

## Verb Tenses – Elizabeth M. Owens

Verbs are the action words in a sentence, usually done by the subject of the sentence. There are four main types of action:

1. **Doing** – run, walk, hit, jump, work, fix, write, type, wash
2. **Thinking** – dream, think, plan, decide
3. **Saying** – say, whisper, yell, scream, state
4. **Feeling** – love, hate, like, enjoy, scare, excite, annoy

There are two types of verbs: **regular** (root word spelling stays the same when you change the tense), and **irregular** (word spelling changes in some way when you change the tense)

Four basic tenses you need to know: Present, past, future, perfect

### 1. Present tense: verb stays as it is or add –ing (is/are/was/were/am goes before)

- a. Simple present: the action is permanent; a rule; principle or fact.
  - i. The boy runs fast. – *verb is run*
  - ii. The dog wags its tail. – *verb is wag*
  - iii. People live longer when they don't smoke. – *verb is live*
- b. Continuous present: it is happening now but may be temporary
  - i. The boy is running fast. – *verb is run*
  - ii. The dog is wagging its tail. – *verb is wag*
  - iii. People are living longer. – *verb is live*

### 2. Past tense: action that happened BEFORE this point of time

- a. Regular verbs: add -ed to the end of the word
  - i. I walked to the car. – regular verb (walk)
  - ii. The baby laughed at the dog. – regular verb (laugh)
- b. Irregular verbs: see chart
  - i. I ran to the car. – irregular verb (run)
  - ii. The teacher taught the class how to spell. – irregular verb (teach)

### 3. Future tense: something that will happen: a prediction/statement of fact; intentions (you are going to do something); arrangement; scheduled events.

- a. Prediction/statement of fact – use will or shall
  - i. I will wake up early tomorrow. – verb is wake
  - ii. I shall have to take another bath tonight. – verb is take
- b. Intention to do something – use auxiliary (extra) verb “going to”
  - i. I am going to wake up early tomorrow. – verb is wake
  - ii. I am going to take another bath tonight. – verb is take
  - iii. What are you going to watch later? – verb is watch

- c. Arrangement – talked to someone else and made plans; use present continuous
  - i. I am waking my sister up early tomorrow.
  - ii. I am taking a bath after Mom is done.
  - iii. What are you watching with your friend tonight?
- d. Scheduled events – use present simple for future events we can't control
  - i. School starts at 10 A.M. tomorrow. – verb is starts
  - ii. The bank closes early on Thanksgiving. – verb is closes
  - iii. I get into L.A. at noon and leave at 6 P.M. – verbs are get and leave

**4. Perfect tense: use of “to have” (have/has/had) before the verb**

- a. Present perfect – happened in the past but still happening –
  - i. use (have/has) with past tense of verb
    - 1. I have read this book before. (still reading)
    - 2. The teacher has taught English here for six years. (still teaching)
- b. Past perfect – happened in the past before something else –
  - i. use (had) with past tense of verb
    - 1. We had run past the park before we saw the gates.
    - 2. When the fire started, Fahad had been sleeping well.
    - 3. Asma had learned how to speak English prior to starting school.
- c. Future perfect – will be completed by some point in the future (will have)
  - i. Use “will” with “have” and past tense of verb
    - 1. I will have taught ESL for two years by next June.
    - 2. By tomorrow night, I will have watched 36 hours of TV.
    - 3. Before my mom comes home tomorrow, she will have been gone three days.

**5. “To be” verbs – these indicate that something exists**

<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	
is	was	Ali <u>is</u> scared today, but yesterday he <u>was</u> brave.
are	were	The toys <u>are</u> broken, but they <u>were</u> new two days ago.
has/have	had	The cat <u>has</u> a toy now, but last week it <u>had</u> nothing.

(verbs ending in *-ing* usually need: *is/are/am/was/were* before it:

*I am running* today. The sun *was shining* brightly, but the clouds *were coming*.