

LESSON 7

Tenses

(i) The Present tense

The Simple Present

Form

I/we sing

You sing

He/she/it sings

They sing

It is important to remember that we add –s or –es to the main verb with the 3rd person singular (he, she, it).

The sentences given below show the present simple in the affirmative, the negative and the interrogative forms. Note that the helping verb ‘do’ or ‘does’ help to form negatives and interrogatives in the simple present.

Affirmative: She **likes** apples.

We **go** to school by bus.

Negative: She **does not (doesn't)** like apples.

We **do not (don't)** go to school by bus.

Interrogative: **Does she** like apples?

Do we go to school by bus?

Some other examples:

1. The lake looks beautiful.
2. The moon goes round the earth.
3. Water boils at 100 degrees.
4. He drives a car.



Some examples of the simple present

1. We use the simple present tense to talk about something that happens again and again and for things that are always true, that is, facts.

For example:

The sun rises in the east.

Birds fly in the sky.

Water boils at 100°C.

2. It is also used for habitual actions, which are part of one's daily routine,

For example:

I go to school at 7:00.

He wakes up early.

My father goes to work by bus.

3. It is interesting to note that the simple present tense may be used to narrate a past event or story.

For example:

The army advances as the battle starts.

She walks up to him and gazes into his eyes.

4. The simple present may also be used to describe future events, especially journeys.

For example:

We leave for Delhi tomorrow.

School starts on the 2nd of January.

5. The simple present tense is frequently used in commentaries and newspaper headlines.

For example:

India wins the toss and opts for batting,

15 die as cold wave continues.

7-year old wins award.

Note: Words such as always, usually, sometimes, generally and never are often used with the simple present tense specially while talking about daily routines and habitual actions.

Let us see what Tina has to say about her daily routine. Try to pick out the verbs which are in the simple present tense.



Hi! I'm Tina. I usually **get up** at 7 o'clock and go for a walk. It **takes** me half an hour. I **have** breakfast at 8:00 and **leave** for work by 9 o'clock. I **have** lunch at 2 o'clock. I generally **finish** my work by 5 o'clock. I sometimes **cook** a meal in the evening. I **watch** T.V for a while. I **go** to bed at 10 o'clock. I **sleep** well.

Forming questions in the simple present tense:

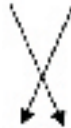
1. Yes/No questions – These are questions which begin with helping verb like am, is, are, do, does, etc. *The helping verb is placed before the subject.* Look at the examples given below:

Delhi is in India.



Is Delhi in India?

They are doctors.



Are they doctors?

2. “Wh–” questions – These questions begin with question words like ‘what’, ‘which’, ‘who’, ‘when’, ‘where’, ‘why’ or ‘how’. In forming these questions the helping verb is placed before the subject. If there is no helping verb in the sentence, then “do” and “does” help in forming the question.

Exercise 1

Change the given statements into questions:

1. Tom is a student. _____ a student?
2. Her name is Leela. _____ Leela?
3. They are from Varanasi. _____ from Varanasi?
4. Your bike is new. _____ new?
5. You are twenty. _____ twenty?

Exercise 2

Make questions by filling in the blanks with question words such as ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘which’.

1. He is in the garden. _____ is he?
2. These are my parents. _____ these people?
3. We leave at 6 o'clock. _____ you leave?
4. My name is Seema. _____ your name?

Exercise 3

Read these sentences. What do they suggest about the functions of simple present tense?

1. It takes me five minutes to get to school.
2. I'm away on holiday next week.
3. I leave work at 5:30 most days.
4. London stands on the Thames.
5. She holds the baby and looks straight into its eyes.
6. The earth rotates on its axis.

Exercise 4

Look at Rima's description of her week's activities:

| Time | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-----------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Morning | | Clean the house | Go to the cinema |
| Afternoon | | Finish shopping | Relax at home |
| Evening | Go out for dinner with friends | Badminton practice | Study and complete assignments |

1. What does Rima do on Friday evening?
2. What does she do on Saturday morning?
3. What does she do on Saturday afternoon?
4. How does she spend Sunday?

Answers to Exercise 1

1. Is Tom a student?
2. Is her name Leela?
3. Are they from Varanasi?
4. Is your bike new?
5. Are you twenty?

Answers to Exercise 2

1. Where is he?
2. Who are these people?
3. When do you leave?
4. What is your name?

Answers to Exercise 3

1. habit
2. future plan
3. habit

4. permanent fact
5. narration
6. scientific truth

Answers to Exercise 4

1. On Friday evenings Rima goes out for dinner with friends.
2. On Saturday mornings she cleans the house.
3. On Saturday afternoons she finishes shopping.
4. On Sunday mornings Rima goes to the cinema.
5. On Sunday afternoons she relaxes at home.
6. On Sunday evenings she studies and completes assignments.

Important Note: The following verbs are not usually used in continuous form. They are used in the simple present form.

1. Verbs of perception: see, hear, smell, notice, recognize
2. Verbs of appearing: appear, look, seem
3. Verbs of emotion: want, wish, desire, feel, love, hate, hope, like, refuse, prefer
4. Verbs of thinking: think, suppose, believe, agree, consider, trust, remember, forget, know, understand, imagine, mean, mind
5. Verbs of possession: have= possess, own, belong, to have (= possess, own)

Examples:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| see | I see birds in the sky. |
| hear | I hear a noise. |
| notice | We notice that you have stopped studying. |
| recognize | I recognize him. |
| smell | These flowers smell sweet. |
| taste | This cake tastes good. |
| believe | I believe in God. |
| think | He thinks well of her. |
| remember | I remember what my mother told me. |
| forget | I forget what happened yesterday. |
| want | She wants a job. |
| wish | I wish I could fly. |
| love | He loves mangoes. |
| hate | I hate summer. |
| like | I like swimming. |
| dislike | I dislike selfishness. |

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| appear/seem | He appears/ seems to be in trouble. |
| belong | We belong to Punjab. |
| refuse | We refuse to help him. |

Exceptional uses of these verbs in continuous form are more frequent in spoken English; i.e. with 'always' meaning, 'at all times':

You're always forgetting something.

She's always refusing to do something or the other.

Other exceptional continuous forms:

1. I'm seeing the doctor tomorrow. (= meeting)
2. We're certainly not recognizing your claim.
3. I'm thinking of leaving this job.
4. We're thinking of going out for dinner. (thinking = considering the idea of)
5. She's minding the baby. (= looking after)
6. How are you liking it? (= enjoy)
7. Are you liking the book I gave you? (= enjoy)

Assignment

Describe your daily routine using the simple present tense.

1. Ask a friend questions about his/her likes and dislikes using the simple present tense.
2. Use 'don't' and 'doesn't' to form negatives and interrogatives.
3. Make sentences using some of the verbs in the list of verbs of perception in the present continuous tense.

(i) The Present tense

The Present Continuous

Form

I am singing

We are singing

You are singing

He/she/it is singing

They are singing

While using the present continuous tense we must remember that the ‘-ing’ form is added to the main verb, for example: sing – singing, sit– sitting, go– going, come– coming, etc. Also, the main verb must be preceded by the helping verbs ‘is’, ‘am’ or ‘are’.

For Example:

| | | |
|---------------|-----|------------------------|
| I | am | play + ing = playing |
| He, She, It | is | sell + ing = selling |
| We, You, They | are | climb + ing = climbing |
| | | buy + ing = buying |
| | | walk + ing = walking |
| | | read + ing = reading |
| | | eat + ing = eating |

Here are some more examples of verbs. Practice adding “-ing” to each verb:

- (a) run
- (b) draw
- (c) jump
- (d) cry
- (e) laugh
- (f) think
- (g) grow
- (h) fly
- (i) speak
- (j) write

Note: The suffix “-ing” can be added to the main verb in these ways:

| by doubling the last letter and then adding -ing | by adding -ing to the main verb | by omitting the ‘e’ at the end of the word and then adding “-ing” |
|---|--|--|
| swim – swimming | climb – climbing | write – writing |
| get– getting | cry– crying | breathe – breathing |
| travel – travelling | speak – speaking | use – using |
| sit– sitting | visit– visiting | live – living |
| wed– wedding | sing – singing | compare – comparing |
| cut– cutting | grow – growing | prove – proving |

The sentences given below show the present continuous in the affirmative, the negative and the interrogative forms. Note that the helping verbs 'is' or 'am' or 'are' used with the negative 'not', help to form negatives in the present continuous.

Affirmative: I **am playing** football.

They **are working** in Mumbai.

She **is leaving** this evening.

Negative: I **am not playing** football.

They **are not working** in Mumbai.

She **is not leaving** this evening.

Interrogative: **Are you playing** football?

Are they working in Mumbai?

Is she leaving this evening?

Four uses of the Present Continuous

1. The Present Continuous may be used to talk about actions taking place at the time of speaking.

For example:

I am speaking.

You are wearing a coat.

He is running.

2. It may also be used to talk about activities which are going on over a period of time including the present but may not be going on at the time of speaking.

For example:

He is writing a book these days.

She is preparing for her examination.

3. It is also used for narrations and commentaries.

For example:

They are flying over a desert when the engine fails.

Now he is running across the field and there he catches the ball.

4. The present continuous tense is also used to refer to planned future action, especially journeys.

For example:

We are leaving for Delhi tomorrow.

My brother is arriving soon.

Read the following conversation between Tina and Leela who meet each other while travelling on a train.

Tina: Where are you travelling to?

Leela: I'm travelling to Delhi.

Tina: Who's travelling with you?

Leela: My sister is travelling with me.

Tina: Are you visiting a relative or going for the Book Fair?

Leela: I am visiting Delhi to attend my cousin's wedding. What about you?

Tina: I'm going to Delhi to attend a seminar. Where are you studying?

Leela: I'm studying at the Dayalbagh Educational Institute in Agra.

Tina: I'm teaching in a University. It was nice meeting you. I hope we meet again.

Note: In this conversation, most of the verbs are in the continuous tense, such as travelling, studying, meeting, and going.

Assignment

1. Describe a scene in a park. What are people doing?
2. Describe a scene on a street.
3. Write a postcard to a friend using 'simple present' and 'present continuous tense'. Include a small description of what you and your friends are doing these days.

(ii) The Past tense

The Simple Past

Form

I/we sang

You sang

He/she/it sang

They sang

Verbs have three forms—the simple present tense form (the first), the simple past tense form (the second) and the past participle form (the third).

In the Simple Past tense the verb is used in its second form.

| Present (first form) | Simple past (second form) | Past Participle (third form) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| go | went | gone |
| drink | drank | drunk |
| eat | ate | eaten |
| buy | bought | bought |
| come | came | come |
| break | broke | broken |

Verbs are changed into the Simple Past Tense (the second form) in three ways:

by adding ‘-ed’:

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| play – played | stay – stayed |
| study – studied | smile – smiled |
| watch – watched | dance – danced |
| cry – cried | live – lived |

by changing the ‘-d’ sound to the ‘-t’ sound or adding a ‘-t’ sound:

| | |
|---------------|----------------|
| build – built | learn – learnt |
| burn – burnt | bend – bent |
| send – sent | |
| lend – lent | |

by changing the vowel sound in the verb:





| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| sit – sat | run – ran |
| catch – caught | take – took |
| sing – sang | eat – ate |



Some verbs which end in 'd' or 't' remain unchanged in their past forms:

spread – spread hit—hit
put – put cut – cut

EXERCISE 1

Write the past tense forms of the action verbs in the pictures given below:

| | | |
|---|-------|-------|
|  | kneel | _____ |
|  | break | _____ |
|  | cry | _____ |
|  | swim | _____ |
|  | run | _____ |
|  | smile | _____ |
|  | pull | _____ |

| | | |
|---|-------|--|
|  | push | |
|  | teach | |

Exercise 2

Classify the verbs given in the box into one of the three columns given below it in their past tense forms according to the three sounds:

| | | | | | |
|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| send | walk | look | learn | talk | hate |
| listen | want | paint | study | spell | fill |
| need | burn | build | faint | chat | spend |

| | | |
|------|------|-------|
| /-t/ | /-d/ | /-id/ |
| | | |

The sentences given below show the past simple in the affirmative, the negative and the interrogative forms. Note that in negatives the verb goes back to its present tense form:

Affirmative: She **ate** the biscuits.

She **went** for a walk.

Negative: She did not **eat** the biscuits.

She did not **go** for a walk.

Interrogative: Did she **eat** the biscuits?

Did she **go** for a walk?

Some more examples:

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| I sang a song. | I didn't sing a song. Did I sing a song? |
| I went to work. | I didn't go to work. Did I go to work? |
| I spoke to my friend. | I didn't speak to my friend. Did I speak to my friend? |
| They went to the cinema. | They didn't go to the cinema Did they go to the cinema? |
| She said hello. | She didn't say hello. Did she say hello? |
| You studied French. | You didn't study French. Did you study French? |

Some uses of the simple Past tense:

1. To indicate a completed action in the past without a time expression.

For example:

I woke up early, washed the dishes, and worked in the garden for a while.



2. To indicate a completed action in the past with a time expression.

For example:

He arrived from the airport at 8:00, Checked into the hotel at 9:00, and

went to the beach at 10:00. In the evening he watched the sunset.



3. To show the duration of an action

For example:

I lived in Mumbai for five years and taught in a school for two years.



4. To indicate a past habit

For example:

I **played** a musical instrument when I was a child. My friend **worked** as a tailor after school. We **used to** play tennis everyday.



Exercise 3

Use the past forms of the verbs given in the box and fill in the blanks.

meet, talk, enjoy, go, play, leave, promise

I _____ an old friend yesterday. We _____ about old times, and _____ ourselves.

We _____ for a picnic and _____ tennis. She _____ the next day and _____ to keep in touch.

Exercise 4

Form negatives in the Past Tense using 'did'.

1. She wrote the letter. _____
2. They left in time. _____
3. He looked tired. _____
4. Amit went home. _____
5. Sita sang well. _____
6. You worked hard. _____

Answers to Exercise 1

knelt, broke, cried, swam, ran, smiled, pulled, pushed, taught

Answers to Exercise 2

- t sent, burnt, built, learnt, spent, spelt
- d listened, walked, looked, studied, talked, filled
- id needed, wanted, fainted, hated, chatted, painted

Answers to Exercise 3

I met an old friend yesterday. We talked about old times and enjoyed ourselves. We went for a picnic and played tennis. She left the next day and promised to keep in touch.

Answers to Exercise 4

1. She did not write the letter.
2. They did not leave in time.
3. He did not look tired.
4. Amit did not go home.
5. Sita did not sing well.
6. You did not work hard.

Assignment

1. Think of three things you did yesterday and three things you didn't do yesterday. You can use these verbs:

| |
|--|
| write, visit, watch, wait, go, study, buy, see, eat, wash, clean |
|--|

2. Describe the place where you lived as a child. You can begin with: "When I was a child, I lived in"

3. Describe any place you visited as a child. You can begin with: "When I was a child, my parents and I visited ..."

(ii) The Past tense

The Past Continuous Tense

Form

I was singing

We were singing

You were singing

He/she/it was singing

They were singing

The past continuous tense can be formed with the help of the helping verbs “was” and “were.” Also ‘-ing’ is added to the main verb.

Examples:

1. Anil **was running** very fast.
2. Ashok **was working** when I reached there.
3. He **was playing** for India.
4. They **were asking** too many questions.

The sentences given below show the past continuous in the affirmative, negative and the interrogative forms.

Affirmative: I was eating.

They were playing.

Negative: She was not eating.

They were not playing.

Interrogative: Was she eating?

Were they playing?

Some uses of the Past Continuous tense

1. The past continuous tense is used for an activity which continued for some time in the past.

For example:

It was getting darker.

We were waiting for the bus to arrive.

2. We also use the past continuous tense to refer to an action or state that was continuing when something else happened.







For example:

I was playing the Sitar when a string broke.

I was washing the dishes when I broke a glass.

Exercise 1

At 8:00 last night, I was reading a magazine. What were other members of my family doing at 8:00? (Create your own answers for six family members. For example: My aunt was cooking dinner.)

| What were these people doing last evening? | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| My uncle | My brother | My sister |
|  |  |  |
| My grandmother | My father | My cousin |

Exercise 2

Match the sentences on the left with those on the right. Join them together using “when” or “while”

| What was happening? | What happened? |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| I was writing a letter | I hit another car. |
| I was jogging in the lane | my brakes failed. |
| I was repairing the roof | my pen ran out. |
| I was driving to the market | I fell off the ladder. |
| I was cycling downhill | I tripped and fell. |

Answers to Exercise 1

1. My uncle was reading some important papers.
2. My brother was swimming.

3. My sister was playing the flute.
4. My grandmother was watching Television.
5. My father was writing a letter.
6. My cousin was cycling.

Answers to Exercise 2

1. I was writing a letter when my pen ran out.
2. I was jogging in the lane when I tripped and fell.
3. I was repairing the roof when I fell off the ladder.
4. I was driving to the market when I hit another car.
5. I was cycling downhill when my brakes failed.

(iii) The Future Tense

The Simple Future

Form

I/we shall sing

You will sing

He/she/it will sing

They will sing

Nina, Tanya and Arushi are going to join a summer camp in a few months time. Read the conversation given below:

Nina – Hi Tanya, Arushi! Are you ready for the camp? It will start in June.

Tanya – I think we will have a lot of fun.

Arushi – I expect we will go to bed late.

Nina – I suppose we will attend a number of interesting lectures.

Tanya – Yes. We will also probably take part in some cultural shows.

Arushi – I hope it won't rain on our trip!

The three friends are trying to predict what may or may not happen using 'will' or 'won't'. They also use "probably" or "I expect" in their sentences. When we express an activity or state in the simple future tense we use "shall" with the first person. e.g. I shall; we shall; and "will" with the second and the third person. e.g. you will; they will; he/she/it will.

Important Note: This rule however is not followed strictly now and it is customary to use "will" with all the three persons. However "will" used with the first person may express determination, promise or a firm decision.

I will not listen to her.

We will leave tomorrow.

I won't believe in what she says.

We will survive.

Similarly "shall" may be used with the second and the third person to express determination or firm decision.

He shall leave the room.

They shall not be allowed to enter.

Students shall not miss classes.

Indians shall not be slaves.

Affirmative: She will work hard.

It will rain tonight.

Negative: She won't work hard.

It won't rain tonight.

Interrogative: Will she work hard?
Will it rain tonight?

Though we have used only “will” or “shall” in these examples, the future tense can also be expressed in three other ways.

1. The simple present tense maybe used with a time expression to convey a definite future happening.

The boys start school on Monday.

I leave tonight.

Work begins on Tuesday.

2. The present continuous tense can be used to express a future decision or plan.

What are you doing next Sunday?

They are coming tomorrow.

3. The ‘going to’ form maybe also used to express an intention or prediction:

I’m going to send Arun the money.

I’m going to lend you my bicycle.

My brother is going to join the army.

It’s going to rain today.

This girl is going to faint.

Two other uses of the simple future tense

1. The future tense expresses the speaker’s opinions, assumptions, speculations, about the future. It may be introduced by verbs such as:

assume

expect

hope

suppose

wonder

I hope we will find him.

I suppose they will sell the house.

I assume he will come back.

I wonder if they will join us.

I expect him to be here soon.

2. It is also used in weather forecasts, formal announcements and future plans.

The president will inaugurate the exhibition tomorrow.

Fog will persist in all areas.

Exercise 1

Look at these situations: what do you think may happen? Use “will” or “won’t” in your answers to these questions.

1. You are stuck in a lift.

I expect _____.

2. Our train is due to leave at 10 o'clock tonight.

I hope _____.

Exercise 2

Look at the information given below. Use the words in the box and make a prediction.

| |
|------------------------------|
| fail, forget, go, lose, miss |
|------------------------------|

1. Ram has a terrible memory. It's his sister's birthday next week.

2. Suman has her exams tomorrow. She hasn't studied at all.

3. Nita's bus leaves at 8:30. She has just got up. It is 8:25.

4. Sita's sister lives in Delhi. She is sick.

5. Tom has made a poor investment.

Exercise 3

Tomorrow is Sunday. Write three things you are going to do tomorrow.

1. I'm going to _____.
2. I'm going to _____.
3. I'm going to _____.

Exercise 4

Change the following statements into questions.

1. Sania Mirza will win tonight.
2. You will need these baskets.
3. The train will arrive soon.
4. It will be sunny tomorrow.
5. She won't pass the exam.
6. The tickets will cost Rs.100.
7. He will go home on Sunday

Answers to Exercise 1

1. I expect someone will rescue us soon.
2. I hope the train will leave on time.

Answers to Exercise 2

Ram will forget his sister's birthday.
Suman will fail in her exams.
Nita will miss the bus.
Sita will go to Delhi to look after her sister.
Tom will lose his money.

Answers to Exercise 3

I'm going to paint the kitchen.
I'm going to buy some vegetables.
I'm going to practice football.

Answers to Exercise 4

1. Will Sania Mirza win tonight?
2. Will you need these baskets?
3. Will the train arrive soon?
4. Will it be sunny tomorrow?
5. Won't she pass the exam?
6. Will the tickets cost Rs.100?
7. Will he go home on Sunday?

Assignment

Ask questions about the next weekend using 'going to'. You can use the choices given below.

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Are you going to: | get up late? |
| | do your homework? |
| | go out for lunch? |
| | visit a friend? |
| | play a game? |
| | watch T.V.? |
| | read a book? |

Complete these sentences using the present continuous tense for future action:

1. On Friday I'm _____.
2. On 15th of June my brother is _____.
3. In summer we are all _____.
4. This evening I'm _____.

Suppose you are on a three day visit to Kerala. Imagine three things you are "going to" do there.

1. I'm going to visit _____.
2. I'm going to see _____.
3. I'm going to buy _____.
4. I'm going to eat _____.

(iii) The Future Tense

The Future Continuous Tense

Form

I/we shall be singing

You will be singing

He/she/it will be singing

They will be singing

The sentences given below show the use of the future continuous tense in the affirmative, negative and interrogative forms. Note the use of 'be' and the '-ing' form of the main verb in the formation of this tense.

Affirmative: She will be waiting for him.

They will be leaving soon.

Negative: She won't be waiting for him.

They won't be leaving soon.

Interrogative: Will she be waiting for him?

Will they be leaving soon?

One important use of the future continuous tense:

We use the future continuous tense to refer to an activity or state which will continue for some time in the future.

For example:

I wonder what he will be doing tomorrow.

I will be waiting for you at the station.

We will be travelling all night.

Exercise 1

Mention three things you will be doing after 5 years.

I'll be_____

I'll be _____

I'll be_____

Answers to exercise 1

I'll be working as a software engineer after five years.

I'll be living in Mumbai.

I'll be playing tennis quite well in five years.

Practice speaking the sound 'll in these sentences.

1. You'll go on a long journey.
2. We'll probably leave next week.
3. I'm sure they'll write to us.
4. I'll phone you tomorrow.

Assignment

1. Assume the role of a fortune teller and make three predictions about your friend using "will", "won't".
2. What will you do after you leave college four years from now? Write at least ten sentences using "will", and 'going to'.

(iv) The Perfect Tense

The Present Perfect Tense

Form

I/we have sung

You have sung

He/she/it has sung

They have sung

Read this little passage.

The failure of the monsoons for the past few years has affected the arrival of birds in the Keoladev Bird Sanctuary in Bharatpur. Due to the lack of rain, the entire area, covering 175 square kilometres, has become too dry to attract birds. Most of them have flown to other parks. This has caused a drop in the number of tourists to this park.

The present perfect tense is a combination of the present and the past.

Now notice that the activity of 'no rain' has been completed and the effect is taking place now – no birds; no tourists. An important feature of the present perfect tense is the use of the helping verbs 'have' or 'has' with the third form of the main verb. 'Have' is used with the first person, the second person and the third person plural.

Examples:

1. I **have completed** my homework.
2. She **has gone** to Delhi.
3. Ratan **has written** a letter.
4. They **have shifted** to Agra.
5. You **have worked** very hard.

The sentences given below show the present perfect in the affirmative, the negative and the interrogative forms. Note that the helping verbs 'have' or 'has', attached with the negative 'not' help to form negatives in the present perfect tense form. The main verb remains in its third form.

Affirmative: I **have started** working.

The train **has left** the station.

She **has gone** to Mini's house.

Negative: I **have not started** working.

The train **has not left** the station.

She **has not gone** to Mini's house.

Interrogative: **Have you** started working?

Has the train left the station?

Has she gone to Mini's house?

Two uses of the Present Perfect tense

1. The present perfect tense is used to refer to an action completed recently, even a few minutes back.

For example:

He has just left.

They have completed the work.

2. The present perfect tense may also be used to refer to an action completed in the past but the effect of which is felt in the present.

For example:

He has eaten all the biscuits [The box is empty.]

Leela has broken her leg. [She cannot walk.]

Since the present perfect tense refers to a completed activity, we must differentiate it from the simple past tense. We almost never use a time expression with the present perfect tense. A time expression can be used with the simple past form.

For example:

1. I have seen the Taj.
I saw the Taj in 1980.
2. I have bought a bag.
I bought a bag yesterday.
3. I have eaten my lunch.
I ate my lunch at 2.30.

The reason is that in the use of the Present Perfect tense the focus is on the current relevance and not on the definite time the activity took place.

Note: The use of 'for' and 'since'

We use "for" with a length or period of time.

for + length of time

We use "since" to speak about a point in time in the past.

since + a point in time

For

| | |
|------------|-------------|
| three days | ten minutes |
| two hours | four weeks |
| six months | many weeks |
| an hour | a long time |
| a month | five years |

Since

| | |
|-----------|---------------------|
| Monday | Wednesday |
| 9:00pm | 12:30pm |
| 24th July | Diwali |
| January | I was ten years old |
| 1985 | Christmas |

Examples:

Tom has been in hospital **for over four weeks**.

I have known her **for a long time**.

I have lived here **since 1975**.

I haven't met her **since September**.

Here is a short passage depicting the difference between the uses of both words:

Prema, my roommate, has been ill since last Friday. The doctor has said that she has got the flu. I have looked after her for a week.

Exercise 1

Complete these sentences by using 'have' or 'has' with the third form of the verb given in the brackets.

1. I _____ your sister. (meet)
2. I _____ my pen and cannot do my work. (lose)
3. This watch was working properly a moment ago, but now it _____. (stop)
4. I _____ my food. (eat)

Exercise 2

Use 'for' or 'since':

1. I have not seen you _____ Diwali.
2. They have lived here _____ ten years.
3. I have not spoken French _____ 1984.

4. We have been waiting _____ 20 minutes.
5. He has been here _____ 7:00 pm.

Answers to Exercise 1

1. I have met your sister.
2. I have lost my pen and cannot do my work.
3. This watch was working properly a moment ago, but now it has stopped.
4. I have eaten my food.

Answers to Exercise 2

1. I have not seen you since Diwali.
2. They have lived here for ten years.
3. I have not spoken French since 1984.
4. We have been waiting for 20 minutes.
5. He has been here since 7:00 pm.

(iii) The Perfect Tense

The Past Perfect Tense

Form

I/we had sung

You had sung

He/she/it had sung

They had sung

The past perfect tense makes use of the helping verb 'had' with the third form of the main verb. For example:

I had helped him many years ago.

She had written the book at a very young age.

The sentences given below show the past perfect tense in the affirmative, negative and the interrogative forms. Note the use of the helping verb 'had'. The negative 'not' is placed between 'had' and the third form of the main verb to form negatives in the past perfect tense. To form interrogatives the helping verb 'had' is placed before the subject.

Affirmative: We had worked very hard.

He had written to me.

Negative: We had not worked very hard.

He had not written to me.

Interrogative: Had we worked very hard?

Had he written to me?

Three uses of the past perfect tense:

1. It is usually used to refer to an action which was completed in the past.

For example:

She had reached Delhi.

Ashok had written a letter.

2. It is also used to talk about a sequence of events: that is, two actions that occurred in the past, one earlier than the other.

For example:

By the time the police arrived, the thief had left.

When she reached the station, the train had gone.

3. The past perfect tense may also be used to report an action or event in reported or indirect speech.

For example:

He said that he had never visited Delhi.

Arun said that he had always hated cold weather.

Exercise 1

Put the verbs in the following sentences in past perfect tense:

1. Mr. Sharma teaches Physics.
2. I ate all the apples.
3. Sita likes cooking.
4. Anil said, "Ram has played cricket in school".

Exercise 2

Add "for" or "since" in the blanks given below:

1. He has lived here _____ three years.

_____ 1980.
_____ last June.
2. They have been married _____ two months.

_____ April.
_____ years.
3. She has worked here _____ January.

_____ a few days.
_____ a week.

Answers to Exercise 1

1. Mr. Sharma had taught Physics.
2. I had eaten all the apples.
3. Sita had liked cooking.
4. Anil said that Ram had played cricket in school.

Answers to Practice exercise 2

1. He has lived here for three years.
 - since 1980.
 - since last June.
2. They have been married for two months.
 - since April.
 - for years.
3. She has worked here since January.
 - for a few days.
 - for a week.

Assignment

1. How has your life changed in the last five years? Write three things you have done.
2. Describe your friend's house. Use simple present, present continuous and present perfect tense.

(iii) The Perfect Tense

The Present Perfect Continuous Tense

Form

I/we have been singing

You have been singing

He/she/it has been singing

They have been singing

For Example:

They have been walking for many hours.

I have been waiting for her since 3 o'clock.

The sentences given below show the present perfect continuous tense in the affirmative, negative and the interrogative forms. Note the use of the verb 'been' with the helping verbs 'have' or 'has'. The negative 'not' is placed between 'have' and 'been' to form negatives in the present perfect continuous tense form. To form interrogatives the helping verb 'have' or 'has' is placed before the subject.

Affirmative: We **have been living** in this house since 1990.

He **has been working** here for many years.

Negative: We **have not been living** in this house since 1990.

He **has not been working** here for many years.

Interrogative: Have **we been living** in this house since 1990?

Has he **been working** here for many years?

Two uses of the Present Perfect Continuous Tense

1. It is used for an activity that began in the past and is continuing into the present.

I have been attending his class since last Friday.

Sheena has been working in a bank for five years.

2. It is also used for an activity which was going on in the immediate past with some result in the present.

I have been working too hard. (I am tired these days)

I have been working in the garden. (My clothes are muddy)

[The difference between Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous is that in the Present Perfect the emphasis is on the completion of the activity, whereas, in the Present Perfect Continuous the emphasis is on the fact that the action continued for some time.]

Exercise 1

Answer these questions using "SINCE" or "FOR".

1. How long have you been living in this town?
2. How long have you been attending this class?
3. How long have you been studying English?
4. How long have you been attending school/college?

Exercise 2

Change the following sentences into questions in the Present Perfect Continuous tense:

1. Rajesh has been studying for his exams.
2. They have been travelling a lot.
3. Lata has been preparing for a concert.
4. She has been writing letters all afternoon.

Exercise 3

Change the following sentences into negatives in the Present Perfect Continuous tense:

1. Ratan has been practicing football every week.
2. She has been coming late every day.
3. The team has been preparing the project proposed.
4. Radha has been going for a walk every morning.

Exercise 4

Complete the sentences given below using the Present Perfect Continuous tense

1. Prema _____ on this project for a long time.(work)
2. I _____ for the lost keys all morning.(look)
3. The teacher _____ the students for the annual function.
(prepare)

Answers to Exercise 1

1. I have been living in this town for six years.
2. I have been attending this class since Tuesday.
3. We have been studying English for a long time.
4. I have been attending college since July.

Answers to Exercise 2

1. Has Rajesh been studying for his exams?
2. Have they been travelling a lot?
3. Has Lata been preparing for a concert?
4. Has she been writing letters all afternoon?

Answers to Exercise 3

1. Ratan has not been practicing football every week.
2. She has not been coming late every day.
3. The team has not been preparing the proposed project.
4. Radha has not been going for a walk every morning.

Answers to Exercise 4

1. Prema has been working on this project for a long time.(work)
2. I have been looking for the lost keys all morning. (look)
3. The teacher has been preparing the students for the annual function. (prepare)

(iv) The Perfect Tense

The Past Perfect Continuous Tense

Form

I/we had been singing

You had been singing

He/she/it had been singing

They had been singing

The sentences given below show the past perfect continuous in the affirmative, negative and the interrogative forms. Note the use of the helping verbs 'had' and 'been' with the '-ing' form of the main verb. The negative 'not' is placed between 'had' and 'been' to form negatives and is placed before the subject to form interrogatives in the past perfect continuous tense.

Affirmative: Amit **had been playing** football.

They **had been living** in Mumbai.

Negative: Amit **had not been playing** football.

They **had not been working** in Mumbai.

Interrogative: **Had Amit been playing** football?

Had they been working in Mumbai?

One important use of the Past Perfect Continuous Tense

The Past Perfect Continuous is used to express the duration of an action up to a certain point in the past.

For example: The phone had been ringing for a long time before it was answered.

Note: In the use of the Present Perfect Continuous tense there is only one kind of time expression but in the use of Past Perfect Continuous tense usually there are two time expressions – one denoting the duration of an action and the other denoting when it came to an end.

For example: He had been studying for some time when the lights went out.

Exercise 1

Combine the given sentences using the past perfect continuous tense.

1. I worked as a teacher (for three years). Then I became a journalist.
2. They lived in Mumbai (for ten years). Then they came to Delhi.
3. I was writing a book. Then I fell ill.

4. We waited for 20 minutes. Then the train arrived.
5. I walked for 10 minutes. Then I noticed that I had forgotten to put on my shoes.

Exercise 2

Choose the correct form:

1. He _____ here for the last five years (worked, is working, has been working)
2. Agam _____ to be a doctor. (wants, wanting, is wanting)
3. Don't disturb me. I _____ an essay (write, wrote, am writing)
4. The baby _____ all morning. (cry, has been crying).

Exercise 3

Change these sentences as directed:

1. He is writing a letter. (Present Perfect)
2. I speak English. (Present Continuous)
3. I go to school by bus. (Negative)
4. Sita likes oranges. (Simple Past)
5. This pen belonged to me. (Simple Present)
6. He lives in Mumbai. (Present Perfect Continuous)
7. Two men work in front of my house. (Past Perfect Continuous)
8. I have seen the Taj Mahal. (Interrogative)
9. I saw her yesterday. (Past Perfect)
10. They built the bridge. (Present Perfect)

Answers to Exercise 1

1. I had been working as a teacher before I became a journalist.
2. They had been living in Mumbai for ten years before they came to Delhi.
3. I had been writing a book when I fell ill.
4. We had been waiting for twenty minutes before the train arrived.
5. I had been walking for ten minutes when I noticed that I had forgotten to put on my shoes.

Answers to Exercise 2

1. He has been working here for the last five years.
2. Agam wants to be a doctor.
3. Don't disturb me. I am writing an essay.
4. The baby has been crying all morning.

Answers to Exercise 3

1. He has written a letter.
2. I am speaking English.
3. I don't go to school by bus.
4. Sita liked oranges.
5. This pen belongs to me.
6. He has been living in Mumbai.
7. Two men had worked in front of my house.
8. Have I seen the Taj Mahal?
9. I had seen her yesterday.
10. They have built the bridge.

Assignments

1. Imagine that two friends have met after several years. Create a conversation between them using any of the tense forms but especially make use of the present and past perfect continuous tenses.
2. Talk about yourself. – your hobbies, family, ambition in life. Use various tense forms.
3. Describe places you may have visited on holidays – what you liked or did not like about them.
4. Imagine you are in a market with your father and you unexpectedly meet your school teacher. Introduce your father to your teacher and engage in a short conversation. Practice interrogatives.