

# Verb Tenses





# Explanation

- When writing, it is important to be consistent in verb tense usage.
- There are three basic forms of verb tenses: past, present, and future. Simple and Perfect forms of these verbs are also used.



# Simple and Perfect Forms

- The simple form of a verb demonstrates an action that has a specific time duration.
  - The action has occurred, is going on now, or will happen in the future.
- The perfect form of a verb is used to show variations in time.
  - These variations include ongoing events, a sequence of events, or events that have a continued effect on a situation.
  - Perfect tenses include the past, present, or future form of “have” plus the past tense form of the verb.



# Examples

Each example is followed with an explanation of what the sentence means.

- **Simple Past tense:**

I *jogged* to my car.

I jogged to my car and stopped when I got there. The action occurred and ended, and no other events occurred at the same time.

- **Past Perfect tense:**

I *had jogged* to my car only to realize I forgot my keys in the office.

I jogged to my car and stopped, but another event (realizing I forgot my keys) occurred directly after the first action.



# Examples

Each example is followed with an explanation of what the sentence means.

- **Simple Present tense:**

I *jog* to my car.

I jog at a certain point in time and stop. No other actions take place at this time.

- **Present Perfect tense:**

I *have jogged* to my car.

I have jogged to my car in the past and the action continues to occur; other actions may take place at the same time.



# Examples

Each example is followed with an explanation of what the sentence means.

- **Future tense:**

*I will jog* to my car.

I will jog to my car in the future. The action will begin and end during a specific time period.

- **Future Perfect tense:**

*I will have jogged* to my car.

At some point in the future I will jog to my car, and other actions may occur at the same time or after the action.



# Practice

**Changing the bold verb to the tense indicated in parentheses:**

(Notice how the verbs in the sentence are consistent in tense.)

- She **talk** will talk (future tense) to her professor about when her paper is due.
- Because she lived alone in an apartment building, she **locks** locked (simple past) her doors every night.
- I arrive at the end of the trail and realize I **jogged** have (present perfect) five miles. jogged
- He got home from the grocery store and realized he **spent** spent (past perfect) too much money.
- We **ate** eat (simple present) breakfast with our family every morning.
- After completing this month, I **worked** will have worked (future perfect) twenty-five years for this hospital.



# Explanation

You will often use progressive and conditional verb tenses in writing.

- The **progressive tense** is used to discuss an action that is, has, or will be in the process of occurring.
  - These can found in past, present, or future tense.
- **Conditional tenses** are used to describe an action that depends on another action taking place.
  - The word “would” is used to form this phrase.
  - You will often find “if” clauses in these sentences.
  - Conditional tenses are not used to make predictions or state facts.



# Examples

## Progressive tense:

- She *was eating* ice cream when her parents came home from work.

Past Progressive: The action happened in the past, and continued to happen when another action occurred.

- Your constant encouragement *is helping* me while I go through this difficult time.

Present Progressive: The encouragement is going on at the same time as another action, and continues to occur.

- Our professor *will be giving* a test next week.

Future Progressive: The action has not occurred yet, but will occur in the future at a certain point in time.



# Examples

## Conditional tense:

- If I were in your shoes, I *would study* for the test before taking it.  
Provided that one condition is true (I am in your shoes), another action will occur (I would study). The action test has not occurred yet, but is going to.
- If I had a better understanding of the consequences, I *would have thought* more before taking action.  
This is similar to the above sentence (an action would occur based on a condition), but the action has already occurred and the writer is reflecting back on it.



# Progressive vs. Conditional

Progressive      My doctor *will be leaving* for France at the end of the month.

Progressive      When the teacher turned the other way, she *was cheating* on the test.

Conditional      I tried to tell her that if I were she, I *would take* the extra work hours.

Progressive      You *are driving* me crazy by tapping your foot on the floor.

Conditional      If she knew the shoes were cheaper at the other store, she *would have waited* until Saturday to pick them up.

Progressive      As he walked into the room, she *was cleaning* his mess up.



# Verb Tense Sequencing

Sometimes in writing, it is necessary to shift verb tenses. It is important to understand how to do this so you do not confuse your reader.

Keeping a few simple things in mind, you will be able to communicate accurately a timeline of events to your reader...



# For Example...

- Try to stay in the same tense throughout the sentence. This includes variations of the tenses, such as simple, perfect, or progressive.
- Make the order of events clear. Perfect tenses often come before simple tenses.
- You may move forward in time within the sentence if it is necessary to change tenses (past to present or future, present to future).
- Only move backward in time if it makes sense.



# Examples

- I *was walking* the dog when she *stopped* to ask me for directions.

**Past progressive** and **past tense** are illustrated here.

A continuous action (walking the dog) is interrupted by an action that occurred once (she stopped to ask directions).

- He *has been playing* baseball for ten years, and *is still playing* today.

**Past perfect** and **present progressive** are illustrated here.

An action that began in the past (playing baseball) continues to the present (still playing).



# Examples

- Susan *did* her homework last week, and *will do* it this week as well.

**Past tense** and **future tense** are illustrated here.

An action occurred once in the past, and it is going to occur again (once) in the future).

- She *is writing* an article about what *happened* during the game.

**Present progressive** and **past tense** are illustrated here.

A continuous action is occurring in the present, and something in the past is related to this event (the game).



# More Examples

See how the sentences are corrected:

**Incorrect:** My arm is hurting when I went in to see the doctor.

**Correct:** My arm **was** hurting when I went in to see the doctor.

**Incorrect:** I love to play the piano as a young girl, and continue to play as an adult.

**Correct:** I **loved** to play the piano as a young girl, and continue to play as an adult.

**Incorrect:** I would not have taken the first exit if I know the second exit brought me closer to my destination.

**Correct:** I would not have taken the first exit if I **knew** the second exit brought me closer to my destination.



# More Examples

See how the sentences are corrected:

**Incorrect:** The professor was considering retirement until he find out he could not afford it.

**Correct:** The professor was considering retirement until he **found** out he could not afford it.

**Incorrect:** She became a mother when she will have been twenty-five years old.

**Correct:** She became a mother when she **was** twenty-five years old.

**Incorrect:** Her mother told her to clean her room, but she is walking out of the house.

**Correct:** Her mother told her to clean her room, but she **was** walking out of the house.



# References

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