



Figure 1 The Writing Center and Academic Resource Center logo

VERBS –THE BASICS

There are two main types of verbs used in the English language: Regular Verbs and Irregular Verbs. These verbs are not a different tense, but they are very important nonetheless. There are three basic forms of verb tenses: simple, perfect, and progressive. These three forms also work together. In this handout we will explain all of the verb tense combinations, as well as the Regular and Irregular verbs, and give examples.

Regular Verbs:

- Regular Verbs are verbs that add –d or –ed to their present form to change the tense from present to past.

For example:

The dog jumped toward the squirrel.

We all noticed the stain on his shirt.

My grandmother knitted me a scarf.

(Notice that -ed is added to the verb to show that the action was performed in the past. See also Verbs that end in –ed handout for more information.)

Irregular Verbs:

Irregular Verbs are not tense specific. What makes these verb types *irregular* is that the past tense is unpredictable. These verbs do not use –d or –ed to signify past tense.

For Example:

I ate my vegetables.
We swam across the lake.
My mother read me a story.

Verb Tenses

Simple Tense:

These are verbs that can take the place of past, present, and future. These verb tenses are the easy ones to remember. Simple Tenses have three uses, Simple Past, Simple Present, and Simple Future.

For Example:
Simple Past Tense Verbs
We played football in the backyard.
The boy tripped on the step.
Simple Present Tense Verbs
We play football in the backyard.
The boy trips on the step.
Simple Future Tense Verbs
We will play football in the
backyard.
The boy will trip on the step.

Perfect Tenses:

The next three tenses are Perfect Tenses. Perfect Tenses are formed using the helping verbs *has*, *have*, *will*, and *shall*. These verb tenses also use the past participle of the verb. These three verb tenses are Past Perfect Tense, Present Perfect Tense, and Future Perfect Tense.

For Example:

Past Perfect Tense

We had played football.

The boy had tripped on the step.

Present Perfect Tense

We have played football.

The boy has tripped on the step.

Future Perfect Tense

By tomorrow, we will have played football.

By noon, the boy will have tripped on the step.

Progressive/Continuous Forms:

We have talked about the two categories of verb tenses, simple and perfect. Both the simple and perfect tenses may be modified and made into *progressive* or *continuous*.

- The reason for using progressive form is to show an action that is in progress or continuing.

For Example:

Present Progressive

We are playing. (Present Progressive)

We were playing. (Past Progressive)

We will be playing. (Future Progressive)

We have been playing. (Present Perfect Progressive)

We had been playing. (Past Perfect Progressive)

We will have been playing. (Future Perfect Progressive)

Present Continuous

He is sleeping.

I am visiting grandpa in the afternoon.

You are always coming late for the meetings!



Figure 2 Cartoon figures with hourglasses

Irregular verb chart

SIMPLE FORM	SIMPLE PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE	SIMPLE FORM	SIMPLE PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
Be	was, were	been	lie	lay	lain
Become	became	become	light	lit (lighted)	lit (lighted)
Begin	began	begun	lose	lost	lost
Bend	bent	bent	make	made	made
Bite	bitten	bitten	mean	meant	meant
Blow	blew	blown	meet	met	met
break	broke	broken	pay	paid	paid
bring	brought	brought	put	put	put
broadcast	broadcast	broadcast	quit	quit	quit
build	built	built	read	read	read
buy	bought	bought	ride	rode	ridden
catch	caught	caught	ring	rang	rung
choose	chose	chosen	rise	rose	risen
come	came	come	run	ran	run
cost	cost	cost	say	said	said
cut	cut	cut	see	seen	seen
dig	dug	dug	sell	sold	sold
do	did	done	send	sent	sent
draw	drew	drawn	set	set	set
drink	drank	drunk	shake	shook	shaken
drive	drove	driven	shot	shot	shot
eat	ate	eaten	shut	shut	shut
fall	fell	fallen	sing	sang	sung
feed	fed	fed	sit	sat	sat
feel	felt	felt	sleep	slept	slept
fight	fought	fought	slide	slid	slid
find	found	found	speak	spoke	spoken
fit	fit	fit	spend	spent	spent
fly	flew	flown	spread	spread	spread
forget	forgot	forgotten	stand	stood	stood
forgive	forgave	forgiven	steal	stole	stolen
freeze	froze	frozen	stick	stuck	stuck
get	got	gotten (got)	strike	struck	struck
give	gave	given	swear	swore	sworn
go	went	gone	sweep	swept	swept
grow	grew	grown	swim	swam	swum
hang	hung	hung	Take care, teach	took	taken
have	had	had	tear	taught	taught
hear	heard	heard	tell	tore	torn
hide	hid	hidden	think	told	told
hit	hit	hit	throw	thought	thought
hold	held	held	understand	threw	thrown
hurt	hurt	hurt	upset	understood	understood
keep	kept	kept	wake	upset	upset
know	knew	known	wear	woke	waked (woken)
lay	laid	laid	win	wore	worn
lead	led	led	withdraw	won	won
leave	left	left	write	withdrew	withdrawn
lend	lent	lent		wrote	written
let	let	let			

VERB TENSE CHART

Simple Present Tense

Singular	Regular / irreg. / be	Plural	Regular / irreg. / be
I	talk, give, am	we	talk, give, are
you	talk, give, are	you	talk, give, are
he/she/it	talks, gives, is	they	talk, give, are

Simple Past Tense

Singular	Regular / irreg. / be	Plural	Regular / irreg. / be
I	talked, gave, was	we	talked, gave, were
you	talked, gave, were	you	talked, gave, were
he/she/it	talked, gave, was	they	talked, gave, were

Simple Future

Singular	Regular / irreg. / be	Plural	Regular / irreg. / be
I, you, he/she/it	will talk, will give, will be	we, you, they	will talk, will give, will be

Present Perfect Regular / Irregular / be

I, you, we, they he/she/it	have talked, have given, have been has talked, has given, has been
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Past Perfect Regular / Irregular / be

I, you, he/she/it, we, they	had talked, had given, had been
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Future Perfect Regular / Irregular / be

I, you, he/she/it, we, they	will have talked, will have given, will have been
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Present Progressive Regular / Irregular / be

I he/she/it	am talking, am giving, am being
you, we, they	is talking, is giving, is being are talking, are giving, are being

Past Progressive Regular / Irregular / be

I, he/she/it	was talking, was giving, was being
you, we, they	were talking, were giving, were being

Future Progressive Regular / Irregular / be

I, you, he/she/it, we, they	will be talking, will be giving, will be being
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Exercises and Practice

Draw a circle around the action verb in each sentence. On the line, tell whether the verb is past tense, present tense, or future tense.

1. Daniel will choose a baseball bat. _____
2. He steps up to the plate. _____
3. The pitcher tossed the ball. _____
4. Daniel will swing hard. _____
5. The ball struck the bat. _____

Fill in the spaces with the correct form of the verb in present progressive, past progressive, and future progressive tenses.

1. I (play) _____ the piano now.
2. You (play) _____ the guitar now.
3. We (play) _____ violins now.
4. It (play) _____ the drums now.
5. When I was young, Grandma (usually, bake) _____ bread on Monday morning.
6. Seagulls (frequently, steal) _____ from the fishermen's nets as they pulled them in.
7. As he sat by the sunny window, the novelist (quickly, write) _____ the first chapter of his new book.
8. The class (listen) _____ closely during the review for the test.
9. The sergeant (train) _____ the new recruits for the next month.
10. The scientists (launch) _____ a satellite in November.

More Practice:

Fill in the blanks with appropriate verb tenses.

I can't believe I (get) that apartment. I (submit) my application last week, but I didn't think I had a chance of actually getting it. When I (show) up to take a look around, there were at least twenty other people who (arrive) before me. Most of them (fill, already) out their applications and were already leaving. The landlord said I could still apply, so I did.

I (try) to fill out the form, but I couldn't answer half of the questions. They (want) me to include references, but I didn't want to list my previous landlord because I (have) some problems with him in the past and I knew he wouldn't recommend me. I (end) up listing my father as a reference.

It was total luck that he (decide) to give me the apartment. It turns out that the landlord and my father (go) to high school together. He decided that I could have the apartment before he (look) at my credit report. I really lucked out!

This handout was based on the following texts:

Berry, Chris, Allen Brizee, and Elizabeth Angeli. "Verb Tenses." *Purdue OWL*. Purdue University, 14 Sept. 2013. Web. 09 Mar. 2015.
<<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/601/01/>>.

"Verb Tenses." *Grammar Revolution*. Elizabeth O'Brien, n.d. Web. 09 Mar. 2015.
<<http://www.english-grammar-revolution.com/verb-tenses.html>>.

All of the above texts are available in The Writing Center.

Please visit our website at www.lavc.edu/writingcenter/index.html for additional resources and services.