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Types of tenses with examples

Tense denotes the time of action as well as the state.

Tense		
Present Tense	Past Tense	Future Tense
• Indefinite • Continuous • Perfect • Perfect Continuous	• Indefinite • Continuous • Perfect • Perfect Continuous	• Indefinite • Continuous • Perfect • Perfect Continuous

12 types of Tenses with examples

1. Present Indefinite
2. Simple Past
3. Simple future
4. Present Continuous
5. Past Continuous
6. Future Continuous
7. Present Perfect
8. Past perfect
9. Future Perfect
10. Present Perfect Continuous
11. Past perfect Continuous
12. Future Perfect Continuous

Note: Questions are often based on confusing pairs.

Confusing Pairs of tense

- (Simple present & Present Continuous)
- (Continuous & Perfect continuous)
- (Present perfect & Simple past)
- (Simple past & Past perfect)

Present Indefinite tense with example

Under Present Indefinite we included the following activities:

(Routine Action)

- **Regular Action:** I come here daily.
- **Irregular Action:** Earthquake comes in Japan.
- **Habits:** He smokes.

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- **Universal Truth:** The sun rises in the East.

Note: In **newspaper headlines** and **commentary of sports**, Simple present tense is used.

Examples:

1. PM sings deal.
2. Sachin strikes the ball and off it goes across the boundary lines.

Simple Present tense is used to express planned action of near future.

Examples: Pm leaves for China next week.

Sentence formation

(If Sub is I, we, they, you or plural)

- **Positive sentence:** Subject + V1 + object.
- **Negative sentence:** Subject + do not (don't) + V1 + object.
- **Questions:** Do + Subject + V1 + object?

Do + Subject + not + V1 + object?

Don't + Subject + V1 + object?

If the subject is he, she, it, name or singular

- **Positive sentence:** Subject + V1 s/es + obj.
- **Negative sentence:** Subject + does not (doesn't) + V1 + Object.
- **Questions:** Does + Subject + V1 + object?

Does + Subject + not + V1 + object?

Doesn't + Subject + V1 + object?

Consider the following sentences:

1. What he knows about you? (**wrong**)
What does he know about you? (**Right**)
2. I do not know what he knows about you. (**Right**)
3. The appeal of the victims to transfer the case related to riots to some states do not affect the merit of the case. (Change 'do' into 'does' as the main subject is 'appeal')

Explanation of the above sentences.

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- In the 1st statement 'what' is being used to ask a question. Hence interrogative form should be used after 'what'.
- In the 2nd sentence 'what' is joining two sentences. Thus a normal sentence should follow 'what'.
- A verb should always agree with the main subject of the sentence. We often relate the verb with the nearest subject but this is wrong.

Simple Past tense with example

(An action that is over is expressed in Simple past tense.)

Examples: I saw you but you did not see me

Sentence formation

- Positive sentence: Subject + V2 + Object
- Negative sentence: Subject + Did not (didn't) + V1 + Object
- Questions: Did + Subject + V1 + Object?

Did + Subject + V1 + Object?

Didn't + Subject + V1 + Object?

Note: If the sentence starts with 'It's time', 'It's high time' or 'it's high time', and if it is followed by a subject, the verb that will follow the subject will in second (V2) form.

Examples:

- It's time you should study. (wrong)
- It's time you studied. (right)

If 'It's time is followed by 'to', V1' will be used.

Examples: It's time to study.

Usually in a sentence, 'do', 'does' and 'did' is not used in a positive sentence as a helping verb. But to emphasise the main verb, we use 'do' 'does' and 'did' before the main verb. In such sentences, the main verb should be in the 'V1' form.

1. You do come here everyday. (Right)
2. He did make a mistake (Right)

If past time is given in a sentence, the sentence is in **Simple Past Tense**.

Examples:

1. I have come yesterday. (wrong)
2. I came yesterday. (Right)

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Simple Future tense with example

An action to take place in future comes under Simple Future Tense.

Examples: I shall meet you tomorrow.

Sentence formation

- Positive sentence: Sub + Shall/will + V1 + obj
- Negative sentence: Sub + shall/will + not + V1 + obj
- Questions: Shall/Will + Sub + V1 + obj?

Shall/Will + Sub + not + V1 + obj?

Shan't/ won't + Sub + V1 + obj?

Note: Use of **shall/will** is explained in Modals.

Present Continuous tense with example

(An action that is **going on at the time of speaking** comes in **Present Continuous Tense**.)

Examples: I am studying English now.

Sometimes some events are going on even at the time of speaking but we cannot see them, they too come in **Present Continuous Tense**.

Examples:

1. Coastal areas are getting submerged.
2. Population is increasing day by day.

Note: For events that will take place in the near future, **Present Continuous Tense** is used

Examples: I am going to Mumbai tomorrow.

Sentence formation

- Positive sentence: Sub + is/am/are + V1 + ing + obj
- Negative sentence: Sub + is/am/are + V1 + not + ing + obj

Sub + isn't/aren't/am not + V1 + ing + obj

- Questions: Is/am/are + Sub + not + V1 + ing + obj?

Is/am/are + Sub + not + V1 + ing + obj?

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Isn't/aren't + Sub + not + V1 + ing + obj?

‘Am not’ has **no contracted form**. Hence in question tag **aren’t** is used.

Examples: I am fine, **aren’t I?**

Use of is/am/are

Is: he/she/it/name/singular

Am: With I

Are: With you/we/they/all/plural

Note:

- My father is working in a bank and my brother is studying in a school. (wrong)
- My father works in a bank and my brother studies in a school. (Right)

If the statement deals with a routing action, **Simple Present Tense** is used and not Present Continuous Tense. But if the work is just a temporary routing action, Present Continuous Tense is used.

Examples: I am preparing for competitive exams now-a-days.

Past Continuous tense with example

If an action was in continuation in the past, Simple Past Tense is used

Examples: I was waiting for you.

Sentence formation

- Positive sentence: Sub + was/were + V1 + ing + obj
- Negative sentence: Sub + was/were + not + V1 + ing + obj

Sub + wasn't/weren't + V1 + ing + obj

- Questions: Was/Were + Sub + V1 + ing + obj?

Was/Were + Sub + not + V1 + ing + obj?

Wasn't/weren't + Sub + V1 + ing + obj?

Use of was and were

Was - He/she/it/name/singular

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Were - You/we/they/plural/all

In imaginary sentence, '**were**' is used with all subjects no matter whether it is used as a helping verb or main verb.

Examples:

1. I wish, I **were** (main verb) a bird.
2. He pretended as if he **were** (helping verb) sleeping.

Future Continuous tense with example

(An action going on in future comes under Future Continuous Tense.)

Examples: We shall be taking the examination at this time, next month.

Sentence formation

- Positive sentence: Subject + shall/will + be + V1 + ing + object
- Negative sentence: Subject + shall/will + not + be + V1 + ing + object

Subject + shan't/won't + be + V1 + ing + object

- Questions: Will/Shall + Subject + be + V1 + ing + obj

Will/Shall + Subject + not + be + V1 + ing + obj

Won't/Shan't + Subject + be + V1 + ing + obj

Note: Some verbs do not take '**ing**' form. Hence they cannot come in Continuous tense.

List of such verbs:

1. **Verbs of Perception:** See, taste, smell, hear, prefer, please notice, recognize.
2. **Verb of Thinking Processing:** Think, know, mean, mind, remember, suppose.
3. **Verb showing possession:** Own, have, belong, comprise, possess, contain, consist.
4. **Verb expressing Feeling or State of mind:** Believe, like, dislike, love, adore, want, wish, desire, hate, agree, trust, imagine.
5. **Verbs in General:** Look, seem, appear, affect, resemble, cost, require, become, hope, refuse.

Examples:

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- He is owing a car. (wrong)

He owns a car. (right)

- This house is belonging to me. (Wrong)

This house belongs to me (right)

- I am not meaning anything wrong. (wrong)

I don't mean anything wrong. (right)

- I am seeing a man standing there. (wrong)

I see a man standing there. (right)

Note: If 'have' denotes possession, it is not used in 'ing' form but if 'have' is denotes 'to have fun or to eat', 'have' can be used in 'ing' form.

Examples:

- I am having a piece of cake. (right)

I am having a car. (wrong)

- I have a car. (right)

If **think, remember, feel, look, appear**, etc. are used to **express emotions** or the verbs given above are used in a **progressive state**, they can come in 'ing' form.

Examples:

- I am thinking you are right. (wrong)

I think you are right. (right)

- I am thinking of you. (right)
- It was appearing as if they were going to kill us. (wrong)

I appeared as if they were going to kill us. (right)

- You are looking good. (right)

Look! He is smelling the rose. (right)

In 'Gerund' & 'Present Participle', verbs are used in 'ing' form.

Examples:

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1. Being ill, I could not come.
2. Getting a job is easy now-a-days.
3. Seeing is believing.
4. Swimming is a good exercise.

If we use a verb after a preposition, the verb will be in ‘**ing**’ form.

Examples:

1. Bats are capable **of hearing (V1 ing)** ultrasonic waves.
2. We must keep away **from smoking (V1 ing)**.

Present Perfect tense with example

An action that has recently finished is expressed in **Present Perfect Tense**.

Examples: He has come to Delhi recently.

If the action is important and not the time of action, and the time of action is not given, we use **Present Perfect Tense**.

Examples:

1. We have progressed a lot.
2. We have reached the moon.

Sentence formation

- **Positive sentence:** Subject + has/have + V3 object
- **Negative sentence:** Subject + has/have + not + V3 object

Subject + hasn't/haven't + V3 object

- **Questions:** Has/ have + Subject + V3 + object?

Has/ have + Subject + not + V3 + object?

Hasn't/ haven't + Subject + V3 + object?

Use of Has/Have

Has-With: He/She/It/Name/Singular

Have-With: I/We/They / You / Plural / All

See the difference:

1. Science has given us many new inventions. (Right)

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2. We have reached the moon. (Right)
3. Science has given us many new inventions in the 19 th century. (wrong)
4. We have reached the moon on 22nd Oct, 2008. (wrong)

If **past time is given**, use **Simple Past Tense** and not Present Perfect Tense.

The correct sentences will be:

1. Science gave us many life-saving drugs in the 19th century. (Right)
2. We reached the moon on 22nd Oct, (Right)

Note: In the sentence, **any form of 'have'** can be followed by **'had'** (Here 'had' will be the main verb). This is because in Perfect Tense, such combinations are used.

1. I **have had** enough problems here (Right)
2. He **has had** his breakfast. (Right)

'Usually', 'recently', 'already', 'yet', 'so far' are used in **Perfect Tense**. **'Yet'** is generally used in **negative sentences of Present perfect**.

Examples: He has not reached home yet (present perfect)

He had not done any work so far. (past perfect)

If 'since' is followed by 'Simple Past Tense', 'since' is preceded by 'Present Perfect Tense'.

Examples: I haven't seen him **since** he left India.

Note: In such sentences, **the perfect form of any modal** can also be used.

Examples: He may have grown old **since** she last saw hi,.

If **since** is used at the beginning of a sentence, the formation of the sentence will be as follows.-

Examples: **Since** he joined the army, he has not taken any leave.

Past Perfect tense with example

Look at the sentences given below:

- I saw him before he stopped his car (wrong)
- I had seen him before he stopped his car. (Right)
- Before he understood anything the robber fled. (wrong)

Before he understood anything the robber had fled. (Right)

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- I met him after I finished my work. (wrong)

I met him after I had finished my work. (Right)

- By the time I reached theatre, the show started (wrong)

By the time I reached the theatre the show had started. (Right)

- When Anand reached his village, he found that the news about him had preceded him. (Right)

If two actions take place in the past, one after the other, the 1st action will be in **Past Perfect Tense** and the 2nd action will be in **Simple Past Tense**.

Sentence formation

- Positive sentence: Subject + Had + V3 + object
- Negative sentence: Subject + Had + not + V3 + object
- Questions: Had + Subject + V3 + object

Had + Subject + not + V3 + object

Hadn't + Subject + V3 + object

Note: see the 5th sentence.

When Anand reached his village, he found that the news about him had preceded him.

Explanation: 'Precede' means 'to come before'. The 1st action is 'the coming of the news' which must be in **Past Perfect Tense** and the 2nd action is 'Anand going to the village' which must be in **Simple Past Tense**.

Future Perfect tense with example

(An action that will have been completed in future, comes under Future Perfect Tense.)

Examples: You will have finished your syllabus by the end of next month.

Look at the following sentences:

Examples: By the time I reach the station, the train will have left.

By the time, Simple Present, Future Perfect

Sentence formation

- Positive sentence: Subject + will/shall + have + V3 + obj
- Negative sentence: Subject + will/shall + not + have + V3 + obj

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Subject + won't/shan't + have + V3 + obj

- Questions: Will/shall + sub + have + V3 + Obj?

Will/shall + sub + not + have + V3 + Obj?

Won't/shan't + sub + have + V3 + Obj?

Look at the difference:

1. By the time I reach the station, The train will have left.
2. By the time I reached the station, the train had left.

Present Perfect Continuous tense with example

(An action **already started** and **still going on** comes under **Present Perfect Continuous Tense**.)

Examples: I have been living in Delhi for five years.

Sentence formation

- Positive sentence: Sub + has/have + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time.
- Negative sentence: Sub + has/have + not + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time.

Sub + hasn't/haven't + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time.

- Questions: Has/have + Sub + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time.?

Has/have + Sub + not + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time.?

Hasn't /haven't + Sub + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time.?

Examples: I am teaching you **since** an hour. (wrong)

I have been teaching you **for** an hour. (right)

For: is used for a **period of time**.

Examples:

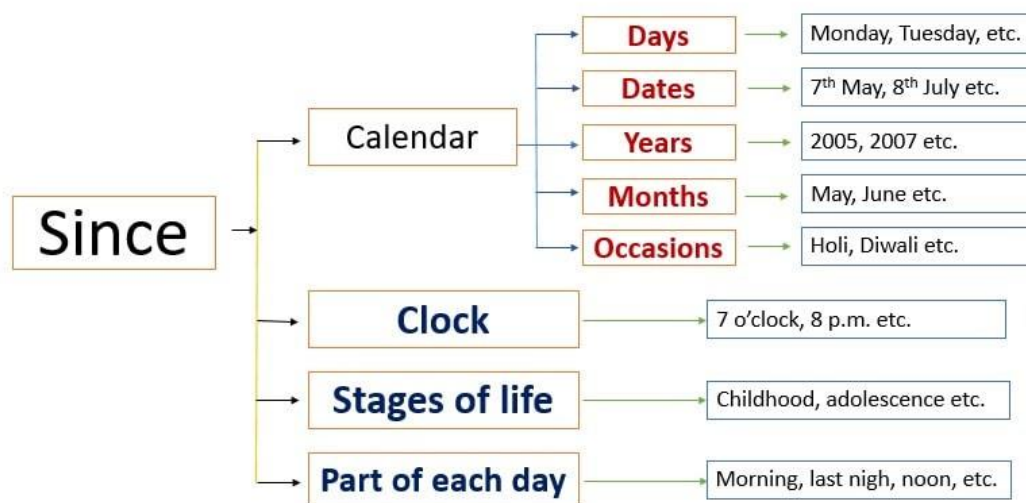
1. For two hours, for last 2 years.
2. For five years, for last 2 months.
3. For 10 years, for last 3 weeks.

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Since: is used for a **point of time**.

Examples:

1. Since Monday, since the beginning.
3. Since 2008, since time immemorial.
4. Since 7 pm, since last year.



Past Perfect Continuous tense with example

(An activity that started in the past, continued and finished in past comes under **Past perfect Continuous**.)

Examples: I had been waiting for you since morning.

Sentence formation

- Positive sentence: Sub + had + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time.
- Negative sentence: Sub + had + not + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time.
- Questions: Had + Sub + not + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time ?

Had + sub + not + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time ?

Hadn't + sub + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/since + time ?

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Future Perfect Continuous tense with example

An action that **continues upto some future point of time** comes under **Future Perfect Continuous**.

Examples: I shall have been living in Delhi for five years by the end of this year.

Sentence formation

- **Positive sentence:** Sub + Shall/will + have + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/from + time.
- **Negative sentence:** Sub + Shall/will + not + have + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/from + time.

Sub + Shan't/won't + have + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/from + time.

- **Questions:** Shall/will + sub + not + have + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/from + time

Shall/will + sub + not + have + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/from + time

Shan't/won't I + sub + not + have + been + V1 + ing + obj + for/from + time

Note: Verbs that are not used in 'ing' form are not used in 'continuous/perfect continuous tense'.

Such verbs should be used in **Indefinite Tense** instead of **Continuous Tense**.

Examples: I am knowing you. (wrong)

I know you (Right)

Such verbs should be used in **Perfect Tense** instead of **Perfect continuous tense**.

Examples: I have been knowing him for five years. (wrong)

I have known him for five years. (right)

For/since is used in both Perfect & Perfect Continuous Tense.

Examples: I have been living in Delhi for five years. (Right)

I had known him for two years. (right)

If '**for/since + time**' is used in a sentence, the sentence will be in **Perfect** or **Perfect Continuous Tense**.

Examples: I ate nothing since morning. (Wrong)

I have eaten nothing since morning. (right)

