

■ Grammar Spy™ — 12 English Verb Tenses

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Past **Present** Future

Tense	Structure	Example	Signal Words	Use
PRESENT TENSES				
Simple Present	S + V(s/es)	<i>She studies every evening.</i>	always, usually, every day, often	Habits, facts, routines
Present Continuous	S + am/is/are + V-ing	<i>They are reading right now.</i>	now, right now, at the moment	Actions happening now, temporary situations
Present Perfect	S + have/has + V3	<i>I have visited London twice.</i>	already, yet, ever, never, since, for	Past actions with present relevance, life experience
Present Perfect Continuous	S + have/has been + V-ing	<i>She has been teaching for ten years.</i>	for, since, all day, how long	Duration of an action from past to now
PAST TENSES				
Simple Past	S + V2 (V-ed / irregular)	<i>We finished the project yesterday.</i>	yesterday, last week, ago, in 2020	Completed past actions
Past Continuous	S + was/were + V-ing	<i>He was working when I called.</i>	while, when, at that time	Ongoing past action interrupted or parallel
Past Perfect	S + had + V3	<i>They had already left before I arrived.</i>	before, after, by the time, already	Action completed before another past action
Past Perfect Continuous	S + had been + V-ing	<i>She had been waiting for an hour before the bus came.</i>	for, since, before, how long	Duration of action before another past event
FUTURE TENSES				
Simple Future	S + will + V1	<i>I will help you tomorrow.</i>	tomorrow, next week, soon, in the future	Predictions, promises, spontaneous decisions

Future Continuous	S + will be + V-ing	<i>At 8 PM, I will be studying.</i>	at this time tomorrow, next week at...	Ongoing action at a specific future time
Future Perfect	S + will have + V3	<i>By June, she will have graduated.</i>	by, by the time, before, by next year	Action completed before a future point
Future Perfect Continuous	S + will have been + V-ing	<i>By December, we will have been living here for five years.</i>	for, by the time, by next...	Duration of action up to a future point

■ **Spy Tip:** The key to choosing the right tense is asking three questions: (1) *When* does it happen? (2) Is the action *complete* or *ongoing*? (3) Does it *connect to another time*? Master these and you'll crack every tense case.