What does verb tense mean?

In your writing, you may write about actions that take place at different times. You may write about how you worked last night, or that you are working on a project, or that you work in a grocery store. Verb tense allows you to indicate when these events are happening.

Obviously, actions may take place in 3 times; the past, the present, or the future.

That sounds simple, but
There are more than three tenses.

Let’s begin with the past tenses

1) Simple Past
Use simple past when writing about an event that took place at a specific time.

To form this tense with a regular verb, just add ed to the end of the verb.

Ex. Last night, I watched Memento.

Some irregular verbs have their own past tense forms.
2) **Past Progressive**  
Use past progressive tense for an action that happened over a period of time, or during a specific time.

To form this tense, you use the past tense of the verb ‘be’ (was, were), followed by the –ing form of the verb.

**Ex.** Krista **was playing** video games when I got home.

3) **Past Perfect**  
Use past perfect tense to indicate that one action happened before another.

To form this tense, use the simple past tense form of the word “have” (had) with the simple past tense of the verb you are using.

**Ex.** Jason **had finished using** the computer when Ken walked in.

Now, we’ll deal with the present tenses.

4) **Simple Present**  
Use simple present tense when writing about something that happens regularly, or when making a general statement.

**Ex.** I **go to bed** at 3 a.m.

**Ex.** People **like reality shows**.

5) **Present Progressive**  
Use present progressive tense for an action that is happening right now.

Form present progressive tense by using the simple present form of ‘be’ (is, are, am) the –ing form of the verb.

**Ex.** He **is reading** *Neuromancer* by William Gibson.
6) Present Perfect
Use present perfect tense when writing about an action that has been happening or a while and continues to happen.

Form the present perfect tense by using the simple present form of “have” (Have, has), followed by the past tense form of the verb. This sounds weird, but the example will illustrate that it does make sense.

**He has worked at the video store for eight years.**

You can also use present perfect tense to write about something that happened in the past, but has an impact on what is currently happening.

**He has worked in a fast food restaurant, so he knows what it is like.**

7) Present Perfect Progressive
This one sounds confusing, but it’s not. Use present progressive when an action starts in the past and continues in the present. Use this tense when a specific amount of time has past.

This tense is formed by using the past perfect form of “be” (have been, has been), followed by the-ing form of the verb. This tense is used when present perfect just isn’t quite right.

**Ex. I have been looking for my car for the last two hours.**
8) **Simple Future**
Use the simple future tense when an event will occur at a point in the future.

Form the simple future tense by placing the word “will” in front of the simple present form of the verb.

**Ex.** I **will laugh** if you fall off the skateboard.

9) **Future Progressive**
Use future progressive tense when an action will occur over a period of time.

To form this tense, use the word “will” with the word and the –ing form of your verb.

**Ex.** I **will be writing** my term paper all day tomorrow.

10) **Future Perfect**
Use the future perfect tense if an action will be completed before a certain time.

To form future perfect tense, use the word “will” with the correct form of the word “have” (have, has) and the past tense form of the verb.

**Ex.** I **will have sent** thirty copies of the chain letter to my friends before tomorrow.

11) **Future Perfect Progressive**
Use future perfect progressive tense when an action will have taken place for a length of time, by a certain point in the future.

**Ex.** By the time he turns 27, Jason **will have been** in college for 9 years.

In the future tenses, words such as “shall,” “may,” “might,” may be used in place of “will.”
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