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:

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**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:**

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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.