

**UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER**  
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**SSC – 245**

## Verb Tense

**Overview:** Verbs are divided into three main tenses: present, past, and future. These are then divided into sub-categories, called simple, progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive. Each tense helps to illustrate the timing of a particular action. It is important to understand when to use the different verb tenses, as it will help the reader clearly understand when the action in your writing is taking place.

	Simple	Progressive	Perfect	Perfect Progressive
<b>Present</b>	walk	am/is/are	have/has	have/has been
		walking	walked	walking
<b>Past</b>	walked	was/were	had	had been
		walking	walked	walking
<b>Future</b>	will/shall	will be	will have	will have been
	walk	walking	walked	walking

## Simple Tenses

- The **simple present tense** represents an action or condition taking place at common or regular time. The original verb form is most often, if not always, in the present tense form.
  - Example of the **simple present tense**:
    - I *walk* to the University Writing Center each morning.
- The **simple past tense** represents an action which started and finished at a past time. To form the simple present tense add a *-d* or *-ed* ending to the present tense verb form. But be careful: some past tense verbs are irregular and don't follow this standard formation but change internally.
  - Examples of the **simple past tense**:
    - Last semester Joe *walked* to the University Writing Center each morning.
    - Last semester Brenda *went* (not "*goed*") to the University Writing Center for help writing an essay.

- The **simple future tense** represents an action which will happen in the future. To form the simple future tense verb, it is always necessary to use *will* or *shall* before the present tense form of the verb.
    - Example of the **simple future tense**:
      - In the fall, they *will walk* to the University Writing Center together each morning.
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## Progressive Tenses

- The **present progressive tense** represents an action that is in progress at the same time it is being written. To form the present progressive verb, it is always necessary to use *am*, *is*, or *are* with and add an *-ing* ending to the present tense form of the verb.
    - Example of the **present progressive tense**:
      - I *am walking* to the University Writing Center.
  - The **past progressive tense** represents an action that took place at a certain time in the past. To form the past progressive verb, it is always necessary to use *was* or *were* with and add an *-ing* ending to the present tense form of the verb.
    - Example of the **past progressive tense**:
      - Joe *was walking* to the University Writing Center last night.
  - The **future progressive tense** represents an action that continues and will happen in the future. To form the future progressive tense, it is always necessary to use *will be* or *shall be* with and add an *-ing* ending to the present tense form of the verb.
    - Example of the **future progressive tense**:
      - They *will be walking* to the University Writing Center each morning in the fall.
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## Perfect Tenses

- The **present perfect tense** represents an action that began in the past but continues into the present. To form the present perfect tense, it is always necessary to use the helping verb *have* or *has* with the past participle form of the verb.
    - Example of the **present perfect tense**:
      - I *have walked* to the University Writing Center for over two years.
  - The **past perfect tense** represents a past action that happened in the past before another past action. To form the past perfect tense, it is always necessary to use *had* with the past participle form of the verb.
    - Example of the **past perfect tense**:
      - Joe *had walked* to the University Writing Center before he bought his new car.
  - The **future perfect tense** represents a future action that will happen before another future action. To form the future perfect tense, it is always necessary to use *will have* with the past participle form of the verb.
    - Example of the **future perfect tense**:
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- They *will have walked* to the University Writing Center each morning in the fall before going to the Beach Hut for coffee.
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## Perfect Progressive Tense

- The **present perfect progressive tense** represents an action beginning in the past that continues in the present and will perhaps continue in the future. To form the present perfect progressive tense, it is always necessary to use *has been* or *have been* with and add an *-ing* ending to the present tense form of the verb.
  - Example of the **present progressive tense**:
    - For the past two years, I *have been walking* to the University Writing Center.
- The **past perfect progressive tense** represents a past action that continued but was completed prior to another past action. To form the past perfect progressive tense, it is always necessary to use *had been* with and add an *-ing* ending to the present tense form of the verb.
  - Example of the **past perfect progressive tense**:
    - Before he bought his new car, Joe *had been walking* to the University Writing Center.
- The **future perfect progressive tense** represents a future action that continues before another future time. To form the future perfect progressive tense, it is always necessary to use *will have been* with and add an *-ing* ending to the present tense form of the verb.
  - Example of the **future perfect progressive tense**:
    - This coming fall they *will have been walking* to the University Writing Center each morning for three years.

**Practice:** Remember that it is not necessarily important to know the specific names of the different verb tenses; however, when and how to use them is important. Also, do not rely on your computer's grammar check to flag all verb tense errors. A computer is programmed by mathematical formulas and cannot reason as humans do, so it is not always a reliable source. If you are having trouble understanding verb tense consistency, click on the link here for more information.