

**TENSES**

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The present tenses in English are used:

- to talk about the **present**
- to talk about the **future**
- to talk about the **past** when we are telling a story in **spoken** English or when we are summarising a book, film, play etc.

There are **four** present tense forms in English:

<b>Tense</b>	<b>Form</b>
Present simple:	I work
Present continuous:	I am working
Present perfect:	I have worked
Present perfect continuous:	I have been working

We use these forms:

- to talk about the **present**:

He **works** at McDonald's. He **has worked** there for three months now.

He **is working** at McDonald's. He **has been working** there for

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three months now.

London **is** the capital of Britain.

- to talk about the **future**:

The next train **leaves** this evening at 1700 hours.

I'll phone you when I **get** home.

He's **meeting** Peter in town this afternoon.

I'll come home as soon as I **have finished** work.

You will be tired out after you **have been working** all night.

- We can use the present tenses to talk about the **past**...

The present tense is the **base form** of the verb: I **work** in London.

But the third person (she/he/it) adds an **-s**: She **works** in London.

**Use**

We use the present tense to talk about:

- something that is true in the **present**:

I'm nineteen years old.

He **lives** in London.

I'm a student.

- something that happens again and again in the present:

I **play** football every weekend.

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*We use words like **sometimes**, **often**, **always**, and **never** (adverbs of frequency) with the present tense:*

I **sometimes** go to the cinema.

She **never** plays football.

- something that is **always true**:

The adult human body **contains** 206 bones.

Light **travels** at almost 300,000 kilometres per second.

- something that is fixed in the future.

The school term **starts** next week.

The train **leaves** at 1945 this evening.

We **fly** to Paris next week.

### Questions and negatives

Do you play the piano?

Where do you live?

Does Jack play football?

Where does he come from?

Do Rita and Angela live in Manchester?

Where do they work?

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- With the present tense, we use **do** and **does** to make questions. We use **does** for the third person (she/he/it) and we use **do** for the others.

We use **do** and **does** with question words like **where**, **what** and **why**:

But look at these questions with who:

Who lives in London?

Who plays football at the weekend?

Who works at Liverpool City Hospital?

Look at these sentences:

I like tennis, but I don't like football. (don't = do not)

I don't live in London now.

I don't play the piano, but I play the guitar.

They don't work at the weekend.

John doesn't live in Manchester. (doesn't = does not)

Angela doesn't drive to work. She goes by bus.

- With the present tense we use **do** and **does** to make negatives. We use does not (**doesn't**) for the third person (she/he/it) and we use do not (**don't**) for the others.

The present continuous tense is formed from the present tense of the verb **be** and the present participle (**-ing** form) of a verb:

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**Use**

1. We use **the present continuous** tense to talk about the present:

- for something that is happening **at the moment of speaking**:

**I'm just leaving** work. I'll be home in an hour.

Please be quiet. The children **are sleeping**.

- for something which is happening before and after a given **time**:

At eight o'clock we **are usually having** breakfast.

When I get home the children **are doing** their homework.

- for something which we **think is temporary**:

Michael is at university. He's **studying** history.

**I'm working** in London for the next two weeks.

- for something which is **new** and **contrasts** with a previous state:

These days most people **are using** email instead of writing letters.

What sort of clothes **are teenagers wearing** nowadays? What sort of music **are they listening** to?

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- to show that something is changing, growing or **developing**:

The children **are growing** quickly.

The climate **is changing** rapidly.

Your English **is improving**.

- for something which happens **again and again**:

It's **always raining** in London.

They **are always arguing**.

George is great. He's **always laughing**.

**Note:** We normally use *always* with this use.

2. We use the present continuous tense to talk about the **future**:

- for something which has been **arranged** or **planned**:

Mary **is going** to a new school next term.

What **are you doing** next week?

3. We can use the present continuous to talk about the **past**:

- When we are telling a **story**:
- When we are summarising the story from a book, film or play etc.:

The **present perfect** is formed from the present tense of the verb *have* and the **past participle** of a verb:

The present perfect **continuous** is formed with *have/has been* and the *-ing* form of the verb:

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### Use

We use the present perfect tense:

- for something that started in the **past** and **continues** in the **present**:

They've **been married** for nearly fifty years.

She **has lived** in Liverpool all her life.

**Note:** We normally use the present perfect continuous for this:

She **has been living** in Liverpool all her life.

It's **been raining** for hours.

- for something we have done **several times** in the **past** and **continue** to do:

I've **played** the guitar ever since I was a teenager.

He **has written** three books and he is working on another one.

I've **been watching** that programme every week.

We often use a clause with *since* to show **when** something **started** in the past:

They've **been staying** with us since last week.

I **have worked** here since I left school.

I've **been watching** that programme every week since it started.

- when we are talking about our **experience up to the present**:

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**Note:** We often use the adverb *ever* to talk about experience up to the present:

My last birthday was the worst day I **have ever had**.

**Note:** and we use never for the negative form:

**Have you ever met** George?

Yes, but I've **never met** his wife.

- for something that happened in the past but is important at the time of speaking:

I can't get in the house. I've **lost** my keys.

Teresa isn't at home. I think **she has gone** shopping.

I'm tired out. I've **been working** all day.

We use the present perfect of *be* when someone has **gone** to a place and **returned**:

A: Where **have you been**?

B: I've **just been out to the supermarket**.

A: **Have you ever been to** San Francisco?

B: No, but I've **been to** Los Angeles.

But when someone **has not returned** we use *have/has gone*:

A: Where is Maria? I haven't seen her for weeks.

B: **She's gone to** Paris for a week. She'll be back tomorrow.



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We often use the present perfect with **time adverbials** which refer to the **recent past**:

*just; only just; recently;*

Scientists **have recently discovered** a new breed of monkey.

We **have just got** back from our holidays.

or adverbials which **include the present**:

*ever* (in questions); *so far; until now; up to now; yet* (in questions and negatives)

**Have you ever seen** a ghost?

**Where have you been up to now?**

**Have you finished** your homework yet?

No, so far I've only **done** my history.

**WARNING:**

We do **not** use the present perfect with an **adverbial** which refers to **past time** which is **finished**:

I have seen that film yesterday.

We have just bought a new car last week.

When we were children we have been to California.

But we can use it to refer to a time which is **not yet finished**:

Have you seen Helen today?

We have bought a new car this week.

The **past tense** in English is used:

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- to talk about the **past**
- to talk about **hypotheses** – things that are imagined rather than true.
- for **politeness**.

There are **four** past tense forms in English:

Tense	Form
Past simple:	I worked
Past continuous:	I was working
Past perfect:	I had worked
Past perfect continuous:	I had been working

We use these forms:

- to talk about the **past**:

He **worked** at McDonald’s. He **had worked** there since July..  
 He **was working** at McDonald’s. He **had been working** since July.

- to refer to the **present** or **future** in **conditions**:

He could get a new job if he really **tried**.  
 If Jack **was playing** they would probably win.

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and **hypotheses**:

It might be dangerous. Suppose they **got** lost.

I would always help someone who really **needed** help.

and **wishes**:

I wish it **wasn't** so cold.

- In **conditions, hypotheses** and **wishes**, if we want to talk about the **past**, we always use the **past perfect**:

I would have helped him if he **had asked**.

It was very dangerous, What if you **had got** lost?

I wish I **hadn't spent** so much money last month.

- We can use the past forms to talk about the **present** in a few **polite expressions**:

Excuse me, I **was wondering** if this **was** the train for York.

I just **hoped** you **would** be able to help me.

### Forms

With most verbs the past tense is formed by adding -ed:

call >> called; like >> liked; want >> wanted; work >> worked

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But there are a lot of irregular past tenses in English. Here are the most common irregular verbs in English, with their past tenses:

infinitive	irregular past
be	was/were
begin	began
break	broke
bring	brought
buy	bought
build	built
choose	chose
come	came
cost	cost
cut	cut
do	did
draw	drew
drive	drove
eat	ate
feel	felt
find	found

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**infinitive    irregular past**

get	got
give	gave
go	went
have	had
hear	heard
hold	held
keep	kept
know	knew
leave	left
lead	led
let	let
lie	lay
lose	lost
make	made
mean	meant
meet	met
pay	paid
put	put
run	ran
say	said
sell	sold
send	sent
set	set
sit	sat

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**infinitive    irregular past**

speak	spoke
spend	spent
stand	stood
take	took
teach	taught
tell	told
think	thought
understand	understood
wear	wore
win	won
write	wrote

**Use**

We use the past tense to talk about:

- something that happened **once in the past:**

I **met** my wife in 1983.

We **went** to Spain for our holidays.

They **got** home very late last night.

- something that happened **again and again in the past:**

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When I was a boy I **walked** a mile to school every day.

We **swam** a lot while we were on holiday.

They always **enjoyed** visiting their friends.

- something that was **true for some time** in the past:

I **lived** abroad for ten years.

He **enjoyed** being a student.

She **played** a lot of tennis when she was younger.

- we often use phrases with **ago** with the past tense:

I met my wife a long time **ago**.

### Questions and negatives

We use **did** to make questions with the past tense:

When **did you meet** your wife?

Where **did you go** for your holidays?

**Did she play** tennis when she was younger?

**Did you live** abroad?

But look at these questions:

Who discovered penicillin?

Who wrote Don Quixote?

For more on these questions see **question forms**

We use **didn't (did not)** to make **negatives** with the past tense:

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They **didn't go** to Spain this year.

We **didn't get** home until very late last night.

I **didn't see** you yesterday.

The past continuous is formed from the past tense of *be* with the *-ing* form of the verb:

We use the past continuous to talk about the **past**:

- for something which continued **before** and **after** another **action**:

The children **were doing their homework** when I got home.

Compare:

I got home. The children did their homework.

and

The children did their homework when I got home.

As I was watching television the telephone rang.

This use of the past continuous is very common at the beginning of a story:



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The other day **I was waiting** for a bus when ...

Last week **as I was driving** to work ...

- for something that happened **before** and **after** a **particular time**:

It was eight o'clock. I was writing a letter.

Compare:

At eight o'clock I wrote some letters.

In July she was working in McDonald's.

- .to show that something **continued for some time**:

My head **was aching**.

Everyone **was shouting**.

- for something that was happening **again and again**:

**I was practising** every day, three times a day.

They **were meeting** secretly after school.

They **were always quarrelling**.

- with verbs which show **change or growth**:

The children **were growing up** quickly.

Her English **was improving**.

My hair **was going** grey.

The town **was changing** quickly.

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We use the verb *had* and the **past participle** for the **past perfect**:

**I had finished** the work.

She **had gone** .

The past perfect **continuous** is formed with *had been* and the *-ing* form of the verb:

**I had been finishing** the work

**She had been going**.

The past perfect is used in the same way as the present perfect, but it refers to a time in the past, not the present.

We use the past perfect tense:

- for something that started in the past and continued up to a given time in the past:

When George died he and Anne **had been married** for nearly fifty years.

She didn't want to move. She **had lived** in Liverpool all her life.

We normally use the past perfect **continuous** for this:

She didn't want to move. She **had been living** in Liverpool all her life.

Everything was wet. It **had been raining** for hours.

- for something we had done **several times** up to a point in the past and **continued** to do **after that point**:

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He was a wonderful guitarist. He **had been playing** ever since he was a teenager.

He **had written three** books and he was working on another one.

I **had been watching** the programme every week, but I missed the last episode.

We often use a clause with *since* to show when something started in the past:

They had been staying with us **since** the previous week.

I was sorry when the factory closed. I had worked there **since** I left school.

I had been watching that programme every week **since** it started, but I missed the last episode.

- when we are reporting our experience and including up to the (then) present:

My eighteenth birthday was the worst day I had ever had.

I was pleased to meet George. I hadn't met him before, even though I had met his wife several times.

- for something that happened in the past but is important at the time of reporting:

I couldn't get into the house. **I had lost** my keys.

Teresa wasn't at home. **She had gone** shopping.

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We use the past perfect to talk about the past in **conditions, hypotheses** and **wishes**:

I would have helped him **if he had asked**.

It was very dangerous. **What if you had got** lost?

**I wish I hadn't spent** so much money last month.

We use the **present perfect** to show that something has continued up to the present

They've **been** married for nearly fifty years.

She **has lived** in Liverpool all her life.

... or is important in the present:

I've **lost** my keys. I can't get into the house.

Teresa isn't at home. I think she **has gone** shopping.

We use the **present perfect continuous** to show that something has been continuing up to the present:

It's **been raining** for hours.

We've **been waiting** here since six o'clock this morning.

We use the **past perfect** to show that something continued up to a time **in the past**:

When George died he and Anne **had been** married for nearly fifty years.

... or was important at that time **in the past**:

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I couldn't get into the house. I **had lost** my keys.

Teresa wasn't at home. She **had gone** shopping.

We use the **past perfect continuous** to show that something had been continuing up to a time in the past or was important at that time in the past:

Everything was wet. It **had been raining** for hours.

He was a wonderful guitarist. He **had been playing** ever since he was a teenager.

We use **will** with the perfect to show that something will be complete at some time **in the future**:

In a few years they **will have discovered** a cure for the common cold.

I can come out tonight. I'll **have finished** my homework by then.

We use **would** with the perfect to refer to something that **did not happen** in the past but would have happened **if the conditions had been right**:

If you had asked me I **would have helped** you.

I **would have helped** you, but you didn't ask me.

You didn't ask me or I **would have helped** you.

We use **other modals** with perfective aspect when we are **looking back** from a point in time when something might have happened, should have happened or would have happened.

The point of time may be in the future:

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We'll meet again next week. We **might have finished** the work by then.

I will phone at six o'clock. He **should have got** home by then.

the present:

It's getting late. They **should have arrived** by now.

He's still not here. He **must have missed** his train.

or the past:

I wasn't feeling well. I **must have eaten** something bad.

I checked my cell phone. She **could have left** a message.

Both tenses have a continuous form. These continuous tenses are formed with the verb *be* and the **-ing** form of the verb:

We use continuous aspect:

- for something happening **before and after** a given time.

He's **getting** on the train. [*before and after the moment of speaking*]

It was quarter past ten. We **were watching** the news on television.

- for something continuing **before and after** another action:

Mother **will be cooking** the dinner when we get home.

We **were waiting** for the bus when it started to rain.

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- for something continuing **for some time**:

Everybody **will be waiting** for us.

They **had been working** hard all day.

- for something happening **again and again**:

They've **been doing** that every day this week.

The children **were always shouting**.

He **will be practising** the piano every night.

- for something **temporary**:

We **are renting** an apartment until our house is ready..

He **was working** in a garage during the vacation.

- for something **new**:

We have moved from Birmingham. We're **living** in Manchester now.

He had left university and **was working** in his father's business.

- to describe something **changing** or **developing**:

Everything **has been getting** more difficult.

He **was growing** more bad-tempered every day.

Future Simple



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Future Simple (future tense + common aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + Will + Base Form of the Verb

*I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They will see Jane when she comes back from India.*



Negative: Subject + Won't (will not) + Base Form of the Verb

*I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They won't see Jane when she comes back from India.*



Interrogative: Question Word + Will + Subject + Base Form of the Verb

*Will I/ you/ he/ she/ we/ they see Jane when she comes back from India?*

**Fact, action or event in the future:**



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- *I **will be** thirty years old next year. I **won't be** thirty years old again. **Will I be** thirty years old again?*
- *We **'ll meet** them at the station at six. We **won't meet** them at the station. Where **will** we **meet** them?*
- *You **'ll cross** the channel by ferry. You **won't cross** the channel. How **will** you **cross** the channel?*

Future Progressive



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Future Progressive (future tense + progressive aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + Will Be + Verb-ING

*I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They will be having fun at the party.*



Negative: Subject + Won't Be + Verb-ING

*I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They won't be having fun at the party.*



Interrogative: Question Word + Will + Subject + Be  
Verb-ING

*Will I/ you/ he/ she/ we/ they be having fun at the party?*

**Action in progress at a given time of the future:**

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- *This time tomorrow we **will be flying** to Los Angeles. We **won't be flying** to New York. Where **will we be flying**?*
- *You **'ll be doing** housework with me at six tomorrow. You **won't be playing** football. What **will you be doing** at six tomorrow?*
- *I **'ll be playing** tennis from seven to nine. I **won't be playing** tennis at six. When **will I be playing** tennis?*

**Recommended for you:**

[FOR and OF Difference and Usage in a Sentence!](#)

[What's the difference between Present Participle and Gerund?](#)

## Future Perfect Simple



Future Perfect Simple (future perfect tense + common aspect)

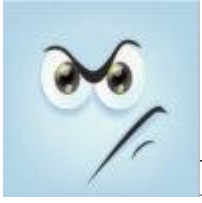


Affirmative: Subject + Will Have + Past Participle

*I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They will have met Dora's husband by this time tomorrow.*

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Negative: Subject + Won't Have + Past Participle

*I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They won't have met Dora's husband by this time tomorrow.*



Interrogative: Question Word + Will + Subject + Have + Past Participle

*Will you have met Dora's husband by this time tomorrow?*

**Action completed by a given time of the future:**

- *I will have done this work by the end of next week. I won't have done this work by the end of next week. Will I have done this work by the end of next week?*
- *They'll have arrived by the time we return. They won't have arrived by the time we return. Will they have arrived by the time we return?*
- *She will have taken three exams by next Tuesday. She won't have taken any exams by next Tuesday. How many exams will she have taken by next Tuesday?*

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## Future Perfect Progressive



Future Perfect Progressive (future perfect tense + progressive aspect)



Affirmative: Subject + Will Have Been + Verb-ING

*I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They will have been working with John for ten years next week.*



Negative: Subject + Won't Have Been + Verb-ING

*I/ You/ He/ She/ We/ They won't have been working with John for ten years next week.*

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Interrogative: Question Word + Will + Subject + Have Been + Verb-ING

*How long will I/ you/ he/ she/ we/ they have been working with John next week?*

**Action completed by or still in progress at a given time of the future (with the progress emphasized):**

- *We will have been staying here for a week tomorrow. We won't have been staying here for a week tomorrow. How long will we have been staying here?*
- *You will have been living here for thirty years by this time next year. You won't have been living here for thirty years by this time next year. How long will you have been living here by this time next year?*
- *I'll have been playing the guitar for ten years by next year. I won't have been playing the guitar for ten years by next year. How long will I have been playing the guitar?*