

## Tense - Definition, Types, Functions and Rules with Examples

Welcome to our blog on Tenses, an essential topic in English Grammar that plays a crucial role in all competitive exams. Approximately 3 - 4 questions certainly appear based on this topic, in the exam, making it imperative for you to grasp the concepts of Tenses thoroughly and practice a variety of questions

In this blog, we will comprehensively cover all the theoretical concepts and rules of this topic. Additionally, we have included many examples for you to deeply understand each concept and rule. So, let's dive into the world of Tenses and boost your exam preparation.

### Tense Meaning and Definition

Tenses or verb tenses are a very important part of English Grammar. This is a very important topic for competitive examinations and should be practised thoroughly. So let's see what tenses are, their structure with examples and how to correctly use them in sentences. We are going to be looking at the various verb tenses in English and how the grammar surrounding each of them functions, allowing you to be more diverse in your speaking. If you want to reference time in speech and writing you will have to use different verb forms. The use of different verb forms to express different actions at different points in time is broadly considered to be the use of grammatical **tenses** or **verb tenses**. But what exactly are verb tenses and how do you use them? This chapter will examine verb tenses and their forms and will feature its uses, examples, and practice questions.

### The 3 Tenses & Their Sub-Categories

In language, tenses are a grammatical category that expresses references to time. In English, verb tenses are used to express actions in the **present, past** and **future**. These categories (past, present, future) can be further divided into four smaller categories each, notably the **simple, continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous tenses**.

## Tense - Definition, Types, Functions and Rules with Examples



[Source: KD Live]

### Present Tense

Present Tense has 4 forms:

Simple Present Tense

Present Continuous Tense

Present Perfect Tense

Present Perfect Continuous Tense

In the subsequent sections, we will learn the meaning, structure, rules, and usage of all the 4 forms of Present Tense.

### Simple Present Tense

The simple present tense is used in a sentence to represent an action or event that is currently taking place or has just occurred in the given context. The **present indefinite tense** is another name for the **simple present**.

The simple present tense form of a verb in a sentence is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “the tense that is used to refer to events, actions, and conditions that are happening all the time, or exist now.”

The base form or 's' form of a verb is used in the simple present tense, as in “I play tennis thrice a week”.



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**Structure of Simple Present Tense**

By examining the positive, negative, interrogative, and negative interrogative forms of the simple present tense, the structure of the tense can be understood.

Structure of Simple Present Tense			
Positive	Negative	Interrogative	Negative Interrogative
Subject + Verb in the base form/third person plural form	Subject + Do not/Don't/Does not/Doesn't + Verb in the base form/third person plural form	Do/Does + Subject + Verb	Don't/ Doesn't + Subject + Verb
Example: You look pretty. She looks pretty.	Example: You do not look pretty. She does not look pretty.	Example: Do you look pretty? Does she look pretty?	Example: Don't you look pretty? Doesn't she look pretty?

**Rules of Simple Present Tense**

There are some rules and points to remember in order to use the simple present tense correctly and effectively. This is because the sentence or context would be meaningless if the verb did not agree with the subject of the sentence.

- The first thing you should know about the simple present tense is that the verb is almost always in its base form.
- When a third person pronoun or subject is used in a sentence, this changes. In this case, the verb should be pluralized.

**Use of Simple Present Tense**

The present tense can be used for a variety of reasons. The present tense serves the following purposes:

- 1. Used to express general truths and scientific facts; as,**



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- A. The Sun sets in the west.
- B. Hydrogen is the first element in the periodic table.
- C. Rome is the capital of Italy.
- D. Honey is sweet.

### 2. Used to express habitual actions; as,

- A. Everyday, I go to work by bus.
- B. Do you attend class regularly?
- C. He drinks tea every morning.
- D. I get up every day at six o'clock.

### 3. In vivid narrative, as substitute for the simple past; as,

- A. Anjali now rushes forward and deals a heavy blow to Rustam.
- B. Immediately the Saleem hurries to his city.

### 4. Used to express a future event that is part of a fixed programme

- A. My father's flight arrives around 5 p.m.
- B. Our winter vacation starts on the 27th of December.
- C. Her cousin arrives tomorrow.
- D. The bus leaves at 5:20pm.

### 5. Giving Directions or Instructions

- A. Take left from the junction to reach the bus stand.
- B. Close the door when you go out.
- C. Come and meet me as soon as possible.

### Other Uses of Simple Present Tense

- 1. Used to introduce quotations

**Example:** Keerat says, 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever'.

- 2. Used instead of the Simple Future tense, in clause of time and condition





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### Example:

- I shall wait till you finish your dinner.
- If it rains we shall get wet.

3. In broadcast commentaries on sporting events, the Simple Present is used, instead of Present Continuous, to describe activities in progress where there is stress on the succession of happenings rather than on the duration.

### Present Continuous Tense

The Present Continuous Tense is a type of tense used to denote an action that is ongoing or happening at the time. It is also known as the present progressive tense because it represents action that is taking place in the present.

The 'present continuous tense' is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as "the verb form used for actions or events that are happening or developing now." According to the Macmillan Dictionary, the present continuous tense is "the tense used to talk about actions or behaviour that are in progress now or planned for the future."

### Structure of Present Continuous Tense

General structure of Present Continuous Tense is : Subject + am/is/are + present participle (verb+ing) + the rest of the sentence.

However, there is something else you should consider. You should also learn how to structure sentences with the verb in the present continuous tense when they are positive, negative, interrogative, or negative interrogative.

### Rules of Present Continuous Tense

- Make sure to use the correct sentence structure when using the present continuous tense.
- When writing a positive or negative sentence, begin with the subject, and when writing an interrogative sentence, begin with the helping verb.
- A sentence in the present continuous tense consists of a helping verb (verbs with the 'to be' form) and a main verb. 'Am' can be used to replace the pronoun 'I,' 'is' for a singular subject, and 'are' for a plural subject.
- Just keep in mind that, like the other pronouns, the pronoun 'am' cannot be used in an interrogative sentence in the negative form. 'Aren't' is used instead of 'amn't'.

### Example:

- Amn't I reading a book? Wrong



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- Aren't I reading a book? Correct

The present continuous tense can never be used with stative verbs.

Stative verbs describe states or conditions. Examples are 'know , believe, or understand'. These verbs can be used in simple and perfect tenses and aspects. However, they cannot be used in the continuous or progressive forms.

### Uses of Present Continuous Tense

The present continuous tense, like the simple present tense, is commonly used to describe an action that is taking place in the present. The only difference is that it refers to an action that is currently taking place or progressing.

#### 1. For an action going on at the time of speaking

Example:

- My brother is working on his science project.
- Santana is singing.
- The girls are playing hockey.

#### 2. For a temporary action which may not be actually happening at the time of speaking

Example:

- I am reading 'David Copperfield' (but I am not reading at this moment).

#### 3. Used for an action that has already been arranged to take place in the near future

For example:

- I am going to the cinema tonight.
- My aunt is arriving tomorrow.

#### 4. The Simple Present is used for a habitual action.

However, when the reference is to a particularly obstinate habit - something which persists, for example, in spite of advice or warning - we use the Present Continuous with an adverb like always, continually, constantly.

Example:

- My dog is very silly; he is always running out into the road.

#### 5. The following verbs, on account of their meaning, are not normally used in the continuous form:

- 1) Verbs of perception, e.g., see, hear, smell, notice, recognize.



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- 2) Verbs of appearing, e.g., appear, look, seem.
- 3) Verbs of emotion, e.g., want, wish, desire, feel, like, love, hate, prefer.
- 4) Verbs of thinking, e.g., think, suppose, agree, consider, mean, mind.
- 5) Have (=possess), own, belong to, contain, consist of.

Example:

### Wrong

- These grapes are tasting sour.
- I am thinking you are wrong.
- She is seeming bad.
- He is having a cellphone.

### Right

- These grapes taste sour.
- I think you are wrong.
- She seems sad.
- He has a cellphone.

The verbs listed above can be used in the continuous tense with a change of meaning:

- She is tasting the soup to see if it needs more salt. (taste = test the flavour of)
- I am thinking of going to Malaysia. (think of = consider the idea of)
- They are having lunch. (have = eat)

### Some more examples of Present Continuous Tense:

- My sister is cooking dinner.
- Rachel and I are going on a trip tomorrow.
- Raman is not practising for the final audition.
- I am trying out something new.
- Are you watching a movie tonight?





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- Is your phone working properly now?

### **Present Perfect Tense**

Present perfect tense is used to express those actions that have been finished recently or we can understand it as “this tense is used to talk about an action which began in the past but has continued into the present moment”. Basically, it links the recent past to the present.

### **Structure of Present Perfect Tense**

Subject + has + V3 + Object

### **Uses of Present Perfect Tense**

#### **1. It shows the action that has just ended.**

Example:

- Mohit has gone to Bangalore.
- I have written a note to Mr. Singh.

#### **2. Used in sentences which consist of the following:**

“This/ That/ It is the first/ second/ third/ best/ worst”.

Example:

- This is the best dish I have ever eaten.
- This is the worst novel I have ever read.

#### **3. To show sentences which have the following words: “So far, ever, yet, up to now, as yet, already, just now, recently, just, lately”.**

Example:

- I have already talked to my senior.
- Have you ever been to Canada?

### **Present Perfect Continuous Tense**

This type of sentence expresses those actions that had begun in the past and are still in progress.



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### Uses of the Present Perfect Continuous Tense

#### 1. Have + Sub + not + been + V1 ing + Obj. + since/for + Time being + '?'

Example: Have they not been dancing for three hours?

Note: 'I' is used as plural in this tense.

Example: I have been cleaning the cupboard since morning.

Note:

(a) 'since' is used to represent 'Point of time'.

(b) 'for' is used to represent 'Period of time'.

#### 2. To show those actions that had begun in the past and are still in progress.

Example: The dog has been sleeping since morning.

#### 3. It can be used with time phrases like "for, all the time, long, since, how long, all week, etc.

### Past Tense

Past Tense has 4 forms:

Simple Past Tense

Past Continuous Tense

Past Perfect Tense

Past Perfect Continuous Tense

In the subsequent sections, we will learn the meaning, structure, rules, and usage of all the 4 forms of Past Tense.

### Simple Past Tense

In English, the simple past tense is used to represent an action or event that occurred in the past. The simple past tense of many verbs is formed by appending a 'ed' or a 'd' to the end of the base verb. Other verbs, however, behave differently and have different spellings when used in the simple past form.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the simple past tense is "a form of a verb used to describe an action that occurred before the present time and is no longer occurring. "It is typically formed by adding -ed."



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### Rules of Simple Past Tense

There are a few things to remember and keep in mind when conjugating a verb in the simple past tense.

- Conjugating regular verbs - To present the main verb in the sentence, simply add '-ed' to the end of a regular verb that ends with a 'e' and '-d' to the end of a regular verb that ends with a 'e'.

**Example:** kick – kicked, confess – confessed, work –worked, introduce – introduced, force – forced, notice – noticed.

- Verbs that retain the same spelling as the base verb - Some verbs retain the same spelling as the base verb in the past tense.

**Example:** Cut – cut, hurt – hurt, set – set.

- Verbs with various spelling patterns - Irregular verbs have different spelling patterns, and there is no rule to explain why this is so.

**Example:** Buy – bought, think – thought, drink – drank, see – saw.

### Uses of Simple Past Tense

The simple past tense can be used to:

- 1. Make reference to a previous action or event. It often occurs with adverbs or adverb phrase of past time.**

Example:

- The steamer sailed yesterday.
- I received her letter a week ago.
- He left college last year.

- 2. Used without an adverb of time. In these cases, the time may be either implied or indicated by the context.**

Example:

- I learnt French in college.
- I didn't sleep well (i.e., last night).

- 3. Used for past habits**

Example:

- He studied many hours ever day.





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- She always carried an umbrella

### Past Continuous Tense

The past continuous tense is one which is used very frequently in the English language and is made up of an -ing verb preceded by the past tense of the verb 'to be.' For example 'the animals were running gracefully through the field.' The past continuous, or past progressive, tense describes an action or situation that began in the past and is still going on in the present time. The past continuous is easily formed by pairing up the verb 'to be' with a verb ending in '-ed' instead of '-ing' (e.g. was talking).

### Structure of Past Continuous Tense

Was/were + V-ing (Present Participle)

### Uses of Past Continuous Tense

The past continuous is used:

#### 1. To describe parallel actions:

The past progressive is often used to denote an action that was interrupted by an event, or for two actions taking place in parallel i.e. (To express specific Time as an Interruption).

Example:

- While I was washing the dishes, I heard a loud noise.
- While you were washing the dishes, Sue was walking the dog.

#### 2. To describe what someone was doing at a particular point in time:

Example: I was working in the garden all day yesterday. That could also be expressed using the simple past, as I worked..., which implies that the action is viewed as a unitary event (although the effective meaning is not very different).

#### 3. To express interrupted action in the past: Often the past progressive is mixed with the past simple to show what was happening when something happened.

Example:

- I was driving to work when I crashed my car.
- I watched a movie while I was flying to Dubai.

#### 4. To describe repetition and irritation:



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Example:

- He was always complaining in class.

**NOTE:** For stative verbs that do not use the progressive aspect, the simple past is used instead.

Example: At three o'clock yesterday we were in the garden.

### Past Perfect Tense

Past Perfect Tense, also called the pluperfect, is a verb tense used in order to talk about an event which has taken place before a certain point in the past.

The past perfect tense keeps the past "in the past". The verbs that are placed in this tense have to happen and complete before a related action can occur. This past participle tense takes the past form of the verb 'to have' as a modifier (e.g. had talked).

### Structure of Past Perfect Tense

The Past Perfect is used to talk about actions that were completed before some point in the past.

The Past Perfect is formed by combining had with the past participle of the main verb.

The formula for the past perfect tense is had + [past participle]. It doesn't matter if the subject is singular or plural; the formula doesn't change..

### Uses of Past Perfect Tense

The past perfect form has a couple of different functions that it can perform:

**1. It can describe an action that occurred in the past that is related to another action that occurred in the past after the first action.**

Example: I had driven to Pittsburgh before driving on to Detroit.

**2. It can describe two non-continuous actions that occurred in sequence.**

Example: I had driven to Florida and then boarded a cruise two days later.

**3. Another time to use the past perfect tense is when you are expressing a condition and a result:**

Example: If I had woken up earlier this morning, I would have caught Tootles red-handed.

The past perfect is used in the part of the sentence that explains the condition (the if-clause).



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### When Not to Use Past Perfect Tense

Don't use the past perfect when you're not trying to convey some sequence of events. If your friends asked what you did after you discovered the graffiti, they would be confused if you said:

I had cleaned it off the door.

They'd likely be wondering what happened next because using the past perfect implies that your action of cleaning the door occurred before something else happened, but you don't say what that something else is. The "something else" doesn't always have to be explicitly mentioned, but context needs to make it clear. In this case there's no context, so the past perfect doesn't make sense.

### Past Perfect Continuous Tense

The past perfect continuous tense, also known as the past perfect progressive tense, shows that an action that started in the past continued up until another time in the past.

#### Structure of Past Perfect Continuous Tense

The past perfect continuous tense is constructed using had been + the verb's present participle (root + -ing).

Unlike the present perfect continuous, which indicates an action that began in the past and continued up to the present, the past perfect continuous is a verb tense that indicates something that began in the past, continued in the past, and also ended at a defined point in the past.

#### Example:

- He had been drinking milk out the carton when Mom walked into the kitchen.
- I had been working at the company for five years when I got the promotion.

When, for, since, and before are words that you may see used alongside the past perfect continuous tense.

#### Example:

- Mahima had been walking three miles a day before she broke her leg.
- The program that was terminated had been working well since 1945.

### Uses of Past Perfect Continuous Tense

The Past Perfect Progressive is used:





## Tense - Definition, Types, Functions and Rules with Examples

### 1. To describe a past action, already started and continued up to another action or time in the past:

Example: The boys had been playing soccer for about an hour when it started to rain.

### 2. To express the duration before something in the past

Example: Richard needed a holiday because he had been working hard for six months.

### 3. To describe the cause of something in the past

Examples: He was tired because he had been jogging.

## Future Tense

Future Tense has 4 forms:

Simple Future Tense

Future Continuous Tense

Future Perfect Tense

Future Perfect Continuous Tense

In the subsequent sections, we will learn the meaning, structure, rules, and usage of all the 4 forms of Future Tense.

## Simple Future Tense

The simple future is a verb tense that's used to talk about things that haven't happened yet.

**Example:** This year, Jaya will read War and Peace. It will be hard, but she's determined to do it.

Use the simple future to talk about an action or condition that will begin and end in the future.

## How to Form Simple Future Tense

The formula for the simple future is will + [root form of verb].

### Example:

- I will learn a new language.
- My brothers will sleep till noon if no one wakes them up.

It doesn't matter if the subject is singular or plural; the formula for the simple future doesn't change.



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But, there is another way to show that something will happen in the future. It follows the formula [am/is/are] + going to + [root form verb].

### Example:

- I am going to learn a new language.
- My brothers are going to sleep till noon if no one wakes them up.

The “going to” construction is common in speech and casual writing. Keep in mind though that it’s on the informal side, so it’s a good idea to stick to the will + [root form] construction in formal writing.

### Uses of Simple Future Tense

#### 1. For Actions Decided at the moment of Speech

Example: I have a toothache. I’ll take the medicine.

#### 2. For Unplanned Future Actions

Example: Winter will come soon.

#### 3. For Offering, Asking for a Request Promising, Ordering, Threatening

Example: I’m afraid we will get wet.

#### 4. For Unpreventable Actions in Future

Example: Summer will come soon.

#### 5. With Conditional, Time and Purpose Clauses

Example: When I arrive at home, I will call you.

#### 6. For Thoughts, Predictions, Assumptions, Sureness, Fears about the Future.

Example: I promise I won’t tell anyone this.

### Future Continuous Tense

The future continuous tense, sometimes also referred to as the future progressive tense, is a verb tense that indicates that something will occur in the future and continue for an expected length of time.

### How to Form Future Continuous Tense



## Tense - Definition, Types, Functions and Rules with Examples

It is formed using the construction will + be + the present participle (the root verb + -ing).

**Example:** At five o'clock, I will be meeting with the management about my raise.

Will be meeting is the future continuous tense of the verb to meet. The construction will + be + the present participle meeting indicates that the meeting isn't going to happen in an instant, all at once. It will have a duration. The will + be + present participle construction always indicates the future continuous tense.

### **NOTE: The Future Continuous Tense Is for Action Verbs Only**

It is important to note that the future continuous tense is only used with action verbs, because it is possible to do them for a duration. (Action verbs describe activities like running, thinking, and seeing.

Stative verbs describe states of existence, like being, seeming, and knowing.) To use the will + be + present participle construction with a stative verb would sound very odd indeed.

- I will be being stressed tomorrow during my science test - Incorrect
  - I will be stressed tomorrow during my science test - Correct
  - When the sun comes out tomorrow, winter will be seeming like a distant memory - Incorrect
  - When the sun comes out tomorrow, winter will seem like a distant memory - Correct
  - After I study, I will be knowing all the answers for the test - Incorrect
  - After I study, I will know all the answers for the test - Correct
- As you can see, only the simple future tense is suited to stative verbs like to be and to seem.

### **Uses of Future Continuous Tense**

#### **1. To describe interrupted actions in the future**

Example: When you come tomorrow, they will be playing tennis.

#### **2. To express actions in progress at a specific time in the future**

Example: At 12 o'clock tomorrow, we will be having lunch at school.

#### **3. To refer to actions that are happening now and expected to continue some time in the future Note: combined with "still"**

Example: Unfortunately, sea levels will still be rising in 20 years.

#### **4. To ask a question politely about the future**

Example: Will you be bringing your friend to the party tonight?





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### 5. To emphasise future plans and intentions

Example: He'll be coming to visit us next week.

### 6. To describe the atmosphere in the future

Example: When I arrive at the party everybody will be celebrating, some will be dancing, others will be talking.

### 7. To express parallel actions or series of parallel actions in the future

Example: She will be watching TV, and he will be cooking dinner.

### Future Perfect Tense

The future perfect is a verb tense used for actions that will be completed before some other point in the future.

**Example:** • The parade will have ended by the time Chester gets out of bed.

• At eight o'clock I will have left.

### How to Form Future Perfect Tense

The future perfect construction consists of the auxiliary verb "will" (shall) to mark the future, the auxiliary verb "have" to mark the perfect, and the past participle of the main verb. The formula for the future perfect tense is pretty simple: will have + [past participle]. It doesn't matter if the subject of your sentence is singular or plural. The formula doesn't change.

### Uses of Future Perfect Tense

#### 1. To talk about an action that will finish before a certain time in the future

Example: By eight o'clock tomorrow, I will have taken off for Japan.

#### 2. To talk about an action that will be completed before another event takes place

Example: She will have learnt Chinese before she moves to China.

#### 3. To express conviction that something happened in the near past

Example: The guests will have arrived at the hotel by now. (I'm sure the guests have arrived at the hotel.)

This article has provided you with valuable insights into the world of Tenses. We sincerely hope that you have found this blog useful and that it has contributed to enhancing your understanding of this crucial topic. As you continue to gear up for your upcoming exam, we encourage you to share your thoughts, or any doubts you may have in the comments section below.



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