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Verb Tense Overview

Active Voice Verb Tenses

Type	Past Tenses	Present Tenses	Future Tenses
Simple	Simple Past past form of main verb <i>The teacher assembled the class.</i> Use to express: 1. an activity that began and ended at a particular time in the past	Simple Present main verb agrees with subject <i>The teacher assembles the class every morning.</i> Use to express: 1. a fact/truth 2. a habitual or everyday activity 3. a scheduled future event (use with future time expressions)	Simple Future will + simple form of verb/ Be + going to + simple form ⁱ <i>The teacher will assemble (is going to assemble) the class at 9:00 AM.</i> Use to express: 1. a prediction. 2. a willingness to do something. 3. a prior made plan
Progressive^{ii iii} (Continuous) Indicates incomplete activity	Past Progressive WAS/WERE + present participle ^{iv} <i>The teacher was assembling the class when the fire alarm rang.</i> Use to express: 1. an action that was in progress when another action occurred or was in progress.	Present Progressive AM/IS/ARE + present participle <i>The teacher is assembling the class right now.</i> Use to express: 1. a temporary activity in progress at the moment 2. an activity of general nature in progress e.g. this week, this year 3. a planned event in the future (use with future time expressions)	Future Progressive will + BE + present participle Be + going to + present participle <i>The teacher will be assembling (is going to be assembling) the class at 9AM tomorrow.</i> Use to express: 1. an action that will be in progress at a time in the future
Perfect Indicates completed activity	Past Perfect HAD + past participle ^v <i>The teacher had assembled the class by 9:05AM.</i> Use to express: 1. an activity that was completed before another activity or time in the past	Present Perfect HAVE/HAS + present participle <i>The teacher has assembled the class.</i> Use to express: 1. the idea that something happened before now at an unspecified time 2. the repetition of an activity before now 3. a situation that began in the past and continues up to the present (use with <i>for/since</i>)	Future Perfect will have + past participle Be + going to + past participle <i>The teacher will have assembled (is going to have assembled) the class by 9:05 tomorrow.</i> Use to express: 1. an activity that will be completed before another time or event in the future

Perfect Progressive Tenses^{vi} Emphasizes incomplete nature of action in progress	Past Perfect Progressive HAD BEEN + present participle <i>The teacher had been assembling the class, but he stopped when the alarm rang.</i> Use to express: 1. an activity in progress before another activity or time in the past (emphasizes duration) 2. an activity in progress close in time to another activity or time in the past (emphasizes time proximity)	Present Perfect Progressive HAVE/HAS + BEEN + present participle <i>The teacher has been assembling the class for three minutes.</i> Use to express: 1. the duration of an activity that began in the past and continues to the present (use with <i>for, since</i> etc.)	Future Perfect Progressive will have been + present participle BE + going to have been + present participle <i>At 9:05AM, the teacher will have been assembling (is going to have been assembling) the class for five minutes.</i> Use to express: 1. an activity that will be in progress before another time or event in the future (emphasizes duration)
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Passive Voice Verb Tenses^{vii}

Tense Type	Past Tenses	Present Tenses	Future Tenses
Simple Tenses	Simple Past WAS/WERE + past participle. <i>The class was assembled by 9AM..</i>	Simple Present AM/IS/ARE + past participle. <i>The class is assembled every morning at 9AM.</i>	Simple Future WILL BE + Past Participle <i>The class will be assembled by 9AM tomorrow.</i>
Progressive^{viii} (Continuous) Tenses	Past Progressive WAS/WERE + BEING + Past Participle <i>The class was being assembled when the bell rang.</i>	Present Progressive AM/IS/ARE + BEING + Past Participle <i>The class is being assembled.</i>	
Perfect Tenses	Past Perfect HAD BEEN + Past Participle <i>The class had been assembled by 9AM.</i>	Present Perfect HAVE/HAS + BEEN + Past Participle <i>The class has been assembled.</i>	Future Perfect WILL HAVE BEEN + Past Participle <i>The class will have been assembled by the time the bell rings.</i>
Perfect Progressive Tenses			

ⁱ When indicating prior made plans, *BE + going to + simple form* is generally used. When indicating willingness, *will + simple form* is generally used. Both can be used for predictions.

ⁱⁱ Progressive tenses may also be called “continuous” tenses.

ⁱⁱⁱ Verbs with stative meanings, such as **know, love, have,** and **exist,** are not used in progressive tenses. These “stative” verbs express mental and emotional states, possession, sense perception and existential states. For a list of stative verbs, see Betty Azar’s *Understanding and Using English Grammar, 3rd ed.* p. 15.

^{iv} Present participles end in –ing e.g. working, swimming. For a list of spelling rules for present participles, see Betty Azar’s *Understanding and Using English Grammar, 3rd ed.* p. 10.

^v Past participles generally end in –ed but may be irregular e.g. worked, swam, ran. For a list of spelling rules for past participles and examples of irregular verb forms, see Betty Azar’s *Understanding and Using English Grammar, 3rd ed.* pp.10 & 22-23.

^{vi} Perfect and perfect progressive tenses can sometimes be used to express the same meaning e.g. We have lived /have been living here for several years.

^{vii} In the passive voice, the object of the active verb moves into the subject position, and the subject becomes the object of an optional “by phrase.” For example, “The firefighters extinguished the fire” becomes “The fire was extinguished (by the firefighters).” Only transitive verbs (those that take a direct object) can be used in the passive voice. Intransitive verbs e.g. *sleep, come, seem* cannot be used in the passive voice.

^{viii} The future progressive and the past, present and future perfect progressive forms are almost never used in the passive voice e.g. “The bride will be being photographed at 3:00 this afternoon.” The meaning is clear, but the structure is avoided due to awkwardness.