

Lecture 30

30.1 Verb Tenses

Verb is a part of speech that is used to indicate an action, occurrence, and state of being. When you place a verb within time, it becomes tense. There are three major categories of verb tenses: past, present and future.

30.1.1 Present: Simple/Indefinite Tense

- Present indefinite tense is used to describe an action, event, or condition occurring in present or at the moment.
 - Marriam prepares her lectures while Ali makes tea.
- It is used to express general truths such as scientific facts.
 - There are seven days in a week.
- We also use present simple to indicate a habitual action, event, or condition.
 - I listen to the lectures on my portal every weekend.
- If you are supposed to interpret a literary text or a work of art, you may use the present simple tense.
 - “*Hamlet* is one of the finest tragedies penned down by Shakespeare.” You may notice that *Hamlet* was written in the past, but we assume literary works exist in an eternal present and thus use present simple for discussing them.
- Present simple is used to refer to a future event when used in conjunction with an adverb/adverbial phrase.
 - The lunar eclipse begins in exactly 43 minutes.

30.1.2 Present: Progressive/Continuous Tense

Present continuous tense is used to indicate the continuing nature of an act, event, or condition. For example, “Asher is working on his project”. However, you may use this tense in conjunction with an adverb, or adverbial phrase for indicating a future event. See these examples for clarity:

- We are taking GAT general test next week.
- The doors are opening in ten minutes.

30.1.3 Present Perfect Tense

Present perfect tense is used to describe an action that began in the past and continues or has just completed at the moment of utterance. Moreover, it is used to suggest that past action still has an effect on something happening in present.

Examples:

- We have just received the pizza.
- They have not eaten fish.
- Bilawal has dreamt about frogs sitting in trees every night this week.

30.1.4 Present: Perfect Progressive/Continuous Tense

Present perfect continuous is used to describe an action, event or condition that began in past and continues into the present. Stress is on the on-going nature of action, event, condition.

- They have been publishing this comic book for ten years.

- That dog has been barking for three hours.

30.1.5 Past: Simple/Indefinite Tense

Past simple tense is used to describe an action, event or condition that occurred in past especially before the moment of speaking or writing.

- I ate two slices of cheesecake.
- I forgot about writing to you!
- Pakistan won the cricket World Cup in 1992.

30.1.6 Past: Progressive/Continuous Tense

Present continuous describes actions ongoing in past. They have no immediate or obvious connection to the present and the actions take place in a specific time frame.

- The cat was walking along the tree branch.
- The archivists were eagerly waiting for the delivery of the former prime minister's private papers.

30.1.7 Past Perfect Tense

Actions that took place and were completed in past are described using past perfect tense. An action, event or condition that ended before another action, event, condition began is also narrated in past perfect tense.

- China had captured the world market when America started to think about it.
- I had eaten macaroni when he arrived.

30.1.8 Past: Perfect Progressive/Continuous Tense

Such tenses are used to indicate that a continuing action in the past began before another past action began or interrupted the first action.

- The toddlers had been running around the school yard for ten minutes before the teachers shooed them back inside.
- We had been talking about repainting the front room for three years and last night we finally bought the paint.

30.1.9 Future: Simple/Indefinite Tense

Future simple tense is used to refer to actions, events, or conditions which would occur after the act of speaking or writing.

- I will meet you tomorrow at the first floor of central library.
- At the feast, we will eat heartily.

30.1.10 Future: Progressive/Continuous Tense

Future continuous tense describes actions ongoing in the future. It refers to continuing action that will occur in the future.

- Zeeshan will be working on the computer system for the next two weeks.
- The selection committee will be meeting every Wednesday morning.

30.1.11 Future: Perfect Tense

Future perfect tense refers to an action that will be completed sometime in the future before another action takes place.

- The surgeon will have operated on 6 patients before she attends a luncheon meeting.
- By the time you get back from the corner store, we will have finished writing the thank you letters.

30.1.12 Future: Perfect Progressive/Continuous Tense

Future perfect continuous tense indicates a continuing action that will be completed at some specified time in the future.

- I will have been studying Greek for three years by the end of this term.
- By the time the meeting is over, the committee will have been arguing about which candidate to interview for three hours.

30.2 Subject Verb Agreement

While writing, many students get confused about the subject-verb agreement in a sentence. Sometimes the verb used does not agree with the subject. To help you with this, this handout discusses some basic rules.

- **Basic Rule**
 - Singular subject takes a singular verb
Example: She sings well.
 - Plural subject takes a plural verb
Example: They play well.
- **Rule 1**

Two singular subjects connected by “or” or “nor” require a singular verb.

 - My aunt or my uncle is arriving by train today.
 - Neither Shazia nor Maria is attending the conference.
- **Rule 2**

Two singular subjects connected by “either/or” or “neither/nor” require a singular verb.

 - Neither Juan nor Carmen is available.
 - Either Kiana or Casey is helping today with stage decorations.
- **Rule 3**

When “I” is one of the two subjects connected by “either/or” or “neither/nor”, put it second and follow it with the singular verb “am”

 - Neither she nor I am going to the festival.
- **Rule 4**

When a singular subject is connected by “or” or “nor” to a plural subject, put the plural subject last and use a plural verb.

 - The serving bowl or the plates go on that shelf.
- **Rule 5**

When a singular and plural subject are connected by “either/or” or “neither/nor”, put the plural subject last and use a plural verb

 - Neither Jenny nor the others are available.
- **Rule 6**

Use a plural verb with two or more subjects when they are connected by “and”.

- A car and a bike are my means of transportation.

- **Rule 7**

Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by words such as “along with”, “as well as”, “besides”, or “not”. Ignore these expressions while deciding the verb. Focus on the subject which precedes these expressions.

- The politician, along with the newsmen, is expected shortly.
- Excitement, as well as nervousness, is the cause of her shaking.

- **Rule 8**

Pronouns such as “each”, “everyone”, “everybody”, “anyone”, “anybody”, “someone”, and “somebody” are singular and require singular verbs.

- Every one of the cakes is gone.
- Each of the girls sings well.

- **Rule 9**

In case of words indicating portions (percent, fraction, part, majority, some, all, none, remainder, and so forth), use the verb in accordance with the noun being used in the “of” phrase

- Focus on the object of preposition “of”
- Fifty percent of the pie has disappeared.
- Fifty percent of the pies have disappeared.
- One-third of the city is unemployed.
- One-third of the people are unemployed.
- None of the garbage was picked up.

- **Rule 10**

The expression “the number” is followed by a singular verb. The expression, “a number”, is followed by a plural verb.

- The number of people we need to hire is thirteen.
- A number of people have written in about this subject.

- **Rule 11**

“Either” and “neither” as subjects take a singular verb

- Neither of them is available to speak right now.
- Either of us is capable of doing the job.

- **Rule 12**

In sentences beginning with “here” or “there”, the subject follows the verb.

- There are four hurdles to jump.
- There is a high hurdle to jump.

- **Rule 13**

Use singular verbs with sums of money or periods of time.

- Ten dollars is a high price to pay.
- Five years is the maximum sentence for that offense.

- **Rule 14**

With pronouns such as “who”, “that” or “which”, use the verb according to the noun directly in front of these pronouns

- Salma is the scientist who writes the reports.
- He is one of the men who do the work.

- **Rule 15**

Collective nouns such as “team” and “staff” may be either singular or plural, depending on their use in a sentence.

- The staff is in a meeting.
- The staff are in disagreement about the findings (staff members).

We hope that if you follow these rules, your language will improve considerably.