

12 Tenses in English



Tense and aspect, although they are two different categories, always appear together. There are six tenses and two aspects in English.

With reference to tense and aspect, we can speak about the following structures in practical usage. All English Tenses with Examples!

(Note: progressive aspect is often called continuous.)

Present Simple



Affirmative: Subject + Base Form of the Verb

*note: for 3rd Person Singular (he/ she/ it) add 's' to the base form

I/ You/ We/ They work in a bank.

He/ She works in a bank.



Negative: Subject + don't/ doesn't + Base Form of the Verb

I/ You/ We/ They don't (do not) work.

He/ She/ It doesn't (does not) work.



Interrogative: Question Word + do/does + Subject + Base Form of the Verb

Where do I/ you/we/they work?

Where does he/ she work?

1. Usual, regular action:

- I usually **go** fishing at weekends. I **don't go** fishing at weekends. **Do I go** fishing at weekends?
- You always **know** the answer. You **don't** always **know** the answer. **Do** you always **know** the answer?
- She never **puts** milk in her tea. She **doesn't put** milk in her tea. **Does** she ever **put** milk in her tea?
- My father **plays** the violin. My father **doesn't play** the violin. **Does** your father **play** the violin?
- We sometimes **go** to the cinema on Friday. We **don't go** to the cinema on Friday. **Do we go** to the cinema on Fridays?
- They never **walk** in the wood. They **don't walk** in the wood. **Do they walk** in the wood?

2. General existence; stating a fact:

- An ostrich **has** two legs. A rabbit **doesn't have** two legs. How many legs **does** a spider **have**?
- The earth **goes** round the sun. The sun **doesn't go** round the earth. **Does** the moon **go** round the earth?
- Water **is** liquid at room temperature. Gold **isn't** liquid at room temperature. **Is** gold solid at room temperature?

3. Dramatic narrative (theatre, sports, etc. events):

- Johnson **takes** the ball, he **bounces** it to the floor, then he **throws** and **scores** two points.

4. Timetables

- The train **leaves** at half past four. The train **doesn't leave** at five. What time **does** the train **leave**?
- The course **starts** on 1 July. The course **doesn't start** in June. When **does** the course **start**?

Recommended for you:

How To Use Simple Present

Difference Between Present Perfect Simple and Present Perfect Continuous?

Present Progressive



Affirmative: Subject + BE + Verb-ING

You are cooking.



Negative: Subject + BE not + Verb-ING

You aren't (are not) cooking.



Interrogative: Question Word + BE + Subject + Verb-ING

What are you cooking?

1. Action happening now:

- *I'm **watching** a film on TV now. I'm **not watching** a film. **Am I watching** a film?*
- *Watch out, a car's **coming**. It **isn't not coming**. **Is it coming**?*
- *The boys **are sleeping** upstairs. They boys **aren't sleeping** upstairs. **Are the boys sleeping** upstairs?*

2. Action happening about this time, but not necessarily now:

- *He's **studying** Spanish and German. He's **not studying** French. What languages **is he studying**?*
- *They're **going** to a business course. They **aren't going** to a cooking course. What course **are they going** to?*
- *You're **visiting** museums while you're here. You're **not visiting** factories. **Are you visiting** museums in our city?*

3. Definite arrangement in the near future:

- *I'm **travelling** to Paris tomorrow. I'm **not travelling** to Paris tomorrow. **Am I travelling** to Paris tomorrow?*
- *My son **is taking** his girlfriend to dinner tonight. My son **isn't taking** his girlfriend to dinner tonight. **Is he taking** his girlfriend to dinner tonight?*
- *You're **going** to Italy on holiday this year, aren't you? You **aren't going** to Greece. Where **are you going** on holiday this year?*

Recommended for you:

9 Brilliant Websites to Learn and Practice Present Perfect

How to make Past Participle, Present Perfect Sentences etc.?

Past Simple



Past Simple (past tense + common aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + Verb in Past Simple (2nd form)

I/ You/ He/ She/ It/ We/ They lived in London ten years ago.



Negative: Subject + didn't (did not) + Base Form of the Verb

I/ You/ He/ She/ It/ We/ They didn't like the film.



Interrogative: Question Word + did + subject + Base Form of the Verb

Where did I/ you/ he/ she/ it/ we/ they meet Richard?

Actions, events in the past:

- *I **had** lunch with Mrs Robinson yesterday. I **didn't have** lunch with Mrs Robinson yesterday. **Did I have** lunch with Mrs Robinson yesterday?*
- *Mother **went** to work on Tuesday. Mother **didn't go** to work on Tuesday. **Did Mother go** to work on Tuesday?*
- *You **did** the shopping this morning. You **didn't do** the shopping this morning. Where **did** you **do** the shopping this morning?*
- *She **travelled** to Spain last year. She **didn't travel** anywhere last year. Where **did she travel** last year?*

Recommended for you:

ALWAYS used in Present Continuous

'Neither do I' vs 'So do I'

Past Progressive



Past Progressive (past tense + progressive aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + was/ were + Verb-ING

*I/He/She was having a shower when you called.
We/ You/ They were watching TV when Bob arrived.*



Negative: Subject + wasn't (was not)/ weren't (were not) + Verb-ING

*I/ He/ She wasn't having a shower when you called.
We/ You/ They weren't watching TV when Bob arrived.*



Interrogative: Question word + was/ were + Verb-ING

What were you doing when Bob arrived?
What was she doing when you called?

Action in progress in the past:

- *I **was working** in the garden when my sister arrived. I **wasn't working** in the garden when my sister arrived. **Was I working** in the garden when my sister arrived?*
- *We **were watching** a film at ten last night. We **weren't watching** a film at ten last night. **Were we watching** film at ten last night?*
- *She **was playing** with the kids from eight to nine. She **wasn't playing** with the kids from eight to nine. Who **was** she **playing** with?*

Recommended for you:

What tenses can we use to talk about the future?

"She is gone". The verb "gone" is on the participle form, isn't ...

Present Perfect Simple



Present Perfect Simple (present perfect tense + common aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + have/ has + Past Participle (3rd Form of the Verb)

*I/ You/ We/ They have finished the letter.
He/ She has finished the letter.*

Negative: Subject + haven't (have not)/ hasn't (has not) + Past



Participle

*I/ You/ We/ They haven't finished the letter.
He/ She hasn't finished the letter.*



Interrogative: Question Word + have/ has + Past Participle

*Have I/ you/we/ they finished the letter?
Has he/she finished the letter?*

1. Action with a result:

- *Sorry, I've **parked** at the wrong place. I **haven't parked** at the wrong place. **Have I parked** at the wrong place?*
- *You've (already) **printed** the letters. You **haven't printed** the letters (yet). **Have you printed** the letters (yet)?*
- *We've (already) **done** the rooms. We **haven't done** the rooms yet. **Have we done** the rooms (yet)?*
- *He **has** already **repaired** the lawn-mower. He **hasn't repaired** the lawn-mower yet. **Has he repaired** the lawn-mower yet?*

2. Action in incomplete time:

- *Our friends **have visited** us four times this summer. Our friends **haven't visited** us this summer. How many times **have** our friends **visited** us this summer?*
- *I've **been** to the cinema a lot lately. I **haven't been** to the cinema lately. **Have I been** to the cinema lately?*
- *You've **been** on holiday this year. You **haven't been** on holiday this year. **Have you been** on holiday this year?*

3. Action in the past without saying when:

- *Jane **has** already **been** to Italy. Jane **has** never **been** to Italy. **Has** Jane ever **been** to Italy?*
- *You **have** already **swum** in this lake. You **haven't swum** in this lake yet. **Have** you ever **swum** in this lake?*
- *You've **been** to the hairdresser's. You **haven't been** to the hairdresser's. Where **have** you **been**?*

4. Action beginning in the past and still continuing:

- *The Simpsons **have lived** here for eight years. The Simpsons **haven't lived** here for long. How long **have** the Simpsons **lived** here?*
- *He **has driven** a car since 2002. He **hasn't driven** a car since 2002. **Has he driven** a car since 2002?*

- You've **worked** here for two years. You **haven't worked** here for two years. How long **have** you **worked** here?

Recommended for you:

When do we use **ALREADY, STILL, YET, JUST?**

In which sentence can we use **has had ... twice?**

Present Perfect Progressive



Present Perfect Progressive (present perfect tense + progressive aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + have/ has been + Verb-ING

*I/ you/ We/ They have been learning English for a year.
He/ She has been learning English for a year.*



Negative: Subject + haven't/hasn't been + Verb-ING

*I/ You/ We/ They haven't been playing tennis for a long time.
He/ She hasn't been playing tennis for a long time.*



Interrogative: Question Word + have/ has + Subject + been Verb-ING

*How long have I/ you/ we/ they been learning English?
How long has he/ she been learning English?*

Action beginning in the past and still continuing (with the progress emphasized):

- *They've **been staying** in this hotel for ten days. They **haven't been staying** in this hotel for ten days. **Have they been staying** in this hotel for ten days?*
- *He **has been mowing** the lawn all this morning. He **hasn't been mowing** the lawn all this morning. How long **has he been mowing** the lawn?*
- *You've **been missing** classes lately. You **haven't been coming** to class lately. What **have you been doing** lately?*

Recommended for you:

[WAS WERE Usage With Examples](#)

[How To Use The Passive Voice With Helpful Examples](#)

Past Perfect Simple



Past Perfect Simple (past tense + common aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + had + Past Participle

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They had already met Sarah before the party.



Negative: Subject + hadn't (had not) + Past Participle

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They hadn't met Sarah before the party.



Interrogative: Question Word + had + Subject + Past Participle

Had I/ you/ he/ she/ we/ they met Sarah before the party?

Action in the past before another:

- She said she **had written** three letters the day before. She said she **hadn't written** any letters the day before. How many letters **had** she **written** the day before?
- They **had lived** in York before they moved to Liverpool. They **hadn't lived** in York before they moved to Liverpool. Where **had** they **lived** before they moved to Liverpool?
- You'd **locked** the door before you left. You **hadn't locked** the door before you left. **Had** you **locked** the door before you left?

Recommended for you:

Use Past Tenses Correctly and Make No More Mistakes

MODAL VERB + HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE!

Past Perfect Progressive



Past Perfect Progressive (past perfect tense + progressive aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + had been + Verb-ING

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They had been living in German for years before moving here.



Negative: Subject + hadn't been + Verb-ING

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They hadn't been living in Germany for a long time before moving here.



Interrogative: Question Word + had + Subject + been
Verb-ING

How long had I/ you/ he/ she/ we/ they been living in Germany before moving here?

Action in the past before another (with the progress emphasized):

- *He said he **had been mowing** the lawn all that morning. He said he hadn't been mowing the lawn all that morning. How long had he been mowing the lawn when you met him?*
- *They **had been working** for the same company for a long time before they changed jobs. They hadn't been **working** for the same company for a long time before they changed jobs. Had they been **working** for the same company for a long time before they changed jobs?*
- *They had been **living** in York before they moved to Liverpool. They hadn't been **living** in York before they moved to Liverpool. How long **had** they **been living** in York before they moved to Liverpool?*

Recommended for you:

Past perfect and simple past tense

How to use HAVE/GET + object + PAST PARTICIPLE

Future Simple



Future Simple (future tense + common aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + Will + Base Form of the Verb

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They will see Jane when she comes back from India.



Negative: Subject + Won't (will not) + Base Form of the Verb

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They won't see Jane when she comes back from India.



Interrogative: Question Word + Will + Subject + Base Form of the Verb

Will I/ you/ he/ she/ we/ they see Jane when she comes back from India?

Fact, action or event in the future:

- *I **will be** thirty years old next year. I **won't be** thirty years old again. **Will I be** thirty years old again?*
- *We'**ll meet** them at the station at six. We **won't meet** them at the station. Where **will** we **meet** them?*
- *You'**ll cross** the channel by ferry. You **won't cross** the channel. How **will** you **cross** the channel?*

Recommended for you:

[How to Use Past Perfect Continuous \[Infographic\]](#)

[BE, BEEN and BEING Usage in English](#)

Future Progressive



Future Progressive (future tense + progressive aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + Will Be + Verb-ING

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They will be having fun at the party.



Negative: Subject + Won't Be + Verb-ING

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They won't be having fun at the party.



Interrogative: Question Word + Will + Subject + Be Verb-
ING

Will I/ you/ he/ she/ we/ they be having fun at the party?

Action in progress at a given time of the future:

- *This time tomorrow we **will be flying** to Los Angeles. We **won't be flying** to New York. Where **will** we **be flying**?*
- *You'll **be doing** housework with me at six tomorrow. You **won't be playing** football. What **will** you **be doing** at six tomorrow?*
- *I'll **be playing** tennis from seven to nine. I **won't be playing** tennis at six. When **will** **be playing** tennis?*

Recommended for you:

FOR and OF Difference and Usage in a Sentence!

What's the difference between Present Participle and Gerund?

Future Perfect Simple



Future Perfect Simple (future perfect tense + common aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + Will Have + Past Participle

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They will have met Dora's husband by this time tomorrow.



Negative: Subject + Won't Have + Past Participle

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They won't have met Dora's husband by this time tomorrow.



Interrogative: Question Word + Will + Subject + Have + Past Participle

Will you have met Dora's husband by this time tomorrow?

Action completed by a given time of the future:

- *I **will have done** this work by the end of next week. I **won't have done** this work by the end of next week. **Will I have done** this work by the end of next week?*
- *They'**ll have arrived** by the time we return. They **won't have arrived** by the time we return. **Will they have arrived** by the time we return?*
- *She **will have taken** three exams by next Tuesday. She **won't have taken** any exams by next Tuesday. How many exams **will** she **have taken** by next Tuesday?*

Recommended for you:

[English Grammar in Pop Songs](#)

[When to use BEEN and BEING in a sentence](#)

Future Perfect Progressive



Future Perfect Progressive (future perfect tense + progressive aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + Will Have Been + Verb-ING

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They will have been working with John for ten years next week.



Negative: Subject + Won't Have Been + Verb-ING

I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They won't have been working with John for ten years next week.



Interrogative: Question Word + Will + Subject + Have Been + Verb-ING

How long will I/ you/ he/ she/ we/ they have been working with John next week?

Action completed by or still in progress at a given time of the future (with the progress emphasized):

- *We **will have been staying** here for a week tomorrow. We **won't have been staying** here for a week tomorrow. How long **will** we **have been staying** here?*
- *You **will have been living** here for thirty years by this time next year. You **won't have been living** here for thirty years by this time next year. How long **will** you **have been living** here by this time next year?*
- *I'll **have been playing** the guitar for ten years by next year. I **won't have been playing** the guitar for ten years by next year. How long **will** I **have been playing** the guitar?*