

5 TENSES - 90% OF ENGLISH

In this lesson, we will look at the most commonly used grammar tenses in English. I will also teach you some of the everyday situations in which you can use each of these tenses. Don't forget to do the quiz at the end to check your understanding of each verb tense.

VERB TENSES

Technically, there are only **three verb tenses**: the present, past and future. But we have **4 different aspects** within these tenses: the simple, continuous, perfect simple and perfect continuous. When we combine these 4 aspects with the 3 verb tenses, we get what we typically refer to as the **12 verb tenses**.

Let's have a quick review of each:

Present

- **Present Simple**: used for general truths, habits and permanent situations.
- **Present Continuous**: used for actions happening now or around the present moment.
- **Present Perfect**: used for past actions with a connection to the present or for experiences.
- **Present Perfect Continuous**: used for actions that started in the past and are ongoing up to the present.

Past

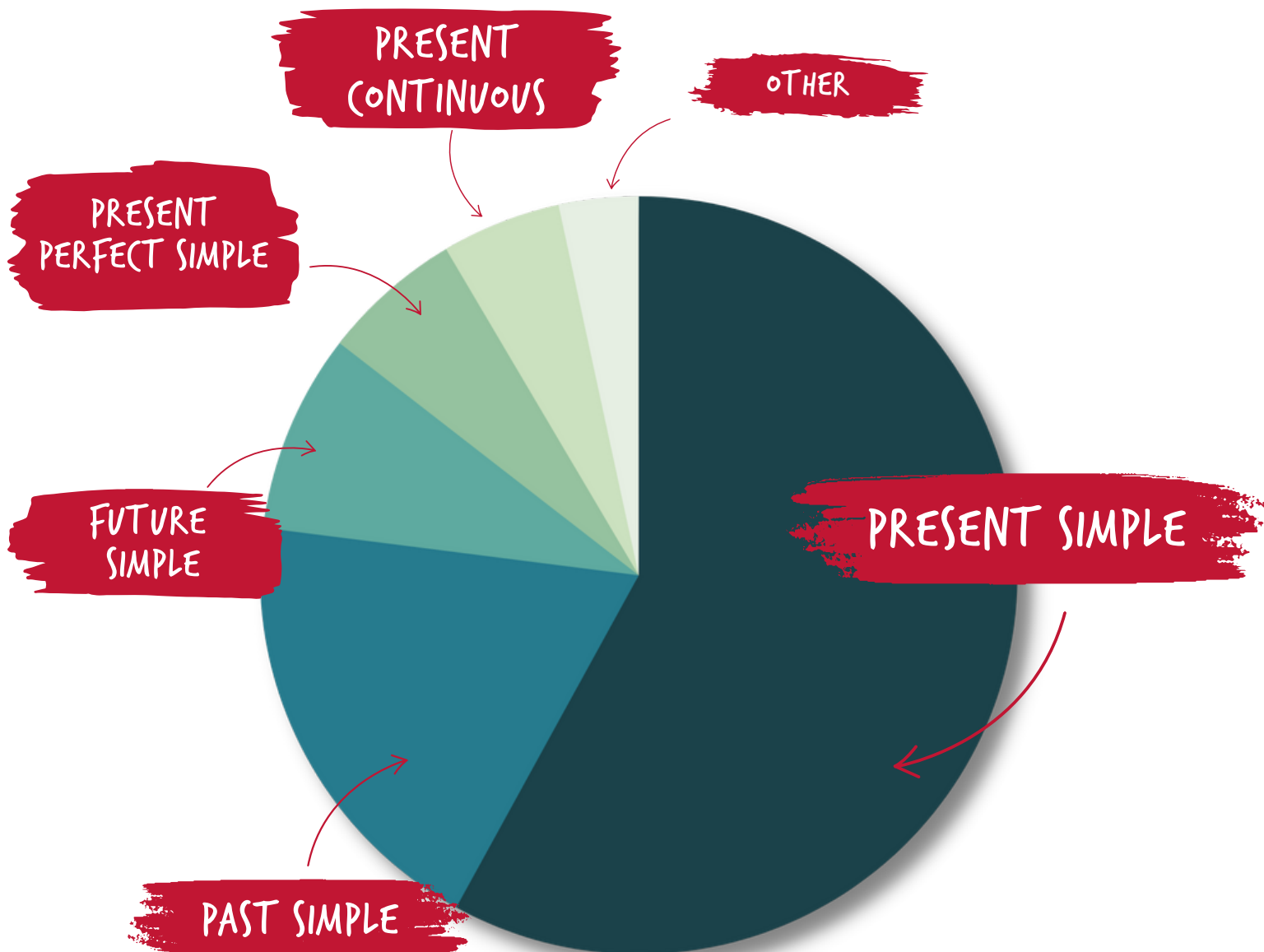
- **Past Simple**: used to talk about completed actions in the past.
- **Past Continuous**: used for actions that were in progress at a specific time in the past.
- **Past Perfect**: used for actions completed before a specific time in the past.
- **Past Perfect Continuous**: used for actions that started in the past, continued and were completed before another past event.



Future

- **Future Simple:** used for actions that will happen in the future.
- **Future Continuous:** used for actions that will be in progress at a specific time in the future.
- **Future Perfect:** used for actions that will be completed before a specific time in the future.
- **Future Perfect Continuous:** used for actions that will have started in the past, present or future, continue, and be completed before another future event.

THE MOST COMMONLY USED TENSES



As you can see in the chart, not all verb tenses are created equal. According to research, the five most common English verb tenses are—

1. **The Present Simple**
2. **The Past Simple**
3. **The Future Simple**
4. **The Present Perfect Simple**
5. **The Present Continuous**

The small purple sliver on the chart contains the other 7 verb tenses.

But don't let this chart fool you. Each and every verb tense has its time and place, but for general, day-to-day conversations, these five are going to be your bread and butter.

Now let's go ahead and see how you can start using each of these tenses to the best of your ability.

THE PRESENT SIMPLE

As you just learnt, the **Present Simple** makes up a large portion of daily communication, and rightfully so.

Let's look at some of the most common uses of the Present Simple.

1. To talk about facts and statements that are always true

- Most people **prefer** to shop online.
- The supermarket **is** busy on Saturday mornings.

2. Statements that are true in the present

- You **are** my best friend, Jasmine!
- I can't **bake** to save my life — **look** at this cake!

3. Routine actions or habits in the present, often used with an adverb of frequency.

- Do you always **bike** to work?



- I never **see** her in yoga class these days.

4. To refer to scheduled events in the future

- Carmine's holiday officially **starts** on the 5th of October.
- My stag do **kicks off** at 10pm at Boots and Brews!

5. To give directions or instructions

- **Mix** the flour and water together to create a thick paste.
- To get to the bookshop, **walk** down to the corner and **take** a left.

As you can probably tell from our examples, these kinds of statements and questions make up a large portion of our daily conversations.

THE PAST SIMPLE

The Past Simple is the second most used verb tense because we use it to talk about completed actions in the past, and we love to talk about the past. Look at a news article or pick up your favourite book; most of them rely heavily on the Past Simple tense.

The Past Simple is commonly used to:

1. Describe actions that occurred at a specific time in the past.

- I **visited** Greece last summer with my girlfriend.

2. Narrate a series of past events

- Yolanda **woke** up, **brushed** her teeth and **headed off** to the office.

3. Express habitual or repeated actions in the past

- Every morning, Ben **watered** his plants and **fed** his dog.

4. Discuss past states or conditions

- We **were** so tired after our long hike yesterday.

THE FUTURE SIMPLE

The Future Simple tense allows us to talk about what's going to happen at a time after the present moment. It's used as a way to predict outcomes, express intentions, make plans and talk about expectations.

The Future Simple tense is pretty straightforward as it only uses 'will' and the base form of a verb. It is commonly used when talking about spontaneous decisions, predictions, promises, offers or requests.

1. spontaneous decisions:

- *I'm pretty hungry; I **will order** some food.*

2. predictions:

- *The weather forecast says it **will rain** tomorrow.*

3. promises:

- *I **will get** to the office 20 minutes early to get everything set up.*

4. offers:

- *Mum **will be** happy to help you with your project if you need it.*

5. requests:

- ***Will** you please **pass** me the salt?*

THE PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE

It's time to talk about the **Present Perfect Simple**. Don't let its long and slightly confusing name fool you; it's actually quite an easy tense to master. Let's look at when and how we use it.

The Present Perfect Simple is a verb tense that is used to connect the past to the present. It is formed by using the auxiliary verb 'have' or 'has' with the past participle of the main verb.

We use the Present Perfect Simple to talk about:



1. Unfinished states or actions that started in the past

- He's **been** in his new position for about two weeks.

2. Completed actions with relevance to the present

- My dad **has** just **pulled up** to the house.

3. Life events and experiences

- They **have travelled** around Asia and most of Europe.

4. Actions or events at an unspecified time in the past

- Yeah, we've **tried** that recipe!

THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS

We usually use the **Present Continuous** tense to describe actions that are happening at the present moment or around the present time. It focuses on actions that are in progress or temporary situations.

We use the Present Continuous to talk about a few different situations, like:

1. Describing things happening right now

- Debra **is whipping** up some delicious banana pancakes.

2. Talking about activities that are not permanent

- **I'm giving** this workout plan a shot for a month to see how it makes me feel.

3. Discussing plans or events that will happen in the future

- Mark **isn't going** to that conference next month. He changed his mind.

4. Actions happening around a specific time

- **I'm working** this morning, but I'll be free this afternoon.

5. Describing things that are gradually changing or improving

- The city **is** slowly **becoming** more eco-friendly with new recycling programs and bike lanes.

QUIZ!

Choose the correct answer for each question.

1) This sentence is written in the Present Perfect Simple.

They finished the project ahead of schedule.

- a. True
- b. False

2) The Present Continuous tense is commonly used to:

- a. talk about actions that started in the past
- b. describe things happening right now
- c. ask about intentions and make plans

3) Which verb tense is used in the following sentence?

Martina plays the violin exceptionally well.

- a. The Past Simple
- b. The Present Perfect Simple
- c. The Present Simple

4) Which verb tense is used to talk about completed actions in the past?

- a. Present Perfect Simple
- b. Past Simple
- c. Future Simple

5) Which verb would put this sentence in the Present Continuous tense?

The company _____ a new software application for its users.

- a. is developing
- b. developed
- c. will develop

6) The most commonly used verb tense is the Present Simple.

- a. True
- b. False

7) The Present Perfect Simple is used to connect:

- a. the past to the future
- b. the past to the present
- c. the present to the future

8) Which verb tense is used in the following sentence?

We will have a meeting at 3pm tomorrow.

- a. The Present Perfect Simple
- b. The Future Simple
- c. The Past Simple

The End!

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