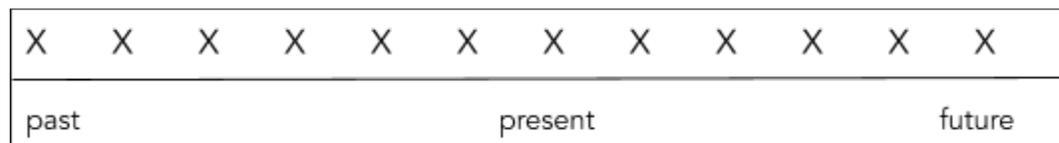# English Verb Tenses

English has twelve main verb tenses that describe when actions take place, sometimes in relation to other points in time. Some tenses are more common than others, but it's good to have a solid understanding of when to use each tense; using the wrong tense can change the meaning of a sentence or decrease comprehensibility. If you have trouble deciding which tense to use, look at the overall context of the clause and for clues such as time words. Here are some visualizations of the tenses and some examples of their common usages.
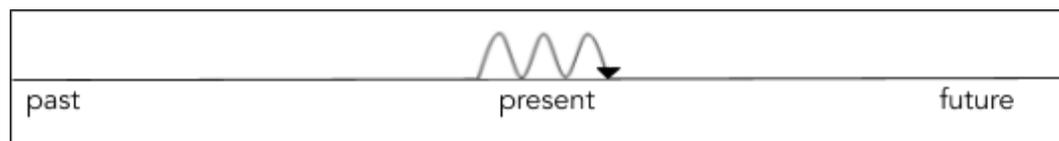
Simple Present
- Current facts
  Ex. They *are* students.
- Repeated actions
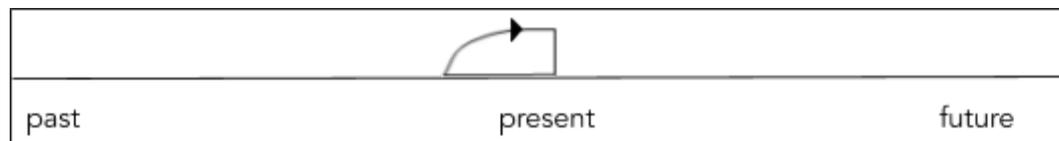 Ex. I *wake* up at 7 o'clock every day.

Present Continuous
- Actions in progress right now
  Ex. I *am reading*; don't disturb me.
- Intentions or plans
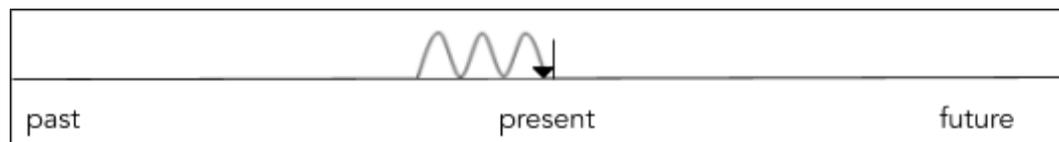 Ex. We *are going* to the movies tonight.

Present Perfect
- Past actions with the result in the present
  Ex. I *have lost* my keys; I can't find them.
- Actions started and not finished
  Ex. He *has lived* here for many years.
- Experiences (had or not)
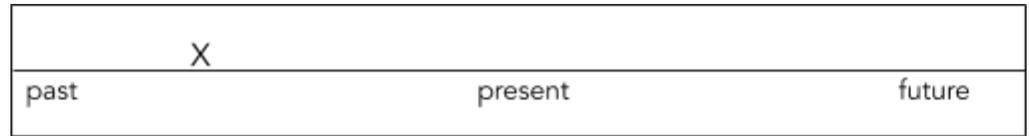 Ex. I *have* never *been* to Europe.

Present Perfect Continuous
- Recent continued actions relevant to the present
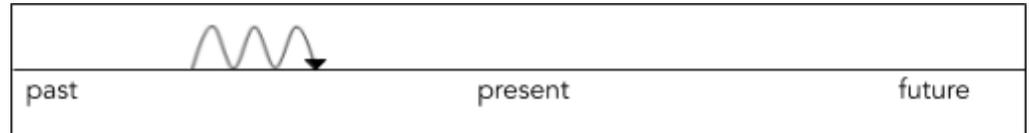 Ex. We *have been studying* since this morning.

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Simple Past
- Finished actions in the past
  Ex. I *visited* my family last week.

past	present	future
X		

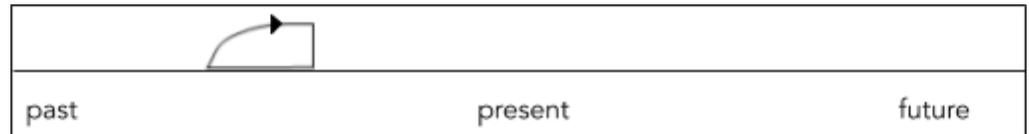## Past Continuous
- Actions in progress in the past
  Ex. They *were sleeping* when the earthquake happened.
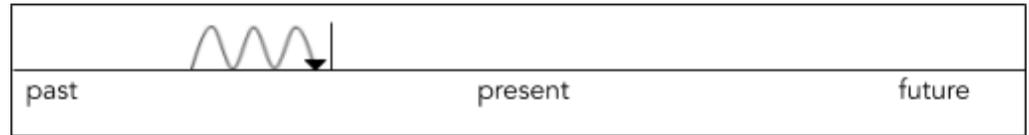
past	present	future

Past Perfect
- Actions finished before another point in the past
  Ex. She *had wanted* to be a doctor, but changed her mind.

past	present	future

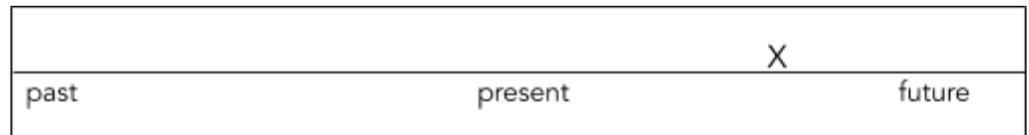## Past Perfect Continuous
- Continuous actions before another point in the past
  Ex. I *had been running* every day before my injury.

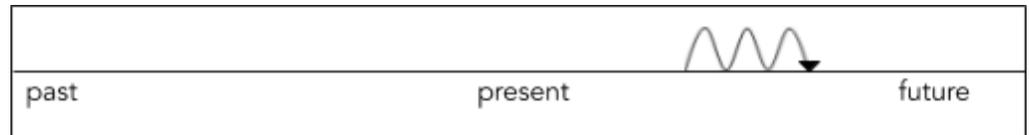| past	present	future

Simple Future
- Actions that will be completed in the future
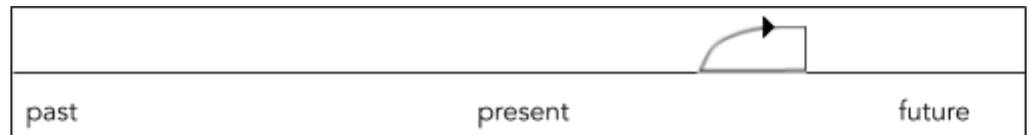 Ex. We *will travel* to France this summer.

past	present	future
		X

Future Continuous
- Actions that will be in progress in the future
  Ex. I *will be applying* to grad school this fall.

past	present	future

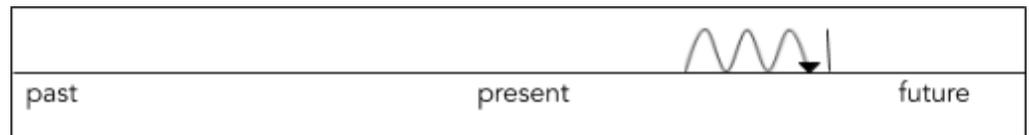## Future Perfect
- Actions finished before another point in the future
  Ex. I *will have finished* my research by the time I graduate.

past	present	future

Future Perfect Continuous
- Continuous actions before another point in the future
  Ex. In May we *will have been living* here for 15 years.

past	present	future

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Conditional Verb Tenses talk about hypothetical situations. There are five main types of conditional sentences, all of which use an "if" clause.
Conditional tenses use "would," which is a modal verb, meaning that after "would" you use the base form of the next verb (she would *see*, not she would *sees*).

Type Zero: Real condition

Usage	If clause verb tense	Main clause verb tense	Examples
General truths	Simple present	Simple present	If this thing happens, this thing happens. If it *rains*, the roads *are* more dangerous.

Type 1: Unreal (present/future), but likely

Usage	If clause verb tense	Main clause verb tense	Examples
A possible condition and its probable results	Simple present	Simple future	If this thing happens, this thing will happen. If you *work* hard, you *will succeed*.

Type 2: Unreal and unlikely

Usage	If clause verb tense	Main clause verb tense	Examples
A hypothetical condition and its probable result	Simple past	Present conditional* / Present continuous conditional	If this thing happened, this thing would happen. If she *wore* glasses, she *would see* more clearly.

Type 3: Unreal (past), but likely

Usage	If clause verb tense	Main clause verb tense	Examples
An unreal past condition and its probable result in the past	Past perfect	Perfect conditional	If this thing had happened, this thing would have happened. If we *had known*, we *would have come* earlier.

Mixed type

Usage	If clause verb tense	Main clause verb tense	Examples
An unreal past condition and its probable result in the present	Past perfect	Present conditional	If this thing had happened, this thing would happen. If he *had studied*, he *would know* the answer.