

Basic Verb Tenses

In this lesson, you'll review the three basic verb tenses of English and learn about the "perfect" aspect of each of those tenses.

The three basic verb tenses in English are present, past, and future.

We use present tense to write about facts, opinions, or things that happen regularly.

In the example below, the present tense of hire is used to explain that web technicians are regularly hired:

*They **hire** web technicians.*

We use past tense to write about the past.

In the example below, the past tense of hire is used to explain that web technicians were hired in the past:

*They **hired** web technicians.*

We use future tense to write about future events.

In the example below, the future tense of hire is used to explain that web technicians will be hired in the future:

*They **will** hire web technicians.*

Much can be expressed with these three basic tenses. However, in some situations, we need to express a more complex idea. In this case, the perfect tense can be helpful. Let's learn more about perfect tenses.

Past Participles with Perfect Tense

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In most cases, the past participle of a verb is formed the same way the past tense is formed—by adding "ed," "d," or "t" at the end of the verb.

However, irregular verbs have different constructions for the past tense and past participle. In the chart below, the irregular verbs are in *italics*:

Past Participle Constructions

Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle
Hire	Hired	hired
Call	Called	called
<i>Choose</i>	<i>Chose</i>	<i>chosen</i>
<i>Fly</i>	<i>Flew</i>	<i>flown</i>
<i>Begin</i>	<i>Began</i>	<i>begun</i>

Perfect Tenses

The word perfect in grammar means completed. So, perfect tenses refer to actions that have been completed, yet have a connection with other time frames. Let's look at each of the perfect tenses now.

Present Perfect

The present perfect tells about an action that happened in the past and is still happening. It also refers to an action that happened in the past and the **effects** of that action are still happening.

It is formed by using has or have with the past participle form of the verb. Let's look at an example:

*Thomas **has worked** here for ten years.*

In the above sentence, we know that ten years ago, Thomas started working at the company (completed action) and that he still works at the company (it is still happening). Let's look at another example:

*I **have driven** that route to work.*

In this example, we know that the person drove the route at least once before (completed action) and that the person still knows about the route (effect of the action is still happening). Notice that the verb, *drive*, is irregular, so its past participle form, *driven*, is different than regular verbs.

Past Perfect

The past perfect tells about an action that happened *before* another action happened in the past.

It is formed by using *had* with the past participle form of the verb. The action that happened *after* the past perfect action is then written. This is done by using the word or phrase *before*, *when*, or *by the time*, followed by a simple past tense verb. Let's see an example:

*The chef **had cooked** the meal **by the time** the waitress **arrived**.*

In the above sentence, we know that *before* the waitress arrived (simple past action), the chef cooked the meal (past action that happened before another past action). Let's look at another example:

*The fax machine **had broken** **before** the printer **disappeared**.*

In this example, we know that *before* the printer disappeared (simple past action), the fax machine broke (past action that happened before another past action).

Future Perfect

The future perfect tells about an action that will happen at a specific time in the future. The future perfect also tells about an action that will happen in the future *before* another future action.

It is formed by using the phrase *will have* with the past participle form of the verb. Let's look at an example.

*Julie **will have worked** here for fifteen years by the end of this year.*

In the above sentence, we know that when the end of the year comes (a specific time in the future), Julie will have worked (future perfect action) at the company for fifteen years. Let's look at another example:

*The conference **will have started** by the time we arrive.*

In this example, we know that when they arrive (future action), the conference will have started (future perfect action).