

University of Bejaia

Department of Technology

Module: English

Tenses

The Present Perfect Simple :

Form : s+to have (have, has) + past participle

Use :

- State leading up to present time. E.g. that house has been empty for ages.
- Habit in a period leading up to the present time. E.g. he has attended lectures regularly (this term)
- Past event with results in the present time. E.g. the taxi has arrived. (it is now here).
- It is used with “just” to express a recently completed action. E.g. he has just gone out.
- It can be used with “since ,for, today, ...

Special Structures

- The present perfect is used in special way after expressions like:
This is the first/second/third time I have heard her sing.
It is one of the most interesting books I have ever read.
- It is + period+ since+ past simple or present perfect tense.
It is a long time since I have heard from Peter.

The Simple Past Tense

Form: 1- s+ stem+ ed / 2- irregular verbs

Use :

It is the most often used to talk about the past. It can refer to short, quickly finished events, to longer actions and situations repeated happenings.

- It is used for actions completed in the past at a definite time (in the past) which may be identified by:
- * A past adverbial in the same sentence: Harry was born in 1973.
- The preceding language contact: John has become engaged, it took us completely by surprise. (Here the past tense “took” is used as the event is already identified in the first clause).
- The context outside language: did the postman bring any letters?
- It is used for a past habit: he always carried an umbrella.

Notes:

A past tense does not always have a past meaning. Expressions like “I had” or “you went” can be used in some kinds of sentences to talk about the present or future. This happens in different cases:

- After “if” and other words similar conditional meanings: e.g. if I had the money now, I’d buy a car.
- In some expressions where the past tense expresses a ‘tentative’ attitude suggesting politeness or respect. E.g. I thought you might like some flowers.

The past perfect simple:

Form: s+ had+ past participle

The past perfect is the past equivalent of the present perfect.

E.g. Ann has just left. (Present)

Ann had just left. (Past)

Use

- If we are talking about the past, we use the past perfect to go back to an earlier past time, to talk about things that had already happened at the time we are talking about. E.g. he wasn’t exactly a stranger. I had met him once before.
- The past perfect is always used with conjunctions of time “when, after, as soon as, until, before....”
E.g. when I’d written all my letters, I did some gardening.
- A simple past tense can often be used instead of a past perfect if the earlier action was a short one. E.g. when I put the cat out, it ran off into...

The present progressive

Form: s+ to be (am, is, are) + stem+ ing

Use:

- For an action happening now/ or about this time but not necessarily at the moment of speaking.
E.g. I am reading a play by Shaw. (This may mean at the moment of speaking but may also mean “now” in a more large sense).
- For a definite plan in the near future (and is the most usual way of expressing one’s immediate plans)
E.g. I’m meeting Tom tonight. He is taking me to the theatre.

Note that the time of the action must always be mentioned, as otherwise, there might be confusion between present and future meanings.

The future time

i) **Form:** Shall/will bare infinitive

Use:

- The future habitual actions which we assume will take place.
E.g. Spring will come again.
- With clauses of condition, time and sometimes purpose.
E.g. If I drop this glass, it will break.
- To express intention at the moment of decision
E.g. A: the phone is ringing.
B: I'll answer soon.

ii) **to be going to**

This form is used for: 1-intention

2-prediction

- It can be used for the near future with a time expression as an alternative to the present progressive, i.e. we can say: I'm meeting Tom at the station at six.
Note: "I'm meeting Tom" implies an arrangement with Tom.
I'm going to meet Tom at the station at six. (Tom may get a surprise)
- With time clauses when we wish to emphasize the subject's intention:
E.g. He is going to be a dentist when he grows up.

"Will" and "be going to" are therefore rather similar but there are two differences.

- "Be going to" implies that there are signs that something will happen.
E.g. The lift is going to break down. (it is making strange noises; we had better get out on the next floor)
Will implies that the speaker thinks/ believes that it will happen.
E.g. the lift will break down (this will happen sometimes in the future.)
- "Be going to" is used about the immediate future.
- "Will" does not imply any particular time and could refer to remote future.