

Guide for Mixed Tense Exercises

Part 1: The Basics

Learning the basics of forming a verb tense is usually easy, and so is using that tense by itself. However, when the tenses are mixed together in grammar or writing, there can be a lot of confusion.

Here are some tips to remember:

1. *Look for the use of time words. A chart is given below.*
2. *Remember the purpose(s) of each tense.*
3. *Look at the context. There may not be any time words in the sentence, but the surrounding sentences will give a clue as to what should come next.*

Tense	Time words	Examples
Simple present	Every day, month, week, year; always; sometimes; never; frequently	George jogs three miles every day.
		Mary always has salad for lunch.
		I sometimes go to New York City.
Simple past	Yesterday; # years, weeks, months, days, hours ago; in (past year); last (month, week, year)	Tom went to Los Angeles yesterday.
		Charles Lindbergh flew to Paris in 1927.
Simple future	Tomorrow; in (future year, month, week); on (future day); next (month, week, year, name of day); # days, months, weeks, years from now; this month, week, afternoon, year; someday	Mary will go to Hawaii in two weeks.
		Ed will drive to Toronto next Saturday.
		George will paint his house six days from now.
Present Progressive	Now; right now; at this moment	You are reading sentences about verb tenses right now.
		Many students are taking calculus this semester.
Future progressive	At this time tomorrow	At this time tomorrow, I will be cleaning my house.
Present Perfect	For; since; yet; never; always; so far; # times; many times; lately; recently; already	Sam has visited Hawaii many times.
		Paul has been here for six hours.
		Yoko has known Mary since 1994.
		I have already written a letter to the president.
Present perfect progressive	For; since; lately; recently	Rita has been jogging for two hours.

Part 2: Time Clauses

Some verb tenses often work with time clauses.

Sentences with time clauses have two parts:

1. *The clause with the time word*
2. *The main clause*

Remember the following tips:

- *The part with the time word is **always** dependent.*
- *Most time words work with more than one tense.*
- *In the present, past, and future perfect progressive tenses, for is not always necessary, but it is frequently used.*
- **Before and after do not require the use of the past perfect, but it is possible.*

Time Clause Patterns

Time word	Time clause tense	Main clause tense	Examples
While	Past progressive	Simple past (short action)	While Anna <i>was sleeping</i> , a plane <u>flew</u> over her house.
		Past progressive (action at same time)	While George <i>was frying</i> fish, Rita <u>was peeling</u> potatoes.
	Present progressive	Future progressive	While Anna <i>is working</i> tomorrow, her sister <u>will be painting</u> the living room.
Before	Simple present	Simple future	Before Karen <i>leaves</i> for work, she <u>will roller-skate</u> around her house three times.
	Simple past	Simple past or past perfect*	Before Karen <i>left</i> for work, she (<u>had</u>) roller-skated around her house three times.
After	Simple present	Simple future	After Karen <i>takes</i> her motorcycle to the mechanic, he <u>will take</u> a look at it.
	Simple past or past perfect*	Simple past	After Karen <i>took</i> [<i>had taken</i>] her motorcycle to the mechanic, she <u>drove</u> to work in a rented car.
When	Simple present	Simple future	When John <i>finishes</i> this semester, he <u>will take</u> a trip to France.
	Simple past	Simple past	When the sun <i>rose</i> , John <u>got up</u> .
		Past progressive	When the pizza <i>arrived</i> , John <u>was checking</u> his e-mail.
		Past perfect	When John's friend <i>came</i> to pick him up, he <u>had already checked</u> his answering machine for messages.
		Past perfect progressive	When John <i>got</i> home, his brother <u>had been surfing</u> the web for five hours.
Until	Simple present	Simple future	Until Mary <i>finishes</i> her scuba-diving course, she <u>won't take</u> the advanced diving class.
	Simple past	Past perfect	Until Mary <i>lost</i> \$50,000 in Las Vegas, she <u>hadn't realized</u> that she had a gambling problem.
As soon as	Simple present	Simple future	As soon as I <i>get</i> home, I <u>will take</u> a nap.
	Simple past	Simple past	As soon as I <i>got</i> home, I <u>took</u> a nap.

Whenever	<i>Simple present</i>	<u>Simple present</u>	Whenever Sam <i>goes</i> to Canada, he always <u>visits</u> Niagara Falls.
The first time	<i>Simple past</i>	<u>Simple past</u>	The first time that Ingrid <i>visited</i> New York, she <u>went</u> to the Empire State Building.
The last time	<i>Simple past</i>	<u>Simple past</u>	The last time that Nancy <i>played</i> hockey, she <u>scored</u> three goals.
The next time	<i>Simple present</i>	<u>Simple future</u>	The next time I <i>buy</i> new sneakers, I <u>will walk</u> around in them first.
By the time	<i>Simple present</i>	<u>Future perfect</u>	By the time the plane <i>arrives</i> , we <u>will have completed</u> the crossword puzzle.
	<i>Simple past</i>	<u>Past perfect</u>	By the time John <i>finished</i> his essay, most of the class <u>had left</u> .
Since (time)	<i>Simple past</i>	<u>Present perfect</u>	Tom <u>has been</u> unhappy since his team <i>lost</i> the championship.

Part 3: Other Uses

Some time words may go with more than one tense. In this case, meaning and context become especially important. **The time given is relative to the present moment—it may be present, past, or future, depending on when the event happened, is happening, or will happen.**

The story below will demonstrate this. **Present time is in bold type, like this.** *Future time is in italics, like this.* Past time is in normal type.

Theresa's Day

Today is Saturday. Theresa had been sleeping for eight hours when the doorbell rang. She got up to answer the door, but no one was there. The sound of the doorbell had also woken up Maria, Theresa's roommate. Because neither of them could go back to sleep, they decided to have breakfast. While Theresa was making breakfast, Maria was taking a shower. While they were eating their breakfast, they heard a loud crash from outside. They ran to the window and looked outside. Their friend, Tom, had been skateboarding, but he had lost control of his skateboard and crashed into the garbage cans. Theresa and Maria ran outside to see how Tom was. He had a few scrapes and bruises, and he was wearing a banana peel and broken eggshells on his head. Theresa and Maria gave him some antiseptic and bandages. They wanted him to go to the nurse, but he said he was all right.

After that, Theresa and Maria went back inside, finished their breakfast and watched a tape. **Now it is 12:00, and Theresa is eating lunch. She is eating a salad. Lately, she has been trying to eat more leafy green vegetables. Everyone tells her this will make her healthier, but it's not easy for her because it's hard to find leafy green vegetables that she likes.** *She will be doing many things this afternoon and evening. At 1:30, she will go to the swimming pool and swim some laps. She practices swimming four times a week because she is on the swim team. She has been on the swim team for two years. When she finishes swimming, she will take a shower and get ready for her evening. First, she will eat dinner at a Chinese restaurant. Next, she plans to watch Citizen Kane with Maria, Tom, and Ed, Tom's brother. By the time the movie ends, they will have seen it sixteen times. After the movie, they will go to a local dance club. By midnight, they will have been dancing for three hours. At 3 a.m., Theresa and Maria will come home and go to sleep. Tomorrow will be less busy.*

Theresa's Day

Time	Main and non-time clause(s)	Time clause
12:00 a.m.-11:59 p.m.	Today is Saturday.	
1 a.m-9 a.m.	Theresa had been sleeping for eight hours.	
9 a.m.		(When) the doorbell rang.
9:01 a.m.	Theresa got out of bed to answer the door, but there was no one there.	
9:15 a.m-9: 30 a.m.	She was making breakfast	(While) her roommate was taking a shower.
9:31 a.m.-9: 45 a.m.		(While) they were eating their breakfast
9:45 a.m.	They heard a loud crash from outside.	
Before 9:45 a.m.	Their friend, Tom, had been skateboarding	
9:45 a.m.	(But) he had lost control of his skateboard and crashed into the garbage cans.	
9:46:00 a.m.	They ran to the window and looked outside.	
9:46:30 a.m.	Theresa and Maria ran outside to see how Tom was.	
9:47 a.m.	He had a few scrapes and bruises, and he was wearing a banana peel and broken eggshells on his head.	
9:50 a.m.	Theresa and Maria gave him some antiseptic and bandages.	
9:55 a.m.	They wanted him to go to the nurse, but he said he was all right.	
10:00-11:59	After that, Theresa and Maria went back inside, finished their breakfast, and watched a tape.	
12 p.m.	Theresa is eating lunch.	
	She is eating a salad.	
Before now and up to the present moment	Lately, she has been trying to eat more leafy green vegetables.	
General truth with a future prediction	Everyone tells her <i>this will make her healthier</i>, but it's not easy for her because it's hard for her to find leafy green vegetables that she likes.	
1 p.m. – 12 a.m.	<i>She will be doing many things this afternoon and evening.</i>	
1:30 p.m.	<i>At 1:30, she will go to the swimming pool and swim some laps.</i>	
Habit	She practices swimming four times a week because she is on the swim team.	
Situation that began in the past and continues to the present moment	She has been on the swim team for two years.	
3:00-4:30 p.m.	<i>She will take a shower and get ready for her evening</i>	<i>(when) she finishes swimming</i>
6:00 p.m.	<i>She will eat dinner at a Chinese restaurant.</i>	
7:00-8:30	<i>She plans to watch Citizen Kane with Maria, Tom, and Ed, Tom's brother.</i>	
	<i>They will have seen the movie sixteen times</i>	<i>(by the time) it ends.</i>
9:00	<i>They will go to a local dance club.</i>	
12 a.m.	<i>By midnight, they will have been dancing for three hours.</i>	
3 a.m.	<i>Theresa and Maria will come home and go to sleep.</i>	
Tomorrow	<i>Tomorrow will be less busy.</i>	

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