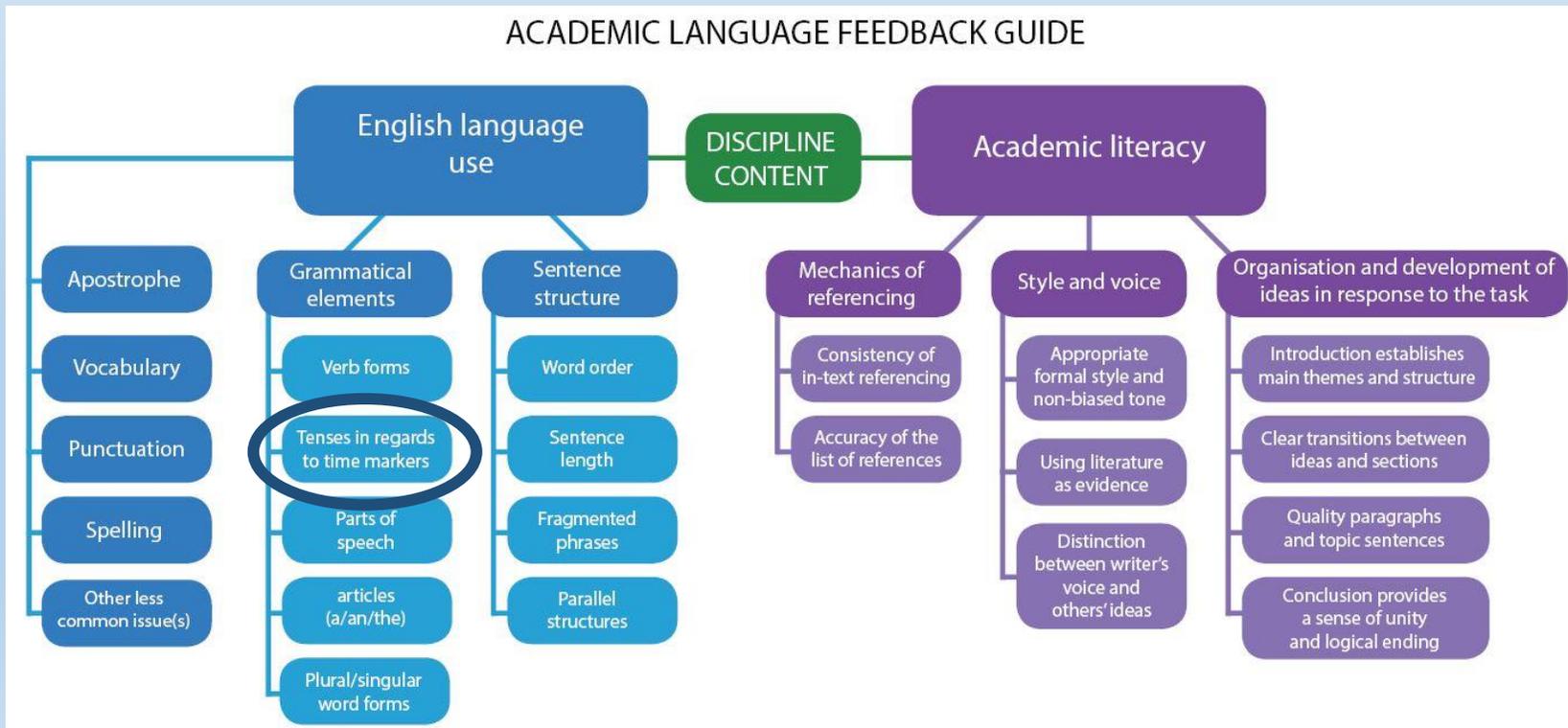


Tenses in regards to time markers



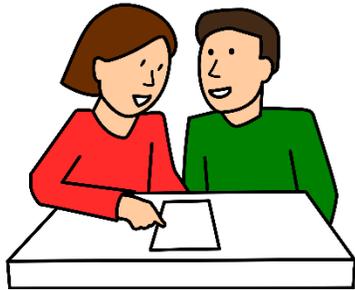
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Updated 6 February 2017

Re-visit

What are verbs and verb tenses?

A verb is the part of speech that signals an action or state of existence.

The tense of a verb signals the time the action took place and how the action was taken. Verbs have important roles in every sentence. The incorrect choice of a verb tense may interfere with the intended message and make it unclear.



subject	verb in a tense	detail
The students	will work	on their next assignment together.
The students	are working	on the assignment together this week.
The students	worked	on their last assignment together.

Using tenses correctly

There are more than 20 English tenses to choose from when we use verbs in our speech and writing. The next two slides provide a summary grid outlining the main rules of tense use in simple sentences. In order to understand the grid, please study the legend below:

Legend:				
V (verb)	<i>go smile start stop</i>		Ving	<i>going smiling starting stopping</i>
V2	<i>went</i>		Ved	<i>smiled started stopped</i>
V3	<i>gone</i>		Vs	<i>goes smiles starts stops</i>

Active use		Past	Present	Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facts Universal truths Historical events Repetitive actions 	Simple (Indefinite) V	<p>did / ved or / yesterday, last (last week, last month, last year) ago (3 days ago, 2 weeks ago, etc.) exact date (in 1990, in April 2012, etc.) when (when I was a child, etc.)</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <p><i>Example: Students submitted their assignments last Friday.</i></p>	<p>do / does / V or Vs / every day/week/etc.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <p>adverbs of frequency</p> <p>0% rarely/seldom 30% 50% often 80% 90% usually 100% always</p> <p>never sometimes</p> <p><i>Example: Students usually submit their assignments on-line.</i></p>	<p>will / Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in ...months/years (distant future) promises spontaneous decisions <p><i>Example: Students will submit their assignments on-line in 2025.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfinished processes Temporary situations Plans 	Continuous (Progressive) be + Ving	<p>was / were / + Ving</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> at ... o'clock yesterday at this time last week while from ... till... last night, etc. <p><i>Example: Students were submitting their assignments when the system crashed.</i></p>	<p>am / is / are / + Ving</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> now = at the moment this week, month, etc. plans (I'm meeting my friends next Monday.) <p><i>Example: Students are submitting their assignments this Friday.</i></p>	<p>will be + Ving / Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> at this time tomorrow/next Monday/etc. from ... till... tomorrow morning, etc. <p><i>Example: Students will be submitting their assignments at this time next Monday.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions completed by a particular moment Focus on the result Connecting two tenses 	Perfect have + Ved or Vs	<p>had + Ved or Vs / Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by + a particular moment in the past (by the time he came home, by 3 pm, etc.) before/after for <p><i>Example: Students had submitted their assignments by the deadline.</i></p>	<p>have / has / + Ved or Vs / Indicators:</p> <p>already, yet, since, ever,</p> <p>never, for, so far, by now, recently, lately, just, before/after</p> <p><i>Example: Students haven't submitted their assignments yet.</i></p>	<p>will have + Ved or Vs / Indicators:</p> <p>by + a particular moment in the future (by the end of this month, by 5 pm next Monday, etc.)</p> <p><i>Example: Students will have submitted their assignments by the end of next month.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the process Focus on the length of the process 	Perfect Continuous have + been + Ving	<p>had been + Ving / Indicators:</p> <p>how long....? for</p> <p><i>Example: Students had been submitting their assignments on-line before the system crashed.</i></p>	<p>have / has / + been Ving / Indicators:</p> <p>how long....? for</p> <p><i>Example: Students have been submitting their assignments on-line for more than a year.</i></p>	<p>Grid legend:</p> <p>V = verb go smile start stop</p> <p>V₂ went</p> <p>V₃ gone</p> <p>Ving going smiling starting stopping</p> <p>Ved smiled started stopped</p> <p>Vs goes smiles starts stops</p>

Passive use		Past	Present	Future
<p>The same use as in active voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facts • Universal truths • Historical events • Repetitive actions 	<p>Simple (indefinite) be + V3</p>	<p>was } + <u>Ved</u> or V3 were }</p> <p>Indicators: yesterday, last (last week, last month, last year) ago (3 days ago, 2 weeks ago, etc.) <u>exact</u> date (in 1990, etc.) <u>when</u> (when I was a child, etc.)</p> <p>Example: Assignments were submitted in person five years ago.</p>	<p>am } + <u>Ved</u> or V3 is } are }</p> <p>Indicators: <u>every</u> day/week/etc.</p> <p>adverbs of frequency</p> <p>0% rarely/seldom 30% 50% 80% 90% 100% never sometimes often always</p> <p>Example: Assignments are usually submitted on-line.</p>	<p>will be + <u>Ved</u> or V3</p> <p>Indicators: - inmonths/years (distant future) - promises - spontaneous decisions</p> <p>Example: All assignments will be submitted on-line in 2025.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfinished processes • Temporary situations • Plans 	<p>Continuous (Progressive) be + being + V3</p>	<p>was } + being + <u>Ved</u> or V3 were }</p> <p>Indicators: - at o'clock yesterday - at this time last week, while, - <u>from</u> ... till... last night, etc.</p> <p>Example: The assignments were being submitted at this time last Monday.</p>	<p>am } + being + <u>Ved</u> or V3 is } are }</p> <p>Indicators: - now = at the moment - <u>this</u> week, month, etc. - plans</p> <p>Example: All assignments for this unit are being submitted this week.</p>	<p>will be + being + <u>V ed</u> or V3</p> <p>Indicators: - at this time tomorrow/ <u>next</u> Monday/etc. - <u>from</u> ... till.... tomorrow morning, etc.</p> <p>Example: Assignments will be being submitted at this time next Monday.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions completed by a particular moment • Focus on the result • Connects two tenses 	<p>Perfect have + been + V3</p>	<p>had + been + <u>Ved</u> or V3</p> <p>Indicators: before/after, for, by + a particular moment in the <u>past</u> (by the time he came home, by 3 pm, etc.)</p> <p>Example: All assignments had been submitted by the deadline.</p>	<p>have } + been + <u>Ved</u> or V3 has }</p> <p>Indicators: already, yet, since, ever, never, for, so far, by now, recently, lately, just, before/after</p> <p>Example: Assignments have been already submitted on-line.</p>	<p>will have been + <u>Ved</u> or V3</p> <p>Indicators: by + a particular moment in the future (by the end of this month, by 5 pm next Monday, etc.)</p> <p>Example: Assignments will have been submitted by the end of next week.</p>

When we use verbs, we have to make two very important decisions very quickly:

- 1) **Choice:** Which tense or verb form do we need to choose – when and how did things happen/are happening/will happen?
- 2) **Accuracy:** What is the accurate way to say or write the tense or form we have chosen?

For instance, when describing our past learning experiences, we would mostly use one or more past tenses (to describe facts and processes from some time ago) and perhaps the Present Perfect tense (to describe events that are still relevant or have results in the present time). For past and perfect tenses, we need to know regular and irregular patterns of using verbs:

Example:

*I **have** always **been** a keen reader. When I **was** very young, I **loved** listening to stories. When I **grew** older, I **went** to the library every week to find books to read. I **was** very disappointed if the books on my list **had been borrowed** by someone else.*

Tenses in reported speech

We often have to report someone else's words in our everyday life or in academic writing. The choice of a tense in the reported part depends on the tense of the reporting verb. Please note the change of the word order, where required*.

If the **reporting verb is in the present tense, no changes** are made to the tense of the reported part. For example:

Direct speech	Reported speech
<i>Our lecturer always asks, "Why are you so happy?"</i>	<i>Our lecturer always asks why we are so happy.</i>
<i>"I forgot to submit my assignment!"</i>	<i>He says he forgot to submit his assignment.</i>

* For more information about the word order changes in reported questions, please go to the "Word Order" module.

Tenses in reported speech

The tense grid becomes very useful when we have to report someone else's words and the reporting verb is in the past tense. Changes need to be made to the tense and time indicators in the reported part. The present tenses 'move' to the past and future tenses start using 'would' instead of 'will'. For example:

Active use		Past	Present	Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facts Universal truths Historical events Repetitive actions 	Simple (Indefinite) V	did / Ved or V Indicators: yesterday, last (last week, last month, last year ago (3 days ago, 2 weeks ago, etc.) exact date (in 1990, April 2012, etc.) when (when I was a child, etc.) Example: Students submitted their assignments last Friday.	do / does / V or Vs Indicators: every day/week/etc. adverbs of frequency: rarely/seldom 90% usually 100% 0% 30% 50% often 90% always never sometimes Example: Students usually submit their assignments on-line.	will / will do Indicators: in ... months/years (distant future) promises spontaneous decisions Example: Students will submit their assignments on-line in 2025.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfinished processes Temporary situations Plans 	Continuous (Progressive) V-ing + V-ing	was / were + V-ing Indicators: - at ... o'clock yesterday - at this time last week - while - from ... till... last night, etc. Example: Students were submitting their assignments when the system crashed.	am / is / are + V-ing Indicators: - now - at the moment - this week, month, etc. - plans (for meeting my friends next Monday.) Example: Students are submitting their assignments this Friday.	will be + V-ing Indicators: - at this time tomorrow/next Monday/etc. - from ... till... tomorrow morning, etc. Example: Students will be submitting their assignments at this time next Monday.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions completed by a particular moment Focus on the result Connecting two tenses 	Perfect V-ed or V-ed	had + Ved or Vs Indicators: - by + a particular moment in the past (By the time he came home, by 3 pm, etc.) - before/after - for Example: Students had submitted their assignments by the deadline.	have + Ved or Vs has Indicators: already, yet, since, ever, never, for, so far, by now, recently, lately, just, before/after Example: Students haven't submitted their assignments yet.	will have + Ved or Vs Indicators: by + a particular moment in the future (by the end of this month, by 5 pm next Monday, etc.) Example: Students will have submitted their assignments by the end of next month.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the process Focus on the length of the process 	Perfect Continuous V-ing + V-ing	had been + V-ing Indicators: how long...? for Example: Students had been submitting their assignments on-line before the system crashed.	have + been + V-ing has Indicators: how long...? for Example: Students have been submitting their assignments on-line for more than a year.	Grid legend: V = verb go smile start stop V2 = went Vs = gone V-ing = going smiling starting stopping V-ed = smiled started stopped Vs = goes smiles starts stops

Direct speech after a verb in the past tense

Our lecturer *asked*, "Why *are* you so happy *today*?"

"My classmates *didn't help me!*" *complained* my friend.

"*Will* you come to our party?" they asked me.

"I *will* submit my assignment tonight," promised he.

Reported speech after a verb in the past tense

Our lecturer *asked* why we *were* so happy *that day*.

My friend *complained* that his classmates *had not helped* him.

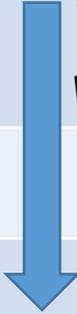
I was asked *whether I would* come to their party.

He *promised* he *would* submit his assignment *that night*.

If the reporting verb is in the past tense, the following changes are required to the present tense and time indicators in the reported clause:

Tenses	Past	Present
Simple	<i>He said he submitted his assignments on time.</i>	"I submit my assignments on time."
Continuous	<i>He said he was submitting his assignment at that time.</i>	"I am submitting my assignment now."
Perfect	He said he had submitted all assignments.	"I have submitted all assignments."
Perfect continuous	He said he had been working on his assignment.	"I have been working on my assignment."

If the reporting verb is in the past tense, the following changes are required to the past tense and time indicators in the reported clause:

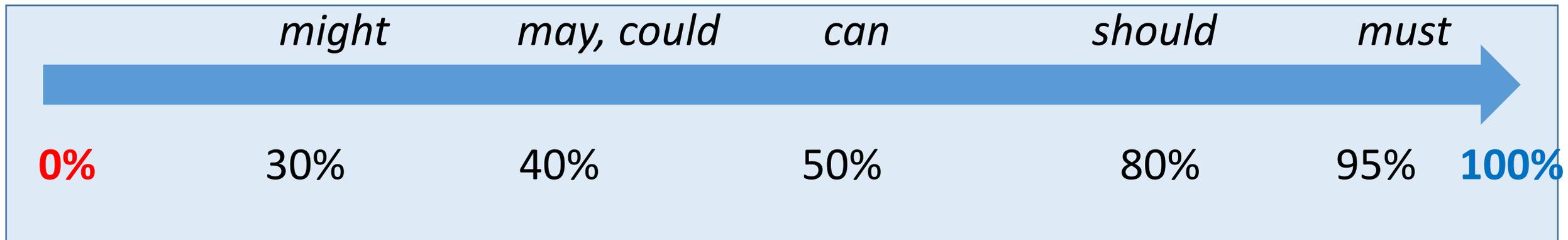
Tenses	Past	
Simple	 <i>"I submitted my assignments last week."</i>	
Continuous		 <i>"I was working on my assignment."</i>
Perfect	 <i>He said he had submitted his assignments the week before.</i>	
Perfect continuous		 <i>He said he had been working on his assignment.</i>

Please note that time indicators also change if you report a past situation. Here are some examples:

Direct speech	After a reporting verb in the past tense
now	then
tonight	that night
yesterday	the day before

As advanced users of English, we often need to discuss events that have not yet taken place or may happen in the future. **Modal verbs** are usually used when we want to express the following:

- Ability (can, be able to)
- Polite requests (can, could, would)
- Necessity (must, have to)
- Advisability or suggestions (should, ought to, had better)
- Obligation (be supposed to)
- Degrees of certainty:



As all other verbs, modals have tenses but the tenses are formed differently. Look at some examples below:

Some uses and meanings	Modal verb	Use in the Present or Future	Use in the Past
past ability	could		<i>I could speak 3 languages when I was a child.</i>
about 40% certainty		<i>Mary isn't here today. She could be sick.</i>	<i>Mary wasn't here last week. She could have been sick.</i>
informal request		<i>Could you please explain the assignment requirements to me?</i>	
suggestion		<i>You could ask your tutor about the assignment.</i>	<i>You could have asked your tutor about the assignment.</i>

Conditionals

There are several tenses and verb forms which we use to talk about conditions and results of these conditions. Sometimes we use mixed forms but mostly the three patterns below are followed:

1st conditional

- True in the Present or Future, strong possibility
- If **Present Simple**,**will + simple form**
- Example: *If you show me this assignment, I will help you with the next one.*

2nd conditional

- Untrue in the Present or Future, very slight possibility
- If **Past Simple**, ... **would + simple form**
- Example: *If I taught this unit, I would do it differently.*

3^d conditional

- Untrue in the Past and impossible to change
- If **Past Perfect**, ... **would have V3** (Past participle)
- Example: *If they had studied harder, they would have received higher grades.*

Quick tips

Quick tips

Ask yourself “Past? Present? Or Future?” and then ‘Fact? Process? Or Result?’ when choosing verb tenses to use in speech and writing.

Double-check that you used correct verb forms for your chosen tense.

Study tenses and verb forms in advanced grammar books. Pay attention to tenses and verb forms around you: on TV, in university and other readings, and in conversations with proficient users of English.

Learn more section

Useful links on verb forms

[Englishpage.com Verb Tense Tutorial](#)

[The University of Adelaide, English for Uni, Tenses](#)

[The University of Adelaide, English for Uni, Conditionals](#)

[Monash University, Language and Learning](#)

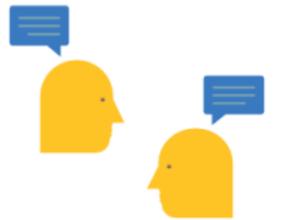
[Online, Grammar](#)

[Purdue University, Online Writing Lab, Verb Tenses](#)

Face-to-face support

Who can help with English at Monash?

[English Connect](#) –
conversational circles,
peer feedback on your
writing and grammar
workshops



Resources – grammar books



- Azar, B. S. & Hagen, S.A. (2009). *Understanding and using English grammar (4th ed.)*. USA: Pearson Longman.
- Borjars, K. & Burridge, K. *Introducing English grammar (2nd ed.)*. London: Hodder Education.
- Foley, M. & Hall, D. (2012). *MyGrammarLab (Advanced)*. England: Pearson.
- Hewings, M. (2012). *Advanced grammar in use: a reference and practice book for advanced students of English (2nd ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Murphy, R. (2011). *English Grammar in Use (Intermediate) (3 ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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