

1. Introduction to Tenses

Definition: Tense indicates the time an action occurs (past, present, or future) and its state (completion or ongoing nature).

It provides information about both the **time of an action** and the **state of an action**.

Tenses are primarily determined by the form of the verb in a sentence.

Expert Note: While the part of speech includes verbs, tenses are not separately classified as they are inherent properties of verbs.

State of an Action (Aspect):

1. **Indefinite (Simple):** Action whose completion or incompleteness is not specified or clear. Often refers to habitual, general, or universal truths.
2. **Continuous (Imperfect):** Action that is ongoing or incomplete at a particular point in time.
3. **Perfect:** Action that is completed by a certain point in time.
4. **Perfect Continuous:** Action that started in the past, continued for some duration, and is either still ongoing or completed with a continued effect.

2. Present Tense

Definition: The Present Tense describes actions happening now, habitual actions, universal truths, or future events scheduled for the near future.

2.1. Simple Present Tense (Present Indefinite)

Definition: Refers to actions that are habitual, universal truths, general statements, proverbs, or scheduled future events. It does not specify the completion or incompletion of an action.

Grammar Rules:

- a) **Habitual Actions & Routines:** Describes actions performed regularly.

Examples:

1. He goes to school daily.
2. She drinks coffee every morning.
3. They play football on weekends.

- b) **Universal Truths & General Statements:** Expresses facts that are always true.

Examples:

1. The sun rises in the East.
2. Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.
3. Honesty is the best policy.

- c) **Proverbs & Maxims:** Stating general wisdom.

Examples:

1. A stitch in time saves nine.
2. Fortune favours the brave.
3. Actions speak louder than words.

- d) **Scheduled Future Events (Near Future):** For formal, fixed timetables or immediate future plans, especially official ones.

Examples:

1. The Prime Minister leaves for the USA next month.
 2. The match starts at 8 PM.
 3. My exam begins on Monday.
- e) **Newspaper Headlines:** To make past events sound immediate and dramatic.

Examples:

1. India Wins Glorious Victory.
2. CM Resigns Amidst Controversy.
3. President Arrives in Capital.

- f) **Conditional Sentences (Type 1):** In clauses of condition, time, or purpose introduced by conjunctions like **if, unless, until, when, as soon as, before, after, provided, in case, till, on the condition.**

Rule: If/When/Unless + Simple Present, Subject + Will/Shall + V1.

Examples:

1. If it rains, I will stay home.
2. Unless you study, you will fail.
3. As soon as he arrives, we will start.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

- a) **Tense Consistency (Universal Truth):** Even if the main clause is in the past, a universal truth in the subordinate clause remains in the Simple Present.
- The teacher said that the Earth revolved around the Sun.(X)

The teacher said that the Earth **revolves** around the Sun.

Expert Note: Facts remain facts, irrespective of reporting time.

- b) **Simple Present for Near Future vs. Present Continuous for Near Future:**

Simple Present: Used for formal, officially fixed events (e.g., "The PM leaves next month").

Present Continuous: Used for informal, personal near-future plans (e.g., "I am living for Mumbai next month"). Both can be correct for formal events.

- He has birthday party next week. (Assuming informal) (X)

He **is having** a birthday party next week.

Nuance: For formal, fixed timetables (e.g., trains, official visits), both simple present and present continuous can be used to indicate near future. For informal personal plans, present continuous is preferred.

- c) **Conditional Sentences (Type 1) - Double Future:** Do not use two future tenses in a single conditional sentence. The clause containing the conditional conjunction (if, when, unless etc.) takes the Simple Present.

- If he will come, I will go.(X)
If he **comes**, I will go.

Expert Note: The condition must be met in the present before the future action can occur.

Conditional Sentences (Type 1) - Universal Truth/Fact:

If the result clause also states a universal truth or fact, both the conditional clause and the result clause can be in the Simple Present.

- If you heat water to 100°C, it **boils**.
- Note:** This is an exception to the "one simple present, one simple future" rule in conditionals because the outcome is a scientific certainty.
- d) **'It is advisable' (General Statement):** General advice should be in Simple Present, not Present Perfect.
- It has been advisable to refrain from smoking.(X)

It is advisable to refrain from smoking.

2.2. Present Continuous Tense (Present Imperfect)

Definition: Describes actions that are ongoing at the time of speaking, temporary actions, or definite future plans (especially informal ones).

Grammar Rules:

1. **Action in Progress:** Describes an action happening right now.

Examples:

- a. She is teaching English.
- b. They are playing cricket.

2. **Temporary Actions:** Actions that are ongoing for a limited period.

Examples:

- a. He is living in a hotel for a month.
- b. She is working on a new project this week.
- c. They are studying for their exams.

3. **Near Future Plans (Informal/Definite):** For personal, definite plans in the near future.

Examples:

- a. I am meeting my friend tomorrow.
- b. She is going to the concert tonight.
- c. The train is going to enter the platform.

4. **Repeated Annoying Actions (with 'always', 'constantly'): To express irritation or criticism about frequently repeated actions.**

Examples:

- a. He is always complaining.
- b. She is constantly interrupting me.
- c. They are always making the same mistake.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance (Stative Verbs):

Stative Verbs: Verbs that describe states, feelings, senses, possession, or mental processes rather than physical actions generally do not take the continuous (-ing) form.

Rule: Stative verbs (verbs of state) do not typically have continuous forms when expressing their core meaning.

Note: Distinguish between a verb's stative and dynamic (action) meanings.

- a. **Verbs of Perception (Sense Organs):** see, hear, smell, taste, feel

- i. I am hearing music.(X)

I **hear** music. (But: The judge is hearing the case. (meaning 'presiding over'))

- ii. He is seeing a movie.(X)

He **is watching** a movie. (But: I am seeing the CM tomorrow. (meaning 'visiting'))

- b. **Verbs of Emotion:** love, like, hate, dislike, want, wish, desire, hope

- i. I am loving it.(X)
I **love** it. (But: Wishing you good luck. (gerund))
- ii. **Error:** I am hoping for the best.
Correct: I **hope** for the best.

- c. **Verbs of Mental Process:** know, believe, remember, understand, think (meaning believe), suppose, realise, recognise

- i. I am knowing the truth.(X)
I **know** the truth. (But: After knowing the truth... (gerund))
- ii. He is not understanding the problem.(X)
He **does not understand** the problem.

- d. **Verbs of Possession:** have, own, possess, belong

- i. He is having two cars.(X)
He **has** two cars. (But: He is having breakfast. (meaning 'eating'))
- ii. All the luggage is belonging to me.(X)
All the luggage **belongs** to me. (But: All his belongings were stolen. (noun))

- e. **Verbs of Appearance:** appear, seem, look (meaning seem)

- i. It is appearing to me that he committed the crime. (X)
It **appears** to me that he committed the crime. (But: He is appearing in the exam. (meaning 'participating'))

2. **'Always' for negative/irritating actions:** While 'always' typically signifies a habitual action (Simple Present), it can be used with Present Continuous to express a frequently repeated, often annoying or critical, action.

Examples:

1. He **is always making** the same mistake. (Negative connotation)
2. He **always makes** the same mistake. (Factual, less emphasis on irritation)

Nuance: For positive actions, only Simple Present is used with 'always'.

He is always helping me. (Positive action in continuous) (X)

He **always helps** me.

2.3. Present Perfect Tense

Definition: Describes actions that started in the past and continue up to the present, or actions completed in the past but whose effects are still relevant in the present. It links the past to the present.

Grammar Rules:

- a) **Past Action with Present Effect:** Action completed at an unspecified time in the past, but its consequences are still felt or relevant now.

Examples:

1. I have lost my keys (so I can't get into the house now).
2. She has finished her work (so she is free now).
3. The car has broken down (so we need a new one).

- b) **Experiences up to Now:** Describes experiences that have happened at any point up to the present moment.

Examples:

1. I have visited Paris three times.
2. She has never seen a live concert.
3. They have eaten sushi before.

- c) **Actions Begun in Past, Continuing to Present (with 'since'/'for':** Used with since (for a point in time) and for (for a duration) to indicate an action that began in the past and continues or holds true up to the present.

Examples:

1. I have lived here since 2016.
2. He has worked for this company for five years.
3. She has been ill since Monday.

- d) **Actions Completed 'Just', 'Already', 'Yet', 'So Far', 'Till Now', 'Of Late', 'Recently':** These adverbs emphasize the recency or completion of an action up to the present.

Rule: These adverbs almost always take the Present Perfect tense.

Examples:

1. He has **just** arrived.
2. She has **already** completed the work.
3. He has not come **yet**.
4. **So far**, there has been no news.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

Present Perfect vs. Simple Past (Action vs. Time): When the emphasis is on the action itself (what was done), Present Perfect is used. When the emphasis is on when the action happened, Simple Past is used.

1. I have done the work yesterday.(X)
I **did** the work yesterday. (Emphasis on specific past time 'yesterday')
I **have done** the work. (Emphasis on the completed action, time unspecified)
2. **Note:** Never use Present Perfect with specific past time markers like yesterday, ago, last week/month/year.

'Today', 'This Week/Month/Year' with Present Perfect: These time markers can be used with Present Perfect if the time period is not yet over at the moment of speaking.

Examples:

1. I **have seen** her today. (If 'today' is not over)
2. She has worked hard this week. (If 'this week' is not over)

Nuance: If the speaker considers the period to be finished (e.g., end of the day, looking back at the week), Simple Past can also be acceptable, though Present Perfect is preferred to imply continuity of the period.

'Yet' for Time vs. Conjunction: 'Yet' as an adverb of time (meaning 'till now') takes Present Perfect. 'Yet' as a conjunction (meaning 'but' or 'however') does not affect the tense in this way.

1. He did not complete the work yet.(X)
He **has not completed** the work yet.
Note: 'Yet' (adverb of time) implies an action started in the past and is expected/ongoing till now, connecting past to present.

'Know' in Perfect Tense: While 'know' is a stative verb and doesn't take continuous form, it can be used in Perfect tenses to show a duration of knowing up to the present.

1. I am knowing him for two years.(X)
I **have known** him for two years.
Note: 'Know' for duration uses Present Perfect, not Present Perfect Continuous.

Frequency vs. Specific Time: When 'times' (e.g., three times) indicates frequency of an action up to the present, Present Perfect is used, not Simple Past.

1. I saw the movie three times. (If referring to experience up till now)(X)
I **have seen** the movie three times.
Note: 'Three times' here is a measure of frequency over a period up to the present, not a specific past time.

2.4. Present Perfect Continuous Tense

Definition: Describes an action that began in the past, has continued up to the present, and is either still ongoing or has just finished with visible results. It emphasizes the duration of the action.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Action Started in Past and Still Ongoing:** The action began at a specific point or over a period in the past and is continuing in the present.

Examples:

1. She **has been living** here **since 2016**.
2. He **has been working** for two hours.
3. They **have been watching TV** **since 2 PM**.

2. **Action Just Finished with Present Results:** The action has recently stopped, but its effects or evidence are still apparent.

Examples:

1. Her eyes are red because she **has been crying**.
2. The ground is wet; it **has been raining**.
3. I'm tired because I **have been running**.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

Stative Verbs in Present Perfect Continuous:

Stative verbs, which do not take continuous forms, also cannot be used in Present Perfect Continuous.

1. I have been knowing him since January.(X)
I **have known** him since January.
Note: If a stative verb cannot be continuous, it defaults to the Present Perfect for duration.

Distinction with Present Perfect (Completion vs. Duration):

Present Perfect: Focuses on the completion of the action or the result. "I have written a letter" (The letter is finished).

Present Perfect Continuous: Focuses on the duration of the action, which might still be ongoing or has just finished. "I have been writing a letter" (Still writing, or just finished and tired).

Nuance (with definite quantity): If a specific, definite quantity of accomplishment is mentioned, Present Perfect (completion) is preferred over Present Perfect Continuous (ongoing duration).

1. The player has been scoring 10 centuries since 2016. (10 centuries is a definite quantity) (X)

The player **has scored** 10 centuries since 2016.

Note: When the number of completed items is specified, the action implies completion.

3. Past Tense

Definition: The Past Tense describes actions or states that occurred and were completed at a specific time in the past.

3.1. Simple Past Tense (Past Indefinite)

Definition: Refers to actions or events that began and ended at a specific point in the past. It does not connect the past action to the present.

Grammar Rules:

Completed Actions in the Past: Describes actions finished at a definite time in the past.

Examples:

1. I **visited** my grandparents last month.
2. She **studied** hard for her exam.
3. They **moved** to a new city two years ago.

- b) **Historical Events/Discoveries:** Facts or occurrences from history.

Examples:

1. Gandhi **started** the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920.
2. Newton **discovered** the law of gravitation.
3. Columbus **discovered** America.

- c) **Adverbs of Specific Past Time:** Used with adverbs such as yesterday, ago, last (week/month/year), formerly, the other day.

Examples:

1. He left for London **last night**.
2. I saw her **the other day**.
3. They met **two years ago**.

- d) **Expressions taking Simple Past (V2):** Certain phrases automatically trigger the Simple Past tense.

Rule: Expressions like **It's time**, **It's high time**, **It's about time**, **As if**, **As though**, **I wish** are followed by the Simple Past tense (V2).

Examples:

1. It's time he **went** to school.
2. It's high time you **started** studying.
3. He behaves as if he **were** a king.

- e) **Imaginary/Hypothetical Sentences (I Wish, As If/Though):** To express wishes, desires, or hypothetical situations contrary to present fact.

Rule: In imaginary sentences, use Simple Past (V2). For the verb 'to be', always use 'were' for all subjects (even singular).

Examples:

1. I wish I **were** a doctor.
2. If I **were** a bird, I would fly.
3. She talked as though she **knew** everything.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

'It's time to + V1' vs. 'It's time + Subject + V2':

Rule 1: It's time to + infinitive is a fixed phrase and implies the action should happen now. The verb is non-finite, so its tense is not changed.

1. It's time **to go** home.
- o **Rule 2:** It's time + Subject + V2 is used when indicating it is already late for an action, and the action should have been done or started.
1. It's time he **did** his work.

Expert Note: The V2 in "It's time + S + V2" is a subjunctive form, not a literal past action, indicating a suggestion that is overdue.

Simple Past vs. Past Perfect for single events:

Simple Past is used for a single completed action at a definite time in the past. Past Perfect is used for an action completed before another past action.

- o Newton **had discovered** the law of gravitation.(X)
- Newton **discovered** the law of gravitation.

Note: Historical events at a specific time are Simple Past unless explicitly sequenced with another past event.

'Yesterday' with Simple Past vs. Past Continuous: While 'yesterday' typically indicates Simple Past, it can be used with Past Continuous if emphasizing an action ongoing at a specific point within yesterday.

Examples:

1. I **played** yesterday. (Simple Past)
2. I **was playing** yesterday afternoon. (Past Continuous for specific time)

3.2. Past Continuous Tense (Past Imperfect)

Definition: Describes an action that was ongoing at a particular point in the past, often interrupted by another action or running parallel to another.

Grammar Rules:

- a) **Action Ongoing at a Past Moment:** An action that was in progress at a specific time in the past.

Examples:

1. At 8 PM yesterday, I **was watching** TV.
2. She **was studying** when I called her.
3. They **were sitting** in a car five years ago.

- b) **Parallel Actions in the Past:** Two or more actions happening simultaneously in the past.

Examples:

1. While she **was cooking**, he **was reading**.
2. As I **was walking** to school, I saw an accident.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

Stative Verbs in Past Continuous: Similar to Present Continuous, stative verbs generally do not take the Past Continuous form.

- o He **was having** two books.
He **had** two books.
- o She **was understanding** the problem.(X)
She **understood** the problem.

Note: For stative verbs in past context, use Simple Past instead of Past Continuous.

3.3. Past Perfect Tense

Definition: Describes an action that was completed before another action or point in time in the past.

It is often called the "past of the past" and is a **relative term**, requiring a comparison between two past actions.

Grammar Rules:

- a) **First of Two Past Actions:** When two actions happened in the past, the action that occurred first is in Past Perfect (Had + V3), and the action that occurred second is in Simple Past (V2).

Examples:

1. He **had left** before I arrived.
2. The bus **had left** when he reached the bus stop.
3. The thief **had escaped** before I opened the door.

- b) **Implied Previous Action:** Sometimes the second past action is implied rather than explicitly stated, but the context still points to an earlier completion.

Examples:

1. He **had left** (before some implied event).
2. She was disappointed because the bus **had left**.

- c) **Conditional Sentences (Type 3):** To express hypothetical situations in the past that did not happen (unfulfilled conditions).

Rule: If + Subject + Had + V3 (Past Perfect), Subject + Would/Could/Might/Should + Have + V3.

Examples:

1. If he **had worked** hard, he **would have succeeded**.
2. If you **had money**, he would help the poor.(conditional rule 2 P.S.& would)
3. Had he **studied** more, he **might have passed**. (Inversion without 'If')
4. If he **would have come**, I would have gone.(X)

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

- **Simultaneous Past Actions:** If two actions in the past happened **almost simultaneously**, or one **immediately followed the other**, both can be in **Simple Past**. Past Perfect is not required for a strict sequence.

1. As soon as he **had stepped** on the stage, it collapsed.(X)
2. As soon as he **stepped** on the stage, it **collapsed**.

Note: For truly sequential but immediate actions, Simple Past for both is often correct.

'Had' as Main Verb vs. Auxiliary Verb:

Rule: A sentence can correctly contain two 'had's. The first 'had' acts as an auxiliary verb, and the second 'had' acts as the main verb (V3 form of 'have', meaning 'taken' or 'eaten').

Examples:

1. I **had had** lunch by 2 PM. (Meaning: I had finished eating lunch by 2 PM.)
2. If Mohan **had had** money, he would have helped the poor. (Meaning: If Mohan had possessed money).

Note: This structure forms the Past Perfect tense (auxiliary 'had' + main verb 'had').

Distinction between 'Had + V2' vs. 'Had + V3':

3. **'Had' alone:** If 'had' is the only verb, it is the V2 (Simple Past) form of 'have' (meaning 'possessed').

 1. He **had** money. (Simple Past)
 2. He **had taken** lunch. (Past Perfect)

3.4. Past Perfect Continuous Tense

Definition: Describes an action that began in the past, continued for a duration, and was ongoing or completed just before another past action or point in time.

Grammar Rules:

- a) **Action Ongoing Before Another Past Action:** An action that had been in progress for some time and then either stopped or was interrupted by another past event.

Examples:

1. He **had been working** for two years before I joined the company.
2. She **had been waiting** for an hour when the bus finally arrived.
3. They **had been living** in that town since 2016 (before moving elsewhere).

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:**Stative Verbs in Past Perfect Continuous:**

Stative verbs are not used in this tense. Instead, Past Perfect is used.

- o I **had been knowing** him for a long time.(X)
I **had known** him for a long time.

Note: Always opt for Past Perfect if a stative verb is involved in a "past of the past" duration.

Consistency with Time Markers: Ensure that the time markers (e.g., 'for 2 years') and the surrounding context (e.g., 'before I joined') are consistent with an action happening before another past event.

- o He **is living** in this town for 2 years before I joined. (Mix of present continuous and past context) (X)

He **had been living** in this town for 2 years before I joined.

4. Future Tense

Definition: The Future Tense describes actions or states that will happen after the present moment.

4.1. Simple Future Tense (Future Indefinite)

Definition: Describes actions that will take place in the future. It expresses predictions, decisions made at the moment of speaking, or future facts.

Grammar Rules:

- a) **Future Actions:** To express actions that will occur in the future.

Examples:

1. I **will do** the work tomorrow.
2. She **will return** the book next week.

- b) **Spontaneous Decisions:** Decisions made at the moment of speaking.

Examples:

1. "I'm thirsty." "I **will get** you some water."
2. "The phone is ringing." "I **will answer** it."

- c) **Predictions and Hopes:** To express beliefs or hopes about the future.

Examples:

1. I hope I **will qualify** the exam.
2. It **will be** a sunny day tomorrow.
3. I think she **will succeed**.

- d) **Actions 'About to' Happen:** Can be expressed with 'be about to + V1'.

Examples:

1. My father **is about to retire**.
2. The movie **is about to begin**.
3. She **is about to leave**.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

Tense Consistency (Past Reporting): When reporting a future event from a past perspective, modal verbs must align with past forms.

- o He said that he **will come**.(X)
He said that he **would come**.

Note: 'Will' in indirect speech becomes 'would', 'may' becomes 'might', 'can' becomes 'could'.

Simple Present and Present Continuous for Future: As discussed earlier, Simple Present (for fixed timetables) and Present Continuous (for definite plans) can also express future events.

Examples:

1. The train **leaves** at 7 AM tomorrow. (Simple Present for schedule)
2. I **am meeting** him tomorrow. (Present Continuous for definite plan)

4.2. Future Continuous Tense

Definition: Describes an action that will be in progress at a specific time in the future.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Action in Progress at a Future Point:** An action that will be happening over a period at a certain time in the future.

Examples:

1. Tomorrow at 10 AM, I **will be working**.
2. He **will be watching** that movie.
2. **Parallel Future Actions:** Two or more actions happening simultaneously in the future.

Examples:

1. While I **will be cooking**, he **will be reading**.
2. They **will be traveling** while we **will be studying**.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

Stative Verbs in Future Continuous: Stative verbs, by nature, do not take continuous forms.

Expert Note: Use Simple Future or Future Perfect with stative verbs to express future states.

4.3. Future Perfect Tense

Definition: Describes an action that will be completed by a specific time or event in the future

Grammar Rules:

1. **Action Completed by a Future Time:** An action that will have finished before a certain point or another action in the future.

Rule: Often used with by, by the end of, by then.

Examples:

1. By next year, the students **will have qualified** the exam.
2. By the end of the vacation, he **will have read** all the books.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

- **Future Perfect vs. Simple Future:** Do not use Simple Future when the sense of completion by a future time is implied.

1. By next year, the students **will qualify** the exam.(X)

By next year, the students **will have qualified** the exam.

Note: The preposition 'by' (meaning 'not later than') is a strong indicator for Future Perfect to show completion.

4.4. Future Perfect Continuous Tense

Definition: Describes an action that will have been ongoing for a certain duration up to a specific point in the future.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Action Ongoing Up to a Future Point:** An action that will have been in progress for a duration and continue up to, or finish at, a definite future time.

Examples:

1. By next year, I **will have been working** here for ten years.
2. She **will have been studying** for five hours by the time the test starts.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:**Stative Verbs in Future Perfect Continuous:**

Stative verbs are not typically used in this tense.

Use Future Perfect instead.

Note: Focus on the duration of the action leading up to a future point.

1. **Always** → 100% (She always drinks coffee in the morning.)
2. **Usually** → 90% (I usually go to school by bus.)
3. **Normally / Generally** → 80% (He normally finishes work at 6 p.m.)
4. **Often / Frequently** → 70% (They often visit their grandparents.)
5. **Sometimes** → 50% (We sometimes eat out on weekends.)
6. **Occasionally** → 30% (She occasionally watches TV.)
7. **Seldom** → 20% (He seldom eats junk food.)
8. **Rarely** → 10% (I rarely go to the cinema.)
9. **Hardly ever / Scarcely ever** → 5% (She hardly ever wakes up late.)
10. **Never** → 0% (He never drinks alcohol.)