

# VERB TENSE RULES-SIMPLE TENSES

## SIMPLE PRESENT

The simple present is most typically used when

A> some activity or task is done (or not done) regularly.

examples:

--I brush my teeth in the morning and evening.

--Students usually try hard in college.

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-or-

B> something that is presented as a known fact.

--College students need support.

--Some students sometimes need more help.

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You will find the simple present used a lot with frequency adverbs, such as never, sometimes, seldom, rarely, always, mostly, etc. to show that it is a routine action.

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In simple present, the I, you, we and they pronouns and plural names always get the base form.

For the he, she, it pronouns and singular names add an "s" at the end. Also, the negative form is does+not+base form, or with "to be," it is am not, is not, or are not.

## SIMPLE PAST

The simple past is most commonly used when

--an action that was started in the past was also completed in the past.

examples:

I finished my work.

I ate lunch earlier.

You were here, and so was I.

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You will see that the simple past can have an adverb of time after it, if it is necessary for meaning. However, it is not required.

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Simple past is also used when you are doing reported speech. If you are talking about a past conversation, use simple past. **WARNING: If you are quoting a source from a book or article, use simple present for the signal verbs, not simple past.**

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Also, be aware that some verbs have irregular forms in the past. This means they do not have -"ed" endings. The negative form is did+not+base form verb, or, for "to be," it is was not/were not.

## SIMPLE FUTURE

The simple future is used when --an action has not been started yet and will be started in the future.

examples:

I will do my homework later.

I will play soccer.

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Simple future always requires the use of the helping verb "will" when making a sentence. Furthermore, since "will" is a helping verb, the verb tense of the main verb will always stay in base form.

examples:

will see, will work, will ask

--For this tense, it does no matter if it is I, you, we, they, he, she, it or a singular or plural name. The structure of this tense is always will+verb (base form)

--Don't use the simple future tense in time clauses about the future. Use simple present instead.

example:

I will not leave the office until I finish the report.

-The negative for will be will+not+verb in base form.

# VERB TENSES--PERFECT TENSES

## PRESENT PERFECT

The present perfect is widely used when you started an action in the past, and have recently completed it. examples:

I have done the homework.

I have eaten lunch.

--It is different from the simple past completed action because you use the present perfect to talk about something that happened in the past that has an effect on the present. This means that you cannot add last week, yesterday, last year, two hours ago at the end.

--Because it is based on the completion of an action now that started in the past, present perfect will have an element called the "past participle." Therefore, the construction of a present perfect verb form is

(with I, you, we, they, plural name)

have + past participle

(with he, she, it, singular name)

has + past participle

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The negative form is have (or has) + not + past participle.

## PAST PERFECT

The past perfect is used when you started and finished an action in the past and another action finished as well in the past. The first action that was finished will have the "had + past participle" form, and the second completed action will be in simple past.

examples:

I had completed my homework by the time you arrived.

I had played soccer for two hours before my friends came.

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A good past perfect sentence will usually have some type of time element to make meaning clear.

examples:

I had finished lunch when you arrived.

I had worked on my paper for two hours before the professor said that class was cancelled.

With past perfect, since it uses the helping verb "had," all subjects, singular or plural, will use "had + past participle" to make past perfect.

The negative form is had+not+past participle

## FUTURE PERFECT

The future perfect is used when you have a "future action that will be completed prior to a specific future time." (Celce and Larsen, *The Grammar Book*) examples:

I will have completed my homework by the time you arrive.

I will have played soccer for two hours when you pick me up.

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The same time element that you see in past perfect needs to be here since you have two actions, and not just one. The earlier action that will be completed in the future will have the will + have + past participle construction while the later action will be in simple present.

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The future perfect is a more difficult tense and is used occasionally. In some cases, it is acceptable to choose simple future instead since the time clause in both simple future and future perfect is in simple present.

example:

My homework will be completed by the time you arrive.

--The negative form of future tense is will + not+ have +past participle.