

Verb Tenses II: Tense, Voice, Aspect, and

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Mood in English Verbs

See also: www.class.uidaho.edu/engl201/Verb_Tenses_I.pdf

There are 12 different tenses in English, considered traditionally. An easy way to remember them is that there is a simple present, simple past, and simple future tense, and for each of these there is a perfect form of the tense. Then, there is a progressive form that corresponds to each of these six tenses. So the sequence goes as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future | ⇒ | Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect |
| ⇓ | | ⇓ |
| Present Progressive, Past Progressive, Future Progressive | ⇒ | Present Perfect Progressive, Past Perfect Progressive, Future Perfect Progressive |

- A Perfect Tense is formed with some part of the verb HAVE (have, had, has)
- A Progressive Tense is formed with some part of the verb BE (is, are, was, were, etc.).
- A Present Progressive tense is formed both with HAVE and BE.

An Example: The Verb EAT

| Simple Present | Simple Past | Simple Future | Present Perfect | Past Perfect | Future Perfect |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| He eats. | She ate | He will eat. | She has eaten. | He had eaten. | She will have eaten. |
| Present Progressive | Past Progressive | Future Progressive | Present Perf. Progress. | Past Perf. Progress. | Future Perfect Progressive |
| She is eating. | He was eating. | She will be eating. | He has been eating. | She had been eating. | He will have been eating. |

In addition to TENSE, verbs have three other qualities:

- **Aspect.** This refers to whether the action was completed or not. A verb's aspect can be **progressive** or **nonprogressive**.
- **Voice.** Voice can be either **active** or **passive**. If the voice of the verb is passive, it will be formed with some part of the verb BE. What distinguishes the passive from the active voice is that in the active voice, the DOER of the action (of the verb) is subject of the verb ("Sophie ate her food."). If the DOER of the verb is *not* the subject of the sentence, the verb is in the passive voice. ("The food was eaten by Sophie.") Caution: Always determine the voice of the verb first. Because the passive voice is always formed by the verb BE followed by the past participle of the verb, it can be confused with one of the progressive tenses. Keep in mind that the concept of voice is separate from the concept of tense.
- **Mood.** Mood refers to manner in which a verb is expressed: a verb's mood shows whether the sentence is conveying a fact, a desire, a possibility or probability, or a command. In traditional terms, there are five moods:

The **indicative** is the most common; it simply expresses something as a fact.

The **imperative** is for orders ("Sit down!").

The **conditional** brings up only the possibility or probability that something might occur. It uses the modals such as could or would.

The **subjunctive** expresses something contrary to fact, and it used in sentences after an imperative.

The mood of a verb in English is expressed mainly by the use of modals (can/could, should/would, may/might, must/have to, etc.). The subjunctive mood in English, however, also has its own form, which is pretty much as the same form in the indicative, except for the third-person singular and the verb BE. The following patterns are noteworthy:

| | |
|---|---|
| After a verb expressing a command, order, recommendation, or demand: | In if-then phrases, when the statement is contrary to fact and it is some form of the verb BE. |
| The parking committee voted that Sue <u>pay</u> the ticket. The teacher demanded that he <u>be</u> on time. The professor recommended that she <u>buy</u> the book. | If I <u>were</u> you, I <u>would surrender</u> myself immediately. If Joe <u>were</u> here, he <u>would agree</u> with me. |

In the last pattern above (on the right side), the if clause uses the subjunctive mood, and the main clause uses the conditional mood. Contrast with "If I am not here by 6:00 pm, start without me" (indicative mood, followed by the imperative).