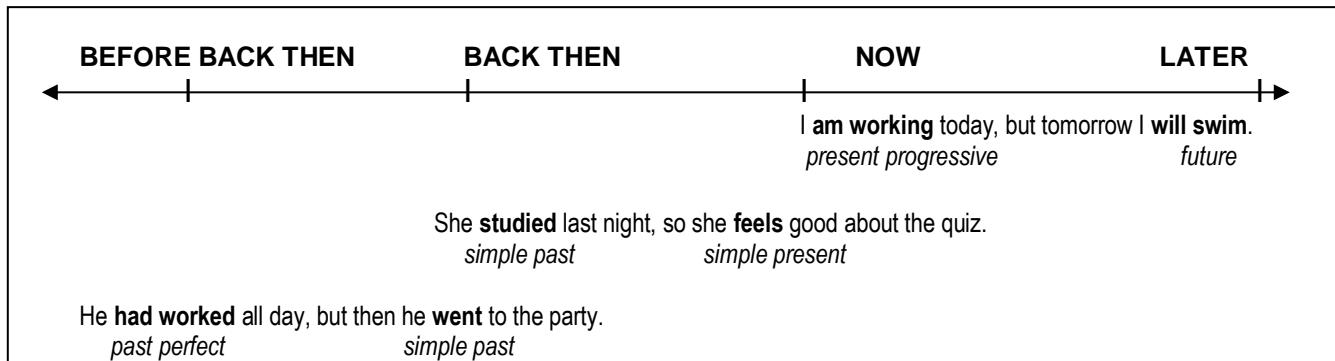


# VERB TENSES

In formal, academic writing, actions that take place at different moments in time are represented by different verb tenses. These differences become especially important in lab reports and in papers for geology and history, where they clearly communicate the order in which things happened.

When we talk, we often say “He gave me the shirt he bought in Boise,” using the same simple past tense for both **gave** and **bought**. When we write, however, we’re supposed to make it clear that these actions happened at different times.

He **gave** (*simple past*) me the shirt that he **had bought** (*past perfect*) in Boise.



## ■ Examples

1. Mike has to take the notes before he lends them.

PAST Yesterday, Mike **lent** (*simple past*) you the notes he **had taken** (*past perfect*) in class last week.  
PRESENT Mike **is lending** (*present progressive*) you the notes he **took** (*simple past*) in class last week.  
FUTURE Mike **will lend** (*future*) you any notes he **takes** (*simple present*) in class today.

2. Meg has to finish the paper before she turns it in.

PAST Yesterday, Meg **turned in** (*simple past*) the paper she **had finished** (*past perfect*) over the weekend.  
PRESENT Today, Meg **is turning in** (*present progressive*) the paper she **finished** (*simple past*) this weekend.  
FUTURE On Monday, Meg **will turn in** (*future*) the paper she **will have finished** (*future perfect*) next weekend.

3. Ryan is reading and getting hungry at the same time. He is doing both gradually, so all the verbs are progressive. He starts reading first, though, so the tenses have to show that.

PAST Ryan **had been reading** (*past perfect progressive*) for several hours, and he **was getting** (*past progressive*) hungry.  
PRESENT Ryan **has been reading** (*present perfect progressive*) for several hours, and he **is getting** (*present progressive*) hungry.  
FUTURE Ryan **will have been reading** (*future perfect progressive*) for several hours, and he **will be getting** (*future progressive*) hungry.

## ■ Future: Later (after now, in five minutes, tomorrow, next year)

Future	I will walk to work tomorrow.	
Future Progressive	He will be walking to work every day next week.	<i>The action will be ongoing or will take a while.</i>
Future Perfect	I will have walked to the store by the time you get there.	<i>The action will have been completed by this point in the future.</i>
Future Perfect Progressive	By Monday, my son will have been walking for two full weeks.	<i>The action will have been going on for a while by this point in the future and may be continuing.</i>

## ■ Present: Now (right now)

Simple Present	I walk.	
Present Progressive	I am walking to the store.	<i>The action is ongoing or is taking a while.</i>
Present Perfect	I have walked 500 miles.	<i>The action has been completed.</i>
Present Perfect Progressive	I have been walking every day before lunch.	<i>The action has been going for a while and may be continuing.</i>

## ■ Past: Back then (before now, yesterday, ten minutes ago, last month)

Simple Past	I walked to the store.	<i>The action has been completed.</i>
Past Progressive	I was walking to the store when I saw the accident	<i>The action was ongoing or taking a while.</i>

## ■ Past Perfect: Before back then (before yesterday, before last month)

Past Perfect	I had walked to the store before I walked to the gym.	<i>The action was completed before another past action.</i>
Past Perfect Progressive	I had been walking for several miles and I was tired.	<i>The action had been ongoing or taking a while before another past action.</i>

## ■ Regular Verbs

Most verbs are regular verbs, so they follow the same predictable pattern. In this pattern, the past tense adds an –ed to the base form of the verb.

I work → I worked

The perfect tenses then use that –ed form to form what is called the past participle:

I have worked      I had worked      She has worked

## ■ Irregular Verbs

Some verbs, however, are irregular verbs, so their past and perfect tenses are unpredictable and have to be memorized. Here are some common ones:

PRESENT	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE	
become	became	become	She became angry because he had become calm.
begin	began	begun	It began to rain after the wind had begun to blow.
bend	bent	bent	She bent back the flower that had bent down.
blow	blew	blown	He blew the same horn that had been blown earlier.
bring	brought	brought	He brought pie and saw that she had brought cookies.
break	broke	broken	Her heart broke because the vase was broken.
choose	chose	chosen	He chose a rod that nobody else had chosen.
cling	clung	clung	Her son clung to her less than he had clung earlier.
come	came	come	She came to work after the boss had come in.
drag	dragged	dragged	She dragged the dog as she had dragged her toy.
draw	drew	drawn	He drew a dog where she had drawn a cat.
drink	drank	drunk	He drank little, because she had drunk too much.
drive	drove	driven	We drove the car we had test-driven earlier.
fall	fell	fallen	She fell just where I had already fallen.
forget	forgot	forgotten	I forgot the meeting that he had also forgotten.
forgive	forgave	forgiven	I forgave her, just as I had been forgiven.
lay	laid	laid	I laid the pen down where he had laid the paper.
lend	lent	lent	He lent me a pen since I had lent him my book.
lie	lay	lain	He lay down where they had lain.
raise	raised	raised	We raised the roof after we had raised the walls.
ride	rode	ridden	She rode ten miles, but we had ridden twenty.
rise	rose	risen	The sun rose earlier than it had risen in March.
see	saw	seen	He saw it as half-full; I had seen it as half-empty.
shake	shook	shaken	We shook the box which they had just shaken.
shrink	shrank	shrunk	The gloves shrank just as the hat had shrunk.

## ■ Exercises

1. Chris (**bake**) the cake for the dinner we (**cook**). (The cake is baked first.)

PAST           Chris \_\_\_\_\_ the cake for the dinner we \_\_\_\_\_ last weekend.  
PRESENT       Chris \_\_\_\_\_ the cake for the dinner we \_\_\_\_\_ tonight.  
FUTURE        Chris \_\_\_\_\_ the cake for the dinner we \_\_\_\_\_ on Friday.

2. Ana (**drive**) for ten hours straight and her back (**start**) to hurt. (Both are taking place over time, but the driving starts first.)

PAST           Ana \_\_\_\_\_ for ten hours straight and her back \_\_\_\_\_ to hurt.  
PRESENT       Ana \_\_\_\_\_ for ten hours straight and her back \_\_\_\_\_ to hurt.  
FUTURE        Ana \_\_\_\_\_ for ten hours straight and her back \_\_\_\_\_ to hurt.

3. Kim (**bring**) ten balloons to the party and he (**give**) one to me.

PAST           Kim \_\_\_\_\_ ten balloons to the party and he \_\_\_\_\_ one to me.  
PRESENT       Kim \_\_\_\_\_ ten balloons to the party and he \_\_\_\_\_ one to me.  
FUTURE        Kim \_\_\_\_\_ ten balloons to the party and he \_\_\_\_\_ one to me.

4. The guest speaker (**begin**), so the audience (**grow**) quiet.

PAST           The guest speaker \_\_\_\_\_, so the audience \_\_\_\_\_ quiet.  
PRESENT       The guest speaker \_\_\_\_\_, so the audience \_\_\_\_\_ quiet.  
FUTURE        By eight p.m. the guest speaker \_\_\_\_\_, so the audience  
                  \_\_\_\_\_ quiet.

## ■ Possible Answers

1. PAST       Chris had baked the cake for the dinner we cooked last weekend.  
PRESENT      Chris has baked the cake for the dinner we are cooking tonight.  
FUTURE       Chris will have baked the cake for the dinner we will be cooking on Friday.
2. PAST       Ana had been driving for ten hours straight and her back was starting to hurt.  
PRESENT      Ana has been driving for ten hours straight and her back is starting to hurt.  
FUTURE       Ana will have been driving for ten hours straight and her back will be starting to hurt.
3. PAST       Kim had brought ten balloons to the party and he gave one to each child.  
PRESENT      Kim brought ten balloons to the party and he is giving one to each child..  
FUTURE       Kim will have brought ten balloons to the party and he will give one to each child.
4. PAST       The guest speaker had begun, so the audience grew quiet.  
PRESENT      The guest speaker has begun, so the audience is growing quiet.  
FUTURE       By eight p.m. the guest speaker will begin, so the audience will have grown quiet.