

Consistent Verb Tense

Good writers maintain **consistent verb tense**. They **do not shift** from the present tense to the past tense within the same sentence **unless** they are trying to show a relationship between events.

Incorrect Sentence:

When the plane arrived, the family runs to the gate.

(past) (present)

Correct Sentence:

I forgot my homework; now I have to go get it.

(past) (present)

Three basic tenses used in English:

Past (back then)	Present (now)	Future (later)
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Most problems with inconsistent verb tense occur with the use of the **perfect tenses**.

There are three perfect tenses:

past perfect--Mary had walked to school.

present perfect--Mary has walked to school.

future perfect--Mary will have walked to school.

Past Perfect Tense

The past perfect tense indicates an action in the past just like the past tense does, but the action of the past perfect tense is action completed in the past before another action began.

Past tense--Carolyn ate supper when Jack arrived. (She ate when he came or when he was there.)

Past perfect tense--Carolyn had eaten supper when Jack arrived. (She was finished eating by the time he arrived.)

Present Perfect Tense

The present perfect tense indicates an action which began in the past but continues into the present or the effect of the action still continues.

Example: Rodney has worked for 35 years. (He is still working.)

Future Present Tense

The future present tense indicates action that will have been completed at a specific time in the future.

Example: By Sunday evening, I will have baked five dozen cookies. (The baking will be done by Sunday evening.)