

# An overview of English verb tenses

# Present simple

1) to talk about activities or **routines** which take place on a **regular basis**

e.g. *He **usually** gets up at six o'clock.*

2) to discuss **future scheduled events**

e.g. *The course begins next Monday at 2 p.m.*

# Common present time expressions

usually

always

often

sometimes

on Saturdays

at weekends (on weekends in  
US English)

rarely

on occasion

never

seldom

...

## IMPORTANT:

- an 's' in the base form of the 3rd person singular
- If the verb ends in -y preceded by a consonant, change the -y to -ies
- Question and negation:  
do, does, don't, doesn't

# Present continuous

- 1) to speak about **what is happening** at the **present moment in time**.

For example, *'He's watching TV at the moment.'*

- 2) to speak about what is happening **AROUND the moment in time**.

For example, if you are working on a project **for only two weeks**, you say: *'I am working on the Smith account.'*

# Present continuous

3) Near future – planned, arranged actions

e.g. I´m leaving tomorrow.

**Common present continuous time expressions include:**

- ✓ at the moment
- ✓ now, just now, right now
- ✓ today
- ✓ this week, this month
- ✓ tomorrow, next week (for future arrangements )
- ✓ currently

# Past simple

- 1) To talk about activities or routines which take place at a **specified time in the past**.

For example, *He played tennis last weekend.*

- 2) Finished, completed, definite actions

For example, *He left an hour ago.*

Regular verbs end in '-ed'.

IMPORTANT

Irregular verbs must be learned properly!

# Past simple

**Common past time expressions include:**

- ✓ last (week, year, night...)
- ✓ yesterday
- ✓ ago
- ✓ in 1987, on 20th October 2007
- ✓ when I was a child, when I was small ...

**IMPORTANT:**

**DID, DIDN'T + present infinitive!!!**

What **did** you study **yesterday**?

**I studied ..., I didn't study ...**

# Past continuous

- 1) to express something that is happening **at a precise moment in the past.**

For example, *Jack was working on the report last night at 10.15.*

- 2) to express **an interrupted action expressed using the past simple**

For example, *Janet was talking on the phone when I arrived.*

- 3) to express the background of an action in past simple

For example, When I woke up, the sun was shining, the birds were singing ...

# Present perfect

- 1) to say what has **happened recently and has an effect on the present moment**

For example, *They haven't had lunch yet.*

- 2) an experience that has happened at an **unspecified point in time before the present**

For example, *They've seen the film twice.*

- 3) an **action begins in the past and continues into the present**  
This use of the present perfect expresses duration over time  
FROM the past moment TO the present moment.

For example, *Alice has lived in New York since 1997.*

# Present perfect

**Common present perfect time expressions include:**

- ✓ for (with a period of time)
- ✓ since (with an exact point in time),
- ✓ ever
- ✓ never
- ✓ yet
- ✓ already
- ✓ this week (month, year) when it is still true

# Present perfect or past simple?

Put each of the following verbs into either the past simple or present perfect.

She (write) the email but doesn't know how to send it.

Hurry up! The concert (begin) and we are late.

Madonna (record) many albums and will probably make many more.

How many books (read) this year?

How many books (read) last year?

# Present perfect continuous

- Like the present perfect simple expresses an action which begins in the past and continues into the present.

For example, *My parents have been travelling since early this morning.*

- **The present perfect continuous describes the duration of a current activity happening at the moment.**

For example, *I've been reading this book since 10 this morning.*

- On the other hand, the present perfect is used to describe **states, more general activity or results.**

For example, *Jack has lived in California most of his life.*

# Where's the difference?

## PRESENT PERFECT

1) Indefinite time in the past (experience).

Emphasis is on the completed action at an **indefinite time in the past**.

Example: Susan's written 3 books.

2) Emphasis on QUANTITY

Example: I've read 300 pages of Tom Smith's latest book.

3) Duration from past to present

Example: Peter has worked for that company for 5 years.

# Where's the difference?

## PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

- 1) Recent activity: to emphasize the recency of a past activity. we often use lately or recently Example: She's been working hard recently
- 2) Emphasis on the duration or length of an activity Example: Jack has been painting for 4 hours.
- 3) Recently finished activity with a present result Example: I've been working in the garden, that's why my hands are so dirty.
- 4) No difference in meaning. Often the present perfect progressive and the present perfect can have the same meaning. This is often the case with verbs of living, occupation or vocation) Example: I've been living in Lisbon for 3 years. OR I've lived in Lisbon for 3 years

# Past perfect

- to talk about an action that is finished before another action in the past.
- useful for giving reasons for a decision that was made in the past

For example, *He didn't come because he had caught the flu.*

Sometimes not necessary.

# Going to – future (eq. to present continuous)

- 1) to speak about **future intentions or plans** made before the present moment.

For example, *He's going to visit his grandmother next month.*

- 2) to speak about **something that is about to happen, which you can see or feel** .

For example, *Look out! You're going to drop those dishes!*

# Will - future

- 1) to make a future prediction

For example, *George will get the job.*

- 2) to express a decision about the future made at the moment.

For example, *Don't worry, I'll help you!*

- 3) Used for promises

For example, *I'll make you a sandwich. They'll help you if you want.*

- 4) Used in combination with time clauses (as soon as, when, before, after) and conditional clauses – !!!in the main clause only)

# Future continuous will be doing

- „present continuous for the future“

A: If you see Sally, can you ask her to  
phone me?

B: Sure, I'll be seeing her this evening, so I'll  
tell her then.

# Future perfect will have done

- To say that sth. will already be complete
- Sally always leaves for work at 8:30 in the morning, so she won't be at home at 9 o'clock.

For example, *She'll have gone to work.*

- We're late. The film will already have started by the time we get to the cinema.

**Thank you for your attention...**