

INSTRUCTOR: Verbs-- Perfect Tenses.

A verb is an action word like talk or sing. Verbs can also describe a state of being, such as believe or want. A verb's tense tells us when an action occurred or will occur. The most basic tenses are the simple present, past, and future.

Regular verbs like walk change tense according to a pattern. They show past actions by adding "ed," and they show future actions by adding "will." Irregular verbs also show future actions by adding "will," but they don't follow a set pattern when they change to past tense. Here, the irregular verb drive changes to drove in the past tense, which is not part of any set pattern.

Verbs in the simple tenses rarely cause problems, but trouble can arise when we need to show action along more complicated timelines. Actions that began in the past and might continue are in the present perfect tense. Actions that occur before other past actions are in the past perfect tense. Both the present perfect and past perfect tenses are made up of a helping verb with a past participle.

Let's start by looking at how to form the past participle. For regular verbs, the past participle is formed the same way as the simple past tense by adding "d" or "ed" to the end. Walk, walked, walked. Close, closed, closed. Call, called, called.

Irregular verbs do not follow a set pattern for forming the past tense or the past participle, so each one must be memorized. Some examples include the following-- drive, drove, driven. Eat, ate, eaten. Fly, flew, flown.

For a longer list of irregular verbs, check your textbook or online.

For both regular and irregular verbs, the past participle is combined with a helping verb has, have, or had to form the perfect tenses. Let's look at the present perfect tense first.

The present perfect tense is used for repeated actions that began in the past and

are either still happening or ended at an unspecified time. To create the present perfect tense, use the helping verb have or has plus the past participle of the main verb.

Humans have lived on Earth for millions of years. The helping verb have with the past participle lived makes it clear that humans started living on earth in the past, and they continue to live on earth.

The world population has grown to over seven billion. The helping verb has with the past participle grown makes it clear that the population started growing in the past, and it continues to grow.

The past perfect tense is used for an action that was completed before some other past action. To create the past perfect tense, use the helping verb had plus the past participle of the main verb.

Germany had surrendered before the allies bombed Hiroshima. In this sentence, the past perfect "had surrendered" takes place before the other past action, bombed.

By the time the war ended, the world had lost 60 million people. In this sentence, the past perfect had lost takes place before the other past action, ended.

Remember to use the present perfect tense to convey actions that started in the past and may continue into the present, and use the past perfect tense to convey a past action that occurred before another past action. The perfect tenses require the helping verb has, have, or had plus the past participle.