here the subject is “They” + had been

It is followed by “preparing”, which is the first form of verb (V1) of “prepare” and then the object

To help you understand past tense and its form even better, given below are a few examples to simply the concept:

1. I played football yesterday (Simple Past)
2. I was playing football yesterday (Past Continuous for Singular)
3. They were playing football yesterday (Past Continuous for Plural)
4. They had played football yesterday (Past Perfect)
5. They had been playing football the entire yesterday (Past Perfect Continuous)

## Future Tense

The actions that are to take place in the future fall in the category of the future tense. We have discussed the subparts of the future tense in detail further below in the article, followed by the examples for the same.

- Simple Future

### Simple Future Tense

**Rule: Subject + will/shall + V1 + Object**

**For Example: I will visit my Uncle tomorrow**

Here, the subject is “I” + will

It is followed by the first form of verb (V1) “visit” and then the object

- Future Continuous

### Future Continuous Tense

**Rule: Subject + will be/shall be + V1 + ing + Object**

**For Example: I shall be going to the market tomorrow**

In this example, the subject is “I” + shall be

Following it is the first form of verb (V1) “go”+ing and then the object

- Future Perfect

### Future Perfect Tense

**Rule: Subject + will have/shall have + V3 + Object**

**For Example: I shall have prepared the notes by tomorrow morning**

In this example, the subject is “I” + shall have

It is followed by “prepared”, which is the third form of Verb (V3) “prepare” and then the object

- Future Perfect Continuous

### Future Perfect Continuous Tense

**Rule: Subject + will have been + V1 + ing + Object**

**For Example: She will have been working here since 2015**

Here, the subject is “She” + will have been

It is followed by the first form of verb “work”+ing and then the object

Given below are a few examples that may help you clarify the future tense concept clearly:

1. She will go to school tomorrow (Simple Future)
2. She will be going to school tomorrow (Future Continuous)
3. She will have gone to school tomorrow (Future Perfect)
4. She will have been going to school tomorrow (Future Perfect Continuous)

## Tenses Exercises with Answers

Do you know the best way to ensure that you are able to remember whatever you’ve learnt for a longer period of time? Practice! So here are two exercises with answers for you. Try it out.

### Exercise 1 – Identify the type of tenses

Go through the sentences provided below and identify the type of tenses.



1. Damon drinks coffee every morning.
2. The boy got up late and missed the bus.
3. My mother goes to pray in the temple.
4. The team is playing very well.
5. The school will be closed for winter break.
6. Leonard graduated from college last year.
7. The baby has eaten all the chips.
8. Have you read Pride and Prejudice?
9. The train has just left the station.
10. The sick child has been sleeping for three hours.
11. They have known each other for a long time.
12. Sam was going to school.
13. When I went there, Bucky was playing video games.
14. The workers have been working on the building for a long time.
15. Penny had done her homework when her parents came back.
16. Mr Arnold had been writing his last book for four months.
17. I will move to Delhi soon.
18. Mr Samuel will be staying in New York next week.
19. Beverly will have left before you arrive to see her.
20. Mr Peter will have been teaching for twelve years next month.

## **Answers**

1. Simple Present Tense
2. Simple Past Tense
3. Simple Present Tense
4. Present Continuous Tense
5. Simple Future Tense
6. Simple Past Tense
7. Present Perfect Tense
8. Present Perfect Tense
9. Present Perfect Tense
10. Present Perfect Continuous Tense
11. Present Perfect Tense
12. Past Continuous Tense
13. Past Continuous Tense
14. Present Perfect Continuous Tense
15. Past Perfect Tense
16. Past Perfect Continuous Tense
17. Simple Future Tense

18. Future Continuous Tense
19. Future Perfect Tense
20. Future Perfect Continuous Tense

## Exercise 2 – Change the tense

Go through the sentences and change their tenses as directed.

1. The boy speaks the truth. (Present Continuous Tense)
2. Mr Cooper has spoken about Dinosaurs. (Present Perfect Continuous Tense)
3. The boat sailed yesterday. (Simple Present Tense)
4. Amy went to school yesterday. ( Future Continuous Tense)
5. The baby cried for hours. (Present Perfect Continuous Tense)
6. Robert ate all the cookies. (Present Perfect Tense)
7. I have finished my assignment. (Past Perfect Tense)
8. Mr Bert had taught for five years. (Past Perfect Continuous Tense).
9. Dev saw the Prime Minister yesterday. (Future Continuous Tense)
10. Priya shall finish her stitching by then. (Future Perfect Tense)

## Answers

1. The boy is speaking the truth.
2. Mr Cooper has been speaking about Dinosaurs.
3. The boat sails today.
4. Amy will be going to school tomorrow.
5. The baby has been crying for hours.
6. Robert has eaten all the cookies.
7. I had finished my assignment.
8. Mr Bert had been teaching for five years
9. Dev will be seeing the Prime Minister tomorrow.
10. Priya shall have finished her stitching by then.