

TENSE, ASPECT AND VOICE (GRAMMAR)

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English has just two tenses – *present* and *past*, plus two aspects – *perfect* and *continuous*. Aspect is how we see things: the perfect aspect describes complete actions, *They have built a new research centre* (present perfect) and the continuous aspect describes actions in progress, *They have been building a new research centre for the last three years* (present perfect continuous).



A bit of theory

There are eight possible tense/aspect combinations, six of which we can put into the passive voice. About 90% of verbs used in English are in simple forms, i.e. neither perfect or continuous.

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
I studied English.	I study English.	I will study English.
PAST SIMPLE	PRESENT SIMPLE	FUTURE SIMPLE
I had studied English.	I have studied English.	I will have studied English.
PAST PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT	FUTURE PERFECT
I was studying English.	I am studying English.	I will be studying English.
PAST CONTINUOUS	PRESENT CONTINUOUS	FUTURE CONTINUOUS
I had been studying English.	I have been studying English.	I will have been studying English.
PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS	PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS	FUTURE PERFECT CONTINUOUS

Conversation gap fill (tenses) – ex. 3 p. 14

Ed: So, what (1) *have you been up to* / *are you up to* since I last (2) *saw* / *have seen* you?

Jon: Oh, (3) *hasn't anyone been telling you* / *hasn't anyone told you*? I (4) *decided* / *have decided* to go for promotion. You know, for the new Area Manager job.

Ed: Great! What exactly (5) *would you be doing* / *would you have been doing* in the new job?

Jon: Well, you need to be quite flexible as there's a lot of travel involved – in fact, the responsibilities (6) *cover* / *have covered* six different countries.

Ed: That'll suit you down to the ground – you (7) *have always got* / *always got* out and about a lot I seem to remember. By the way, you know Jacob (8) *is going* / *has been going* for it as well?

Jon: No, but I'm not threatened – he (9) *blew* / *has blown* his reputation for competence over that lost documents episode.

Ed: OK, but what (10) *have you done* / *have you been doing* to make sure you actually get the job?

Jon: Well, by the end of the week I (11) *will have worked out* / *will be working out* my interview strategy and there's no question they can ask me I can't answer.

Ed: (12) *Aren't you being* / *Aren't you* a bit overconfident, or should that be arrogant?

Jon: We'll see. Drinks are on me if I get it.

Ed: Deal.

Sentences gap fill (passive) – ex. 5 p. 15

1 **target** (present continuous)

- a) We _____ the training initiative at those employees who need it the most.
- b) The training initiative is _____ at those employees who need it the most.

2 **make** (past perfect)

- a) The Chairman of the board admitted that 'mistakes _____'.
- b) The Chairman of the board admitted that they '_____ mistakes'.

3 **cover** (present simple)

- a) The course _____ all the areas of confidence building, fostering team spirit and self-awareness.
- b) All the areas of confidence building, fostering team spirit and self-awareness _____ by the course.

Sentences gap fill (passive) – ex. 5 p. 15

4 **bring under control** (present perfect)

- a) The government _____ massive arrival of illegal immigrants, particularly the influx of refugees fleeing civil war in neighbouring countries at the end of the decade.
- b) The massive arrival of illegal immigrants, particularly the influx of refugees fleeing civil war in neighbouring countries at the end of the decade, _____.

5 **transform** (past perfect)

- a) From a backward agricultural society, by 1970, the people _____ the country into a powerful industrial state.
- b) From a backward agricultural society, by 1970, the country _____ into a powerful industrial state.

6 **rate** (present perfect)

- a) People _____ this product highly since it was released.
- b) This product _____ highly since it was released.

More grammar activities (p. 122)

1 Fill in the spaces in the text below with an appropriate verb from the box. Do not change the verb form.

be don't envisage has suggested intend 'm put
smarten up to build to take to watch
've been learning 've learned

Over the next two years my plan is (1) _____ on what I have achieved recently and make myself more employable. First, I (2) _____ to focus on brushing up my academic writing skills in English. That will (3) _____ a good start. I (4) _____ English for about six years now, but it's only recently that I (5) _____ how to write an academic essay in English. I (6) _____ any particular obstacles as far as my work is concerned, but I do need (7) _____ the initiative more. My line manager (8) _____ that I (9) _____ my appearance a bit. I guess he has a point. I should also consistently (10) _____ work first – after all I (11) _____ not a student anymore! It would be disastrous for my colleagues (12) _____ me throw away everything I've worked for so far. In short my new motto is: focus, plan, act!

2 Complete the sentences by putting the verb in brackets into the most appropriate tense and aspect.

- 1 It's time I _____ (look) again at my training priorities.
- 2 Commodity prices _____ (not rise) this fast since 2008.
- 3 I wish I _____ (have) more time to finish the job properly.
- 4 Our sales figures _____ (get) worse by the day – something must be done about it.
- 5 I had the document _____ (draw up) by the new legal firm – they did a great job.
- 6 How long _____ (be) you here for – is it next Tuesday you fly back?
- 7 It _____ (be) when I was flying to Shanghai that the idea came to me.
- 8 That must be the tenth time you _____ (ask) me that question.
- 9 I need a reply. Tell Francesca I _____ (wait) for her to get back to me.
- 10 _____ (you/write) many applications yet?
- 11 This time I really _____ (need) you to deliver the goods and come up with something brilliant.
- 12 I'd rather you _____ (not advertise) that position just yet – we haven't definitely got funding for it.
- 13 You look like you _____ (run) through the rain – why are you all wet?
- 14 You _____ (look) a lot more up for it these days – I guess your holiday did you the world of good.

More grammar activities (p. 122)

CONDITION

+

RESULT**ZERO**
conditional

If you stand in the rain, you get wet.

If you heat ice, it melts.

PRESENT SIMPLE

+

PRESENT SIMPLE

USES: *Facts which are generally true or scientific facts*
The condition always has the same result

FIRST
conditional

If it rains, we will cancel the trip.

If you study, you will pass the exam.

PRESENT SIMPLE

+

WILL / WON'T + VERB

USES: *A possible situation in the future*
Predicting a likely result in the future (if the condition happens)

SECOND
conditional

If I won the lottery, I would travel a lot.

If they sold their house, they would be rich.

PAST SIMPLE

+

WOULD + VERB

USES: *Hypothetical or unlikely situations*
Unreal or improbable situation now or in the future

THIRD
conditional

If you had studied, you would have passed the exam.

If I hadn't been sick, I would have gone to your party.

PAST PERFECT

+

WOULD HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

USES: *The person is imagining a different past*
Imaginary situation that did not happen

Conditionals

Conditionals

If sentences can be quite complicated. The *if* clause is typically first, but the order of the clauses can be reversed for a change in emphasis. The descriptions below are based around time and reality:

Timeless, universal, always true – ‘zero’ conditional (*if* + subject + present tense, subject + present tense): ***If interest rates go up, the cost of borrowing normally increases.***

Future time, quite likely – First conditional (*if* + subject + present tense, subject + modal): ***If she does well in the interview, she will/should/may get the job.*** [paraphrase: ‘on condition that she performs well in the interview, the chances of getting the job are reasonably good’]

Future time, unlikely – Second conditional (*if* + subject + past tense, subject + **would**): ***If she got the job I’d be amazed.*** [paraphrase: ‘it’s possible, but I really don’t think it’s at all likely that she’ll get the job’]

Present time, unreal – Second conditional (*if* + subject + past tense, subject + **would**): ***If we had the resources we would be able to help you.*** [paraphrase: ‘we don’t have the resources so it’s not possible to help you’]

Past time, unreal – Third conditional (*if* + subject + past perfect, subject + **would have** past participle): ***If I’d realized what a cowboy outfit this company was I would never have taken the job.*** [paraphrase: ‘this company is a cowboy outfit, but when I took the job I didn’t realize this, so now I’m upset about it’]

Past unreal event affecting real present time – mixed third and second conditional (*if* + subject + past perfect, subject + modal + infinitive): ***If I had passed the exam I might/would be in a better job now.*** [paraphrase: ‘I failed the exam which means I’m now in a worse job’]

Present unreal event, past real event – mixed second and third conditional (*if* + subject + past tense, subject + **would have** past participle): ***If the company operated there, they would have been badly affected by last week’s currency crash.*** [paraphrase: ‘the company doesn’t operate there, so they haven’t been affected by last week’s currency crash’]

4 Choose the most appropriate tense to complete the following sentences.

- 1 I'd be surprised if he _____ (reach) his sales targets this year.
- 2 If you _____ (ask) me there's no chance it'll happen.
- 3 If you _____ (pass) by the office on your way out, could you tell Arne I'll be down in a minute?
- 4 People who complain are generally happier if you _____ (sit down) and spend a bit of time listening to them.
- 5 If only I _____ (know) about her problems I wouldn't have dismissed her so quickly.
- 6 The report would be finished by now – if you _____ (leave) me in peace and _____ (give) me enough time to get on with it.
- 7 If only I _____ (listen) to your advice, I wouldn't be in this mess now.
- 8 Be thankful we're not in real estate – if we _____ (be) in the business of selling houses we _____ (hit) really badly by the recent property crash.
- 9 There's no way the sales results would be so bad if we _____ (be) part of the team from the beginning.
- 10 In my view, she would never have got so far if it _____ (be) for her family connections.

One grammar activity (p. 123)

Passive (p.123)

Active: ***They are constructing a new retail outlet.***

Passive: ***A new retail outlet is being constructed.***

To form the passive voice use **be** as an auxiliary verb and keep the same tense and aspect, in this example the present continuous. The passive is used: to focus on one topic, ***Oil is produced ... Oil is refined ... Then it is transported ...***; to make a text more formal or objective; when we do not know or want to avoid saying who did something, ***Mistakes have regrettably been made,*** or it is unnecessary, ***The equipment should then be disconnected.***

The passive voice is more common in academic writing than other kinds of text, accounting for about 20% of verbs, but it is quite rare in conversation – just 2% of verbs.

5 Read the following text and decide whether the active or passive forms are the most appropriate.

Employees and motivation

In recent years (1) *a great deal of research has been done / they have done a great deal of research* into motivation in the workplace. Yet misconceptions (2) *are persisted / persist*. Not only (3) *do many employees believe / is it believed by many employees* that money is the main source of motivation, but also that motivation must come from outside. This external, or extrinsic, motivation might be in the form of rewards for (4) *the achievement of a specific degree of success by employees / employees who have achieved a specific degree of success*. While (5) *such rewards may be wanted by employees / employees may want such rewards*, they might not be aware that a different kind of motivation is equally powerful. (6) *Intrinsic motivation plays a major role / A major role is played by intrinsic motivation* in getting workers on task and on the road to success. This kind of motivation comes from within and (7) *external rewards do not affect it / is not affected by external rewards*. Finally, employees (8) *can help themselves / can be helped* by individually drawing up a personalized plan involving self-motivational techniques.