

REVIEW GRAMMAR SOLUTIONS

Forms and Uses of Verb Tenses

The following charts provide an explanation of the forms and uses of verb tenses. Begin by reviewing all of the tenses. Then, study more carefully those tenses that you find difficult.

SIMPLE PRESENT	
USE	EXAMPLES
To express a habitual or repeated action in the present or to express a condition that is true at any time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thuy <u>rides</u> her bicycle to school every day. • I <u>am</u> not a morning person. In fact, I usually <u>do not get up</u> until 10:00 AM.
To express general truths that are timeless (well-known laws or principles or even generally accepted truths about people, places, and customs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water <u>boils</u> at 100°C. • Generally speaking, Spaniards <u>eat</u> dinner much later than Americans <u>do</u>. • College students often <u>do not get</u> enough sleep.
To report what appears in print. This use is common in academic writing when the writer is referring to texts and quotations. In the example, even though Norman Cousins wrote his article in the past, the writer has put the underlined verb in the present tense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In his article "The Communication Collapse," Norman Cousins <u>asserts</u> that schools encourage poor writing habits by forcing students to write under time pressure. (Note: The writer could also use the past tense, <i>asserted</i>.)
To describe past events as if they were happening now. This use is called the <i>historical present</i> . In the example, taken from a longer account of a visit to India, the writer has chosen to narrate his adventures using the present tense, even though the trip is over.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My friend and I <u>arrive</u> at the Mumbai airport on February 25. Jim <u>meets</u> us with a taxi, and we <u>drive</u> to what is to be our apartment for nearly three weeks. The drive <u>is</u> culture shock number one.
FORMATION	
Base form of the verb (infinitive without to). For third-person singular, add -s or -es.	
Examples: I write, you write, we write, he/she/the student writes, they/the students write	

PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

USE*	EXAMPLES
To express that an action or activity is happening right now (at this moment, today, this year); the action has begun and is still happening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tammy <u>is working</u> on the first draft of her essay. • Monica <u>is majoring</u> in aeronautical engineering.
To express that an action or activity is happening at the present time and is temporary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark <u>is working</u> for his uncle. (allows for the possibility that Mark may not work for his uncle permanently)
To express that an action is already in progress at a specified point of time in the present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When my roommate gets home after class, I <u>am usually cooking</u>. • At 8:00 PM, Teresa <u>is usually studying</u> in the library.
FORMATION	
<i>am/is/are + present participle (-ing)</i>	
<p>Examples: I am reading, you are reading, he/she/the student is reading, we are reading, they/the students are reading</p>	

*When a verb expresses a state of being (a stative verb), it cannot be used in the progressive tense. See "Stative Verbs" on page 15.

SIMPLE PAST

USE	EXAMPLES
To indicate that an action or event took place at a specific time in the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I <u>visited</u> Korea last year. • Last night we <u>saw</u> a movie about India.
To indicate that an action or event occurred over a period of time in the past with the implication that it is no longer true in the present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I <u>lived</u> in Los Angeles for 15 years. • Barbara <u>was</u> on the volleyball team in college.
FORMATION	
Regular verbs: base form + <i>-ed</i>	
<p>Examples: I walked, you walked, he/she/the student walked, we walked, they/the students walked</p>	
<p>Note: Many verbs have irregular past-tense forms. Some common irregular past-tense forms include <i>took</i>, <i>ate</i>, and <i>came</i>. You can find irregular past-tense forms in the dictionary under the entry for the base form of the verb. Consult a learner's dictionary for a list of common verbs that have irregular past-tense forms.</p>	

PAST PROGRESSIVE

USE	EXAMPLES
To express that an activity was in progress at a specific point of time in the past, or was in progress and was interrupted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 8:00 PM last night, I <u>was studying</u> in the library. • I <u>was cooking</u> when the phone rang.
To show that an activity lasted for a period of time in the past (emphasis on the duration).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerald <u>was cooking</u> while you <u>were sleeping</u>.
FORMATION	
<i>was/were</i> + present participle (-ing)	
<p>Examples: I was reading, you were reading, he/she/the student was reading, we were reading, they/the students were reading</p>	

PRESENT PERFECT

USE	EXAMPLES
To express that an action or state began in the past and continues in the present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiroaki <u>has lived</u> in Ohio for two years. • I <u>have known</u> Hiroaki since he came to Ohio.
To indicate that an action or event occurred some time in the past, although the exact time is not specified or important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alex <u>has moved</u> back to France. • I <u>have already filed</u> my income taxes.
Note: This tense can also indicate that an event has very recently happened. The adverb <i>just</i> is often used in this case.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I <u>have just completed</u> the application.
To indicate that an action or event has occurred more than once in the past (specific times are not given or important).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan <u>has seen</u> the doctor several times about her allergy problem.
FORMATION	
<i>has/have</i> + past participle	
<p>Examples: I have walked, you have walked, he/she/the student has walked, we have walked, they/the students have walked</p>	
<p>Note: Many past-participle forms are irregular (for example, <i>known, seen, written, met</i>). Consult a learner's dictionary for a list of common irregular verbs.</p>	

PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

USE	EXAMPLES
To emphasize the duration of an activity that started in the past and continues into the present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I <u>have been waiting</u> for you for an hour. • Abdul <u>has been living</u> here for two years.
To indicate that an activity has been in progress recently (the activity started in the past and is still going on).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramon <u>has been reading</u> the book <i>War and Peace</i>. • I <u>have been thinking</u> about moving out of the dormitory.
FORMATION	
<i>has/have + been + present participle (-ing)</i>	
<p>Examples: I have been waiting, you have been waiting, he/she/the student has been waiting, we have been waiting, they/the students have been waiting</p>	

PAST PERFECT

USE	EXAMPLES
To indicate that an action was completed before another action began in the past or to indicate that an action was completed by a definite time in the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I <u>had never read</u> anything by Jane Austen until last month. • In English class I suddenly realized that I <u>had forgotten</u> to bring my textbook.
Note: If the word <i>before</i> or <i>after</i> is in the sentence, the simple past may be used instead of the past perfect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After all my friends <u>left</u> (or <u>had left</u>), I cleaned up the apartment.
FORMATION	
<i>had + past participle</i>	
<p>Examples: I had called, you had called, he/she/the student had called, we had called, they/the students had called</p>	
<p>Note: Many past-participle forms are irregular (for example, <i>written</i>, <i>met</i>, <i>known</i>). Consult a learner's dictionary for a list of common verbs that have irregular past-participle forms.</p>	

PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

USE	EXAMPLES
To emphasize the duration of an activity that was completed before another action or time in the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I <u>had been waiting</u> for him for an hour when he finally arrived.
FORMATION	
<i>had + been + present participle (-ing)</i>	
<p>Examples: I had been waiting, you had been waiting, he/she/the student had been waiting, we had been waiting, they/the students had been waiting</p>	

FUTURE

USE	EXAMPLES
To express that an action, event, or state will occur in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I <u>will drive</u> you to the airport tomorrow. Terry <u>will graduate</u> next June.
FORMATION	
<i>will + base form</i>	
<p>Examples: I will attend, you will attend, he/she/the student will attend, we will attend, they/the students will attend</p>	
<p>Note: Do not use an -s on the base form of the verb in the third-person singular.</p>	

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT EXPRESSING FUTURE TIME

Future time can also be expressed in the following ways:

- am/is/are going to + base form*

Examples: We are going to take the midterm on Friday.
The city is going to have a parade on July 4.

- simple present or present progressive (especially with verbs of arriving and departing)

Examples: The plane leaves at 8:00 PM this evening.
The plane is leaving at 8:00 PM this evening.

- would* (when the future is expressed in a sentence that is in past time)

Examples:

1. **Present/future time:** The instructor says that the exam will cover the first five units of the textbook.

Past time: The instructor said that the exam would cover the first five units of the textbook.

2. **Present/future time:** Even though I plan to go to college next year, I do not know how demanding college classes will be.

Past time: When I was in high school, I did not know how demanding college classes would be.

FUTURE PROGRESSIVE

USE

To express that an action will be happening over a period of time at some specific point in the future.

To emphasize the duration of an action in the future.

EXAMPLES

- Even though I will be studying when you call, I will answer the phone.
- Lin will be working on this essay for the next week.

FORMATION

will + be + present participle (-ing)

Examples: I will be leaving, you will be leaving, he/she/the student will be leaving, we will be leaving, they/the students will be leaving

FUTURE PERFECT

USE

To indicate that an activity will be completed before another event or time in the future.

EXAMPLES

- Maria will have finished her Ph.D. by the time she leaves for France.
- We will have written five essays by the end of the semester.

FORMATION

will + have + past participle

Examples: I will have gone, you will have gone, he/she/the student will have gone, we will have gone, they/the students will have gone

FUTURE PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

USE

To indicate that an action has been in progress for a period of time before another event or time in the future.

EXAMPLES

- Carlos will have been working on his dissertation for three years before he gets his Ph.D. degree.
- By this time next year, I will have been living here for two years.

FORMATION

will + have + been + present participle (-ing)

Examples: I will have been practicing, you will have been practicing, he/she/the student will have been practicing, we will have been practicing, they/the students will have been practicing