

Course: Tenses

Simple Tenses

1. Present Simple

- **Form:** Verb + s/es in third person (s/he, it).

Most verbs conjugate like the verb “go” below. Notice how you add an “es” to third-person forms. Third-person negative forms and third-person questions are made using “does” and “do” is used with first-person forms. For example:

- You **speak** English / He **speaks** English. (positive/affirmative)
- **Do** you **speak** English? / **Does** he **speak** English? (interrogative/question)
- You **do not speak** English / He **does not speak** English. (negative)

Notice that in third-person form above, the verb “speak” has no “s” at the end of it because the verb does already carries the “s” present tense. The infinitive form should be used in this case.

➤ **Uses of the Present Simple**

- To express habits, general truths, repeated actions or unchanging situations, emotions and wishes: **You smoke** (habit); **He works in London** (unchanging situation); **London is a large city** (general truth).
- To give instructions or directions: **You walk** for two hundred meters, then **you turn** left.
- To express fixed arrangements, present or future: Your exam **starts** at 09.00.
- To express future time, after some conjunctions: *after, when, before, as soon as, until*: **He'll give it to you when you come next Saturday.**

2. Past Simple

- **Form:** VERB + d/ed or irregular verbs. Examples:

- You **called** Debbie. (positive)
- **Did** you **call** Debbie? (interrogative)
- You **did not call** Debbie. (negative)

➤ **Uses of the Past Tense**

- Use the Simple Past to express the idea that an action started and finished at a specific time in the past. Sometimes, the speaker may not actually mention the specific time, but they do have one specific time in mind: I **saw** a movies yesterday.
- We use the Simple Past to list a series of completed actions in the past. These actions happen 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and so on: I **finished** work, **walked** to the beach, and **found** a nice place to swim.
- The Simple Past can be used with a duration which starts and stops in the past. A duration is a longer action often indicated by expressions such as: for two years, for five minutes, all day, all year, etc. They **did not stay** at the party the entire time.

- The Simple Past can also be used to describe a habit which stopped in the past. It can have the same meaning as "used to." To make it clear that we are talking about a habit, we often add expressions such as: always, often, usually, never, when I was a child, when I was younger, etc.
They never **went** to school, they always **skipped** class.
- The Simple Past can also be used to describe past facts or generalisations which are no longer true. People **paid** much more to make cell phone calls in the past.

3. Simple Future

Simple Future has two different forms in English: "will" and "be going to." Although the two forms can sometimes be used interchangeably, they often express two very different meanings. These different meanings might seem too abstract at first, but with time and practice, the differences will become clear. Both "will" and "be going to" refer to a specific time in the future.

➤ **Form Will:** will + VERB. Examples:

- You **will help** him later.
- **Will** you **help** him later?
- You **will not help** him later.

➤ **Form Be Going To:** am/is/are + going to + verb. Examples:

- You **are going to meet** Jane tonight.
- **Are** you **going to meet** Jane tonight?
- You **are not going to meet** Jane tonight.

➤ **Uses of Future Simple**

- "Will" often suggests that a speaker will do something voluntarily. A voluntary action is one the speaker offers to do for someone else. Often, we use "will" to respond to someone else's complaint or request for help. We also use "will" when we request that someone help us or volunteer to do something for us. Similarly, we use "will not" or "won't" when we refuse to voluntarily do something.
- "Will" is usually used in promises. "Be going to" expresses that something is a plan. It expresses the idea that a person intends to do something in the future. It does not matter whether the plan is realistic or not.
- Both "will" and "be going to" can express the idea of a general prediction about the future. Predictions are guesses about what might happen in the future. In "prediction" sentences, the subject usually has little control over the future. In the following examples, there is no difference in meaning:
 - ✓ The year 2222 **will be** a very interesting year.
 - ✓ The year 2222 **is going to be** a very interesting year.

Continuous Tenses

1. Present Continuous

➤ **Form:** am/is/are + ing. Examples:

- You **are watching** TV.
- **Are** you **watching** TV?
- You **are not watching** TV.

➤ **Uses of the Present Continuous**

- Use the Present Continuous with *Normal Verbs* to express the idea that something is happening now, at this very moment. It can also be used to show that something is not happening now.

✓ **I am not standing.**

- In English, "now" can mean: this second, today, this month, this year, this century, and so on. Sometimes, we use the Present Continuous to say that we are in the process of doing a longer action which is in progress; however, we might not be doing it at this exact second.
 - ✓ **I am studying** to become a doctor.
- Sometimes, speakers use the Present Continuous to indicate that something will or will not happen in the near future.
 - ✓ **Isn't he coming** with us tonight?
- The Present Continuous with words such as "always" or "constantly" expresses the idea that something irritating or shocking often happens. Notice that the meaning is like Simple Present, but with negative emotion. Remember to put the words "always" or "constantly" between "be" and "verb + ing."
 - ✓ I don't like them because they **are always complaining**.

2. Past Continuous

➤ **Form:** was/were + ing. Examples:

- You **were studying** when she called.
- **Were you studying** when she called?
- You **were not studying** when she called.

➤ **Uses of the Past Continuous**

- Use the Past Continuous to indicate that a longer action in the past was interrupted. The interruption is usually a shorter action in the Simple Past. Remember this can be a real interruption or just an interruption in time.
 - ✓ **I was watching** TV when she called.
- You can also use a specific time as an interruption: Last night at 6 PM, I **was eating** dinner.
- When you use the Past Continuous with two actions in the same sentence, it expresses the idea that both actions were happening at the same time. The actions are parallel.
 - ✓ **I was studying** while he **was making** dinner.
- In English, we often use a series of parallel actions to describe the atmosphere at a particular time in the past: When I walked into the office, several people **were** busily **typing**, some **were talking** on the phones, and he boss **was yelling** directions.
- The Past Continuous with words such as "always" or "constantly" expresses the idea that something irritating or shocking often happened in the past. The concept is very similar to the expression "used to" but with negative emotion. Remember to put the words "always" or "constantly" between "be" and "verb + ing." Example: She **was always coming** to class late.

3. Future Continuous

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.

➤ **Form Future Continuous with Will:** will be + ing.

- You **will be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight.
- **Will you be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight?
- You **will not be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight.

➤ **Form Future Continuous with Be Going To:** am/is/are + going to be + ing.

- You **are going to be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight.
- **Are you going to be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight?
- You **are not going to be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight.

REMEMBER: It is possible to use either "will" or "be going to" to create the Future Continuous with little difference in meaning.

➤ **Uses of the Future Continuous**

- Use the Future Continuous to indicate that a longer action in the future will be interrupted by a shorter action in the future. Remember this can be a real interruption or just an interruption in time.
 - ✓ I **will be waiting** for you when your bus arrives.
- In USE 1, described above, the Future Continuous is interrupted by a short action in the future. In addition to using short actions as interruptions, you can also use a specific time as an interruption.
 - ✓ At midnight tonight, we **will still be driving** through the desert.
- When you use the Future Continuous with two actions in the same sentence, it expresses the idea that both actions will be happening at the same time. The actions are parallel.
 - ✓ I **am going to be** studying and he is **going to be** making dinner.
- In English, we often use a series of Parallel Actions to describe atmosphere at a specific point in the future. Example: When I arrive at the party, everybody **is going to be celebrating**. Some **will be dancing**. Others are **going to be talking**.

Perfect Tenses

1. Present Perfect

➤ **Form:** has/have + past participle. Examples:

- You **have seen** that movie many times.
- **Have you seen** that movie many times?
- You **have not seen** that movie many times.

➤ **Uses of Present Perfect**

- We use the Present Perfect to say that an action happened at an unspecified time before now. The exact time is not important. You CANNOT use the Present Perfect with specific time expressions such as: yesterday, one year ago, last week, when I was a child, when I lived in Japan, at that moment, that day, one day, etc. We CAN use the Present Perfect with unspecific expressions such as: ever, never, once, many times, several times, before, so far, already, yet, etc.
 - ✓ I think I **have met** him once before.
- The concept of "unspecified time" can be very confusing to English learners. It is best to associate Present Perfect with the following topics:
 - ✓ **Experience:** I **have been** to France.
 - ✓ **Change Over Time:** You **have grown** since the last time I saw you.
 - ✓ **Accomplishments:** Scientists **have split** the atom.
 - ✓ **An Uncompleted Action You Are Expecting:** James **has not finished** his homework yet.
 - ✓ **Multiple Actions at Different Times:** The army **has attacked** that city five times.
- With Non-Continuous Verbs and non-continuous uses of Mixed Verbs, we use the Present Perfect to show that something started in the past and has continued up until now. "For five minutes," "for two weeks," and "since Tuesday" are all durations which can be used with the Present Perfect.

- ✓ Mary **has loved** chocolate since she was a little girl.

2. Past Perfect

➤ **Form:** had + past participle. Examples:

- You **had studied** English before you moved to New York.
- **Had** you **studied** English before you moved to New York?
- You **had not studied** English before you moved to New York.

➤ **Uses of the Past Perfect**

- The Past Perfect expresses the idea that something occurred before another action in the past. It can also show that something happened before a specific time in the past.
 - ✓ I did not have any money because I **had lost** my wallet.
- With Non-Continuous Verbs and some non-continuous uses of Mixed Verbs, we use the Past Perfect to show that something started in the past and continued up until another action in the past.
 - ✓ We **had had** that car for ten years before it broke down.
- Unlike with the Present Perfect, it is possible to use specific time words or phrases with the Past Perfect. Although this is possible, it is usually not necessary.
 - ✓ She **had visited** her Japanese relatives once in 1993 before she moved in with them in 1996.

3. Future Perfect

Future Perfect has two different forms: "will have done" and "be going to have done." Unlike Simple Future forms, Future Perfect forms are usually interchangeable.

➤ **Form Future Perfect with Will:** will have + past participle. Examples:

- You **will have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.
- **Will** you **have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.?
- You **will not have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.

➤ **Form Future Perfect with Be Going To:** am/is/are + going to have + past participle.

- You **are going to have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.
- **Are** you **going to have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.?
- You **are not going to have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.

NOTE: It is possible to use either "will" or "be going to" to create the Future Perfect with little or no difference in meaning.

➤ **Uses of the Future Perfect**

- The Future Perfect expresses the idea that something will occur before another action in the future. It can also show that something will happen before a specific time in the future.
 - ✓ I **will have received** my promotion by next November.
- With Non-Continuous Verbs and some non-continuous uses of Mixed Verbs, we use the Future Perfect to show that something will continue up until another action in the future.
 - ✓ I **will have been** in London for six months by the time I leave.
 - ✓ Susan **is going to have had** my book for a week by Monday.