

Important tenses: overview

The examples given below show the positive, negative and question forms of the main tenses in English. Brief descriptions of each tense's usage are also given.

Simple past tense

I met Peter yesterday. (Affirmative)

I didn't meet Peter yesterday. (Negative)

Did you meet Peter yesterday? (Question)

Uses

The simple past tense is mostly used to talk about events that happened at a specified moment in the past.

Simple future tense

I will meet Peter tomorrow. (Affirmative)

I will not meet Peter tomorrow. (Negative)

Will you meet Peter tomorrow? (Interrogative)

Uses

The simple future tense is used to make simple predictions about the future.

I will meet you at the post office tomorrow.

Present continuous tense

I am working now. (Affirmative)

I am not working now. (Negative)

Is he working now? (Interrogative)

The present continuous tense is used to talk about actions and situations that are going on at around the time of speaking.

Past continuous

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I was working in the garden yesterday. (Affirmative)

He wasn't working when she arrived. (Negative)

Was he working when she arrived? (Interrogative)

Uses

The past continuous tense is used to say that something was in progress around a particular past time.

What were you doing at 7 o'clock yesterday evening?

Future continuous

This time tomorrow I will be taking my exam. (Affirmative)

I will not be coming tomorrow. (Negative)

Will you be working tomorrow? (Interrogative)

The future continuous tense is used to say that something will be in progress at a particular moment in the future.

Present perfect tense

She has arrived. (Affirmative)

She has not arrived. (Negative)

Has she arrived? (Interrogative)

Uses

The present perfect tense is used to talk about an action that began in the past and continues up to the present. It can also be used to talk about actions that happened in the unspecified past.