

The Complete List of English Verb Tenses

Do you find English verbs confusing? Take a look at this chart of English verb tenses to help you understand when to use each one:

	Simple	Continuous	Perfect	Perfect Continuous
Present	speak / speaks	am/is/are speaking	have/has spoken	have been speaking
Past	spoke	was/were speaking	had spoken	had been speaking
Future	will speak going to speak	will be speaking	will have spoken	will have been speaking

Present Simple

Use the present simple tense in English...

For general facts:

- *This shirt **costs** ten dollars.*
- *We **speak** English.*

For actions that happen regularly:

- *I **take** guitar lessons on Wednesday nights.*
- *Sarah sometimes **eats** lunch in her office.*

Present Continuous

Use the present continuous tense in English...

For a continuous action in progress at the moment:

- *I'm currently **studying** biology at university.*
- *Bill can't talk on the phone right now – he's **doing** his homework.*
- *We're **watching** TV at the moment.*

For future plans/arrangements:

- *I'm **having** lunch with Jack tomorrow.*
- *My sister **is driving** me to the airport on Saturday.*
- *Tim and Joanna **are joining** us for dinner next week.*

Present Perfect

Use the present perfect tense in English...

With actions that happened in the past at an unspecified time:

- *I've **met** several celebrities.*
- *He's **been** to Australia several times.*
- *We've already **taken** the test.*

With actions that began in the past and continue to the present:

- *I've **lived** in this house for five years.*
- *Harry **has worked** at the same company since 1992.*

Note: Usually the verbs “lived” and “worked.” The present perfect continuous can also be used – see the next section.

With actions that have never happened:

- *I've **never broken** a bone.*
- *She's **never bought** a car.*
- *My parents **have never eaten** sushi.*

Present Perfect Continuous

Use the present perfect continuous tense in English...

With actions that began in the past and continue to the present:

- *I've **been thinking** a lot about the situation recently.*
- *Laura's **been studying** since 7 AM.*
- *We've **been waiting** for you to arrive for over an hour.*

Past Simple

Use the past simple tense in English...

For events that started and finished in the past:

- *I **worked** as a research assistant from 2001 – 2003.*

- He **called** me ten minutes ago.
- We **went** to the Bahamas last summer.

Note: Many common verbs are irregular in the simple past. Check out these tips for learning [irregular verbs in English!](#)

Past Continuous

Use the past continuous tense in English...

For events that were in progress in the past (often when another one-time event happened):

- Sorry I didn't pick up the phone – I **was taking** a shower when you called.
- He **was sleeping** on the couch when I got home.
- When I saw Tina and Sam at the park earlier today, they **were arguing**.

Past Perfect

Use the past perfect tense in English...

For past events that happened BEFORE other past events:

- By the time we arrived at the train station, the train **had** already **left**.
- When I woke up, I saw that my husband **had made** breakfast.
- Five minutes after leaving my house, I realized I **'d forgotten** to lock the front door.

Past Perfect Continuous

Use the past perfect continuous tense in English...

For past actions that continued up to another point in the past:

- Before I lost my job, I **had been working** on some important projects.
(“working” was a continuous action until the point I lost my job)
- They **had been hoping** Pat would make a full recovery after the accident, but he died.
(“hoping” was a continuous action until Pat died)
- She'd already **been studying** English by herself for several years by the time she started taking classes.
(“studying” English by herself was a continuous action until the time when she started classes)

Future Simple

There are two ways to form the future simple tense in English.

Use the “going to” form of the future simple tense...

For plans, arrangements, and predictions:

- *After I graduate from college, I'm **going to study** for a Masters degree.*
- *We're **going to move** to a different city next year.*
- *I think the current president is **going to be** reelected.*

Use the “will” form of the future simple tense...

For promises, offers, predictions, and decisions made in the moment of speaking:

- *Promise: **I'll call** you later.*
- *Offer: **We'll give** you a ride home.*
- *Prediction: I have a feeling that this new singer **will become** very popular.*
- *Decision made in the moment: **I'll have** the spaghetti and a side order of salad.*

Future Continuous

Use the future continuous tense in English...

For actions that will be in progress at a time in the future:

- *Don't call me at 6, because **I'll be driving** home from work.*
- *At 10:30 tomorrow morning, **we'll be giving** a presentation in English class.*
- ***He'll be watching** the football game tonight at 8.*

Future Perfect

Use the future perfect tense in English...

For actions that will be completed before a future time:

- ***I will have written** a book before I'm 40.*
- *We're late. By the time we get to the theater, the movie **will have started** already.*
- *We **will have traveled** to 12 different countries by 2015.*

Future Perfect Continuous

Use the future perfect continuous tense in English...

For actions that will continue up to a future time:

- *By the time she graduates, she **will have been studying** for 7 years.*
- *By 7 PM, I **will have been working** on this project for eight hours straight.*

- *By this time next year, they **will have been living** in Japan for two decades.*

Note: BY and BY THE TIME are commonly used with the future perfect continuous.