**TENSES**

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**Updated May 07, 2018**

In grammar, *tense* is the time of a [verb](https://www.thoughtco.com/verb-definition-1692592)'s action or its state of being, such as present (something happening now), past (something happened earlier), or future (something going to happen). These are called the verb's time frame. For example, examine I *walk*(present), I *walked* (past), and I *will walk* (future).

Next, a verb can have an aspect, which gives more formation about the state of the verb's action. They are simple, progressive, perfect, or perfect progressive. *Simple* is covered by the basic present, past, and future tense verb forms. A verb with a simple aspect doesn't necessarily specify if an action is complete or not. For an action that's ongoing or unfinished, you use continuous/progressive tenses. If the action was completed, you use perfect or or perfect progressive tenses:

* I walked (simple past)
* I am walking (present continuous, action is ongoing)
* I was walking (past continuous, action continued in the past)
* I will be walking (future continuous, ongoing action will happen later)
* I have walked (present perfect, action is completed)
* I had walked (past perfect, action was completed in the past)
* I will have walked (future perfect, action will be completed in the future)
* I have been walking (present perfect progressive, the current ongoing action is complete)
* I had been walking (past perfect progressive, action was ongoing in the past and completed in the past)
* I will have been walking (future perfect progressive, ongoing action will be completed in the future)

**Irregular Verbs**

Of course, not every verb form in English is as easy as forming regular verbs such as *walk* into its participles of *walking* and *walked*. Take for example, *go,*which changes to *went* and *gone*in the past:

* I went (simple past)
* I am going (present continuous, action is ongoing)
* I was going (past continuous, action continued in the past)
* I will be going (future continuous, ongoing action will happen later)
* I have gone (present perfect, action is completed)
* I had gone (past perfect, action was completed in the past)
* I will have gone (future perfect, action will be completed in the future)
* I have been going (present perfect progressive, the current ongoing action is complete)
* I had been going (past perfect progressive, action was ongoing in the past and completed in the past)
* I will have been going (future perfect progressive, ongoing action will be completed in the future)

**Helpers and Conditional Mood**

Auxiliary verbs, also called helping verbs, create continuous and perfect tenses; auxiliaries include forms of "to be" or "has," such as in the examples from above:

* I *am/was* walking (continuous)
* I *have/had* walked (perfect)
* I *will* walk (future)

English doesn't have a separate verb form for future tense (like adding an -ed to create a past tense word), just shows it through auxiliary words next to the verbs, such as I *will* walk, I *shall* be walking, or I *am going to* walk.

If something might happen or it might not (conditional), that's the conditional mood (not a separate verb form either), and it also formed with auxiliary verbs, such as *may*or *can*: I *may* walk (present conditional) or I *could* walk (past conditional).

**The Debate as to Whether Future Is a Tense**

Many contemporary [linguists](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-linguist-1691239) equate tenses with the [inflectional](https://www.thoughtco.com/inflection-grammar-term-1691168) categories (or different endings) of a verb, which means that they don't consider future to be a tense. English maintains an inflectional distinction only between the [present](https://www.thoughtco.com/present-tense-grammar-1691674) (for example, *laugh* or *leave*) and the [past](https://www.thoughtco.com/past-tense-simple-past-1691596) (*laughed*, *left*). But if you equate "tense" with a time change, then future is indeed a tense.

* "English...has only one inflectional form to express time: the past tense marker (typically *-ed*), as in *walked, jumped,* and *saw*. There is therefore a two-way tense contrast in English: *I walk* vs. *I walked*—present tense vs past tense. English has no future tense ending, but uses a wide range of other techniques to express future time (such as *will/shall, be going to, be about to,* and future adverbs). The linguistic facts are uncontroversial. However, people find it extremely difficult to drop the notion of 'future tense' (and related notions, such as imperfect, future perfect, and pluperfect tenses) from their mental vocabulary, and to look for other ways of talking about the grammatical realities of the English verb." (David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2003)
* "In discussing tense, labels such as present tense, past tense, and future tense are misleading, since the relationship between tense and time is often not one-to-one. Present and past tenses can be used in some circumstances to refer to future time (e.g. *If he comes tomorrow..., If he came tomorrow...*); present tenses can refer to the past (as in newspaper headlines, e.g. *Minister resigns...*, and in colloquial narrative, e.g. *So she comes up to me and says...*); and so on." (Bas Aarts, Sylvia Chalker, and Edmund Weiner, *Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 2014)

**The Lighter Side of Verb Tense**

The past, the present, and the future walked into a bar.

It was tense.

Source: https://www.thoughtco.com/tense-grammar-1692532

**What is Tense?**

***tense*** (noun): a verb-based method used to indicate the time, and sometimes the continuation or completeness, of an action or state in relation to the time of speaking. ORIGIN Latin *tempus "time"*

The concept of tense in English is a method that we use to refer to time - past, present and future. Many languages use tense to talk about time. Other languages have no concept of tense at all, but of course they can still talk about time, using different methods.

So, we talk about time in English with tense. **But**, and this is a very big **but**:

* we can also talk about time without using tense (for example, [going to](https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/verbs-m_going-to.htm) is a special construction to talk about the future, it is not a tense)
* one tense does not always talk about one time (for example, we can use the present tense, or even the past tense, to talk about the future - see [tense and time](https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/verb-tenses-tense-time.htm) for more about this)

Note that many grammarians take the view that there are only two tenses in English: **present** tense and **past** tense. That is because we make those two tenses with the verb alone - *he walks, he walked*. They do not consider that *he will walk*, *he is walking* or *he has walked* (for example) are tenses because they are not formed solely from the verb "walk". For English learners, most EFL teachers and books treat all these constructions as tenses. On these pages we do the same.

We cannot talk of tenses without considering two components of many English tenses: **time** and **aspect**. In simple terms...

**Time** expresses:

* **past** - *before now*
* **present** - *now, or any time that includes now*
* **future** - *after now*

**Aspect** can be:

* **progressive** - *uncompleted action*
* **perfective** - *completed action or state*

The following table shows how these components work together to create some basic tenses.

|  | **time** |
| --- | --- |
| **past** | **present** | **future** |
| simple (no aspect) | sang | sings | will sing |
| **aspect** | **progressive** | was singing | is singing | will be singing |
| **perfective** | had sung | has sung | will have sung |

(Some say that simple tenses have "simple aspect", but strictly speaking simple tenses are simply unmarked for aspect.)

The progressive aspect produces progressive or "continuous" tenses: *past continuous, present continuous, future continuous*.

The perfective aspect produces perfect tenses: *past perfect, present perfect, future perfect*.

And the two aspects can be combined to produce perfect continuous tenses: *past perfect continuous, present perfect continuous, future perfect continuous*.

The above is a summary of the concept of tense in English. There are other factors, including voice and mood, that allow us to create more than the twelve tenses referred to on this page. We deal with those under the [English tense system](https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/verb-tenses-system.htm) and [tenses](https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/verb-tenses.htm).

Source: <https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/tense-what.htm>

**Grammatical tense definition:** English tenses are the form the verb takes to show the time of an action.

What are Tenses in English?

Grammar tenses refer to the state of the verb. The state, or tense, of the verb explains the time of the action.

There are three major tenses in English. These include past, present, and future. Each of these tenses can explain an event that occurred in the past, an event that occurs in the present, or an event that will occur in the future.

**Example of Past, Present, and Future Tenses:**

* I danced. (past)
* I dance. (present)
* I will dance. (future)

What is Past Tense?

**What does past tense mean?**The past simple tense of verbs expresses events or actions that already occurred. These actions are finite in that they have both a starting and a stopping point.

Examples of Past Tense Verbs

For regular verbs, the past tense is formed by adding “-ed” to the end of the infinitive (base).

**Example:**

* Verb: to listen
* Past: listened
* Verb: to credit
* Past: credited
* Example: He credited Mr. McAneny and Mr. Bassett with creating a revolutionary document couched in accepted common-law and constitutional doctrines. –[*The New York Times*](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/26/nyregion/new-yorks-first-zoning-resolution-which-brought-order-to-a-chaotic-building-boom-turns-100.html%3F_r%3D0)

Some regular verbs with short vowel sounds require adding an extra consonant to the end of the infinitive before adding “-ed.”

**Example:**

* Verb: to brag
* Past: bragged

A verb with a silent “e” at the end just requires a “-d” to create past tense.

**Example:**

* Verb: to require
* Past: required

Irregular verbs take various forms in the past tense. One example follows.

**Example:**

* Verb: to bring
* Past: brought

What is Present Tense?

**What does present tense mean?**The present simple tense expresses events that happen in the present but are not actions happening now. The present tense is used for facts, habits (habitual actions), general truths, and states of being.

This may seem confusing, so an example will clarify.

**Examples of Present Tense Verbs**

**Examples:**

* He works at Target.
	+ While he works at Target, he may not be working at Target at this very moment. This statement expresses a fact.
* He works hard to have the most opportunities possible available to him. And he is excited for where he is headed. –[*The Washington Post*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2016/07/18/my-son-with-autism-oh-the-places-you-too-will-go/)
	+ Similar to the last example, while he works hard, he may not be working hard right this very moment.

The present tense takes the infinitive (base) for all conjugation except for the singular third person. An “-s” is added to the singular third person to create the present tense.

**Example with “to hear:”**

* I hear.
* You hear. (singular, plural)
* He *hears*. (She hears. It hears.)
* They hear.
* We hear.

What is Future Tense?

**What does future tense mean?**The future simple tense expresses actions that have not yet occurred but that will occur at a future date.

The future tense is formed in two ways:

1. Adding “will” between the subject and the infinitive (base) of the verb.
	1. I will go to the store later today.
	2. She will answer the question shortly.
2. Adding “going” between the subject + the infinitive of the verb.
	1. I am going to remind you tomorrow.
	2. We are going to sleep

Full List of English Verb Tenses

Here are all of the major types of tense in English. For a full explanation of each tense, click the links below.

**Four Past Tenses**

* Simple Past Tense > He smiled
* Past Progressive Tense > He was smiling
* Past Perfect Tense > He had smiled
* Past Perfect Progressive Tense > He had been smiling

**Four Present Tenses**

* Simple Present Tense > He smiles
* Present Progressive Tense > He is smiling
* Present Perfect Tense > He has smiled
* Present Perfect Progressive Tense > He has been smiling

**Four Future Tenses**

* Simple Future Tense > He will smile
* Future Progressive Tense > He will be smiling
* Future Perfect Tense > He will have smiled
* Future Perfect Progressive Tense > He will have been smiling

Exercises with English Grammar Tenses

Are the following sentences written in past, present, or future tense?

1. I answered the question correctly.
2. She will attend the ball.
3. Quietly, Jeremy listened to the recording.
4. Sally sleeps in her crib every night.
5. Smoking is not permitted in the park.

Summary: What are the English Tenses?

**Define tense:**In grammar, the definition of tense is *a verb’s quality that shows time in which an act, state, or condition occurs or occurred.*

**In summary**, there are three tense groups in English which include past, present, and future. The past expresses events that have ended. The present expresses general truths. The future expresses events that will happen.

**Answers:**

1. past
2. future
3. past
4. present
5. present

source: <https://writingexplained.org/grammar-dictionary/english-tenses>

**TENSES**

**1. What are tenses?**

Everyday we speak about things we did in the past, things we are doing now, and things we are going to do in the future. We do so by using verb “tenses” that indicate time—the [past tense](http://englishsentences.com/past-tense/), the [present tense](http://englishsentences.com/present-tense/), and the [future tense](http://englishsentences.com/future-tense/). With each tense, we change the form of the verb (called “conjugating” the verb) to express the timeline of the sentence.

**2. Examples**

To express when things happen, we need to conjugate our verbs differently. Here are examples of the three main verb tenses, with the verbs in orange:

* *Sally****called****me.*      **Past Tense**
* *I****talked****to Sally*.      **Past Tense**
* *Sally****calls****me*.      **Present Tense**
* *I****call****Sally*.      **Present Tense**
* *Sally will****call****me*. Future Tense
* *I will****talk****to Sally*. Future Tense

As you can see, the form of the verbs change with each tense. To make this easier to see, we can add a specific timeto the sentence:

* *Sally called me****yesterday****.*
* *I talked to Sally****yesterday****.*
* *Sally calls me****every day****.*
* *I talk to Sally****every day****.*
* *Sally will call me****tomorrow****.*
* *I will talk to Sally****tomorrow***.

**3. Parts of Tenses**

Verbs themselves only change form between past and present tense, so we need other [words](http://wordrequest.com/) to help show the time or situation. When changing verb tenses we use “helping verbs,” called **auxiliary verbs** and **modal auxiliary verbs**, which go alongside the main verb. They help the main verb make sense in a sentence.

**a. Auxiliary Verbs**

Sometimes using just a verb isn’t enough for a sentence to work. So, **auxiliary verbs** exist to add grammatical meaning or make other verbs function properly. Without them, a lot of sentences just wouldn’t make sense. They come in three main groups: ***to be***, ***have***, and ***to do***.

**To be**: *am, are, is, be, been, being, was, were*
**Have**: *had, has, have, having*
**Do**: *do, did, does*

Here are some examples, with and without auxiliary verbs:

* Sally is calling.      **Correct**
* Sally has been calling.      **Correct**
* Sally was calling.      **Correct**
* Sally calling.      INCORRECT
* Sally did call.      **Correct**
* Sally call.      INCORRECT
* Sally called.      **Correct**
* Sally has called.      **Correct**

You can see that without auxiliary verbs, some of the sentences just don’t make sense!

**b. Modal Auxiliary Verbs**

Basically, modal auxiliary verbs show if something will likely happen, might happen, probably happen, definitely happen, and so on. The main modal auxiliaries are: *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will,* and *would*. Here are so examples, with the modals in **gray**.

* Sally **could**call soon.      **Likely happen**
* Sally **may** call soon.      **Might happen**
* Sally **should**call soon.      **Probably happen**
* Sally **will** call soon.      **Definitely happen**

**4. Types of Tenses**

As you now know, there are three main tenses in English: past, present, and future. But, within each tense are further types that help us share what we want to say more accurately: **simple**, **continuous**, **perfect**, and **perfect** **continuous**. So, English actually has many more tenses than the ones below, which is what makes it so hard to keep track of them sometimes! To begin, the chart below will give you an overview of the differences between the tenses, using the regular verb “walked”, and the irregular verb “read.”
**Remember**:

* The **past tense** lets us speak about things that have already happened (in the past).
* The **present tense** lets us speak about things that are happening right now (in the present).
* The **future tense** lets us speak about things that will happen later (in the future).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Verb Tense | Example 1 | Example 2 |
| Simple Past | Sally walked home  | Sally read the book |
| Past Continuous | Sally was walking home | Sally was reading the book |
| Past Perfect | Sally had walked home | Sally had read the book |
| Past Perfect Continuous | Sally had been walking home | Sally had been reading the book |
| Simple Present | Sally walks home | Sally reads a book |
| Present Continuous | Sally is walking home | Sally is reading a book |
| Present Perfect | Sally has walked home | Sally has read the book |
| Present Perfect Continuous | Sally has been walking home | Sally has been reading the book |
| Simple Future | Sally will walk home | Sally will read the book |
| Future Continuous | Sally will be walking home | Sally will be reading the book |
| Future Perfect | Sally will have walked home | Sally will have read the book |
| Future Perfect Continuous | Sally will have been walking home | Sally will have been reading the book |

**a. Simple Tenses**

The simple tenses are the most basic way of writing and speaking. They express that something happened/is happening/will happen during the specific time being talked about in the sentence:

* **Past**: *Yesterday Sally****walked****home from school*.
* **Present**: *Sally****walks****home from school on Tuesdays.*
* **Future**: *Sally****will walk****home from school tomorrow*.

**b. Continuous Tenses**

The continuous tenses let us express something that is, was or will be happening continuously. This means that the action in the sentence will still be going on at the time being talked about:

**Past**: *Sally****was walking****home when Sam called*.
**Present**: *Sally****is walking****home now*.
**Future**: *When Sam calls, Sally****will be walking****home*.

**c. Perfect Tenses**

Perfect tenses let us express that something happened before the time being discussed in the sentence that affects what is now happening in the sentence. It usually shows that since something happened, something else can happen.

**Past**: *By the time we were ready to leave school, Sally****had walked****home.*
**Present**: *Sally****has walked****home; let’s go meet her now.*
**Future**: *Sally****will have walked****home by the time we finish work tonight.*

**d. Perfect Continuous Tenses**

Perfect continuous tenses let us express something that had been/has been/will have been going on for some time, and is still going on during the time the sentence is talking about:

**Past**: *When she turned 15, Sally****had been walking****home from school for 10 years.*
**Present**: *Sally****has been walking****home from school since she was 5.*
**Future**: *By the time she turns 15, Sally****will have been walking****home from school for 10 years.*

**5. How to Avoid Mistakes**

People commonly make the mistake of switching between the tenses when they shouldn’t. So, there’s one important thing to remember to help you avoid that: DO NOT change tenses in a sentence, *unless* you are changing the timeframe. Keeping to the same verb tense is called “verb tense consistency”; and it includes auxiliaries and main verbs. Mixing together tenses in a sentence can make the timeframe unclear, which makes the sentence confusing. Here are some examples to help you avoid these mistakes:

* *Sally****walked****home and****reads****a book.* INCORRECT
* *Sally****walked****home and****read****a book.* **Correct**
* *Sally****was walking****home and****is reading****a book*. INCORRECT
* *Sally****was walking****home and****was reading****a book.* **Correct**
* *Sally is****walking****home and****is reading****a book*. **Correct**

Top of Form

**Test your Knowledge**

1.

The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tense lets us talk about things that will happen

a.past

b.present

c.future

2.

The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tense lets us talk about things that already happened.

a.past

b.present

c.future

3.

The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tense lets us talk about things that are happening.

a.past

b.present

c.future

4.

, add the proper form of the verb “jump” (and an auxiliary verb, if necessary) to match the tense.

Simple Past: The rabbit \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ over the fence.

a.jumps

b.jumped

c.will jump

source: <http://englishsentences.com/tenses/>