



VERB TENSE

Verb tense refers to the time when an action takes place.

Consistent Verb Tense

When you begin to describe an event in one tense, stay in that tense until you are no longer dealing with that topic. Sometimes you will deal with a topic for only a paragraph and sometimes for an entire paper.

Examples:

Wrong: A bad accident occurred on Glenstone when a green station wagon pulls up next to a truck and changes lanes.

Right: A bad accident occurred on Glenstone when a green station wagon pulled up next to a truck and changed lanes.

Present Tense

Present tense is used for statements of universal or unchangeable truth and for habitual actions.

Examples:

A human needs oxygen, food, and water to live.

The county fair begins the last week of August.

Present tense is also used when referring to an author and his or her ideas, regardless of whether the author is still alive.

Examples:

Darwin tells us that only the strongest of a species will survive. Kilgore Trout receives the Nobel Prize in Vonnegut's classic *Breakfast of Champions*.

Past Tense

Past tense is used to report experimental results and refer to past events.

Examples:

The bake sale was very successful. The Creighton experiments were inconclusive about the origin of cancer.

Verb Tenses

There are six verb tenses in the English language:

Tense	Example	Action
• Past	I called.	Action has been completed.
• Present	I call.	Action takes place now.
• Future	I will call.	Action will take place later.
• Past Perfect	I had called.	Earlier of two finished actions.
• Present Perfect	I have called.	Recently completed action.
• Future Perfect	I will have called.	Action will be completed before a future time.