

Lesson: four tests for getting the tense right

Read this page out loud before you start. Teaching notes for a grown up are on page 2.

START HERE: A TENSE JUST MEANS WHEN

Whenever you say anything you are talking about one of three times: before now, right now, after now. English changes the shape of the verb to show which one you mean. That change of shape is a tense. Before now, I walked. Right now, I walk. After now, I will walk. Three times, three shapes. Their names are the past, the present and the future.

TEST 1: THE TIME LINE TEST

Every sentence sits somewhere on a time line, and there are three stops. Same verb three times. Only the shape changed. Find the time word FIRST, then choose the verb shape. Never the other way round.

YESTERDAY

I walked to school.

walked

TODAY

I walk to school.

walk

TOMORROW

I will walk to school.

will walk

TEST 2: THE RULE BREAKERS

Most verbs are rule keepers. Add -ed and they change: play played, clean cleaned. Some verbs refuse. Yesterday I goed is wrong. Yesterday I went is right. Rule breakers travel in families. In this one the middle vowel turns into an a: sing sang, ring rang, drink drank, swim swam, run ran. Learn five a week, and always say each one inside a full sentence out loud.

TEST 3: THE S CHANT

He, she, it: the s must fit. I, you, we, they: the s stays away. She walks home. I walk home. They walk home. Any single name or thing counts as it. Ali walks. The bus stops. Watch out for I walks and we walks. Both are wrong.

TEST 4: THE WILL TRICK

For the future you do not change the verb at all. Put will in front and leave it plain. Tomorrow we will travel. Next week she will go. Will walked is wrong. Will goes is wrong. Will has already done the job.

KEEP THIS IN YOUR HEAD: THE FOUR BIGGEST FAMILIES

The a family, the middle vowel turns into an a: sing sang, drink drank, swim swam, run ran
The ought family, the ending is swapped for that sound: buy bought, think thought, catch caught
The ew family, the ending turns into ew: grow grew, know knew, throw threw, fly flew
The loners, no pattern at all: go went, eat ate, see saw, make made, tell told
One family works two ways: burned or burnt, spelled or spelt. Both are correct.
All one hundred are on the free irregular verb list, grouped the same way.

Teaching tips for each test

- Test 1 works best if the time word is treated as the trigger and the verb shape as the result, in that order. A child who picks the tense first then hunts for a word to justify it gets stuck, because most sentences read fine both ways in the head.
- Test 2 is the heavy one. Families roughly halve the work, because sing, ring and drink are one pattern rather than three separate facts. Five a week said out loud beats a long list read silently.
- Test 3 closes a gap left open on purpose in Level 1, which taught the hopping s only for sentences starting with a naming word. Expect I walks and we walks. The chant fixes them faster than the rule, because it can be run mid sentence.
- Test 4 is worth doing third rather than last. It is the one shape a child gets right every time, and that early win steadies them for the irregular past.

The three simple tenses, side by side

Tense	Time words that give it away	What the verb does
Past	yesterday, last week, two days ago	Adds -ed, or changes shape if it is a rule breaker
Present	every day, usually, always	Stays plain, but adds s for he, she and it
Future	tomorrow, next week, soon	Nothing at all. Will goes in front

Where the s goes in the present tense

Who	Verb	Example
I, you, we, they	plain	I write in the evening. They write on the board.
he, she, it	add s	She writes in the evening.
one name or thing	add s	The clock ticks loudly.

GOING TO, AND WHY IT IS NOT MARKED WRONG HERE

I am going to walk is also correct English and children will say it. Accept it in speech.

The written answers in Part E ask for will, because will is the single shape this level teaches.

If they get stuck, say this

Mistake you will hear	What to say back
I walks, we walks	Run the chant. He, she, it take the s. I, you, we, they do not.
goed, eated, buyed	Good thinking, but this one is a rule breaker. Say the real form, then add it to the family list.
will opens, will finished	Will has already done the job, so the verb goes back to its plain shape.
bakeed, closeed	The verb already ends in e, so it only needs a d.
Which tense is it?	Find the time word first. Yesterday, every day, tomorrow. The verb follows the time word.

Score record

Part	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
Out of	8	10	8	8	6	8	48
Score							

A score of 36 or more out of 48 means the level is secure and Level 3 will not feel like a jump.

Part A: name the tense (8 marks)

Write past, present or future. Find the time word first.

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Every Sunday my uncle washes his car. | Tense: |
| 2. Last winter we visited my grandmother in Lahore. | Tense: |
| 3. Next Friday the school will close early. | Tense: |
| 4. The postman brings the letters at nine every day. | Tense: |
| 5. Yesterday the power went off during dinner. | Tense: |
| 6. Tomorrow the painters will finish the gate. | Tense: |
| 7. Every evening my mother waters the plants. | Tense: |
| 8. Two weeks ago the train reached Karachi late. | Tense: |

Part B: rule keeper or rule breaker (10 marks)

Write the past tense. Tick the box if the verb is a rule breaker.

- | | | | | | |
|----------|-------|--------------------------|----------|-------|--------------------------|
| 1. clean | ..... | ☐ | 6. go | ..... | ☐ |
| 2. swim | ..... | ☐ | 7. paint | ..... | ☐ |
| 3. shout | ..... | ☐ | 8. think | ..... | ☐ |
| 4. buy | ..... | ☐ | 9. help | ..... | ☐ |
| 5. count | ..... | ☐ | 10. grow | ..... | ☐ |

Part C: match the verb to the person (8 marks)

Circle the correct verb. Run the chant before you decide.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. I my homework after dinner every night. | finish / finishes |
| 2. My sister the newspaper every morning. | read / reads |
| 3. You very quickly. | run / runs |
| 4. We cricket in the street on Sundays. | play / plays |
| 5. The kettle every morning at six. | whistle / whistles |
| 6. They to school together. | walk / walks |
| 7. Ali the shop at eight. | open / opens |
| 8. My cousins us every Eid. | visit / visits |

Part D: past tense (8 marks)

Every sentence has already finished. Some of these verbs are rule breakers.

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. Yesterday the class a new poem. (learn) | Answer: |
| 2. Last night my brother his glasses. (lose) | Answer: |
| 3. Last week we to the science museum. (go) | Answer: |
| 4. This morning the baker two hundred rolls. (bake) | Answer: |
| 5. Two days ago the cat up the neem tree. (climb) | Answer: |
| 6. Last Sunday the boys the wall. (paint) | Answer: |
| 7. Yesterday the goat my hat. (eat) | Answer: |
| 8. Last winter the pipes twice. (freeze) | Answer: |

Part E: future tense (6 marks)

Two words every time: will, then the plain verb.

1. Tomorrow the shop at eight. **(open)** Answer:
2. Next month my cousin from Islamabad. **(arrive)** Answer:
3. Tomorrow we our new books. **(get)** Answer:
4. Next week the team in Karachi. **(play)** Answer:
5. Next summer we my grandmother. **(visit)** Answer:
6. Tomorrow the results on the notice board. **(appear)** Answer:

Part F: find and correct the mistake (8 marks)

Every sentence has one verb mistake. Write the sentence out correctly.

1. I walks to school every day.
.....
2. Yesterday she goed to the market.
.....
3. Tomorrow he will opens the gate.
.....
4. We watches television every evening.
.....
5. Last night the wind blowed the door open.
.....
6. My brother play cricket every Sunday.
.....
7. Next week they will finished the work.
.....
8. Two days ago I buyed a new bag.
.....

Bonus: write your own

Not marked. Underline the verb you used in each sentence.

Write a sentence about something you did last weekend.
.....Write a sentence about something you do every day.
.....Write a sentence about something you will do next week.
.....Write one sentence using a rule breaker from the free list.
.....

FOR THE TEACHER OR PARENT

One mark is given for each correct answer. In Part D, learned is the usual American spelling and learnt the usual British one, so both are correct.

In Part F, one mark is given for the corrected verb. The rest of the sentence does not need to be copied out perfectly.

Part A: name the tense

1. Present
2. Past
3. Future
4. Present
5. Past
6. Future
7. Present
8. Past

Part C: match the verb to the person

1. finish
2. reads
3. run
4. play
5. whistles
6. walk
7. opens
8. visit

Part B: past tense forms

1. cleaned
2. swam (rule breaker)
3. shouted
4. bought (rule breaker)
5. counted
6. went (rule breaker)
7. painted
8. thought (rule breaker)
9. helped
10. grew (rule breaker)

Part D: past tense

1. learned or learnt
2. lost
3. went
4. baked
5. climbed
6. painted
7. ate
8. froze

Part E: future tense

1. will open
2. will arrive
3. will get
4. will play
5. will visit
6. will appear

Part F: find and correct the mistake

1. I walk to school every day.
2. Yesterday she went to the market.
3. Tomorrow he will open the gate.
4. We watch television every evening.
5. Last night the wind blew the door open.
6. My brother plays cricket every Sunday.
7. Next week they will finish the work.
8. Two days ago I bought a new bag.

Common mistakes to watch for

- Adding -ed to a rule breaker: goed, eated, buyed, blowed. Praise the logic, then supply the real form and put it on the family list.
- Putting the s on I and we: I walks, we walks. This comes from over applying the Level 1 hopping s. The chant is the fix.
- Changing the verb after will: will opens, will finished. Will has already marked the tense, so the verb stays plain.
- Forgetting the s for a single name: my brother play. A name counts as he or she.
- Writing bakeed instead of baked. If the verb already ends in e, add only d. This was taught in Level 1.

How to use this worksheet

- Read page 1 aloud together first. It takes about six minutes.
- Parts A to C suit one sitting. Parts D to F suit a second sitting on another day.
- Between the two sittings, let the child play Time Traveller and Rule Breaker Rally online for quick recall practice.
- Print the irregular verb list as well. It has a blank column, so it can be folded over and used as a weekly test.

Coming up in Level 3

Level 3 takes helping verbs and modals apart properly, and lays all twelve tenses out as a single grid rather than twelve separate rules. It suits Grade 6 to 9, Class 6 to 9 and Year 7 to 10. Every level is free at numrahedu.com/english/verbs/