

The function of verbs is to convey an action or indicate a relationship between the subject and other words in a sentence. Another vital function of verbs is the expression of time. They show when an action or situation occurs in the present, future, or past. The time expressed by a verb is called the verb tense. As verbs change their time, or tense, they also change their form. Most verbs are regular, meaning that their tenses change in consistent ways. Using verb tenses correctly is one way to ensure that your writing will convey your ideas clearly.

Present tense describes an action or situation that is happening now.
Future tense describes an action or situation that has not occurred yet.
Past tense describes an action or situation that has already occurred.

Present Tense

Present Tense indicates action that is going on right now!

For regular verbs, the form of the present tense varies according to the subject. If the subject is singular, it refers to one person or thing. For present tense singular, you add –s (or –es if the verb ends in –sh, –ch, or –x) to end the basic verb.

Example

Singular: My friend laughs at all the instructor’s bad jokes.

Plural: Most children watch too much television.

If the subjects change, the verbs will also change accordingly.

Example

Singular: My friends laugh at all the instructor’s bad jokes.

Plural: The average child watches too much television.

Present Tense Verbs with Pronoun Subjects		
	Singular	Plural
First Person	I climb.	We climb.
Second Person	You climb.	You climb.
Third Person	He/She/It climbs.	They climb.

Future Tense

Writers use future tense to describe an action that has not occurred yet or a relationship that is to come.

You can change regular verbs to future tense by adding *will* to the basic verb. In the future tense, the verb endings –s and –es are not needed. Singular and plural forms are the same.

Example

Present: The employees enjoy their new spacious office.

Future: The employees will enjoy their new spacious office.

Past Tense

Writers use the past tense to describe an action or situation that has already occurred.

The key letters utilized in constructing past tense sentences are the letters –ed. For regular verbs, you can form the past tense by adding –ed to the basic verb form. If the basic form ends in –e, add –d. The endings for singular and plural forms are the same.

Example

Present Tense: After midnight, the waitress cleans all the sticky tables.

Past Tense: After midnight, the waitress cleaned all the sticky tables.

To further summarize Simple Present, Past, and Future tense, refer to the table below:

Tenses	Basic or “I” Form	Form for Plural Subjects	Form for Singular Subjects
For the simple present tense , use the basic verb form. Add –s or –es for singular subjects.	I walk a mile every day.	Harvey and Sheila walk a mile every day. They walk a mile.	Norton walks a mile every day. He walks a mile.
For the simple future tense , use the basic verb form plus <i>will</i> . Use the same verb form for both singular and plural subjects.	I will walk a mile every day.	Harvey and Sheila will walk a mile every day. They will walk a mile.	Norton will walk a mile every day. He will walk a mile.
For the simple past tense , use the basic verb form plus –d or –ed. Use the same verb form for both singular and plural subjects.	I walked a mile every day.	Harvey and Sheila walked a mile every day. They walked a mile every day.	Norton walked a mile every day. He walked a mile.

Perfect Tenses

In the Perfect tenses (Past Perfect, Present Perfect and Future Perfect), just add to the past participle (the –ed form of the verb).

The helping verbs to use are: *had, has, and have*.

VERB TENSE

Helping Verb	+	Past Participle	=	Perfect Tense
had		walked		had walked
has		walked		has walked
have		walked		have walked

The rest is simple. Take a look at the chart below to grasp how to make the items into perfect tense using the past participle.

Tense	Helping Verbs	Examples
Present Perfect	had	He had jumped over the barricade.
Past Perfect	has or have	He has performed an act of violence before. The workers have exhibited this behavior before.
Future Perfect	will or have	Many events will have happened before. The events have happened before.

Irregular Verb Forms		
Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle (+ <i>has, had, have</i>)
am, is, are	was, were	been
arise	arose	arisen
awaken	awoke	awoken
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bend	bent	bent
bind	bound	bound
bite	bit	bitten, bit
bleed	bled	bled
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
build	built	built
burn	burned, burnt	burned, burnt
burst	burst	burst
buy	bought	bought
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
cling	clung	clung
come	came	come
cost	cost	cost
creep	crept	crept

VERB TENSE**PS-18**

cut	cut	cut
deal	dealt	dealt
dig	dug	dug
dive	dived, dove	dived
do/does	did	done
Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle (+ <i>has, had, have</i>)
draw	drew	drawn
dream	dreamed, dreamt	dreamed, dreamt
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
feed	fed	fed
feel	felt	felt
fight	fought	fought
find	found	found
flee	fled	fled
fling	flung	flung
fly	flew	flown
forbid	forbade, forbad	forbidden
forget	forgot	forgotten
freeze	froze	frozen
get	got	got, gotten
give	gave	given
go/goes	went	gone
grind	ground	ground
hang	hung	hung
have/has	had	had
hear	heard	heard
hid	hid	hidden, hid
hold	held	held
hurt	hurt	hurt
keep	kept	kept
kneel	knelt, kneeled	knelt, kneeled
knit	knit, knitted	knit, knitted
know	knew	known
lay	laid	laid
lead	led	led
leap	leaped, leapt	leaped, leapt
leave	left	left
let	let	let
lie	lay	lain
light	lighted, lit	lighted, lit
lose	lost	lost

VERB TENSE**PS-18**

make	made	made
mean	meant	meant
meet	met	met
mistake	mistook	mistaken
pay	paid	paid
Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle (+ <i>has, had, have</i>)
plead	pleaded, pled	pleaded, pled
prove	proved	proved, proven
put	put	put
quit	quit	quit
raise	raised	raised
read	read	read
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
run	ran	run
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
seek	sought	sought
sell	sold	sold
send	sent	sent
set	set	set
sew	sewed	sewn, sewed
shake	shook	shaken
shine	shined	shone
shoot	shot	shot
shrink	shrank, shrunk	shrunk, shrunken
shut	shut	shut
sing	sang, sung	sung
sit	sat	sat
sleep	slept	slept
slid	slid	slid
sling	slung	slung
slink	slunk, slinked	slunk, slinked
sow	sowed	sown, sowed
speak	spoke	spoken
speed	sped, speeded	sped, speeded
spell	spelled	spelled
spend	spent	spent
spit	spit, spat	spit, spat
spring	sprang, sprung	sprung
stand	stood	stood
steal	stole	stolen
stick	stuck	stuck

VERB TENSE**PS-18**

sting	stung	stung
stink	stank, stunk	stunk
stride	strode	stridden
strike	struck	struck, stricken
string	strung	strung
Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle (+ <i>has, had, have</i>)
strive	strived, strove	striven, strived
swear	swore	sworn
sweat	sweat, sweated	sweat, sweated
swell	swelled	swelled
swim	swam	swum
swing	swung	swung
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
tear	tore	torn
tell	told	told
throw	threw	thrown
understand	understood	understood
wake	woke, waked	woken
wear	wore	worn
weave	weaved	weaved
weep	wept	wept
win	won	won
wind	wound	wound
wring	wrung	wrung
write	wrote	written

Verb Tense Websites

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_tensec.html

This gives a good explanation of the rules regarding verb tense. The bottom of this page gives a link to Exercises. Do the one on Recognizing Shifts in Sentences and check your answers!

<http://www.cit.gu.edu.au/~mf/wrsk/Consistency.pdf>

Good information explaining verb tense + Quiz available to try to make sure you understand the information.

http://ec.hku.hk/epc/interviews/verb_tenses.htm

Interactive quiz on verb tense (in interview format).

<http://www.pacificnet.net/~sperling/quiz/vtr.html>

Verb tense review quiz. Check your answers!