



Perfect tenses *have finished*.

Why we call them perfect tenses: The three **perfect tenses** are the “have” tenses; they all make use of the verb *to have* as a helping verb. The three perfect tenses (sometimes called *aspects* rather than *tenses*) are called *perfect* because the word *perfect* comes from the Latin *perficere*, meaning to finish. The perfect tenses are the tenses of things that are finished—either finished in the past, finished in the present, or finished in the future. **Present perfect** indicates action that is finished now. Caesar vowed to the pirates who had captured and ransomed him, “I will return,” and when he did come back to enact his revenge, he said: *I have returned*. **Past perfect** indicates action that was finished then: *By then I had returned*. **Future perfect** indicates action that will be finished in the future: *By tomorrow I will have returned*.

Have, not of: We often use contractions, saying *should’ve* instead of *should have*. This has led to the mistaken idea that we are saying *should of*, but it is *should have*. In other words, we should say *She should have tried* and not *She should of tried*. There is no such thing as *should of*. As a matter of style, we do not use contractions such as *should’ve* in academic writing.

Progressive forms are *in progress*.

Progressive forms of the six tenses: Each of the six tenses also has a **progressive** (sometimes called *continuous*) form or aspect, an *-ing* variation using the **present participle**—the *-ing* form of the verb—indicating action still in progress. The progressive form is made with the present participle and one or more auxiliary verbs. Here are first person singular examples of the six tenses’ progressive forms:

Present progressive:	I am equivocating.
Past progressive:	I was equivocating.
Future progressive:	I shall be equivocating.
Present perfect progressive:	I have been equivocating.
Past perfect progressive:	I had been equivocating.
Future perfect progressive:	I shall have been equivocating.



Regular verbs: Most verbs make the four principal parts in the same regular way, and therefore we refer to these ordinary verbs as **regular verbs**. These regular verbs always begin with the infinitive, add *-ing* to make the present participle, and add *-d* or *-ed* to make the past and past participle:

infinitive	present participle	past	past participle
to listen	listen ing	listen ed	listen ed
to celebrate	celebrat ing	celebrat ed	celebrat ed

In other words, we would say:

I listen.	I am listen ing .	I listen ed .	I have listen ed .
I celebrate.	I am celebrat ing .	I celebrat ed .	I have celebrat ed .

The present participle—the *-ing* form—is used with a helping verb to show something that is in progress: *I am try**ing***. The past participle—the *-ed* form—is used with a helping verb to show something in a state of completion: *I have till**ed** the soil*. Most verbs are regular, so we follow these regular rules for making verbs, until the rules fail...

I have broked the glasses?

Jane writed a novel?

Byron had catched a cold?

Irregular verbs: Regular verbs use *-ing* and *-ed* suffixes to form tenses, but more than 300 verbs do not follow this regular pattern. Instead, they have principal parts that are unique and that must be memorized: *to shrink, shrinking, shrank, shrunk*; *to ring, ringing, rang, rung*.

Why are some verbs irregular? What if the language went like this: *She has broked her promise* or *I have shrinked my shirt*? What about the verb *to ride*? Should we say, *Caesar rided his horse*? *He had rided it before*? During a period of centuries, some verbs acquired irregular forms for reasons. The irregular verbs are not stupid or pointless; they are improvements that make English more elegant and musical.