Grammar Handout 132

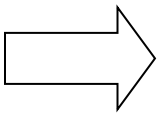
Verb Tense

132

Verbs tell us the time of an action. The time that a verb shows is called tense. There are three major tenses.

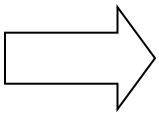
1. The present tense shows present time: I am reading this book.
2. The past tense shows past time: I was reading this book.
3. The future tense shows future time: I will be reading this book.

Tense changes may be indicated in three ways.



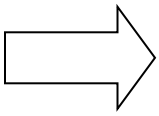
1. Spelling: sing, sang.

   I sing in the morning.
   She sang yesterday morning.



2. Endings: work, worked.

   I work at the docks.
   He worked in the garden yesterday.



3. Helping verbs: has talked, will talk.

   She has talked all morning.
   He will talk about taxes.

The time that a verb indicates is called tense. When using verbs, do not shift tense unnecessarily.

Examples

Tense shift
Sue will be waiting for her friend when the phone rang.
Consistent tense
Sue was waiting for her friend when the phone rang.
Explanation
The verbs in the sentence (was waiting and rang) both reflect past actions.

Tense shift
In case a break-in does occur, the burglar alarm had sounded to frighten intruders.
Consistent tense
In case a break-in does occur, the burglar alarm will sound to frighten intruders.
Explanation
The verb (will sound) refers to a future event based upon a possible action (break-in).

Tense shift
The English Patient won Academy Awards in 1996 and is released on video in 1997.
Consistent tense
The English Patient won Academy Awards in 1996 and was released on video in 1997.
Explanation
The verbs in the sentence (won and was released) refer to past events.

Exercise

Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

1 Bob takes a bullhorn to the football games; the sound _____ people to move away from him.

A will cause
B causes
C has caused
D have been causing

2 The nursing program attracted Maria, but she considered the opportunities and then _____ to enroll in the x-ray technician program instead.

F decides
G had decided
H decided
J will decide

3 Gary _____the comet when it arrives next week.

A was watching
B watches
C will watch
D has been watching

4 When my girl friend told me it was time to get married, I _____ hard and my head spun.

F swallowed
G swallow
H will swallow
J had swallowed

5 Glenn _____a nap when he heard the crash.

A taking
B was taking
C will be taking
D has been taking

6 The dog walked to her blanket. Then she_____twice and lay down.

F circles
G will circle
H circled
J had circled

7 Many trees are cut for use in industry. Paper _____ one industrial product.

A is
B was
C will be
D have been

8 Last year she was a captain on the city police force. Today, she _____ chief of police.

F was
G will have been
H be
J is

9 By the time that she _____ from the police academy, she knew what she wanted.

A graduates
B will graduate
C graduated
D have graduated

10 Many people respect her as a law officer. One of her biggest supporters _____ the director of the FBI.

F are
G is
H be
J have been

11 Future space shuttle flights _____ longer than flights of the past.

A will last
B last
C have lasted
D have been lasting

12 Sharon used to make her own clothes, but now she _____some of them from the store where her mother works.

F buys
G bought
H has bought
J was buying

13 Dianne _____the film when it opens next week.

A was seeing
B sees
C will see
D has been seeing

14 When the boss told me it was time to help customers by myself, I _____ hard and did it.

F swallowed
G swallow
H will swallow
J had swallowed

15 Glenn _____television when he heard the crash.

A watching
B was watching
C will be watching
D has been watching

16 The plane radioed the control tower. Then it _____twice and landed.

F circles
G will circle
H circled
J had circled

17 Plastic products have many uses in industry. Containers _____ one industrial product.

A are
B were
C will be
D has been

18 Last year she was a teacher. Today, she _____ the school principal.

F was
G will have been
H be

J is

19 By the time that she _____ from the university, she will know what she wants.

A graduates
B will graduate
C graduated
D have graduated

20 Many people respect her as an attorney. One of her biggest supporters _____ the governor.

F are
G is
H be
J have been