Tense

6d. The tense of a verb indicates the time of the action or of the state of being expressed by the verb.

The time of an action or state of being can be **past, present, or future**. Each verb has six tenses. The six tenses express time in different ways.

Here are three of the tenses.

**PRESENT** The oak tree *shades* the trail. [The present tense verb *shades* describes an action happening now. Present verbs describe something that is happening or existing now.]

**PAST** The oak tree *shaded* the trail. [The past tense verb *shaded* describes an action happening in the past. Past verbs describe something happening or existing in the past.]

**FUTURE** The oak tree *will shade* the trail. [The future tense verb *will shade* describes an action that will happen at some time in the future. Future verbs describe something happening or existing in the future. Notice that the future tense always uses *will* or *shall* as a helping verb.]

**EXERCISE A** Identify the tense of the underlined verb in each of the following sentences. Write **present, past, or future** on the line provided.

Example __**past**__ 1. The silvery balloon reflected the child’s smile. [The verb *reflected* describes an action that took place in the past.]

_____ 1. The boys **will ride** the Ferris wheel later. [In what time frame is the action described by the verb phrase *will ride* occurring?]

_____ 2. **Are** they old enough to go in the fun house?

_____ 3. How confusing the house of mirrors **was**!

_____ 4. We all ate **roasted corn on the cob**.

_____ 5. Next year, the fair **will come** to town in May.

Here are three more of the six tenses. These tenses are called the **perfect tenses**. They describe action that is complete, or “perfect.”

**PRESENT PERFECT** The oak tree *has shaded* the trail for an hour. [The present perfect tense verb *has shaded* describes an action that is complete at the present moment.]

**PAST PERFECT** By the time the sun was high, the oak tree *had shaded* the trail for an hour. [The past perfect tense verb *had shaded* describes an action that was completed before a specific time in the past.]

**FUTURE PERFECT** By the time the sun is high, the oak tree *will have shaded* the trail for an hour. [The future perfect tense verb *will have shaded* describes an action that will be completed before a specific time in the future.]
**Exercise B** Identify the tense of the underlined verb in each of the following sentences. Write present perfect, past perfect, or future perfect on the line provided.

**Example** present perfect

1. Have you ever dialed a wrong number? [The action in the sentence was completed at some point before now.]

6. The caller said, “Have I reached the pizza delivery place?” [Was the action in the sentence completed in the past, or will it occur in the future?]

7. “No,” I answered, “I have never sold a pizza in my life.”

8. I wasn’t angry, because I had had the same problem the day before.

9. My best friend’s family had changed their phone number.

10. By tomorrow, I will have looked up the new number.

**Exercise C** In each of the following sentences, write the form of the verb described in parentheses. Write your answer on the line provided.

**Example** 1. Which candidate have the students elected class president? (present perfect tense of elect) [The present perfect tense is formed with the helping verb have and the past participle form of the verb.]

11. Nina a funny story about herself. (past tense of write) [How is the past tense of a verb formed?]

12. Our father four tickets to the play. (past perfect tense of buy)

13. Jason always that Phoenix was a beautiful city. (present perfect tense of think)

14. Teresa and her sister painting the set before the next rehearsal. (future tense of finish)

15. I a lot about fly-fishing from my aunt. (present perfect tense of learn)