

# TENSES: WHEN ARE YOU SAYING?

The 'tense' of a word represents when an action takes place. In English, time is identified by **tenses** and **forms**. The three tenses are **Present, Past, and Future**, and they appear in **Simple, Perfect, or Present/Continuous** forms.

- The **past tense** indicates that an action happened in the past.  
-The dog walked.
- The **present tense** indicates that an action is happening now.  
-The dog walks.
- The **future tense** indicates that an action will happen in the future.  
-The dog will walk.

In a sentence, the subject and the verb must always agree with each other. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular. If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural.

- You would not say *The dog have a ball* because "have" is a plural verb. You would say either "The dogs have a ball" or "The dog has a ball."

Hint: Third-person singular verbs end in 's' or 'es'. *The dog sees the ball.*

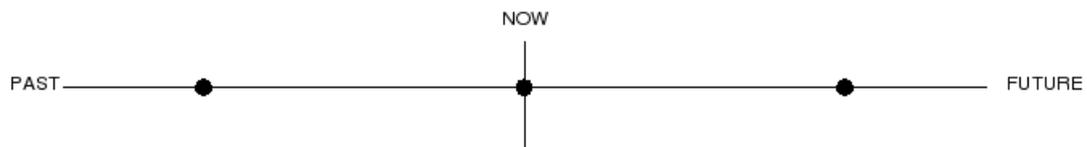
## Forms

The **simple form** of each tense indicates an action occurring at a specific point in time or (in the present) sometimes a general rule:

*Past: I **ate** breakfast yesterday morning.*

*Present: I **eat** breakfast every morning.*

*Future: I **will** eat breakfast tomorrow morning.*

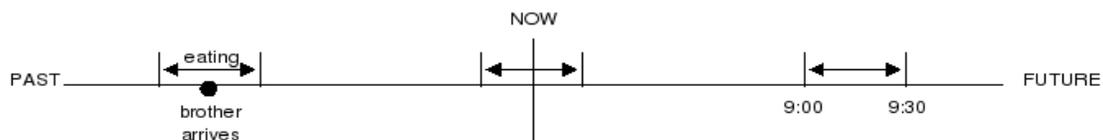


The **progressive or continuous form** indicates an action occurring over a length of time. The verb is preceded by "will" and takes an "-ing" form.

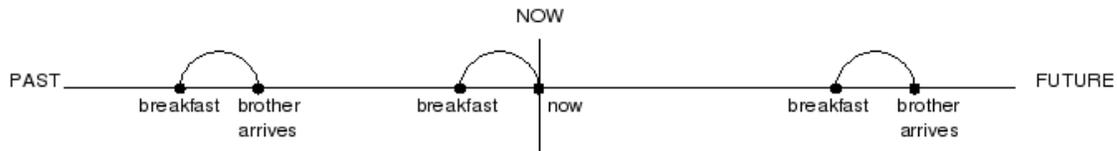
*Past: I **was eating** breakfast when my brother arrived.*

*Present: I **am eating** breakfast right now.*

*Future: I **will be eating** breakfast from 9:00 to 9:30.*



The **perfect form** indicates an action that was or will be completed at the time of another action. The verb is preceded by “had” and takes the past particle form (usually “-en” or “-ed”).  
*Past: I **had eaten** breakfast already when my brother arrived.*  
*Present: I **have eaten** breakfast already.*  
*Future: I **will have eaten** breakfast by the time my brother arrives.*



The progressive or continuous form also takes a perfect form, the **perfect continuous**, which is used when talking about an ongoing action that has been taking place up to a certain point.  
*Past: I **had been eating** breakfast for 30 minutes when my brother arrived.*  
*Present: As of now, I **have been eating** my breakfast for 30 minutes.*  
*Future: I **will have been eating** my breakfast for 30 minutes by the time my brother arrives.*



## Preferred Tenses

Each academic discipline has a preferred tense. When writing in a discipline, you should try to stick to that tense *unless it is grammatically appropriate to change tenses* (e.g., when a History paper mentions a future event).

<b>Biblical Studies/Theology</b>	<i>Exegetical Papers: Present</i> <i>Research Papers: Past</i>
<b>Business Admin.</b>	Past and/or Present Perf.
<b>Counselling</b>	Past and/or Present Perf.
<b>English</b>	Present
<b>Health &amp; Human Services</b>	Past and/or Present Perf.
<b>Hist. &amp; Global Stud.</b>	Past

<b>Int'n Development</b>	Past and/or Present Perf.
<b>Linguistics</b>	<i>Research Papers: Present</i> <i>Literature Review: Past</i>
<b>Philosophy</b>	Present
<b>Psychology</b>	Past and/or Present Perf.
<b>Spiritual Formations</b>	<i>Reflection Papers: Mainly Past, but some Present</i>
<b>Other</b>	Assume Past

## Moods

Verbs can also appear as **infinitives**, **participles**, **imperatives**, and **subjunctives**:

**Infinitives** include a verb preceded by “to” and is used to show **action at the same time or later** than the action of the main verb. (Infinitives can also be used like nouns – I like **to eat**.)

*Jesus asked his disciples **to find** him a donkey.*

**Participles** indicate an action occurring **at the same time as or before** the main verb, ending in “-ing.”

***Speaking** to the crowd, Jesus taught his beatitudes*

**Imperatives** indicate a **command**.

***Go** therefore and make disciples of all the nations.*

**Subjunctives** are used to indicate something that **may** happen. It does not carry certainty.

*Class **may be cancelled** if it snows too hard.*