



Writing Centre

Verb Tenses

Simple Present

"verb + s/es"

Use the simple present verb tense to express the idea that an action is repeated or usual. The simple present can also indicate the statement is a fact or was true before, is true now, and will be true in the future.

- I study English every day.
- I play soccer.
- Toronto is in Canada.
- Class begins at 9 o'clock.

Simple Past

"verb + ed" or irregular verbs

Use the simple past to express the idea that an action started and finished at a specific time in the past or to list a series of completed actions in the past. The simple past can also be used to describe a habit which stopped in the past and also can be used to describe past facts or generalizations which are no longer true.

- You called Nancy last week.
- I had to call my wife yesterday.
- She didn't wash her car.
- I studied Italian when I was a child.

Simple Future



"will + verb" or "be going to + verb"

"Will" often suggests that a speaker will do something voluntarily. We also use "will" when we request that someone help us, or volunteer to do something for us. Similarly, we use "will not" or "won't" when we refuse to voluntarily do something.

"Be going to" expresses that something is a plan or a person intends to do something in the future.

Both "will" and "be going to" can express the idea of a general prediction about the future.

- Will you help him later?
- I will send you the information when I get it.
- He is going to spend his vacation in Korea.
- I will call you when I arrive.

Present Continuous

"am/is/are + present participle"

Use the present continuous to express the idea that something is happening now, at this very moment. It can also be used to show that something is not happening now.

- I am meeting some friends after work.
- You are swimming now.
- I am not standing.
- I am studying to become a nurse.

Past Continuous

"was/were + present participle"



Use the past continuous to indicate that a longer action in the past was interrupted. This can also just be an interruption in time. However, you can also use a specific time as an interruption.

- I was watching TV when she called.
- Nancy was waiting for us when I got into work.
- Yesterday at this time, I was lying on the beach.
- I was studying, while she was making dinner.

Future Continuous

"will be + present participle" "am/is/are + going to be + present participle"

- Will you be waiting for her to arrive at school?
- Are you going to be waiting for her to arrive at school?
- I will be watching a movie when she arrives tonight.
- I am going to be watching a movie when she arrives tonight.

Present Perfect

"has/have + past participle"

We use the present perfect to say that an action happened at an unspecified time before now. You cannot use the present perfect with specific time expressions such as: yesterday, one year ago, last week, when I was a child, when I lived in Korea, at that moment, that day, one day, etc. We can use the present perfect with unspecific expressions such as: ever, never, once, many times, several times, before, so far, already, yet, etc.

- I have seen that movie a hundred times.
- There have been many earthquakes in China.
- My English has improved since I moved to Canada.

Past Perfect

"had + past principle"

The past perfect expresses the idea that something occurred before another action in the past. It can also show that something happened before a specific time in the past.

- I had studied a little English before I moved to Canada.
- Had you studied English before you moved to Canada?
- Nancy had never been to Canada's Wonderland before.
- I did not have any money because I had lost my purse

Future Perfect

"will have + past participle" "am/is/are + going to have + past participle"

The future perfect expresses the idea that something will occur before another action in the future. It can also show that something will happen before a specific time in the future.

- By next November, I will have reached my goal.



- I am not going to have finished this assignment by 6 o'clock.
- I will have been in Canada, for two years when I leave.
- By the time I finish this course, I will have written five essays.

Present Perfect Continuous

"has/have + been + present participle"

We use the present perfect continuous to show that something started in the past and has continued up until now. "For five minutes," "for two weeks," and "since Tuesday" are all durations which can be used with this verb tense. You can also use the present perfect continuous without duration so it has a more general meaning.

- You have been waiting for more than two hours?
- They have been talking for the last hour.
- Recently, I have been feeling really sick.
- He has been teaching here for over a year.

Past Perfect Continuous

"had been + present participle"

We use the past perfect continuous to show that something started in the past and continued up until another time in the past. "For five minutes" and "for two weeks" are both durations which can be used with the Past Perfect Continuous. Notice that this is related to the present perfect continuous, however, the duration does not continue until now, it stops before something else in the past.

- Justin gained weight because he had been overeating.
- The dinner had been prepared for days.
- Nancy had been teaching for ten years.



- How long had you been studying English before you moved to Canada?

Future Perfect Continuous

"will have been + present participle" "am/is/are + going to have been + present participle"

We use the future perfect continuous to show that something will continue up until a particular event or time in the future. "For five minutes," "for two weeks," and "since Friday" are all durations which can be used. Notice that this is related to the present perfect continuous and the past perfect continuous; however, with future perfect continuous, the duration stops at or before a reference point in the future.

-She is going to have been working at that company for three years when it finally closes.

-How long will you have been studying when you graduate?

-You will not have been waiting for more than two hours when her plane finally arrives.

-We are going to have been driving for over three days straight when we get to Saskatoon.

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