



## Understanding Verbs: Verb Tenses

Each verb tense is composed of a time frame (past, present, future) and an aspect (simple, progressive, perfect, perfect progressive). Together, the time frame and the aspect make up the complete verb tense (past progressive, future perfect, etc . . .).

### Time Frames

**Past, present and future** are the three time frames that are used to describe or indicate verb tense. **Past tense** is used to describe actions that occurred in the past; **present tense** is used to describe actions that are currently taking place; and **future tense** is used to describe an action that will take place in the future.

### Aspects

Aspect refers to the state of action of a verb. There are four types of verb aspects: simple, progressive, perfect and perfect progressive.

#### Simple tenses

The simple tenses are used for actions that occurred at a specific time either in the present, past or future, but they do not state whether or not the action is finished. They are present (simple), past (simple) and future (simple).

#### Progressive tenses

The progressive tenses are used to indicate an unfinished action. They are present progressive, past progressive and future progressive.

#### Perfect tenses

The perfect tenses describe a finished action. They are present perfect, past perfect and future perfect.

#### Perfect progressive tenses

The perfect progressive tenses describe an action that was in progress but was then finished. They are present perfect progressive, past perfect progressive and future perfect progressive.

## Time Frames + Aspects = Complete Verb Tenses

### Complete Verb Tenses: Present

The complete present verb tenses are typically used to describe actions that are taking place or have taken place repeatedly during the present time period. The four complete present verb tenses are

Present + (Simple) = **Present tense**

Present + Progressive = **Present progressive tense**

Present + Perfect = **Present perfect tense**

Present + Perfect Progressive = **Present perfect progressive tense**



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Present Verb Tenses	Examples
<b>Present (Simple):</b> The present tense describes the present state or condition of something or a habitual action.	I <i>study</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.
<b>Present Progressive:</b> The present progressive tense describes an activity that is currently in progress.	I <i>am studying</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.
<b>Present Perfect:</b> The present perfect tense describes an event that has already been completed in the present. It may also be used with events that occurred at an unspecified time in the past.	I <i>have studied</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.
<b>Present Perfect Progressive:</b> The present perfect progressive tense describes something that began in the past, continues into the present and may continue into the future.	I <i>have been studying</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.

### Complete Verb Tenses: Past

The complete past verb tenses are typically used to describe actions that took place during the past time period. The four complete past verb tenses are

Past + (Simple) = **Past tense**

Past + Progressive = **Past progressive tense**

Past + Perfect = **Past perfect tense**

Past + Perfect Progressive = **Past perfect progressive**

Past Verb Tenses	Examples
<b>Past (Simple):</b> The past tense describes something which occurred in the past.	I <i>studied</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.
<b>Past Progressive:</b> The past progressive tense describes an ongoing action in the past.	I <i>was studying</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.
<b>Past Perfect:</b> The past perfect tense describes an event that occurred before a specific time in the past.	I <i>had studied</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria before I changed my major.
<b>Past Perfect Progressive:</b> The past perfect progressive tense describes something that began in the past, continued in the past and concluded in the past.	I <i>had been studying</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.

### Complete Verb Tenses: Future

The complete future verb tenses are typically used to describe actions that will take place in the future or will continue on into the future. The four complete future verb tenses are

Future + (Simple) = **Future tense**

Future + Progressive = **Future progressive**

Future + Perfect = **Future perfect**

Future + Perfect Progressive = **Future perfect progressive**

Future Verb Tenses	Examples
<b>Future (Simple):</b> The future tense describes something that will occur in the future.	I <i>will study</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.
<b>Future Progressive:</b> The future progressive tense describes an ongoing action in the future.	I <i>will be studying</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.



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<b>Future Perfect:</b> The future perfect tense describes an action that will be completed by a specific time in the future.	I <i>will have studied</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.
<b>Future Perfect Progressive:</b> The future perfect progressive tense describes something that begins in the present and continues into the future.	I <i>will have been studying</i> accounting at the University of Houston-Victoria.

### Exercise 1

Underline the verb in each sentence and indicate in which tense it is in.

- Beth was sleeping when she heard the smoke detector.
- Teresa will be going shopping at Katy Mills Mall tomorrow.
- In January I will have been working at the tutoring center for four years.
- Joseph is singing in the church choir now.
- I had already eaten lunch by the time that the pizza arrived.
- I work at the gas station on Sunday afternoons.
- James had been skipping work for several weeks before they fired him.
- The Smiths eat dinner at 6 o'clock every evening.
- I'm sure that the dogs will have tried to escape from the yard.
- The cruise ship will stop in Cancun and Playa del Carmen.



### Answer Key to Exercise 1

- Beth was sleeping when she heard the smoke detector.  
past progressive      past
- Teresa will be going shopping at Katy Mills Mall tomorrow.  
future
- In January I will have been working at the tutoring center for four years.  
future perfect progressive
- Joseph is singing in the church choir now.  
present progressive
- I had already eaten lunch by the time that the pizza arrived.  
past perfect      past (simple)
- I work at the gas station on Sunday afternoons.  
present
- James had been skipping work for several weeks before they fired him.  
past perfect progressive      past (simple)
- The Smiths eat dinner at 6 o'clock every evening.  
present
- I'm sure that the dogs will have tried to escape from the yard.  
present      future perfect
- The cruise ship will stop in Cancun and Playa del Carmen.  
future