

Verbs

A shows what a subject does (action), or it helps describe a subject.

Shows action: *Pediatricians **treat** children.*

Helps describe: *They **are** medical specialists.*

NOTE: Words that end in *-ing* cannot act as verbs unless they are paired with helping verbs, such as *are, is, was, and were*.

*The surgeons **are** removing the patient's gall bladder.*

LEARN WHAT A VERB DOES

A Verb

1. Tell what a does, did, or will do.
2. Tells what is, has been, or will be done to a subject.
3. Describes a subject by joining it with .

A Verb Shows Action by Telling What a Subject Does, Did, or Will Do

Present: *Coyotes howl at the moon as it shines on the hills.*

Past: *John Donne wrote poetry and sermons.*

Future: *My sister will major in Spanish.*

A Verb Shows Action by Telling What Is Done to a Subject

Present: *Raspberries are baked in delicious pastries.*

Past: *Andrea was elected class president.*

Future: *Science 109 will be offered in the spring term.*

A Verb Describes a Subject by Joining It with Adjectives

Present: *The house is old, large, and drafty.*

Past: *Richard was intelligent.*

Future: *When remodeled, our kitchen will be spacious.*

MASTER VERB TENSES

The of the verb shows time: past, present, and future. Verbs can be classified as regular and irregular. Regular verbs follow set patterns in all tenses. Irregular verbs do not; they change their forms and have to be learned individually.

PRESENT TENSE

In the present tense, a verb tells what is happening right now. The present tense also shows action that happens over and over again. Therefore, you can write

I eat chili with meat and rice.

OR

I eat chili with meat and rice every Thursday.

NOTE: The third person singular is the only exception to the rule. It ends in –s.

Present Tense – The Irregular Verb *To Be*

The irregular verb *to be* significantly changes its spelling in the present tense.

		Singular		Plural
First Person:	I	am	We	are
Second Person:	You	are	You	are
Third Person:	He, She, It, One	is	They	are

PAST TENSE

Verbs in the past tense relate action or events that have been completed. To form the past tense of a regular verb, add –d or –ed to the verb’s basic form:

I lived in Alabama once.

You ruined my new shirt.

Jana earned \$500 a week.

We helped my parents move.

You carried the burden yourselves.

They visited me in the hospital.

Past Tense – Irregular Verbs

The past tense of irregular verbs is formed in various ways. These verbs don’t follow a pattern. That’s why they are called *irregular*. A list of irregular verbs appears below. You will want to make a copy and study it.

Irregular Verbs—Present and Past

Present	Past	Present	Past	Present	Past
arise	arose	fall	fell	ride	rode
awake	awoke	feel	felt	rise	rose
beat	beat	fly	flew	run	ran
break	broke	forgive	forgave	see	saw
bring	brought	get	got	send	sent
catch	caught	give	gave	sit	sat
choose	chose	go	went	speak	spoke
cling	clung	hold	held	steal	stole
come	came	keep	kept	teach	taught
dig	dug	know	knew	tear	tore
do	did	lead	led	throw	threw
draw	drew	lose	lost	win	won
drive	drove	make	made	write	wrote
eat	ate	meet	met		

Once you know the past tense of an irregular verb, you can apply it in all cases.

		Singular		Plural
First Person:	I	drove	We	drove
Second Person:	You	drove	You	drove
Third Person:	He, She, It, One	drove	They	drove

NOTE: The only exception is the past tense of *to be*.

Past Tense – The Irregular Verb *To Be*

		Singular		Plural
First Person:	I	was	We	were
Second Person:	You	were	You	were
Third Person:	He, She, It, One	was	They	were

NOTE: The first and third person singular are different from all the rest.

FUTURE TENSE

The future tense tells us what will be true or what will happen at a later time. To form the future tense, attach the helping verbs *will*, *is going to*, or *are going to* to the basic form of the verb:

She will meet you tomorrow at the gym.

Ari is going to visit Japan next year.

THE PERFECT TENSES

The present perfect uses the helping verb *have* or *has* with the past participle of a verb. The past perfect uses the helping verb *had* with the past participle. To form the past participle of regular verbs, add *-d* or *-ed* to the basic form of the verb.

NOTE: The present, past, present participles, and past participles of irregular verbs do not follow a pattern. You must learn each of them individually.

GUIDE TO IRREGULAR VERBS			
Present	Past	Present Participle	Past Participle
arise	arose	arising	arisen
awake	awoke	awaking	awaked
beat	beat	beating	beaten
break	broke	breaking	broken
bring	brought	bringing	brought
catch	caught	catching	caught
can	could		
choose	chose	choosing	chosen
cling	clung	clinging	clung
come	came	coming	came
dig	dug	digging	dug
do	did	doing	done
draw	drew	drawing	drawn
drive	drove	driving	driven
eat	ate	eating	eaten
fall	fell	falling	fallen
feel	felt	feeling	felt
fly	flew	flying	flown
forgive	forgave	forgiving	forgiven
get	got	getting	got, gotten
give	gave	giving	given

go	went	going	gone
hang	hanged	hanging	hanged (to execute someone)
hang	hung	hanging	hung (to hang a thing)
hold	held	holding	held
keep	kept	keeping	kept
know	knew	knowing	known
lead	led	leading	led
lose	lost	losing	lost
make	made	making	made
meet	met	meeting	met
ride	rode	riding	ridden
rise	rose	rising	risen
run	ran	running	run
see	saw	seeing	seen
send	sent	sending	sent
sit	sat	sitting	sat
speak	spoke	speaking	spoken
steal	stole	stealing	stolen
teach	taught	teaching	taught
tear	tore	tearing	torn
throw	threw	throwing	thrown
win	won	winning	won
Write	wrote	writing	written

The Present Perfect

Use the present perfect to talk about actions that begin in the past and continue into the present. Verbs in present perfect use the helping verb *have* except in the third person singular. Then they use *has*.

I have run two miles a day for six years.
They have developed new drugs to fight AIDS.

The Past Perfect

Use the past perfect to talk about actions that happened in the past and that came before other events that happened in the past. Verbs in the past perfect use the helping word *had*, the past tense of *have*, in all cases.

Before the revolution, Russia had been a monarchy.

You might even use of the future tense in a third sentence:

*However, knowing Spanish **will help** me with the career **I will pursue** after graduation.*

Your finished paragraph might look like this:

I study Spanish two hours a day, but I still have trouble passing tests in that class. In high school, I barely studied Spanish two hours a week, yet I got good grades. However, knowing Spanish will help me with the career I will pursue after graduation.

CAUTION: Do not shift from one tense to another without purpose. For example, **DO NOT** write the following:

*I **study** Spanish two hours a day, but I still **had** trouble passing tests in that class.*

Being Logical When Changing Tenses in a Sentence

Sometimes you will need to talk about things happening at different times in the same sentence, and you will have to use more than one tense. Just make sure you move from tense to tense logically:

past **present** **future**
*Friends who **spoke** to Jake yesterday **say** now that he **will arrive** tomorrow.*

Being Consistent When Using the Perfect Tenses

The present perfect uses the helping verb *have* or *has* with the past participle of a main verb. To form the past participle of regular verbs, add *-d* or *-ed* to the basic form of the verb. A list of participles for irregular verbs can be found in this chapter.

Using the Present Perfect Tense

To maintain consistency, remember that the present perfect is used to talk about actions that begin in the past and continue into the present.

Not: *He **is** interested in stamp collecting ever since he **was** 17.*

But: *He **has been** interested in stamp collecting ever since he **was** 17.*

Using the Past Perfect Tense

Verbs in the past perfect use for helping word *had* with the past participle of a verb. To maintain consistency, remember that the past perfect is used to talk about actions that happened in the past but that came before other past events.

Not: *Before Columbus **came** to America, the Mayans **built** a remarkable civilization.*

But: *Before Columbus **came** to America, the Mayans **had built** a remarkable civilization.*

THE PROGRESIVE TENSES

The progressive tenses combine forms of the verb *to be* with present participles. Present participles always end in *-ing*. Use the progressive tense to show continuing action.

<i>I am studying.</i>	<i>We have been eating pizza.</i>
<i>You are trying hard.</i>	<i>You are holding up traffic.</i>
<i>She was sleeping.</i>	<i>They will be discussing taxes.</i>

The Present Progressive

The present progressive shows continuing action in the present. It combines the present tense of the verb *to be* with the present participle.

I am watching you!

Someone is parking in my spot!

They are visiting relatives.

The Past Progressive

The past progressive shows continuing action in the past. It combines the past tense of the verb *to be* with the present participle.

I was standing on the corner.

We were speaking very loudly.

They were shouting.

The Future Progressive

The future progressive shows continuing action in the future. It combines *will be*, which is the future tense of the verb *to be*, with the present participle.

Prof. Martinez will be attending a symposium for three days.

Next year, automakers will be negotiating a labor contract.

USE LINKING VERBS, HELPING VERBS, AND MODALS

Linking verbs do not show action. Instead, they help describe a subject by connecting it to a , , or . Linking verbs include *am, are, is, was, and were*.

To a noun: *She was the queen of his heart.*

To a pronoun: *It is I!*

To an adjective: *Our bellies were full.*

Helping verbs are used with main verbs to form the future, the perfect, and the progressive tenses. They include forms of the verbs *to be*, such as *am, are, be, been, being, is, was, and were*. They also include *will* and *shall* and forms of the verbs *to have* and *to do*.

The engineers were draining the swamp.

The scholarship ball has raised thousands of dollars.

Including Needed Helping Verbs

Sometimes leaving out needed helping verbs can cause a sentence fragment, that is, a sentence that is not complete, or can create a subject/verb agreement error.

Fragment: *She carrying the baby in her arms.*

Complete: *She was carrying the baby in her arms.*

Agreement error: *The band practice on Thursday.*

Correct: *The band will practice on Thursday.*

Modals are helping verbs. Unlike most helping verbs, however, they cannot act as main verbs. They are used before main verbs to create special meanings.

can	do	may	shall	will
could	does	might	should	would
	did	must		

*Stephanie **can** drive a tractor.*

*He **must** return by midnight or face the consequences.*

Andrea **should** win the award for best actress.

If you **will** cook the snails, I **will** eat them.

LEARN TO USE VERB MOODS

What is Mood?

Verbs come in various tenses. They also come in four : **indicative**, **imperative**, **subjunctive**, and **conditional**. A verb's mood helps show the writer's intention or purpose.

Use the **indicative mood** to make a statement or ask a question:

*How many people in this country **have** hay fever?*

*Twenty – two million Americans **suffer** from this allergy.*

The **imperative mood** gets its name from “imperial,” an adjective describing empires. It is natural that the imperative be used to give commands. However, it is also used to make requests and give directions.

Command: ***Close** the door!*

Request: *Please **pass** the gravy.*

Directions: ***Turn** right at the traffic light.*

The **subjunctive mood** is used for three purposes:

1. To express a wish or desire.
2. To explain a demand, a request, or a suggestion.
3. To make a statement that is contrary to fact.

Wish: *I wish I **owned** [not own] a Corvette.*

Demand: *The police demanded that the thief **drop** [not drops] the gun.*

Contrary to fact: *If Sam **were** [not was] patient, he would master the computer easily.*

NOTE: In the subjunctive mood, the past tense is expressed with the helping verb *had*.

*If she **had gone** [not went], she would have enjoyed herself.*

*If he **had left** [not left] earlier, he would have avoided traffic.*

The **conditional mood** is used to answer questions such as *What would happen if?* or *What happens when?* A conditional sentence usually begins with an “if” or “when” clause, which states the condition. The first clause is followed by a clause that tells what will happen “if” or “when” that condition comes true.

If we do well this term, we will keep our scholarships.

When a parolee commits a crime, he or she is returned to jail immediately.

The conditional and the indicative forms are the same. The problem comes in distinguishing the conditional from the subjunctive.

Conditional: *If he **exercises**, he will lose weight.*

Subjunctive: *If he **were exercising**, he would lose weight.*

The conditional says he will lose weight, but only if he exercises. The subjunctive says that he is not exercising and that he is not losing weight. In many cases, the second clause of a conditional sentence contains *will*; the second clause in a subjunctive sentence contains *would*.

USE GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES CORRECTLY

A **gerund** is an *-ing* noun formed from a verb. A gerund names an activity and is used the same way any other noun is.

Subject: ***Hiking** is my favorite sport.*

Object: *The French have perfected **wine making**.*

An **infinitive** is the basic form of a verb preceded by *to*. Infinitives can be nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

Noun: ***To cry** over a friend's death is not a sign of weakness.*

Adjective: *When I go shopping, I make a list of things **to buy**.*

Adverb: *She stopped **to buy** some groceries.*

Using Gerunds and Infinitives with Verbs

Some verbs can be used with both and with no change in meaning:

Gerund: *I love **watching** old science – fiction movies.*

Infinitive: *I love **to watch** old science – fiction movies.*

However, other verbs mean one thing when used with a gerund and another when used with an infinitive:

Gerund: *Ali forgot **writing** a check to the landlord.*

Infinitive: *Ali forgot **to write** a check to the landlord.*

USE THE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICES

Verbs have tenses and moods. They also have voices. The voice is the form a verb takes to indicate whether the subject of the sentence does an action or is acted upon.

Active: *Ramon **wrote** the letter.*

Passive: *The letter **was written** by Ramon.*

A sentence in the active voice uses a subject, person, place, or thing that does an action. A sentence in the passive voice uses a subject that is acted upon.

In general, Choose the Active over the Passive Voice

There are four problems with using the passive voice:

1. Since the passive requires more words than the active voice requires, the former can make a sentence wordy.

Active: *The small audience **applauded** the violinist.*

Passive: *The violinist **was applauded by** the small audience.*

- The passive voice sometimes takes emphasis away from the subject and makes a sentence awkward and hard to read.

Active: *The small children **ran** into the house.*

Passive: *The house **was run** into by the small children.*

- Using the passive voice might cause the writer to forget to include the subject. This omission might be a serious mistake, for knowing the doer of an action is often just as important as knowing what happened.

Active: *Governor Santiago **approved** funds for a new super highway.*

Passive: *The funds for a new super highway **were approved**.*

2. Using the passive voice can lead to sentence structure problems.

Problem: *Going down in the elevator, the verdict **was discussed** by the lawyers.*

Correct: *Going down in the elevator, the lawyers **discussed** the verdict.*

NOTE: In the first example, the modifier (adjective) *going down in the elevator* seems to refer to the verdict. That, of course, would make the sentence illogical.

WHEN TO USE THE PASSIVE VOICE: TWO EXCEPTIONS

1. Using the passive voice can help you emphasize the action over the doer of an action.

Passive: *Ann **was elected** to the Monroe city council.*

The sentence above places more emphasis on Ann's election than does the following version:

Active: *The citizens of Monroe **elected** Ann to the city council.*

2. Using the passive voice is also appropriate when you don't know who did an action.

*Doors and windows **had been left open**; books, clothing, and small items of furniture **had been scattered** across the room; and curtains, sheets, and blankets **had been torn** to shreds.*

AVOID ILLOGICAL VOICE SHIFTS

Verbs take various tenses. They also come in active voice or passive voice. A verb in the active voice takes a subject – person, place, or thing – that does an action. A verb in the passive voice takes a subject that is acted upon.

Active: *The students admire the teacher.*

Passive: *The teacher is admired by the students.*

NOTE: Verbs in the passive voice always contain at least two words: a form of the verb to be (is) and the participle (admired).

CAUTION: Shifting from one voice to another in the same sentence often makes the sentence hard to read. Shifting the voice also makes your message less direct and emphatic.

Inconsistent: *Beautiful birds were seen as she entered the garden.*

Consistent: *She saw beautiful birds as she entered the garden.*

The first example begins in the passive voice and then shifts to the active. In the second example, both verbs are in the active voice.

Sample Quiz questions:

1. Choose the words that would correctly complete the sentence. Click on the right choice. As a child, Susan did not like basketball, but ...
 - a. she liked it now.
 - b. she likes it now.
 - c. she will like it now.
 - d. she had liked it now.

Answer: b. she likes it now.

2. Choose the sentence that uses the correct verb forms.
 - a. Many people decide to buy digital cameras even though their film cameras work perfectly.
 - b. Many people decided to buy digital cameras even though their film cameras work perfectly.
 - c. Many people decided buying digital cameras even though their film cameras work perfectly.

Answer: a. Many people decide to buy digital cameras even though their film cameras work perfectly.

3. Choose the sentence that contains a verb in simple present tense.
 - d. Julie arises for work every day at 5 A.M.
 - e. Julie arose for work every day at 5 A.M.
 - f. Julie will arise for work every day at 5 A.M.

Answer: a. Julie arises for work every day at 5 A.M.

4. Identify the verb(s) in the following sentence. I learned computer programming and wrote my own software.
 - a. learned/wrote
 - b. learned/programming
 - c. programming/software

Answer: a. learned/wrote