

Overview of Verb Tenses in English

(from Lange, Janet and Ellen Lange. 1999. *Writing clearly: An editing guide*. Heinle and Heinle, Massachusetts.)

	PRESENT	PAST	FUTURE
SIMPLE	<p><i>Buy/buys</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Habitual ➤ General truth ➤ Reporting in print ➤ Historical present 	<p><i>Bought</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Past action (specific time) ➤ Past action (no longer true) 	<p><i>Will buy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An action that will occur in the future
PROGRESSIVE	<p><i>Am/is/are buying</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Present moment action ➤ Present period of time action ➤ Parallel actions 	<p><i>Was/were buying</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Past moment action ➤ Past action (emphasis on duration) 	<p><i>Will be buying</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Future moment action ➤ future action (emphasis on duration)
PERFECT	<p><i>Have/ has bought</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An action that began in the past and continues by/in the present ➤ An action occurred in the past (time is not specified) ➤ An action has occurred more than once in the past 	<p><i>Had bought</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An action was completed by a definite past time/ before another past action 	<p><i>Will have bought</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An action will be completed before another time in the future
PERFECT PROGRESSIVE	<p><i>Have/has been buying</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An action that started in the past and has continued into the present (emphasis on duration of the activity) ➤ An activity that has been in progress recently 	<p><i>Had been buying</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An action that was completed before another action in the past (emphasis on the duration) 	<p><i>Will have been buying</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An action that has been in progress for a period of time before another event in the future