

Lesson 2.8 Tense and Aspect

key words: verbs, tense, aspect, auxiliary verbs, progressive, perfect

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.3.1a Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/a>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.4.1b Form and use the progressive (e.g., *I was walking; I am walking; I will be walking*) verb tenses. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/1/b>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.5.1b Form and use the perfect (e.g., *I had walked; I have walked; I will have walked*) verb tenses. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/b>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.5.1c Use verb tense to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/c>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.5.1d Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/d>

It's important to understand that tense and aspect are distinct grammatical systems. Aspect has to do with the way a verb is viewed in relation to the discourse. The **progressive** aspect presents an action (the term *action* is used loosely here) as continuing and ongoing with respect to the time being talked about. The **perfect** suggests an end to an action or series of actions, and by implication focuses on the resulting state or action.

Remember from lessons in 1.4 that each verb has a unique form; present and past tense forms are two of the five forms.

She ate. (past)

We see. (present)

In order to indicate aspect, however, there must be both an auxiliary verb and a main verb present, and together they express a more complex relationship not only about the time, but about other kinds of interactions between events over time.

Think about and then try to describe when you would use each of the following.

We <u>eat</u> .	present tense
We <u>ate</u> .	past tense
We <u>are eating</u> .	progressive aspect (auxiliary verb <i>be</i> is present tense)
We <u>were eating</u> .	progressive aspect (auxiliary verb <i>be</i> is past tense)
We <u>have eaten</u> .	perfect aspect (auxiliary verb <i>have</i> is present tense)
We <u>had eaten</u> .	(auxiliary verb <i>have</i> is past tense)

Traditional grammar uses the terms present progressive, past progressive, present perfect, and past perfect, so you may encounter those. Such terms should not imply that the aspect itself is either present or past, but that the verb string (auxiliary and main verb together) is expressing both tense and aspect.

Below are some examples with each verb labeled and with each verb string labeled. You may want to first refer back to Lesson 1.4c (past tense), 1.4d (present tense), 1.4e (present participles), and 1.4f (past participle),.

My brother is being loud.

is – present tense

being – present participle

is being – progressive aspect

Already, the children had eaten their lunch.

had – past tense

eaten – past participle

had eaten – perfect aspect

More than two verbs can occur in a string.

The girl had been helping her mother.

had – past tense

been – past participle

helping – present participle

had been – perfect aspect

been helping – progressive aspect

For the following sentences, label the form of each verb (present, past tense, present participle, past participle) and the aspect of each two-word verb string, as in the examples above.

My friend is singing in the choir.

Your uncle has been waiting in the car for you.

Your cousin sings really well.

That dog has chewed through its leash.

I am reading a great book.

The athlete ran the race in record time.

I have run 12 miles this week.

