

Use of the tenses

Simple and progressive forms

For a quick overview of how to use the simple and progressive forms in English, see the examples below:

Use of the simple present	Examples
things that are generally true:	Many people drink coffee.
natural facts and scientific laws:	Cats have four legs.
regular, repeated actions; routines:	Tom usually cycles to work.
permanent situations:	Berlin is the capital of Germany.
state verbs (generally only used in the simple form)	This soup tastes delicious!
after time clauses (<i>when, if, until, as soon as, etc</i>)	Emma will be surprised when she hears our news!



GOOD TO KNOW:

Signal words for the simple present:

- ◆ always, usually, often, sometimes, occasionally, never, every
- ◆ if, when, until, as soon as
- ◆ to be, to believe, to belong, to consist, to contain, to depend, to hate, to know, to like, to love, to mean, to need, to prefer, to realise, to remember, to seem, to smell, to taste, to want

Use of the present progressive	Examples
actions happening at the moment of speaking:	It's raining heavily – you'd better take an umbrella.
incomplete actions:	We're learning about the Cold War in history.
temporary situations:	My cousin is staying with us for a few days.
changing or developing situations:	The effects of global warming are getting worse.

The past tenses work in a similar way:

Use of the simple past	Examples
permanent or long-lasting situations in the past:	His family owned the land for many generations.
repeated actions and routines:	The film club met every Monday afternoon in the cinema.
completed actions:	The factory closed down in 2015.
actions in a sequence:	She pressed the button, the door opened and she stepped into the lift.
state verbs	This painting belonged to my grandmother.

Use of the past progressive	Examples
temporary situations in the past:	I stayed at home last night because I wasn't feeling well.
activities happening at a definite time in the past:	Three weeks ago we were skiing in Austria.
actions not complete at a certain time in the past:	They were talking about Lucy when she came into the room.



GOOD TO KNOW:

We often use the simple past and past progressive to show that one action interrupted another:

- We **were having** a barbecue when it **started** to rain.
- I **saw** Tina while I **was waiting** for the bus.

The perfect tenses

Perfect tenses are used in a number of different situations in English:

Use of the present perfect simple	Examples
recent events, without saying exactly when they took place:	Tom has just left . He'll be back this afternoon.
results of past actions that have an effect on the present:	If you haven't revised for this test, you're likely to fail it.
for things someone has experienced at some time in their life; exactly when is not mentioned:	She's visited New York several times.

Use of the present perfect simple	Examples
situations that began in the past and have continued to the present:	They've lived in that house for over 20 years.
for routines or repeated actions that began in the past and have continued until the present:	I've never missed an episode of "Lost Kingdoms" – I watch it every week!
for time expressions that indicate unfinished time:	There hasn't been much snow so far this winter.
for state verbs:	We've known each other since we were children.

Contrast of the present perfect simple and the present perfect progressive

In some cases, there is no real difference in meaning between the simple and progressive forms of the present perfect:

- ◆ I've **worked** here for several years or I've **been working** here for several years.

However, the focus of the sentence is different, depending on whether the simple or progressive form is used:

- ➔ The present perfect progressive focuses on the activity, whereas the simple form focuses on the result:
 - ◆ I've **been revising** for the maths test all week.
 - ◆ I've just **found out** that I've **passed** the test – what a relief!
- ➔ The progressive form shows that an action is not complete, whereas the simple form is used for completed activities:
 - ◆ They've **been renovating** our school this year. The work should be finished by June.
 - ◆ The building looks much better now they've **renovated** it.
- ➔ The progressive form shows how long something has been going on, while the simple form expresses how often something has happened:
 - ◆ You've **been sitting** at your computer all afternoon. Go out and get some fresh air!
 - ◆ I've already **walked** the dog twice today – now it's your turn!
- ➔ As with other tenses, the progressive form can be used to show that a situation is temporary, while the simple form indicates a permanent or long-lasting situation:
 - ◆ I've **been looking** everywhere for my phone – I really need to check my messages.
 - ◆ It seems that I've **lost** my phone. I can't find it anywhere.

The present perfect and the simple past

It can be tricky to decide whether you need the present perfect or the simple past. Here are some pointers:

- ◆ When you use a specific past time expression (e.g. **yesterday, last week, ago**), you need the simple past:
 - ◆ *She's **worked** with many Hollywood legends, most recently with Tom Cruise, whose new film she **directed last year**.*
 - ◆ *"I've never **been** to the USA. **Have** you?" "No, but I **visited** Canada a couple of years **ago**."*
- ◆ Expressions indicating "unfinished" time (e.g. **today, this week**) cannot be used with the present perfect for short, completed actions:
 - ◆ *When **did** Tom **leave** this morning?*
 - ◆ *(at 10 a.m.): I've **sent** a lot of emails this morning.*
 - ◆ *(at 5 p.m.): I **sent** a lot of emails this morning.*
- ◆ The simple past is used when there is no connection to the present:
 - ◆ *Marilyn Monroe **starred** in several films. (as she is now dead, she will not star in any more films)*
 - ◆ *Although she is still young, Jennifer Lawrence **has** already **starred** in several films.*
- ◆ The present perfect is often used to introduce new information, followed by the simple past to continue the story:
 - ◆ *President Jones **has won** the election. Experts **expected** a close result, but when the votes **were counted**, she **was** the clear winner.*

The past perfect tenses

Use of the past perfect simple	Examples
for past events that happened before other events in the past:	When Lucy had finished her essay, she switched off the computer.
Use of the past perfect progressive	Examples
for events that happened before another past event, the result of which could still be seen later:	It had been raining for days and the water in the river was dangerously high.
for situations that continued for a while up to a certain time in the past:	We were relieved when Ben finally phoned – we had been waiting for his call all day.
for talking about how long an activity or event went on:	Jane had been drinking coffee all afternoon and couldn't sleep at all that night!

The future forms



GOOD TO KNOW:

Remember that there are several different ways to talk about the future in English!

- ◆ will/won't
- ◆ going to
- ◆ the future progressive
- ◆ the present tenses
- ◆ the future perfect simple and progressive

Study the examples below to make sure you know which form to use!

Use of will/won't	Examples
for the future in general:	The tickets will be more expensive in summer, so we should buy them now.
for making future predictions:	England won't win this match – not the way they're playing!
for spontaneous offers, promises or decisions:	If you like, I'll help you with your maths homework.

Use of the future progressive	Examples
for activities not yet complete at a particular time in the future:	Come round at 8 o'clock – I'll be waiting for you.
for things that are definitely going to happen at a certain time in the future:	The next Olympic Games will be taking place in Tokyo in 2021.

Use of the present tenses with a future meaning	Examples
use the present progressive for future arrangements:	We're meeting in the café on Grafton Street.
use the simple present to talk about timetables and schedules:	The concert begins at 8 o'clock.

Use of the "going to" future	Examples
for plans or intentions:	I'm going to save up my money and buy a new car this year.
for predictions about the future based on evidence in the present:	It's going to rain later: look at those black clouds!

Use of the future perfect simple + progressive	Examples
for actions that will be complete by a certain time in the future:	By the end of June, my brother will have run his seventh marathon. I can't believe we'll have been living in Spain for 10 years by the end of April!

The passive voice

HOW TO FORM THE PASSIVE

The passive voice is formed using the verb **to be** in the relevant tense plus the **past participle**.

- ◆ The passive places the focus on the action rather than the person that carries it out.
 - ◆ If it is necessary to mention the person, **by** is used:
- *The Mona Lisa was painted **by** Leonardo da Vinci.*

The passive voice in different tenses	Examples
present simple:	Breakfast is included in the price of the room.
present progressive:	Tickets for the festival are being sold on the event website.
past simple:	The stolen jewels were found in the thief's car.
past progressive	The thief escaped while he was being taken to the police station.
present perfect:	Has Marie been invited to the party?
past perfect:	By the end of the month, her song had been downloaded more than 50,000 times.
"will" future:	Your personal information won't be made public.
"going to" future:	His blog is going to be published as a book next month.

The passive voice in different tenses	Examples
future perfect:	If we don't hurry, all the food will have been eaten by the time we get there!
modal verbs:	Mobile phones cannot be taken into the examination room. Bags should not be left unattended at any time. The pictures must have been posted straight after the party, but we don't know who took them.

Conditional sentences

HOW TO FORM CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- ◆ Conditional sentences consist of two clauses.
- ◆ It does not matter whether the main clause or the subordinate clause comes first.
- ◆ They are used to talk about what happens, or could happen, or could have happened.
- ◆ They are often referred to as "if clauses", but the two clauses can also be linked by **when, unless, until, even if, as long as**.

The zero conditional

The zero conditional is used for things that always happen. The **present simple** is used in both clauses:

- ➔ When it **is** winter in Britain, it **is** summer in South Africa.
- ➔ If you **click** here, you **can** download the photos.

The first conditional

The first conditional is used for things that are likely to happen. Use **will/won't** in the main clause and the **present** in the subordinate clause:

- ➔ I'll **go** swimming after work if I **have** time.
- ➔ Unless you **work** harder, you **won't** finish your essay on time.

The second conditional

The second conditional is used for things that are impossible or unlikely. Use **would/wouldn't + present** in the main clause and the **past simple/progressive** in the subordinate clause:

- My father **would go** crazy if he **found** out what really happened last weekend!
- I don't trust Brian. If I **were** you, I **wouldn't give** him my phone number.



GOOD TO KNOW:

If I were you is a standard phrase often used to give someone advice or tell them your opinion. Although **I + were** sounds wrong, it is correct. In similar phrases, **if I were rich** or **if I was rich** are both correct.

The third conditional

The third conditional is used to talk about past situations that did not happen, although they were possible, or something that should not have happened, but did. Use **would/wouldn't have + past participle** in the main clause and the **past perfect** in the subordinate clause:

- He **would have become** the new world champion if he **had won** the race.
- If I **hadn't forgotten** to put petrol in the car, it **wouldn't have broken** down.

Conditional sentences with modal verbs

Modal verbs can also be used in the main clause of a conditional sentence instead of will or would:

- You **could get** a better job if you **spoke** a foreign language.
- If they **hadn't repaired** the fence, someone **might have been injured**.
- **Let** me know if you **can come** to the cinema with us.

Use of the gerund

WHAT IS A GERUND?

- ◆ A gerund is a verb that is used as a noun.
- ◆ The form is the same as the present participle (“-ing” form).

- ◆ A gerund can be the subject or object of a sentence:
 - Snowboarding** is more popular than ever this winter.
 - I enjoy **baking** – I find it very relaxing.
- ◆ Gerunds can also have their own object:
 - Taking** photos in the museum is forbidden.
 - Their parents want them to stop **watching** so much television.

Verbs always followed by the gerund

Some common verbs that are always followed by the gerund are: *admit, appreciate, can't help, can't stand, consider, delay, deny, dislike, enjoy, escape, feel like, finish, forgive, give up, imagine, involve, mention, mind, miss, postpone, practise, put off, resent, risk, suggest, understand*

- Would you mind **closing** the window? It's freezing in here!
- She considered **studying** medicine, but the course was too expensive.
- My cousin really enjoys **traveling** – he's going to Argentina soon.

Verbs that can be followed by the gerund

Some common verbs that can be followed by the gerund are: *forget, hate, like, love, prefer, remember, stop, try*

- When it comes to exercise, I prefer **cycling** to **jogging**.
- Stop **telling** me what to do! I can make my own decisions.

The meaning of these verbs changes depending on whether they are followed by a gerund or an infinitive:

followed by a gerund	followed by an infinitive
I remember checking my messages but I didn't see yours. = <i>I know that I did it.</i>	Remember to check your messages later. = <i>Don't forget to do it.</i>
Why don't you try working in the library? It's a lot quieter in there. = <i>this is a suggestion of something that might work for you</i>	She tried to work in the corner of the café but found she couldn't concentrate. = <i>she attempted to work but did not succeed</i>

Gerunds are used after certain preposition combinations.

verb + preposition + gerund:

- ◆ I'm **fed up with listening** to her complain about her boyfriend.
- ◆ They're **thinking about moving** to the countryside.
- ◆ She **apologised for losing** my book and offered to buy me a new one.

adjective + preposition + gerund:

- ◆ I'm **interested in learning** how to windsurf.
- ◆ My brother is **afraid of flying**.
- ◆ We're very **excited about meeting** the president.

Other common prepositions followed by the gerund:

- ◆ **In spite of having** a terrible cold, Tony went to the football match.
- ◆ **Besides speaking** French and Italian, she knows a bit of Chinese.
- ◆ **After winning** an Olympic gold medal, she decided to end her sporting career.
- ◆ I can't believe they went on holiday together **without telling** me.

Gerunds as part of compound nouns

- ◆ The hotel has two large **swimming** pools.
- ◆ Lunch will be served in the **dining** room.
- ◆ It's terrible that so many young people today suffer from **eating** disorders.
- ◆ Next week we're going on a **shopping** trip to London.
- ◆ Tom wants to be a **racing** car driver when he grows up!
- ◆ There is a **waiting** room inside the station.

Gerunds in notices and instructions

- ◆ No **smoking**.
- ◆ Emergency access road: no **parking** here.
- ◆ No **talking** while the exam is in progress.

Phrasal verbs



LEARNING PHRASAL VERBS

- It is helpful to write phrasal verbs in a sentence to illustrate the meaning, as it is not always possible to guess their meaning.
- You can organise them by verb (e.g. phrasal verbs with “take” or by particle (e.g. phrasal verbs with “off”, “on” and so on).

Phrasal verbs with “come”

- The bill **came to** more than £100, but my father paid.
- They **came up with** some good suggestions at the meeting.

Phrasal verbs with “get”

- It helped me **get through** a difficult time in my life.
- Lena was late because she **got off** the bus at the wrong stop.
- Tim and Harry don't **get on**. They argue all the time.

Phrasal verbs with “put”

- Put** your jacket **on** before you go out.
- Please **put** your toys **away**. Don't just leave them on the floor!

Phrasal verbs with “off”

- Take off** your shoes before you go into the living room.
- Jack **fell off** a ladder and broke his arm.

Phrasal verbs with “up”

- Frank walks so fast I can't **keep up** with him.
- I hate having to **get up** so early every day – I'd rather stay in bed.

GRAMMAR

Checkliste

Make sure you know:

- When to use the simple form and when to use the progressive form
- When to use the simple past and the present perfect
- The difference between the various future forms
- How to form the passive
- How to use conditional sentences
- When you need the gerund