

Verb Tenses in English

Present Tense

There are four main types of present tense in English:

1. the **simple present** tense is the most common present tense. It describes actions happening now or actions that happen regularly:
She **walks** slowly. I **walk** to school every day. He **is** tall.
2. the **present continuous** tense describes actions that are happening around (and including) the time when you are speaking:
I **am walking** to the store now.
3. the **present perfect** tense describes an activity that, as of right now, has been completed or has ended. The exact time when the action happened is not important, so it is ignored for this tense:
I **have seen** her before. I **have lived** in a lot of places.
4. the **present perfect continuous** tense describes an action that started in the past and has been ongoing without stopping up to the present time. The duration of the action is usually mentioned in this tense:
I **have been living** in McKinney for eight years.

Special Note on Present Continuous

Note that **present continuous** tense statements like 'I am going to school' can be used in present *and* future contexts, or to describe a trend.

Present Context

- I **am going** to school. (I am on my way to school as I say this.)
- I'm leaving. (I **am leaving** right now.)

Future Context

- I am going to school every day next week. (I **will go** to school every day next week.)
- I'm going to the beach tomorrow. (I **will go** to the beach tomorrow.)

Describing a Trend

- More and more people **are becoming** vegetarians.

Past Tense

There are four main types of past tense in English:

1. the **simple past** tense describes an activity that took place (was completed) in the past:
I **walked** to school yesterday.
2. the **past continuous** tense describes an activity that was ongoing in the past at the time you are talking about:
I **was walking** to school when I started to feel sick.
3. the **past perfect** tense describes an activity that was completed in the past before the time you are talking about:
I **had walked** down that same road the day before.
4. the **past perfect continuous** tense describes an activity that started before the time you are talking about, but *had not been completed*, meaning that it *continued* at least up until the time you are talking about:
I **had been walking** for an hour when I realized that I was lost.
I **had been eating** for a while when they arrived.

Future Tense

There are four main types of future tense in English:

1. the **simple future** tense describes an activity that you will *complete* in the future:
I **will eat** some sushi when I'm on vacation.
2. the **future continuous** tense describes an activity that will be *ongoing* at the point you're talking about in the future:
I **will be eating** sushi tonight when you call me.
3. the **future perfect** tense describes an activity that will be *complete* by the specific time you are talking about:
I **will have eaten** by the time you get here.
4. the **future perfect continuous** tense describes an action or activity that will be in progress but *not completed* by the time some *other* action takes place in the future:
I **will have been eating** for a while by the time she gets there.