# Tenses

“Tense refers to the grammatical devices a language uses to describe temporal relationships”

Stanlaw, James. “Tense.” The International Encyclopedia of Linguistic Anthropology 2020: 1–1. Web.

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| Present | **Present Simple**   * Presenting a fact * Asking about a fact * Present about a habit/ regular event | * Water *boils* at 100 degrees. * *Does* the sun *rise* from the east? * I *wake* up at 8 in the morning. |
| **Present Continuous (-ing)**   * Something which is happening now * Temporary events | * I *am cooking* dinner for us. * I *am trying* to quit smoking. * He *is staying* here tonight |
| **Present Perfect (Simple)**   * Completed events * Past events with present results * Experiences | * They *have* recently *opened* a store here. * She *has lit* up the candles on the cake. * I *have* never *seen* a test score this low before. * I *have watched* this TV show before. |
| **Present Perfect Continuous**   * Recently completed events with present results * Continuing events * Repeated continuing events * Asking for duration for an event   **#** Continuous form places more focus on the action itself, rather than the result  *Generally, the condition set out by present perfect continuous is still true at present, but it may not be the case for present perfect (simple).* | * He *has been cleaning* the kitchen for you. * I *have been living* in Oxford for the past month. (I’m still at Oxford) * Jane *has been visiting* her grandmother once per week for the past two years. (She is still doing that now) * How long *have* you *been working* on the problem set for? |
| Past | **Past Simple**   * Events at a past point of time * Habits **in the past** | * The porter *turned* off the lights at 11pm. * He *worked* at a fast-food restaurant. * I *played* chess with him every weekend. |
|  | **Past Continuous**   * Events **happening** at a past point in time * Background events: Some *less* *important* event occurring during the main event * Context/ reasons for events * Ongoing/Repeating events (Temporary) | * She *was listening* to music during the train ride yesterday. * I *was walking* home when I saw the traffic accident happen right in front of me. * A fire broke out in the kitchen yesterday because Johnny *was cooking* while he was drunk. * They *were decorating* the room during December for Christmas. |
| a | **Past Perfect (simple)**   * Events going on up till a point in the past * Reported speech * Changed state * Actions happening before main action (past of the past) | * I *had seen* every Avengers movie made before 2021! * She said that she *had seen* five cows jumping across the stream when a lion was chasing them. * I *had planned* to go to church, but my boss needed me to work an extra shift. * I returned home after they *had left* for the party. |
|  | **Past perfect continuous**   * An ongoing activity which ended in the past   # Again the continuous form puts more focus on the action itself | * The living costs were sky high. I *had been eating* only 1 meal per day in the previous month. |
| Future | Let’s leave it for next time. |  |

## Present tense – exercises

*Fill in the following chat with the correct tenses, use the verb provided inside the brackets.*

Jeff: How long \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(teach) at this secondary school? And how long did you teach for?

Iris: I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(teach) here for around 3 years. In total, I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(teach) students for a decade.

Jeff: That is a long time! I cannot \_\_\_\_\_\_(stand) teaching children for 15 minutes. This is why I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(train) to become an accountant now. I \_\_\_\_\_\_(like) messing around with numbers so much more than looking after children.

Iris: It \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (not be) easy this year, I was assigned to teach the worst class at my school. I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(try) to ignite their passion for learning right now, but nothing seems to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(work).

Jeff: That is rough, but I hope that it works out.

Iris: I have faith! There is this one kid in the class who \_\_\_\_(have) the potential to get a good grade. He also has the passion for learning. He has been asking(ask) me questions about English every day. I think my speech the other day \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(motivate) him to learn more.

Jeff: That must \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(be) a very inspiring speech then. I was inspired by a similarly good speech back in secondary school to work hard. I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(guess) my teacher was right, look at what I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(do) for a living now.

Iris: Anyways, I really need to sleep right now. Since my school is so far away, I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(leave) my house at 6:30 am in the morning.

Jeff: Live closer! I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(apply) for an accounting exam, so I will need to study for that as well.

## Past tense

*Fill in the following diary with the correct tenses. Use the verbs provided in the brackets.*

I went(go) to Japan last week. I had travelled(travel) there for 6 times by 2019. However, due to the COVID pandemic, I could not visit Japan for the past 3 years. Therefore, I was(be) very excited before the trip.

Originally, I had planned(plan) to go to Tokyo, but the airplane tickets were(be) way too costly. Instead, I chose(choose) to go to Kyoto. When I was taking(take) the flight, a baby sat(sit) right next to me. Thankfully, the baby did not(do not) cry, so I could get a few extra hours of sleep.

As I was getting(get) off the flight, I realized(realize) that my luggage had gone(go) missing. Fortunately, I managed(manage) to retrieve it since it was sitting(sit) at the fragile luggage corner all along.

Then I wanted to take a train to go to the city center. However, the station broadcast said that an accident had occurred (occur) on the train tracks, and train services had been suspended.

I was panicking (panic) until I found that there were buses which also took me to the city center. I hopped (hop) onto one of them and I began (begin) travelling towards my hotel.

In all of my trips, I put(put) down all my luggage as soon as I got to my hotel. That was no different. I left (leave) my belongings inside my room and then went(go) out to have dinner. As I walked into the hotel after my meal, I realized(realize) I had left(left) my room card at the restaurant. Thankfully, the hotel staff gave (give) me a spare one earlier today, which I used to enter my room with. This finally brought an end to my chaotic first day.

## Mixed Tenses Level 1 (Present + Past)

Many upcoming university freshers \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(attend) orientation camps throughout the summer, anticipating a great start to a new chapter of their lives. Unfortunately, that \_\_\_\_\_\_(do not) turn out to be true as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(highlight) in the article published on 6th October titled “Hong Kong lawmakers demand stricter controls on university orientation camps after series of sex assault allegations by students”. It \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(become) apparent in the previous few years that university orientation camps \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(go) over the line. Right now, they \_\_\_\_\_\_(leave) scars in students’ memories.

Currently, orientation camps \_\_\_\_\_(be) fully hosted by student bodies, typically in the form of a society which \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(bear) the university’s name. These activities \_\_\_\_\_\_(have) a direct impact on the school’s outlook, so why should the schools not be responsible for it? I \_\_\_\_\_\_(not suggest) that we should strip away freedom from student organisers. Universities should focus more on providing guidelines for societies as to what they should include in their camps, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(inspect) their planned activities to make sure everything is appropriate. It takes a second of thought to know that alcohol should not be compulsory for participants during camps. The tragedies \_\_\_\_\_(list) in the article would not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(happen) if there \_\_\_\_\_\_(be) a bit more control exerted by the university. The university \_\_\_\_\_\_(have) the trump card, which is to revoke a student’s spot when they have committed a serious offence. They have the power and responsibility to exert control. These incidents \_\_\_\_\_\_(go) under the radar for so long and it \_\_\_\_(be) time we \_\_\_\_\_\_(stop) them.

## Past or present??

We thought that we were on the right path when suddenly we 1\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(run into) a very familiar rock and 2\_\_\_\_\_\_(realise) that we 3\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(walk) in circles for quite a long time. We 4\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (be) totally lost, and the fact that we 5\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(already/finish) drinking up our water wasn't very promising.

We 6 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(decide) to go uphill because according to John, it would be easier to spot a way out from an elevated point. He 7\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  (learn) that from a documentary he 8 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (see) about survival. But what the documentary 9 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (not teach) John was that maybe it’s not such a good idea to go up a mountain when you are exhausted and waterless.

We 10 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (trek) one mile when we 11 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (start) to have a horrible feeling that that might be our last trek. Of course, we 12 \_\_\_\_\_\_ (say) anything, but we could see in each other’s eyes that at that precise moment we 13 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (think) precisely the same. We couldn't walk any longer, so we 14 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (decide) to sit and rest, quietly, because neither of us wanted to share any of our gloomy thoughts.

"Hello, can I help you?" we suddenly 15 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (hear). We 16 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (raise) our heads and 17 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(see) a little man with slanted eyes and a childish grin. He 18 \_\_\_\_\_ (stand) right next to us. I wondered where he 19 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (come) from and how long he 20 \_\_\_\_\_\_(stand) there. But it didn't matter really, because we were safe.

Future Tense

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Will/shall + **base form**   * Predictions * Offers * Decisions | * It will snow in March. * I will give you a free book. * I’ll pass on that, thank you. |
| Be going to + ?   * Intention * Prediction | * I am going to finish my report tomorrow * It is going to rain again today |
| About to   * Actions happening very soon (like next second) | * The train is about to leave! Hurry! |
| Future continuous (-will be + ing)   * Events that are in progress at a particular time in the future | * I will be sitting my public exams next week. |
| Future perfect (will + have + p.p.)   * Events completed/finished at a point in the future | * They **will have finished** building the swimming pool next year. |
| Future perfect continuous (will + have been + -ing)   * Emphasizing the length or duration of a certain event at a future point in time. | * I will have been studying for 3 years at this school by 2026. |
| Present continuous   * It can be used to describe the future to describe a decision that **has been made before** | * I am flying to Beijing next week. |
| Present simple   * Facts in the future (already known) | * The term ends on the 1st December |

Not very certain Certain/Fact

May/might Will

Could/can Am going to

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Not certain | Somewhat certain | Facts/very certain |
| May  Could  Chances are that… | Am going to  Probably | Will  Sure/Surely  Must  Definitely  Of course  Certainly |

Future tense exercises:

1. My license for the program \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(expire) on the 26th August 2027.
2. Miss Ho \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(teach) us for 3 years by the end of this semester.
3. I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(arrive) late because I left work late by an hour.
4. The exhibition \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(host) the economic forum next week.
5. The telecom company \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(help) set up internet at home if you subscribe to them.
6. My house \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(finish) renovating next month.
7. I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(going) to a barber shop tomorrow.
8. He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(search) for alternatives to dairy products.

Ans:

1. Ran into
2. Realised
3. Had been walking
4. Were
5. Had already finished
6. Decided
7. Had learnt
8. Had seen
9. Had not taught
10. Had trekked
11. Started
12. Did not say (personally I don’t like this question)
13. Were thinking
14. Decided
15. Heard
16. Raised
17. Saw
18. Was standing
19. Had come
20. Had been standing