

Verbs

- Understand what verbs are
- Understand some facts about tenses
- Recognise active and passive voices

Some Basic Facts about Verbs

A **verb** is a word that describes an action (e.g. bring, read, walk, run, learn), an occurrence (e.g. happen, become), or a state of being (e.g. be, exist, stand). All grammatically correct sentences have to contain at least one verb.

The main form of a verb is called the 'infinitive' – it has 'to' in front of the verb, i.e. to walk, to speak.

Verbs change their spelling depending on who or what is talking (person):

First person – I, we	Second person – you	Third person – He, she, it, they
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Example

The table shows the verb 'to eat' in first, second and third person.

	To eat (Infinitive)
1st person singular	I eat
2nd person singular	you eat
3rd person singular	he/she/it eats
1st person plural	we eat
2nd person plural	you eat
3rd person plural	they eat

Tenses

Verbs have **tenses**: Tenses mean that verbs can refer to events happening at different times:

- Present tense – shows that an action is being done
- Past tense – shows that an action has been done
- Future tense – shows that an action will be done.

There are many forms of the present, past and future tenses.



Key Point

The infinitive is the basic form of the verb.

Key Point

It is important to change the spelling of the verb, according to who is speaking.



Study

Example

Tense	Example (verb: 'to run')
Present simple	I run
Present continuous	I am running
Present perfect	I have run
Past continuous	I was running
Past perfect	I had run
Past perfect continuous	I had been running
Future	I will run
Future continuous	I will be running
Future perfect continuous	I will have been running

The 'continuous' is also known as the 'progressive'.

Tip

Make sure that you use tenses consistently in a piece of writing. If you start in the past tense, stick to the past tense.

There are exceptions to this, for example if you were telling a story that started in the present tense, but then used a flashback to events in the past.

The Subjunctive

The subjunctive is a verb form that is sometimes used in formal speech or writing. It can show a wish or possibility and is often used in a subordinate clause:

Example

If the fire alarm were to go off, it would be a shock.

'were' is the subjunctive form of the verb 'to be'.

Active and Passive

Writing in the **active** voice means that the **subject** of the sentence is doing something and the **object** is being acted on. The **passive** voice means that the subject is unknown.

Example

The boy broke the window.

Active. 'The boy' = subject; 'the window' = object

The window was broken.

Passive. 'The window' = object

Quick Test

1. Write the infinitive form of the verb 'sing'.
2. He/she/it – are they second or third person?
3. What is the present simple tense of the verb 'to run' in the second person?
4. What is the future perfect continuous/progressive version of the verb 'to run' (in the first person singular)?

Key Words

- Verb
- Tense
- Active
- Subject
- Object
- Passive