

1 Here's the Idea

► **Verb tenses indicate when an action or a state of being occurs—in the past, present, or future.**

There are three **simple tenses** (past, present, and future) and three **perfect tenses** (past perfect, present perfect, and future perfect). These tenses are formed from the principal parts of verbs and make up the verb's **conjugation**. They give writers many ways to describe past, present, and future events.

Forming and Using Simple Tenses

| Conjugation of Simple Tenses | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Singular | Plural |
| Present Use the present part. | I talk you talk he, she, it talks | we talk you talk they talk |
| Past Add <i>-ed</i> to the present part for regular verbs. | I talked you talked he, she, it talked | we talked you talked they talked |
| Future Add <i>will</i> or <i>shall</i> to the present part. | I will (shall) talk you will (shall) talk he, she, it will (shall) talk | we will (shall) talk you will (shall) talk they will (shall) talk |

Using the Present Tense Use the present tense to describe an action or a state of being . . .

- happening as it is being reported

This biography of Mother Teresa inspires me.

- that is regularly occurring or habitual

Mother Teresa's followers do important and exhausting work.

- that will take place in the future—when the verb is modified by an adverb or adverbial phrase indicating future time

The presentation on Mother Teresa's life begins in an hour.

Writers often use the **historical** or **literary present tense** to tell about a past action or state of being as though it were happening now. This tense is often used to discuss literature.

A *Simple Path*, a biography of Mother Teresa, describes her tireless work with the needy people of India.

Using the Past Tense Use the past tense to describe an action or a state of being that began and ended in the past.

During the 1920s, a young girl of Albanian descent, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, joined a religious order in Ireland and took the name Sister Teresa.

Using the Future Tense Use the future tense to describe an action or a state of being that will take place some time after the present moment.

Generations of social activists will honor Mother Teresa as one of the greatest Nobel Peace Prize recipients.

Forming and Using Perfect Tenses

| Conjugation of Perfect Tenses | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Singular | Plural |
| Present Perfect Add <i>has</i> or <i>have</i> to the past participle. | I have talked you have talked he, she, it has talked | we have talked you have talked they have talked |
| Past Perfect Add <i>had</i> to the past participle. | I had talked you had talked he, she, it had talked | we had talked you had talked they had talked |
| Future Perfect Add <i>will have</i> or <i>shall have</i> to the past participle. | I will (shall) have talked you will (shall) have talked he, she, it will (shall) have talked | we will (shall) have talked you will (shall) have talked they will (shall) have talked |

Using the Present Perfect Tense Use the present perfect tense to express an action or a state of being . . .

- completed at an indefinite time in the past

Historians **have noted Mohandas Gandhi's tremendous impact on social activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

- that started in the past and continues into the present.

Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence **has left a lasting impression on the world.**

Using the Past Perfect Tense Use the past perfect tense to express a past action or state of being that occurred before another in the past.

Gandhi **had embraced the principles of nonviolent protest long before he **organized** a demonstration against an unfair tax.**

Using the Future Perfect Tense Use the future perfect tense to express a future action or state of being that will take place before another in the future.

By the year 2010, Gandhi's reforms **will have been in practice for more than 60 years.**