

VERBS: PRESENT TENSE

WHAT IS A VERB?

A verb is a part of speech that expresses action, occurrence, or state of being. Actions, occurrences and states of being can happen at different points in time, so verbs change form in order to express that timing. These forms of verbs are called tenses.

To create the correct tense of a verb, writers and speakers start with a base form of the verb, which is the infinitive form (e.g., “to read”) without the “to,” and then they add different endings and sometimes an auxiliary (helping) verb.

Most verbs follow the same pattern for each tense, though some will change their form differently. These are called irregular verbs. Let’s use the Present Simple tense as an example. For most verbs you take the base verb form and sometimes add the ending “-s” or “-es” (e.g., “to open” becomes “open”). However, the irregular verb “to have” turns into “has.”

Below we very briefly explain the rules for verb tenses used to express action that has happened in the present. Present Simple, Present Continuous, Present Perfect, and Present Perfect Continuous. If you need more assistance with verb tenses, please schedule a meeting with a Writing Center Consultant or search online for more comprehensive resources.

PRESENT SIMPLE

The Present Simple tense is used to describe an action that happens once in the present time or on a recurring basis, such as a habit, a general statement, truth, or state of being that is usual for the person, place, or thing. This tense is created by using the base verb form. It does not need any endings except when the subject is in 3rd person singular (he/she/it) for which you add “-s,” or “-es.”

This tense in negative statements is created by adding “do not”/“does not” and the base verb form. Questions in this tense are formed by adding “do”/“does” before the noun/pronoun and the base verb form after the noun/pronoun.

Positive

The sun **rises** in the east.

Negative

She **doesn’t swim**.

Question

Where **do** you **live**?

Please note, irregular verbs are an exception and have their own Present Simple forms. One notable exception that we want to point out is the verb “to be.” The verb “to be” changes in its entirety when used with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person singular and plural nouns in Present Simple forms.

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PRESENT CONTINUOUS

The present Continuous tense is used to describe an action in progress in the present moment. In some cases, this tense can express an action that is unfinished or a plan of action someone is making for the future. The Present Continuous tense is formed by adding the verb “to be” before the verb and adding the ending “-ing” to the base form.

Positive

I **am reading** a good book.

Negative

They **aren't studying**.

Question

Where **are** you **going** tonight?

PRESENT PERFECT

The Present Perfect tense is used to express action that has started in the past but continues into the present. It can also refer to repeated past action and past experiences or accomplishments of someone who is still living, in other words, actions that have occurred up until now.

The tense is formed by adding the verb “to have” and the ending “-ed” to the verb form.

Positive

We **have visited** Las Vegas twice.

Negative

We **haven't studied** enough for our test.

Question

Where **have** you **traveled**?

Please note, irregular verbs are an exception and have their own present perfect forms.

PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

Like the Present Perfect tense, the Present Perfect Continuous tense is used to express action that started in the past and continues into the present or that lasted for a long period of time and only recently completed. This tense is used to highlight the ongoing nature of the action itself, whereas, the Present Perfect tense highlights the completion or result of the action.

Present Perfect Continuous is formed by adding the verb “to have,” the past participle form to “to be” (“been”), and the ending “-ing” to the base verb form.

Positive

We **have been visiting** Las Vegas for two years.

Negative

We **have not been studying** enough for our test.

Question

Where **have** you **been traveling**?