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# Finite and non-finite forms

## Summary of finite and non-finite forms

Finite = verb has tense (present or past)

Non-finite = verb does not have tense

There are three non-finite forms; the perfective form, e.g. *I have broken it*, the progressive form, e.g. *I am eating it*, and the infinitive, e.g. *I hope to get married some day*

NB WORD OF WARNING: The *perfective from* is often called the *past participle*. The *past participle* is terrible name, as we can use it to talk about the future, e.g. By this time tomorrow *I will have finished the essay*. It really refers to a COMPLETED event (we take an EXTERNAL perspective). Likewise the *progressive form* is sometimes called the *present participle*. This is also a terrible name as the *present participle* does not have to refer to now, e.g. *She was laughing*. It really refers to an INCOMPLETE / ONGOING EVENT (we take an INTERNAL perspective)

Finite forms tend to have a richer **inflectional morphology**, i.e. the form of the verb changes depending on the subject. In English the inflectional morphology is relatively *sparse*, e.g.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Singular | Plural |
| 1st person (speaker) | I run | We run |
| 2nd person (hearer) | You run | You run |
| 3rd person (neither speaker nor hearer) | She **runs** | They run |

Spanish has a much richer system

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Singular | Plural |
| 1st person (speaker) | Yo **corro** | Nosotros **corremos** |
| 2nd person (hearer) | Tu **corres** | Vosotros **correís** |
| 3rd person (neither speaker nor hearer) | El **corre** | Ellos **corren** |

## The importance of tense marking

With a few exceptions, all main verbs in English MUST be tense-marked, e.g.

1. \*I eating food
2. I am eating foot (*tensed auxiliary “rescues” the sentence*)

The main exception is the imperative (for commands) which employs the infinitive:

1. Shut that door!

# Grammatical Aspect

## What is grammatical aspect?

Grammatical Aspect is used to signal one’s PERSPECTIVE on an event. We can take an EXTERNAL perspective on the event (Perfective aspect), or INTERNAL perspective (Progressive aspect)

Perfective aspect requires “have” as the agreeing auxiliary

1. I have done it.

Progressive aspect requires “be” as the agreeing auxiliary

1. She is doing it

## Combining tense and aspect

When combining tense and aspect we

1. Mark aspect on the rightmost verb and insert an appropriate auxiliary verb
2. Repeat last rule if necessary
3. Mark tense (plus ”the future”) on the leftmost verb

Aspect expresses the PERSPECTIVE. Tense expresses the VIEWPOINT (past / present / future), e.g.

1. She has eaten the food

Perfective Aspect signals an EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVE on the event (the event is completed). Past tense shows that we adopt a PRESENT VIEWPOINT on the event. This is the “Present Perfect” and it is used when when a completed event has relevance for the present, e.g. *I have eaten the food, and therefore I am full*

1. We ’ll be eating dinner when you arrive

Progressive Aspect signals an INTERNAL PERSPECTIVE on the event (it is ongoing). Future tense shows that we adopt a FUTURE VIEWPOINT. This is the “Future Progressive” and it is used to describe an ongoing future event.

## Adding Adverbs

Adverbs typically come inside the Verb Complex, after the firs auxiliary (if there is one);

1. She is **always** laughing
2. She has **never** been arrested