

Time & Tense



~ English Grammar · Competitive Exams ~



Tense is the form of a verb that shows the **time** of an action — present, past or future. There are **three tenses** — **Present, Past, Future** — and each has **four forms**: Simple, Continuous, Perfect, Perfect Continuous.

① Present Tense ⌚

Form	Structure	Example
Simple Present	S + V1 / VS	The sun rises in the east.
Present Continuous	S + is/are/am + V-ing	She is reading a book now.
Present Perfect	S + has/have + V3	I have finished my homework.
Present Perfect Continuous	S + has/have + been + V-ing	He has been studying since morning.



Use **Simple Present** for **universal truths**, **habits** (always, daily), and after **if / when / unless / as soon as / until / in case**. Use **Present Perfect Continuous** with **for** (period) and **since** (point of time).

② Past Tense ↻

Form	Structure	Example
Simple Past	S + V2	He went to school.
Past Continuous	S + was/were + V-ing	They were playing cricket.
Past Perfect	S + had + V3	She had left before I came.
Past Perfect Continuous	S + had + been + V-ing	We had been waiting for an hour.

Use **Simple Past** with **yesterday, last night, ago** and after **It is time / high time**.

🕒 For **two past actions**, the **earlier** one takes **Past Perfect** and the **later** one takes **Simple Past**.

③ Future Tense ↻

Form	Structure	Example
Simple Future	S + shall/will + V1	I will call you tomorrow.
Future Continuous	S + shall/will + be + V-ing	She will be travelling then.
Future Perfect	S + shall/will + have + V3	I will have finished by 6 p.m.
Future Perfect Continuous	S + shall/will + have + been + V-ing	He will have been working for a year.

✓ **Future Perfect** uses **by** for the time — not **for** or **since**. After **if / unless / when / as soon as**, the clause stays in the **Simple Present** (no shall/will).

④ Important Tense Rules

X wrong → ✓ correct

i) **Universal truths** and **habits** (always, daily) take the **Simple Present**.

X ~~The earth revolved around the sun.~~

✓ The earth revolves around the sun.

X ~~She is always coming late.~~

✓ She always comes late.

ii) **Stative verbs** (love, know, hear, want, feel) are **not** used in the **continuous** form.

X ~~I am knowing the answer.~~

✓ I know the answer.

X ~~He is feeling that he will win.~~

✓ He feels that he will win.

iii) With **yesterday**, **last night**, **ago** use the **Simple Past**, not the present perfect.

X ~~Ravi has gone home yesterday.~~

✓ Ravi went home yesterday.

X ~~He has finished his work last night.~~

✓ He finished his work last night.

iv) Use **since** for a **point of time** and **for** for a **period of time**.

X ~~I have lived here since five years.~~

✓ I have lived here for five years.

✓ She has been ill since Monday.

v) After **It is time** / **It is high time**, use the **Simple Past**.

X ~~It is high time we start the work.~~

✓ It is high time we started the work.

vi) For an **unreal wish or condition** (I wish / if), use the **past (were)** — and never **would have** in the if-clause.

X ~~I wish I was taller.~~

✓ I wish I were taller.

X ~~If he would have studied, he would have passed.~~

✓ If he had studied, he would have passed.

Important Tense Rules (contd.)

vii) After **if / when / unless / until / as soon as / in case**, the clause is in the **Simple Present** (no will).

~~X If you will study daily, you will succeed.~~

✓ If you study daily, you will succeed.

~~X I will wait until he will come.~~

✓ I will wait until he comes.

viii) Of two past actions, the **earlier** takes **Past Perfect** and the **later** takes **Simple Past**.

~~X The train started before I reached the station.~~

✓ The train had started before I reached the station.

~~X I met him after he went.~~

✓ I met him after he had gone.

ix) **Future Perfect** takes **by** for the time — not **for** or **since**.

~~X I shall have finished the book since July.~~

✓ I shall have finished the book by July.

Quick Tips! 💡

✓ Universal truths & habits → **Simple Present**; stative verbs are never continuous.

✓ **yesterday, last night, ago** → **Simple Past**; **It is high time** → **Simple Past**.

✓ **since** = point of time, **for** = period of time.

✓ After **if / unless / as soon as / until** → **Simple Present** (no will).

✓ Earlier past action → **Past Perfect**; **Future Perfect** → **by** (not for/since).

⑤ Exercise – Spot the Error 🔍

Find the part with the error – (a) / (b) / (c) / (d).

1. Water always (a) / boiled (b) / at hundred (c) / degrees (d).
2. She (a) / is crying (b) / for two (c) / hours (d).
3. This is (a) / the best (b) / that you (c) / are doing (d).
4. Ram (a) / has been (b) / crying (c) / for his marriage (d).
5. Unless you (a) / will work (b) / hard, you (c) / will fail (d).
6. It is (a) / the first time (b) / that I (c) / met him (d).
7. The police had reached (a) / the spot after (b) / the thief (c) / had escaped (d).
8. My father told (a) / me that (b) / necessity was the (c) / mother of invention (d).
9. Whenever she (a) / is writing a letter (b) / she makes (c) / many mistakes (d).
10. I had reached (a) / there before (b) / he (c) / had gone out (d).
11. She told (a) / Mohan that she (b) / has met him (c) / the previous day (d).
12. I have been (a) / studying in this (b) / school since (c) / the last week (d).
13. As soon as I (a) / will reach home, (b) / I will (c) / call you (d).
14. He is (a) / feeling that (b) / he will (c) / get good marks (d).
15. I (a) / am not finishing (b) / my work (c) / yet (d).
16. Ram and Shyam (a) / are learning (b) / English for (c) / two hours (d).
17. He has not (a) / completed (b) / his work (c) / last night (d).
18. I have come (a) / to know that (b) / your father has died (c) / last night (d).
19. She says (a) / that she will take (b) / an umbrella (c) / in case it will rain (d).
20. It is high time (a) / you are starting (b) / this work, (c) / said my father (d).
21. If you would have (a) / informed me, I would (b) / have taken (c) / action (d).
22. Since I (a) / meet Dinesh (b) / last Saturday, he (c) / calls me daily (d).
23. No sooner did he (a) / blow the whistle than (b) / we all start (c) / running (d).
24. He is in (a) / good health because (b) / he was walking (c) / every morning (d).
25. While he was (a) / crossing the road, (b) / a bus run over (c) / him (d).

Answer Key – Spot the Error ✓

1. (b) → **boils** (universal truth → Simple Present).
2. (b) → **has been crying** (for + period → present perfect continuous).
3. (d) → **have done** (this is + superlative → present perfect).
4. (d) → **since his marriage** ('marriage' takes 'since').
5. (b) → **work** (after 'unless' → Simple Present).
6. (d) → **have met** (it is the first time → present perfect).
7. (a) → **reached** (the later action → Simple Past).
8. (c) → **is** (a proverb → Simple Present).
9. (b) → **writes** (habit → Simple Present).
10. (d) → **went out** (after 'before' → Simple Past).
11. (c) → **had met** (earlier action → Past Perfect).
12. (c) → **for** ('the last week' → for).
13. (b) → **reach** (after 'as soon as' → Simple Present).
14. (b) → **feels** ('feel' is not used in continuous).
15. (b) → **have not finished** ('yet' → present perfect).
16. (b) → **have been learning** (for + period → present perfect continuous).
17. (a) → **did not** ('last night' → Simple Past).
18. (c) → **died** ('last night' → Simple Past).
19. (d) → **rains** (after 'in case' → Simple Present).
20. (b) → **started** ('it is high time' → Simple Past).
21. (a) → **had** (no 'would have' in the if-clause).
22. (a) → **met** ('since' as conjunction → Simple Past).
23. (c) → **started** (the main clause → Simple Past).
24. (c) → **walks** (present habit → Simple Present).
25. (c) → **ran over** (past action → Simple Past).

☆ Match the time word – nail the tense! ☆