



Verb Tenses 1

Verb tenses help the writer to communicate the proper time frame of the events they are explaining. There are three different verb tenses: *past*, *present*, and *future*. Each tense has four forms: *simple*, *perfect*, *continuous* and *perfect continuous*.

Past Tense

Simple Past

Simple Past expresses an action that began and ended in the past.

Common uses:

- 1) Completed action in the past
Ex- I saw a play yesterday.
- 2) A series of completed actions in the past
Ex- I got home, did my homework, and went to bed.
- 3) Duration of time in the past
Ex- I lived in China for 10 years.
- 4) Habit in the past
Ex- I never drove to school, I always walked.

Past Perfect

Past Perfect expresses an activity that was finished before another action occurred in the past.

Common uses:

- 1) Completed action before something in the past
Ex- I had never been interested in school before I had Mr. Clark as a teacher.
- 2) Duration before something in the past
Ex- I had been friends with Jamie for 6 months before she moved away.

Past Continuous

Used when an action in the past was interrupted by another action.

Common uses:

- 1) Interrupted action in the past
Ex- I was eating dinner when Mark called.
- 2) Specific time as an interruption
Ex- Last night at 10pm I was doing homework.
- 3) Parallel actions
Ex- I was watching television while Mary was studying.
- 4) Atmosphere
Ex- At the movie, children were yelling, parents were looking embarrassed and teenagers were throwing popcorn at the screen.
- 5) Repetition and irritation with "Always"
Ex- He always talked during movies.

Past Perfect Continuous

Used when something started in the past and continued until another time in the past.

Common uses:

- 1) Duration before something in the past
Ex- We had been talking for two minutes before we were interrupted.
- 2) Cause of something in the past
Ex- Susan did well on her exam because she had been studying