

SECTION

5

USE OF TENSES



ORAL LANGUAGE

Conversation (Speaking)

INTRODUCTION

Dear learner, you are warmly welcome to this section of the Intervention English lesson. In the previous section, you learned about the varied meanings of the same words or familiar words and how to use them correctly in speech and writing. Also, you learned how word context, grammatical role, structure, location, field or subject-specific knowledge, formality, synonyms and antonyms contribute to meaning. In this section, you are going to learn about the correct use of words and tenses in speech. This lesson will look at verbs in relation to tenses and aspects. These are basic grammatical parts or features that enhance good communication and fluency. It is important to know that verbs are compulsory parts in the formation of sentences or in speeches. The correct use of tenses and aspects of verbs will help build your confidence in speaking. You are encouraged to follow the lesson carefully, do all the activities in the lesson and practise more at your own pace to improve your English language proficiency.

By the end of the lesson, you as the student will be able to;

Use Words And Tenses Correctly When Speaking

Key Ideas:

- **Tense** refers to the time at which an event or an action or a condition (indicated by the verb) takes place or occurs.
- **Aspect** measures the duration or length of time an action or an event or a condition covers.
- **Verb** is a word that describes an action, an occurrence, or a state of being.
- **Regular** verb is a verb that forms its simple past and past participle by adding the suffix ‘-ed’ or ‘d’ to the main verb.
- **Irregular** verb is a verb that forms its simple past and past participle in some way other than by adding the suffix ‘-ed’ or ‘d’ to the main verb.

CORRECT USE OF TENSES

The Three Main Tenses

In our everyday conversations, we use verbs in many ways to describe or talk about our actions and conditions. The actions and conditions we talk about are expressed by tenses or time. Therefore, a tense shows the time in which an action or a condition takes place. That is, we may express our ideas in relation to what happened in the past, what happens now and what will happen in the future or later. This means a tense has three main areas or domains which are the simple present tense, simple past tense and the simple future tense. This is to say that ideas, feelings, actions, and emotions are expressed in the simple present tense, the simple past tense and the simple future tense. The illustration below will help you understand the grouping of tenses.

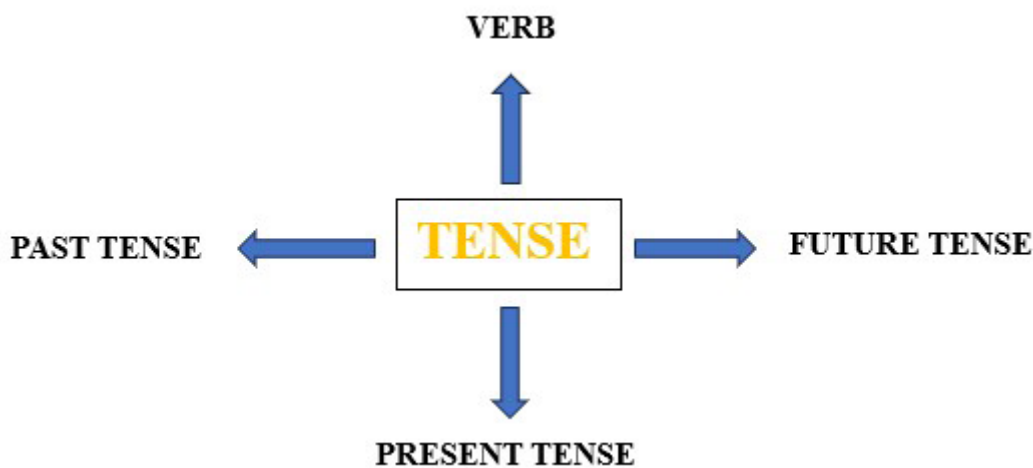


Fig 5.1: Tenses

Here are some sentences to help you learn about the tense of a verb. (Read them aloud)

Simple Past Tense	Simple Present Tense	Simple Future Tense
Dzifa was an intelligent lawyer.	Dzifa is an intelligent lawyer.	Dzifa shall be an intelligent lawyer.
Tetteh and Afiba were nurses.	Tetteh and Afiba are nurses.	Tetteh and Afiba will be nurses.
The boys cooked well.	The boys cook well.	The boys shall cook well.

Simple Past Tense	Simple Present Tense	Simple Future Tense
They played good football.	They play good football.	They will play good football.
The teacher taught us reading.	The teacher teaches us reading.	The teacher will teach us reading.
The tables were in the class.	The tables are in the class.	The tables will be in the class.
The headteacher loved us.	The headteacher loves us.	The headteacher will love us.
Ghanaian people were tolerant	Ghanaian people are tolerant	Ghanaian people will be tolerant.
We celebrated our heroes.	We celebrate our heroes.	We shall celebrate our heroes.
Every child had right to education.	Every child has right to education.	Every child shall have right to education

Activity 5.1:

Underline the verb in the sentences below and identify its tense form (present, past or future tense).

- a. I played all night.
- b. We went for a walk in the moonlight.
- c. I will see you tomorrow.
- d. They shop at my mother's shop.
- e. We shall go for sightseeing.

You have done well! Now, let us learn how the three tenses are used.

Simple Present Tense: The Present tense is used to describe or speak about an action or a condition which happens always. For example, see how the present tense can help you answer some questions in the box. Focus on the tense of the verbs underlined.

What is your name? My name **is** Nasara.

How old are you? I **am** eleven years old.

Who cooks your food? My father **cooks** my food.

What is your best subject? My best subject **is** Mathematics.

Who disciplines you at home? My mother **disciplines** me at home.

Any time you are asked questions, pay attention to the tenses. This will help you answer the questions correctly. Here are other examples on how the simple present tense is used.

1. Tijani is here today.
2. They **come** to school together.
3. The teacher sees us at the library.
4. I **brush** my teeth.
5. They wash their clothes.
6. The boys **cook** this week.

The tense of the verbs *is*, *come*, *sees*, *brush*, *wash* and *cook* shows that the things talked about are in the simple present tense. You can read the sentences again. Tell a classmate what you do at home always. Pay attention to the choice of tenses of your verbs. Good!

Simple Past Tense: The simple past tense is used for action that started in the past and at the time of speaking is completed. That is, we use the simple past tense to speak about something that happened in the past. For example, look at how the questions in the box below are answered. Pay attention to the underlined tenses.

What was your name? My name **was** Nasara.

How old were you? I **was** eleven years old.

Who cooked your food? My father **cooked** my food.

What was your best subject? My best subject **was** Mathematics.

Who disciplined you at home? My mother **disciplined** me at home.

The underlined tenses are all in the past. This shows that all the things happened in the past. Read the sentences below and study the underlined tenses.

1. Tijani was here yesterday.
2. They came to school together.
3. The teacher saw us at the library.
4. I brushed my teeth.
5. They washed their clothes.
6. The boys cooked last week.

From the sentences, the tense of the verbs *was*, *came*, *saw*, *brushed*, *washed* and *cooked* shows that the things talked about happened in the past. Use the simple past tense when you want to tell your parents what happened when they were not home. Now, tell a classmate what you saw on your way to school. Always pay attention to your tenses. Great!

Simple Future Tense: The simple future tense is used to describe or talk about actions or conditions that are yet to happen. The simple future tense is normally used together with *will* or *shall*. Look at how the simple future tense can help you answer the questions in the box. Focus on the underlined tenses in the questions and the answers.

What will be your name? My name will be Nasara.

How old will you be tomorrow? I will be eleven years old tomorrow.

Who shall cook your food? My father shall cook my food.

What will be your best subject? My best subject will be Mathematics.

Who shall discipline you at home? My mother shall discipline me at home.

Look at other examples of the simple future tense in the following sentences. Pay attention to the underlined words or verbs.

1. Tijani will be here tomorrow.
2. They shall come to school together.
3. The teacher will see us at the library.
4. I will brush my teeth.
5. They shall wash their clothes.
6. The boys will cook next week.

The tenses *will be*, *shall come*, *will see*, *will brush*, *shall wash* and *will cook* are all showing that the things talked about in the sentence will happen in the future. The simple future tense tells you about the things that will occur later. Discuss with your classmate or sibling what you will do when you finish school. Remember to use the simple future tense in your conversation.

Beautiful!

Now that you have studied the three main tenses (simple present tense, simple past tense and simple future tense), it is time to assess yourself on your progress. Perform the activity that follows.

Activity 5.2:

Study and rewrite the sentences provided in the other tenses indicated.

1.

- a. Simple Present Tense: _____
- b. Simple Past Tense: _____
- c. Yaba **will be** a good chief.

2.

- a. Simple Present Tense: _____
- b. Ghanaians **observed** Independence on 6th March, 2024.
- c. Simple Future Tense: _____

3.

- a. Simple Present Tense: _____
- b. Simple Present Tense: _____
- c. Simple Future Tense: The school team **will participate** in this year's games.

Congratulations!

We are going to learn about the aspects or durations or lengths of the tenses (**simple present tense and simple past tense**). But first, let us look at the behaviour of verbs (**regular and irregular verbs**) in relation to the tenses (most especially the formation of the simple past tense and the past participle) to help us better understand the lesson.

Regular and Irregular Verbs

Have you wondered why the simple past tense of the verb ‘*cook*’ is **cooked** but the simple past tense of the verb ‘*sweep*’ is **swept** and not **swept**? To use tenses correctly, you have to learn that some verbs are regular (for example: *cook*, *play*, *kick*, *pack*, *play*, *dance*) and others are irregular (for example: *sweep*, *sing*, *run*, *write*, *shine*, *break*). The regular verbs form their simple past tense by adding -ed or -d or -ied to the main verb (*cook* + **ed** = **cooked**). The irregular verbs form their simple past tense by some changes in the vowel sounds of the main verb and add other related sounds (*sweep* = **swept**). I hope you remember vowel sounds? (Refer to Section 1). Let us demonstrate this with a table.

Some Regular Verbs			
S/N	Simple Present Tense -s or +s/ies	Simple Past Tense +ed or +d or +ied	Past Participle +ed or +d or +ied
1	cook/cooks	cooked	cooked
2	pray/prays	prayed	prayed
3	kick/kicks	kicked	kicked
4	play/plays	played	played
5	dance/dances	danced	danced
6	pack/packs	packed	packed
7	save/saves	saved	saved
8	stop/stops	stopped	stopped
9	study/studies	studied	studied
10	bake/bakes	baked	baked
11	bury/buries	buried	buried
12	work/works	worked	worked

Some Irregular Verb			
S/N	Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle
1	sweep/sweeps	swept	swept
2	sing/sings	sang	sung
3	run/runs	ran	run
4	write/writes	wrote	written
5	shine/shines	shone	shone
6	break/breaks	broke	broken

Some Irregular Verb			
S/N	Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle
7	grow/grows	grew	grown
8	bite/bites	bit	bitten
9	buy/buys	bought	bought
10	forget/forgets	forgot	forgotten
11	steal/steals	stole	stolen
12	begin/begins	began	begun

Study the verbs in the table well to understand how verbs behave. You have seen that the simple present tense is used with 's' or without 's'. When a simple present tense has 's', it means singular or the tense describes one thing only. But when the simple present tense is used without 's', it makes it plural or it means it describes more than one thing. Read the sentences below and look at the verbs underlined and things they talk about.

1. *Ahmed* **comes** from Abetifi. (one person - **Ahmed**).
2. *Ahmed and Sadia* **come** from the Abetifi. (two people- **Ahmed and Sadia**)
3. The *boys* **sing** well. (more than one- **boys**)
4. The *girl* **sings** well. (one person- **girl**)
5. *She* **sells** mangoes. (one person- **she**)
6. The *men* **sell** salt at the market. (more than one person- **men**)

Activity 5.3:

Change the following verbs from the simple present tense to the simple past tense and the past participle tense.

Simple Present Tense	Simple Past Tense	Past Participle Tens
1. cook		
2. love		
3. paint		
4. laugh		
5. rise		
6. take		

Good job! Practise more with your friends in school or at home. Now that you have learned how the simple past tense and the past participle of verbs are formed, let us look at the aspect of tense.

The Tense-Aspect (Simple Present Tense and Simple Past Tense)

The tense aspect is the duration of an event within a particular tense. Therefore, the tense aspect measures how long an event takes place. For example, the English Language lesson covers one hour before teaching comes to an end. Also, you cover a distance from the dormitory to the classroom each morning which covers a duration of walking. Let us express the various duration of the tense aspects of the simple present tense verb **'teach'** (*irregular*) through some questions and answers and do the same thing for the simple past tense **'taught'**. The tense aspects of the irregular verb **'teach'** are all underlined in the responses or answers. Study them carefully.

Question:

Response (Simple Present Tense Aspect):

What is the teacher doing?

The teacher is teaching English.

What has the teacher done?

The teacher has taught English.

What has the teacher been doing?

The teacher has been teaching English.

Question:

Response (Simple Past Tense Aspect):

What was the teacher doing?

The teacher was teaching English.

What had the teacher done?

The teacher had taught English.

What had the teacher been doing?

The teacher had been teaching English.

From the responses, you can see that the simple present tense and the simple past tense have the following aspects:

Simple Present Tense Aspects

Simple Past Tense Aspects

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Present continuous - is teaching | → | Past Continuous- was teaching |
| 2. Present Perfect- has taught | → | Past Perfect- had taught. |
| 3. Present Perfect Continuous - has been teaching | → | Past Perfect Continuous - had been teaching |

Activity 5.4:

Demonstrate together with a friend the simple present tense and the simple past tense aspects of the verb 'sweep'. (Form the simple present tense aspects while your friend forms the simple past tense aspect- do it orally).



You: Simple Present Tense Aspects **Your friend:** Simple Past Tense Aspect

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. She is sweeping the room. | She was sweeping the room. |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |

Well done my friend!

You are now going to learn how these aspects of the tenses (simple present and simple past) we have just demonstrated are formed. Make sure you pay attention.

Formation of the Tense Aspects (*Simple Present Tense and Simple Past Tense*)

- a. Present Continuous:** It is used for an action that started in the past and at the time of speaking the action is in progress or still going on. It is usually marked by a present auxiliary verb (such as am, is, are and the main verb ending + **ing**).

Example:

1. The boys are sweeping.
2. The girl is weeding.

- b. Past continuous:** It is used to describe an action that happened over a particular period of time in the past. It is marked by a past auxiliary verb (such as *was, were*) + **ing** form of the main verb.

Example:

1. The boys were sweeping.
2. The girl was weeding.

- c. Present Perfect:** *It is used for an action that is already completed at the time you are speaking about it.* It is marked by **has/have** plus (+) the past participle form of the main verb.

Example:

1. The boys have swept.
2. The girl has weeded.

- d. Past perfect:** It is used to describe an event that happened in the past before another event. It is marked by using **had** plus the past participle form of the main verb.

Example:

1. The boys had swept.
2. The girl had weeded.

- e. Present Perfect Continuous:** It is used to show that an action started in the past and at the time of speaking, the action is still in progress. It is marked by **has/have + been (has/ have been)** plus (+) the **ing** form of the main verb.

Example:

1. The boys have been sweeping.
2. The girl has been weeding.

- f. Past Perfect Continuous:** It is used to indicate that one action was completed before the other but the second action covers a period of time in the past. It is usually marked by **had + been** plus (+) the **ing** form of the main verb.

Example:

1. The boys had been sweeping.
2. The girl had been weeding.

Activity 5.5:

Change the following simple present tense to the **present perfect** and the **past perfect**.

- i. They eat fruits before breakfast.
- ii. Adiko loves pets.
- iii. Children celebrate their parents.
- iv. God gifts all children talents.
- v. We show respect to everyone.

Congratulation! Now let us practise more with the examples in the table.

Example of Tense and Aspect in Sentences

Aspect	Present Tense	Past Tense
Simple	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elikem <i>eats</i> fufu every day. 2. Sundeme <i>embraces</i> change. 3. They <i>regret</i> all their actions. 4. The students <i>break</i> the school's record. 5. The players <i>stick</i> to the rules of the game. 6. They <i>wear</i> beautiful Kente clothes to the party. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elikem <i>ate</i> fufu. 2. Sundeme <i>embraced</i> change. 3. They <i>regretted</i> all their actions 4. The students <i>broke</i> the school's record. 5. The plays <i>stuck</i> to the rules of the game. 6. They <i>wore</i> beautiful Kente clothes to the party.
Continuous	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elikem <i>is eating</i> fufu. 2. Sundeme <i>is embracing</i> change. 3. They <i>are regretting</i> their actions. 4. The students <i>are breaking</i> the school's record. 5. The players <i>are sticking</i> to the rules of the game. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elikem <i>was eating</i> fufu. 2. Sundeme <i>was embracing</i> change. 3. They <i>were regretting</i> their actions. 4. The students <i>were breaking</i> the school's record. 5. The players <i>were sticking</i> to the rules of the game.

Aspect	Present Tense	Past Tense
	6. They are wearing beautiful Kente clothes to the party.	6. They were wearing beautiful Kente clothes to the party.
Perfect	1. Elikem has eaten all the fufu. 2. Sundeme has embraced change. 3. They have regretted their actions. 4. The students have broken the school's record. 5. The players have stuck to the rules of the game. 6. They have worn beautiful Kente clothes to the party.	1. Elikem had eaten all the fufu when you arrived. 2. Sundeme had embraced change. 3. They had regretted their actions. 4. The students had broken the school's record. 5. The players had stuck to the rules of the game. 6. They had worn beautiful Kente clothes to the party.
Perfect Continuous	1. Elikem has been eating fufu for two hours. 2. Sundeme has been embracing change. 3. They have been regretting their actions. 4. The students have been breaking the school's record. 5. The players have been sticking to the rules of the game. 6. They have been wearing beautiful Kente clothes to the party.	1. Elikem had been eating fufu for two hours when you arrived. 2. Sundeme had been embracing change. 3. They had been regretting their actions. 4. The students had been breaking the school's record. 5. The plays had been sticking to the rules of the game. 6. They had been wearing beautiful Kente clothes to the party.

Good! Practise more with your friends orally.

Activity 5.6:

1. With your classmate, talk about the above images using the following tenses:
 - i. Present perfect
 - ii. Past perfect
 - iii. Present perfect continuous
 - iv. Past perfect continuous.

Great job! How do you feel? Practice more with your friends or siblings.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Use the verbs in the box to form three oral sentences indicating the past tense, the present tense and the future tense. Read your sentences out to your friend or sibling.

swim	eat	watch
------	-----	-------

- a. Simple Present Tense:

- i. _____

- ii. _____

- iii. _____

- b. Simple Past Tense:

- i. _____

- ii. _____

- iii. _____

- c. Simple Future Tense:

- i. _____

- ii. _____

- iii. _____

2. Use the verbs provided in the box to form three oral sentences using the following verb tenses below (a, b, c, and d).

preach	buy	play
--------	-----	------

- a. Present perfect tense
- b. Past perfect tense
- c. Present perfect continuous tense
- d. Past perfect continuous tense
3. Identify and state the tense forms in the following sentences.
- a. My grandmother exercises every Saturday morning.
- b. Oforiwa has been the best Mathematics student in school.
- c. They had been singing nice songs.
- d. Ghanaian people had loved indigenous meals.
- e. Benjamin and Issah have been waiting here for long.

EXTENDED READING

1. Click on any of the links below to read more on words and vocabularies:
 - a. [Aspect @ The Internet Grammar of English \(ucl.ac.uk\)](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/english/grammar/aspect)
 - b. [Tense Questions for Kids | English Grammar Practice Test \(byjus.com\)](https://www.byjus.com/english/grammar/practice-test/)
 - c. [Verb Tenses Explained, with Examples | Grammarly](https://www.grammarly.com/verb-tenses-explained/)
2. MacCary, M. (2021). *Handbook for Reading*. Ebeka Book Production
3. Any English language books approved by NaCCA

GLOSSARY

Aspect: it measures the duration or length of time an action or an event or a condition covers.

Word Poster: A large printed sheet that usually contains pictures and is posted to promote information or concepts to people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Ghana Education
Service (GES)



List of Contributors

Name	Institution
Benjamin Ornon Akrono	Islamic Girls SHS, Suhum
Fati Issifu	Buipe Girls' Model School
Lawrenda Osei-Anim	Accra Girls SHS