

Verb Tenses

Why do we have tenses?

- From the Purdue OWL:
 - Strictly speaking, in English, only two tenses are marked in the verb alone, present (as in "he sings") and past (as in "he sang"). Other English language tenses, as many as thirty of them, are marked by other words called auxiliaries. Understanding the six basic tenses allows one to re-create much of the reality of time in their writing (Berry, Brizee, and Angeli).

Simple Present

- Used to describe an action that is repeated or usual. These include habits or hobbies.
 - Examples: I **walk**, he **runs**, they **dance**, humans **eat**.

Subject/Verb Agreement

- Note that when a subject is singular, a verb appears plural.
 - Example: Katie walks.
- Conversely, when a subject is plural, a verb appears singular.
 - Example: They run.

Simple Present

- He runs five miles every day.
- Susie works at the Writing Center.
- Katie draws pictures of Susie all the time.

Simple Present Practice

- Create a sentence using the simple present tense.

Present Perfect

- Used to describe something that happened at a specific time in the past which is continuing into the present
 - Example: Susie has worked here for five years.
- Used to describe something that occurred at an unspecified time
 - Example: I have seen that movie before.
- Used to describe an uncompleted action.
 - I have not finished writing my paper yet.

Present Perfect Examples

- I have never been to Japan.
- Susie has not gotten to work yet.
- We have been friends for a very long time.

Present Perfect Practice

- Create a sentence using the present perfect tense.

Simple Past

- Used to describe an action that started and ended in the past.
 - Examples:
 - Yesterday, I went shopping.
 - We ate lunch together today.

Simple Past Examples

- I ate eggs for breakfast.
- The cat chased the mouse.
- I went to see the new Tom Hiddleston movie yesterday.

Simple Past Practice

- Create a sentence using the simple past tense.

Past Perfect

- Used to denote a sequence of actions that happened in the past.
- Uses the word “had” to denote that one action happened before another action.
 - Example:
 - By the time I got to the Writing Center, Susie **had** already gotten there.
(Susie got to the Writing Center before I got there.)
- Also used in conditional phrases.
 - If I had studied for my test, I would have gotten a better grade.

Past Perfect Examples

- She had already eaten by the time he arrived at the restaurant.
- If he had shown up on time, she would have eaten with him.

Past Perfect Practice

- Create a sentence using the past perfect tense.

Future Perfect

- Used to describe an action that will have been completed at a time in the future.
- Usually uses “will” and “have” with a verb.
 - Example:
 - By this weekend, I will have finished knitting this sweater.

Future Perfect Examples

- By this Sunday, I will have cleaned my car out.
- You can call me at 8:00 because I will have gone to dinner and come home by then.

Future Perfect Practice

- Create a sentence using the future perfect tense.

Progressive Tense

- Used to describe an event that is in progress at a certain point in time – in the past, present, or future.
- Uses a “to be” verb plus the present participle (an –ing verb.)
 - Examples:
 - Present Progressive: The cake is baking.
 - Past Progressive: The leaves were falling.
 - Future Progressive: The cats will be meowing.

Perfect + Progressive Tense

- Present Perfect, Past Perfect, and Future Perfect tenses can be progressive as well.
- Simply combine both tenses.
 - Examples:
 - Present Perfect Progressive: She has been dancing for five minutes.
 - Past Perfect Progressive: He had been waiting for 15 minutes by the time she showed up.
 - Future Perfect Progressive: In December, I will have been working here for seven years.

Progressive Tense Practice

- Create a sentence using a progressive tense. Try creating one using a progressive tense with a perfect tense.

Tense Consistency

- If you are describing a single action or event, it is important to keep your tenses the same.
 - Example: The sky **rumbled**, **turned** dark, and **began** raining.

Tense Consistency (cont.)

- However, if you are referring to more than one action or state, you may need to put more than one tense in a sentence.
 - Example: I love my cat, who has been living with me for two years.
 - (**love** is present tense, since I currently love him; **has been living** is present perfect progressive, which indicates that he started living with me in the past and continues to do so today.)

Tense Consistency Practice

- Try creating a sentence with more than one tense.

Works Cited

Berry, Chris, Allen Brizee and Elizabeth Angeli. "Verb Tenses." *Online Writing Lab*. Purdue University, 14 Sep. 2013. Web. 30 Oct. 2014.