

Tenses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:-

- ❖ understand tenses.
- ❖ learn about different types of tenses and their importance.
- ❖ learn and understand about the correct tense.
- ❖ understand the basics of simple, perfect, continuous tenses.
- ❖ study about the meaning of aspects.
- ❖ understand about different aspects of tenses.

Real Life Example

Tenses are very important in Grammar. They have different rules in different languages but form the most important part of the communication.

QUICK CONCEPT REVIEW

Tenses: Tenses come from a Latin word "tempus" which means time.

Tenses are therefore an indication of time reference, often using three basic categories of:

- ❖ "before now", i.e. the past:
- ❖ "now", i.e. the present; and
- ❖ "after now", i.e. the future.

Tense differs from aspect in showing the time reference.

PRESENT TENSE

Simple Present

Simple Present Tense is used when an action is common, habitual, done at all times and a regular occurrence, irrespective of a particular time period.

Simple present tense is used in the following cases:

- ❖ Habitual Action
Example: She drinks coffee, (her regular habit)
My mom wakes up early in the morning, (her daily habit)
- ❖ Universal Truths
Example: It rains in the rainy seasons. (It's a universal occurrence)
The earth moves round the sun.
- ❖ Common Actions: When we refer to common actions done by almost everyone or by a majority of people or objects, we need to use simple present tense only.
Example: I love my nation (almost everyone loves his/her country).
We observe 2nd October as the Gandhi Jayanti in India. (Every Indian does it)
- ❖ No time factors: we have certain actions which are not bound by any time they may happen all the time.
Example: I have a brother. (no time factor here).
She speaks in Spanish (a language she speaks all time).
- ❖ Proverbs: in proverbs or sayings, we use simple present tense since those are applicable or relevant for all ages.
Example: two is a company, three's a crowd (it's true).
Necessity is the mother of invention.
- ❖ Action at a particular future time or in near future: when we have an action to be done in near future or at a mentioned time, we use simple present tense.

Example: The match starts at 9 am tomorrow (at a fixed future time).

The classes begin next month (near future, fixed time).

How do we make the Simple Present Tense?

Subject+ auxiliary verb+ main verb

do base

PRESENT PERFECT

Present Perfect Tense completes an action of the verb started in the past. Moreover, when an action is just done i.e., in the recent past, we use this tense.

Syntax: subject + auxiliary verbs 'HAVE/HAS' + Past Participate of Verbs

Example: He has written a poem.

Uses of Present Perfect Tense

- ❖ When the work is done in the recent past and not in the distant past.

Misconcept/ concept

Misconcept: Tenses and Time are synonyms.

Concept: Tenses, time and synonyms are all different things. TENSES refers to the absolute location of an event or action in time, either the present or the past.

Example: He has just reached home [indicates- his arrival at home is a recent event].

- ❖ When the time of action which has already started is not definite, we use present perfect tense.

Example: I have read this book.

Have you watched Harry Porter?

- ❖ When the effect of an action started in the past is still on and we can feel the effect in the present, we use present perfect tense.

Example: Sir, we have completed all the assignments. (i.e. there isn't any more assignment at this moment).

- ❖ When an action specifically starts in the past and continues to be in the present, we use present perfect tense. It's often used with 'since/ 'for'.

Example: I've known John since my childhood [i.e. the action (knowing) started in the past and still on].

*** Present Perfect Tense should not be used when you use an adverb of the past time.

PRESENT CONTINUOUS/ PROGRESSIVE

Present continuous tense speaks about an action which is happening at this moment, an action in current motion.

Syntax; Subject + be auxiliary verbs (am/is/are) +verb (ng) +(object OR no object)

Example: She is singing.

The action (singing) has started but is not complete yet. When it's complete, it will get into another form of tense. (present perfect tense).

Use of Present Continuous Tense

- ❖ For an action which is still continuing and not complete yet.

Example: I am reading a book. [the act of reading the book is still going on and not complete yet].

- ❖ For an action which is sure to happen in near future.

Example: It is going to rain tonight. [rain has not started but it's almost sure that it will rain tonight].

- ❖ For an action which is not actually happening of this moment but will happen surely- Sometimes, we perform an action but leave it mid-way to complete it later. This means, an action has already started but not completed yet.

Amazing Facts

Present tense is very interesting because it can be used to express the future.

The word die cannot be in continuous form since the action of death cannot be in continual form. A person dies once.

The simple past tense is sometimes called the "preterite tense".

But, we're not doing it right now: we'll do it later and complete the action. In this case, Present Continuous Tense should be used.

Example: I am reading the novel Gulliver Travels these days. [this confirms that the action of 'reading' has already started and will go on. But at the time of speaking, I am actually not performing this action. Maybe, 'I am having my dinner now but sharing this thought with my co-diner'.]

PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

In Present Perfect Continuous Tense, an action starts in some time of the past and is still going on. In short, an action started in the past (in most cases, the time is specific) and the action is continuing.

Example: I have been watching the movie for 2 hours.

Syntax: Subject + (HAVE/HAS) + been + Verb(ing) + (SINCE/FOR, -if you add time period)

Examples:

- ❖ He has been reading for 5 hours.
 - ❖ We've been living in this city since 1981.
- Uses of Present Perfect Continuous Tense
- ❖ An action that has just stopped or recently stopped- We used the present perfect continuous tense to talk about an action that started in the past and stopped recently. There is usually a result now.

Example:

I'm tired [now] because I've been running.

Why is the grass wet [now]? Has it been raining?

- ❖ An action continuing up to now- We used the present perfect continuous tense to talk about an action that started in the past and is continuing now. This is often used with 'for' or 'since'.

Example:

I have been reading for 2 hours. [I am still reading.]

We've been studying since 9 o'clock. [We're still studying.]

FOR and SINCE with Present Perfect Continuous Tense

- ❖ We use 'for' to talk about a period of time – 5 minutes, 2 weeks, 6 years.
- ❖ We use 'since' to talk about a point in past time- 9 o'clock, 1st January, Monday.

Historical Preview

The evolution of a future and perfect tense represents the most significant innovation of Modern English in comparison to earlier stages of this language. Old English had a two tense system (past and non-past), which is claimed to have been preserved in Modern English by some linguists.

PAST TENSE

Simple Past

Simple Past Tense completes an action in the past and it does not bring its impact to the present time.

A Simple Past Tense usually has adverbs of past time (such as ago, back, yesterday, last, etc.) in a sentence.

Add suffixes such as -ed, -d, -t, -ied to the main verbs to make them in past tense.

Syntax:

Subject + past tense form of verb + (in affirmative sentences)

Subject + was/were+.... (with 'be' auxiliary verb)

Subject + DID NOT + Present form of the verb + (in negative sentences)

Subject+ was/were+ NOT+.... (with 'be' auxiliary verb)

We use the simple past tense to talk about an action or a situation- an event- in the past. The event can be short or long.

Examples: Did you see that car? (Short term)

I lived in Dubai for 10 years (long term)

We use the past simple tense when:

- ❖ the event is in the past.
- ❖ the event is completely finished.
- ❖ we say (or understand) the time and/or place of the event.

PAST PERFECT

If there are two actions in the past corresponding to each other or related to each other, the action which happens earlier than the other will be in past perfect tense. In other words, the tense which occurs earlier than another tense in the past is known as past perfect tense.

- ❖ Avoid using past perfect tense when there is only one action to refer to.
- ❖ We often use the past perfect tense in reported speech after verbs like said, told, asked, though, wondered.

Syntax: subject + 'Had' (auxiliary verb) + Past participle of verbs

Interrogative syntax: 'Had' + subject + Past participle of verbs.

Examples:

- ❖ She thanked me for what I had done for her.
- ❖ He had seen me before I did.
- ❖ Rose completed her papers after I had submitted mine.

PAST CONTINUOUS/ PROGRESSIVE

The type of tense, where an action starts in the past and it remains in continual process for some time or until another action, is known as Past Continuous Tense. It's a complete action of the past but it just remains active for some time or till another action begins.

Syntax: Subject + WAS/WERE + Verb (ing)

For example, yesterday I watched a film on TV. The film started at 7 pm and finished at 9 pm.

Past Continuous Tense + Simple Past Tense

PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

The past perfect continuous is composed of two elements- the past perfect of the verb to be (= had been) + the present participle (base + ing).

Syntax: Subject + HAD + BEEN (auxiliary verb) + Verb (ing)

Example: It had been raining before you reached the school [1st action (raining) was continuous before the 2nd action (reach) started].

The words in **bold** are in past perfect continuous tense. These are the action which began before another actions (the ones underlined) started. But those actions were in a continual mode and going on until the other actions began.

Some other examples:

- ❖ John was very tired. He had been running.
- ❖ I could smell cigarettes. Somebody had been smoking.

FUTURE TENSE

Simple Future

The future simple tense is often called will, because we make the future simple tense with the modal auxiliary will.

Syntax: Subject + SHALL/WILL + present form of Verb

How do we use the Simple Future Tense?

- ❖ No Plan: We use the simple future tense when there is no plan or decision to do something before we speak. We make the decision spontaneously at the time of speaking.
Examples: We will see what we can do to help you.
Hold on. I'll get a pen.
- ❖ Prediction: We often use the simple future tense to make a prediction about the future. Again, there is no firm plan. We are saying what we think will happen.
Examples: It will rain tomorrow.
People won't go to Jupiter before the 22nd century.

FUTURE PERFECT

The future perfect tense talks about the past in the future. Future Perfect has two different forms: “will have done” and “be going to have done.”

Syntax:

Subject + auxiliary verb WILL + auxiliary verb HAVE + main verb

- ❖ In speaking with the future perfect tense, we often contract the subject and will.
- ❖ Like all future forms, the Future Perfect cannot be used in clauses beginning with time expressions such as: when, while, before, after, by the time, as soon as, if, unless, etc.

The future perfect tense express action in the future before another action in the future. This is the past in the future.

Example: The train will leave the station at 9 am. You will arrive at the station at 9.25 am. When you arrive, the train will have left.

Future Perfect Forms using ‘Will’

- ❖ I will have stopped.
- ❖ They will not have stopped.
- ❖ Will I have stopped?
Future Perfect Forms using ‘Being Going To’
- ❖ He is going to have stopped.
- ❖ It is not going to have stopped.
- ❖ Am I going to have stopped?

FUTURE CONTINUOUS/ PROGRESSIVE

Future Continuous has two different forms: “will be doing” and “be going to be doing.” Unlike Simple Future forms, Future Continuous forms are usually interchangeable.

Syntax: Subject + auxiliary verb WILL + auxiliary verb BE + main verb

The future continuous tense expresses action at a particular moment in the future. The action will start before that moment but it will not have finished at that moment.

For example, tomorrow I will start work at 2 pm and stop work at 6 pm.

I will be playing tennis at 10 am tomorrow.

What will you be doing at 10 pm tonight?

FUTURE PERFECT CONTINUOUS

We use the future perfect continuous tense to talk about a long action before some point in the future.

Examples:

- ❖ I will have been working here for ten years next week.
- ❖ He will be tired when he arrives. He will have been travelling for 24 hours.

Syntax:

Subject + auxiliary verb WILL + auxiliary verb HAVE + auxiliary verb BE + main verb

For negative sentences in the future perfect continuous tense, we insert not between will and have. For interrogative sentences, we exchange the subject and will.