Using Verbs to Express Time: An Explanation
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**Simple Present Tense** (one-word verb)

1. Make a statement of fact
   a. Bananas **grow** on trees.

2. Express customs and habitual actions
   a. James **watches** TV every night.

3. Express opinions
   a. Jane **is** a good cook.

**Present Continuous Tense** (two-word phrase: am, are, is + -ing verb)

1. Express an action that is happening at the moment of speaking or writing
   a. I **am sitting** in the library.
   b. He **is reading** the newspaper.

2. Express an activity or situation that is happening over a given period including at the moment of speaking or writing
   a. She **is studying** French this semester.

**Present Perfect Tense** (two-word verb phrase: have or has + past participle verb form)

1. Express an action that started in the past and is still continuing in the present
   a. She **has lived** in Long Beach for three years.

2. Indicate an action that happened at an unspecified time in the past.
   a. I **have seen** that movie.
   b. Tina **has baked** an apple pie.
Present Perfect Continuous (three-word verb phrase: have or has + been + -ing verb form)

1. Express the duration or time of an action that began in the past, has continued into the present, and may continue into the future.
   
a. David has been working for two hours.
   
b. Jessie and Julie have been traveling for a month.

Simple Past Tense (one word verb)

1. Express an action or an event in the past that is completed
   
a. I went to school yesterday.
   
b. Gina cried at the end of the movie.

Past Continuous Tense (two-word verb phrase: was or were + -ing verb)

1. Express an action that was happening at a specific moment in the past.
   
a. He was doing his homework at 8:00 P.M. last night.
   
b. The children were eating pancakes yesterday morning.
   
2. Express two actions that were happening at the same time in the past.
   
a. The students were talking while the teacher was writing on the board.

Past Perfect Tense (two-word verb phrase: had + past participle verb form)

1. Express an action or event in the past that happened before another action in the past.
   
a. Dr. Smith had taught at three other schools before he taught here.
   
b. The band had played two shows in Los Angeles before coming to Long Beach.
**Past Perfect Continuous** (three-word verb phrase: had + been + -ing verb form)

1. Express an activity in progress before another activity or time in the past.
   a. We **had been driving** for two hours when the tire blew out.
   b. He had a headache because **he had been reading** without his glasses.

**Other ways to express past time**

1. **Used to** and a verb
   a. When Mary was a teacher, she **used to assign** lots of homework.
   b. The children **used to watch** Sesame Street every morning.

2. **Would** and a verb
   a. As a boy, I **would climb** trees to look for birds’ nests.
   b. When Maria lived in Mexico, she **would eat** papayas everyday.

**Simple Future Tense** (two-word verb phrase: will or shall + base verb form)

1. Express an action or event that will happen, or express a promise of action.
   a. She **will play** tennis tomorrow.
   b. I **shall meet** you after class.

**Future Continuous** (three-word verb phrase: will + be + -ing verb form)

1. Express an activity or situation that will happen in the future over a given period, or while another activity will be occurring at the same time.
   a. She **will be working** at the store while she goes to school.
   b. Isabelle **will be practicing** her routine in preparation of the meet.
**Future Perfect** (three-word verb phrase: will + have + past participle verb form)

1. Express an action that will be completed before another activity or time.
   
a. Lisa will have worked ten hours by the end of the week.

**Future Perfect Continuous** (four-word verb phrase: will + have + been + -ing verb form)

1. Express the duration of an activity that will be in progress before another time or event in the future.
   
a. Next month, we will have been attending LBCC for exactly two years.

**Other ways to express future time:**

1. Going to + simple verb
   
a. I am going to visit my grandmother next week.

2. Simple present
   
a. The plane leaves at two o’clock this afternoon.

3. Present continuous
   
a. My brother is returning from Europe next week.