

Verbs have different forms to indicate when in time the action of a sentence occurs. These forms are called tenses. There are twelve main tenses: three simple tenses, three perfect tenses, and six progressive tenses. This handout provides basic information about verb tenses, but writers should always consider their audience and assignment when writing.

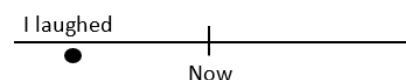
Simple Tense

Simple tenses express basic time relationships. For these tenses, the writer or speaker views the action of the verb from the point in time when the sentence is written.

Simple Past

This tense portrays an action or state of being that took place *before* the time when the sentence is written. It is often formed by adding *-ed* to the end of the verb.

Example: I **laughed** (yesterday).



Simple Present

This tense describes an action or state of being that takes place *at the time* the sentence is written.

Example: I **laugh** (now).



Simple Future

This tense portrays an action or state of being that will occur sometime *after* the sentence is written. It is often formed by adding the word *will*, followed by the present form of the verb.

Example: I **will laugh** (tomorrow).



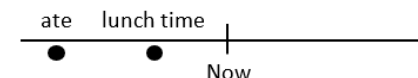
Perfect Tense

Perfect tenses express the completed or ongoing action of the verb that connects to other points in time. They are created by adding a form of the verb *to have* to the past participle of the main verb (a form of the verb typically used to signify a tense, usually ending the word with *-ed* or *-en*).

Past Perfect

This tense shows that the verb's action was completed at some time *before a past event*. It consists of the word *had* plus the past participle of the verb.

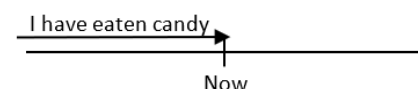
Example: Before lunch, I **had** already **eaten** candy.



Present Perfect

This tense indicates that the verb's action began in the past and *continued through the time the sentence is written*. It is made by adding the past participle of the verb to the word *have*.

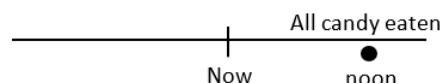
Example: I **have eaten** candy all day long!



Future Perfect

This tense indicates that by the time of a specified future event, the verb's action *will have been completed*. It is formed by adding the past participle of the verb to the words *will have*.

Example: By noon, I **will have eaten** all the candy.



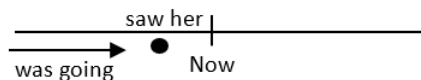
Progressive Tenses

Progressive or continuous tense shows that the action of the verb was or is *continuous* or *in progress*. The progressive tenses contain a form of the verb *to be* followed by the present participle (the *-ing* form) of the main verb. The tense of the verb *to be* indicates the tense of the progressive verb.

Past Progressive

This tense shows the action or state of being happening at the same time as another event before the present time. It contains the past tense of the verb *to be* plus the present participle of the main verb.

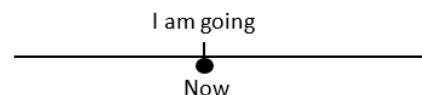
Example: I **was going** to the beach when I saw her.



Present Progressive

This tense indicates that an action or state of being is continuously happening at the time of writing the sentence. It consists of the present tense of the verb *to be* plus the present participle of the main verb.

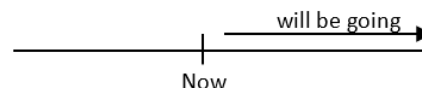
Example: I **am going** to the beach (now).



Future Progressive

This tense shows how an action or state of being will be continuously happening at a future time. It consists of the future tense of the verb *to be* plus the present participle of the main verb.

Example: I **will be going** to the beach (tomorrow).



Perfect Progressive Tense

Perfect progressive verbs connect aspects of perfect and progressive tense by showing that the ongoing action of the verb started in the past. The progressive tenses contain a form of the verb *to be* followed by the present participle (the *-ing* form) of the main verb. The tense of the verb *to be* indicates the tense of the progressive verb.

Past Perfect Progressive

This tense shows how an action or state of being was happening, then ended before the present. It consists of the past perfect tense of the verb *to be* plus the present participle of the main verb.

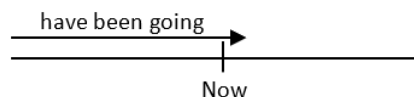
Example: I **had been going** to the beach, but I stopped.



Present Perfect Progressive

This tense shows how an action or state of being began in the past and is still happening in the present. It consists of the present perfect tense of the verb *to be* plus the present participle of the main verb.

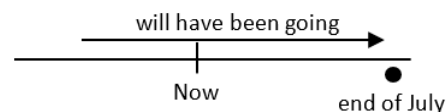
Example: I **have been going** to the beach for years.



Future Perfect Progressive

This tense shows how an action or state of being began in the past, is happening in the present, and will keep happening through a specific time in the future. It consists of the future perfect tense of the verb *to be* plus the present participle of the main verb.

Example: I **will have been going** to Pine Beach for two years by the end of July.



Time (to be)	Past	Present	Future
Progressive	was going	am going	will be going
Perfect Progressive	had been going	have been going	will have been going