

# talking about the past

## the past simple

The simple past tense in regular verbs is formed by **adding ed to the infinitive** (*work-worked*). But there are some irregular verbs that must be learnt.

The past simple tense is used for actions completed in the past at a definite time.

- ◆ for a past action when the time is given:  
*I met him yesterday. Pasteur died in 1895.*
- ◆ or when the time is asked about:  
*When did you meet him?*
- ◆ or when the action clearly took place at definite time even though this time is not mentioned:  
*The train was ten minutes late. How did you get your present job? I bought this car in Montreal.*
- ◆ for past situation or habit (*used to*):  
*When I was a child, we lived in a small house by the sea. Every day I walked for miles on the beach with my dog. He always carried umbrella. We used to live in a small house.*
- ◆ to describe a series of actions or events in the past (a story):  
*Jackson put his coat, switched off the light, opened the door and walked out onto the street.*

# the past continuous tense

- ◆ The past continuous is chiefly used for past actions which continued for some time but whose exact limits are not known and are not important. It is uncertainly about times of starting or finishing.
- ◆ used with a point in time, it expresses an action which began before that time and probably continued after it (actions or events that were in progress around the particular time in the past) :  
*At eight he was having breakfast.*
- ◆ We often use the past simple and the past continuous together to describe how one event interrupted another, longer event:  
*While Zac was looking for the right address, a police car came around the corner.*

# the present perfect tense

The present perfect tense is formed **with the present tense of have + the past participle**.

This tense may be said to be a sort of mixture of the present and the past. It always implies a strong connection with the present and is chiefly used in conversations, letters, newspapers and television and radio reports. The present perfect is used for past actions whose time is not definite.

- ◆ recent events, particularly when giving news:  
*Have you heard? Tom and Nancy have just got married!*
- ◆ the present perfect is used for recent actions when the time is not mentioned:  
*I have read the instructions but I don't understand them.*
- ◆ recent actions in the present perfect often have results in the present:  
*Tom has had a bad car crash. → he is probably still in hospital.*  
*The lift has broken down. → we have to use stairs.*  
*I washed the car. → it looks lovely.*
- ◆ to talk about an event that began in the past and continues up to the present:  
*I've had this skateboard since I was six years old.*
- ◆ to talk about experiences at an unstated time in the past:  
*Have you ever been to Paris?                      I've never tried rockclimbing.*

The present perfect is used for actions occurring in an incomplete period: today, this morning, afternoon, evening, week .... lately, recently, for, since. And for talking about the experiences- yet, just, already.

# the present perfect continuous tense

This tense is formed by **the present perfect of the verb to be + the present participle**:

*He has been working.*

- ◆ to talk about recent actions or events that are not necessarily complete:  
*You have been spending to much money recently.*
- ◆ this tense is used for an action which began in the past and is still continuing or has only finished:  
*I have been waiting for an hour and he still has'nt turned up.*
- ◆ to say how long an action or event has been in progress:  
*I have been learning the guitar for six years.*
- ◆ to explain a current situation in terms of recent events:  
*My trousers are muddy because I have been planting trees in the garden.*

# the past perfect tense

This tense is formed with **had +past participle**.

*I had worked.*

- ◆ we use past perfect simple to talk about an event that happened before another event in the past:  
*I wanted some pasta, but my brother had eaten it all.*

# The past perfect continuous

- ◆ for saying how long an action had been in progress up to a certain point in the past:  
*By the age of 18, my grandfather had been working in a factory for six years.*
- ◆ to explain a past situation in terms of previous events:  
*Terry was upset because his sister had been making fun of him.*

# Present tenses

## the present simple

- ◆ The main use of the present simple tense is to express habitual actions:  
*He smokes. Cats drink milk. My grandfather runs 3 km every morning.*

This tense does not tell us whether or not the action is being performed at the moment of speaking, and if we want to make this clear we must add a verb in the present continuous tense.

*He is working. He always works at night.*

The present simple tense is often used with adverbs or adverb phrases such as: *always, never, occasionally, often, sometimes, usually, every week, on Mondays, twice a year ...*

- ◆ to state a general fact (that is always true):  
*Some birds fly south in winter. Ronaldo comes from Brazil. Koala bears sleep more than 20 hours a day.*
- ◆ for actions and events in a story, especially when describing the plot of a book, film ... (state):  
*Scout goes to school for the first time that autumn and has a terrible day. He works in bank.*
- ◆ to refer to a future action or event that is part of a timetable:  
*The next train to Manchester leaves in ten minutes.*
- ◆ with the verb not used in continuous tense (state verbs)

## The present continuous

- ◆ for an action happening now, an action or event that is in progress:  
*It is raining. I am not wearing a coat as it is not cold.*

- ◆ for an action happening about this time but not necessarily at the moment of speaking:  
*I am reading a play by Kocbek. He is teaching French.*
- ◆ to talk about an action or event which is repeated, but only around this time:  
*I am drinking too much coffee these days.*
- ◆ to complain about annoying behaviour:  
*That dog is always jumping on the sofa.*
- ◆ to refer to a future action or event that has been arranged:  
*Which country is hosting the next Olympics? I am meeting Peter tonight.*

## State verbs

Some verbs are non-continuous with some meanings but not with others. For example, think is not used in continuous tenses when it means »have an opinion«.

*I **think** reality TV show are boring* BUT *I'm thinking about my last holiday.*

**This is because their meanings are related to states or conditions that are facts and not activities.**

### Verbs of thinking:

believe	think	understand	suppose	expect
agree	doubt	know	remember	forget
mean	imagine	realize	deserve	prefer

### Verbs of emotionals and feelings:

like	love	hate	hope
wish	want	admit	care

### Verbs of having and being:

belong	own	have	contain
cost	seem	appear	need
depend on	weigh	come from	resemble
possess			

### Verbs of senses:

look	hear	taste	smell	feel
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