

Name:

Exercise on the Verb System

The English verb system provides **three** basic meanings – or “**aspects**” – that can be **added to a verb** (not counting the modals). We can express an action as (1) “**done**” (which does not mean “past”), (2) “**happening**”, and (3) “**happens to the subject**”. These meanings are independent of the notions of past, present, and future.

Match these aspects with the phrases that describe them by checking the appropriate box below each item. (#10 gets two!)

- A) Perfect – HAVE + past participle
- B) Progressive – BE + present participle (~ing)
- C) Passive – BE + past participle

Some example forms (past, present, future)
have seen, had seen, will have seen
are learning, were learning, will be learning
is fixed, was fixed, will be fixed

- 1) The time of the action cannot be expressed in the same clause
 Perfect Progressive Passive
- 2) Expresses an action as “done”
 Perfect Progressive Passive
- 3) Expresses an action as “happening”
 Perfect Progressive Passive
- 4) French speakers tend to use this aspect superfluously when they should use the simple verb
 Perfect Progressive Passive
- 5) Implies that the action is temporary (although it could be a long period, some limit is implied)
 Perfect Progressive Passive
- 6) The action happens to the subject
 Perfect Progressive Passive
- 7) Used incorrectly as a translation of the French *passee composee* (which is actually the present simple in English)
 Perfect Progressive Passive
- 8) Useful for focusing on the recipient of the action
 Perfect Progressive Passive
- 9) When this aspect is used in the past or future, the time by which the action was/will be done must be expressed – there must be some clear point of reference either in the sentence or in the context.
 Perfect Progressive Passive
- 10) When these two are used together, the action was happening during a period of time that is/was/will be done.
 Perfect Progressive Passive

Check “True” or “False” for numbers 11 – 15.

- 11) The meaning of each aspect is the same in the past, the present, and the future.
 True False
- 12) The three aspects can be used in any combination.
 True False
- 13) There are 8 possible combinations of the three aspects, including not using any aspect (just the verb).
 True False
- 14) Technically speaking, there is no future tense in English (but we have many ways of referring to the future).
 True False
- 15) In many cases, the verb structure itself does not express time; the same form is often used for the present and the future – and the time is indicated by other words in the sentence (like “yesterday” or “in 2019”).
 True False

Use each of the following words in a sentence – something that makes sense on its own. All of your sentences must be about the past! Also, each sentence must have two parts (two clauses expressing different actions, separated by a comma). The words may occur anywhere in the sentence (well, anywhere that makes sense!). Your sentences, obviously, must occur in the boxes. Hint: longer ≠ better.

16) already

17) since

18) while

19) until

20) before