

## Tenses of Verbs

By the use of different tenses a writer sets the time of the situation he is describing. It may be going on at present, have happened in the past, or may occur in the future.

After the writer decides on the perspective he is to use toward people and events he should not shift from one tense to another as this may confuse the reader.

For example in the sentence “I think Ellen is at home” both verbs “think” and “is” are in the present tense. If you wrote “I thought Mary was at home” both “thought” and “was” are in the past tense. Do not shift from one to the other, however. Do not write “I thought Mary is at home.”

There are six main tenses in English. The tense denotes the time of the action indicated by the verb.

- I. Most common is the present tense which expresses action which is going on at the present time.

He looks happy.

The present tense may express future time.

The ship sails Thursday.

It may be used in the historical present referring to the past.

The fire department arrives just in time.

- II. The past tense expresses action completed at a definite time in the past.

It snowed yesterday.

- III. The future tense expresses action which will take place in the future.

She will come to the party.

- IV. The present perfect tense expresses action completed at the present time and is formed by adding “has” or “have” to the past participle.

I have cooked three meals a day for years.

- V. The past perfect tense expresses action completed before a certain time in the past and is formed by adding “had” to the past participle.

I had mailed my letter before I received his.

- VI. The future perfect tense expresses action which will be completed before a certain time in the future and is formed by adding “shall have” or “will have” to the past participle.

I shall have gone by the time he gets here.

He will have gone by the time I am ready.

There are two types of verbs-regular and irregular. Their tenses are formed in different ways.

A regular verb is a verb that forms its past tense and past participle by adding “ed” to the first person singular of the present tense. When the first person singular of the present tense ends in “e”, we just add “d” to form the past tense and the past participle. In such verbs as “learn” and “burn” we add “t” to form the past tense.

All verbs have three principal parts. They are first person singular of the present tense, first person singular of the past tense, and the past participle.

Examples of tenses of regular verbs as they are formed in the three principal parts:

Present Tense 1 <sup>st</sup> singular	Past Tense 1 <sup>st</sup> singular	Past Participle
walk	walked	walked
live	lived	lived
change	changed	changed

An irregular verb is a verb that forms its past tense and past participle by changing a vowel or consonant or altering the spelling.

Present Tense 1 <sup>st</sup> singular	Past Tense 1 <sup>st</sup> singular	Past Participle
go	went	gone
fight	fought	fought
drive	drove	driven

Be sure to use the tense that indicates the time you are trying to express and after you have determined it avoid shifts tense.