

# Tenses and aspects, modal verbs and modality

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Tense and aspect al affiliation: Tense and Aspect Section A Question Tense and aspect I have bought the ticket and we are ready to board the train.

Have bought present perfect

2. Richard is still in the laboratory. He has been working on the experiment the whole day!

Is still present perfect.

Has been working: present continuous.

3. My dad is normally out to walk our dog at this time but now he is still marking his pupils' assignments.

Is normally: past continuous.

Still marking: present continuous.

4. I have been drafting this proposal since last Monday but I still have a lot left to write before I can wrap it up and send it to other group members for comment.

Have been drafting: present continuous.

5. I have finished my assignment at last, and I have finally submitted it, before the due date.

I have finished: present perfect

Have finally submitted: past perfect.

6. Marian had been preparing for the presentation all night and by 8: 30 a. m. she still wasn't ready.

Had been preparing: past continuous.

7. By the time the riot police arrived at the scene, the demonstrators had dispersed.

Had dispersed: past perfect.

8. That evening I was fixing my car at the garage when the burglar broke in.

Was fixing: past continuous.

9. Susan had finished her dinner and was ready to go out by 8 o'clock last evening.

Had finished: past perfect

10. For many people, Sony means the best audio-video equipment because it has been presented as such over the years.

Has been presented: past continuous.

Question 2: Functions of the present simple tense

1 I hereby pronounce you husband and wife.

Action happening at time of statement.

2 We always get up early in the morning.

Fact about present events.

3 The underemployment rate this year is higher than last year.

Fact about present events.

4 I wish you a healthy and fruitful 2014.

Future fixed events.

5 His popularity sets him apart from other candidates.

General truth

6 My kids come back to Hong Kong once a year.

Habits

7 Like the sun, the moon also rises in the east.

General truth.

8 Murder is different from manslaughter.

General truth.

9 India calls for assistance after the earthquake.

Action happening at time.

10 I usually have a swim in the morning.

Habits

Question 3: Functions of ' will'

1 I'll have my oral defense next week.

Fixed event.

2 We'll nominate her the president of our union.

Intention.

3 The train will depart from Central Station at 6 p. m.

Fixed event.

4 John will start his study at OUHK this January.

Intention.

5 I'll have finished my research report by the end of next week.

Prediction

6 I'll probably quit the show if he continues to be so offensive.

Threat.

7 I have no idea how Tom will react to the news that the position is being given to his subordinate.

Condition.

8 Peter will have been studying for his doctorate for five years by August this year.

Fixed event.

9 I'll see you at ten in the morning tomorrow.

Intention.

10 If you lend me some money, I'll buy a new iPhone.

Intention.

Question 4: Meanings of modal verbs

1 Life in this company can get crazy around Christmas. (Root)

2 I might agree if you ask for less money. (Epistemic)

3 I'm very sure the problem can be solved by the end of this week. (Root)

4 My boss said I could take early leave tomorrow. (Epistemic)

5 Students must submit their assignments on time or risk being downgraded.  
(Root)

6 Might I ask you to give me a hand in the ceremony? (Epistemic)

7 The traffic is really terrible right now. (Root) There must have been an  
accident somewhere ahead. (Epistemic)

8 The economy could get worse before it gets better. (Epistemic)

9 They're yet to arrive but they may be here any time. (Epistemic)

10 You can go to the party if you promise me to be back by 11: 00 p. m.  
(Root)

Section B

Question 5: Internal and external negation

1 I'm afraid he won't attend the committee meetings anymore. External

2 You don't have to walk me home if you have work to do. Internal

3 I can't do it now as I've a quiz tomorrow. External

4 I believe that it won't rain today. External

5 Peter may not come home this Christmas because he has a trip to Europe  
around that time. Internal

6 He won't lose the competition as there are no strong competitors at all.

External

7 I can't drink anymore even if he will pay for another round. External

8 The notice says that we can't enter the building here. External

9 You mustn't bully your peers at school. External

10 Stay calm. We shouldn't lose our patience. Internal

Question 6: Main verbs and progressive aspect

Aspect represents the speaker's point of view on a subject. The event may be ongoing or terminated. Stative main verbs are used to state events that cannot be changed at all and are almost not likely to change. Dynamic verbs as the word suggests are diverse. They represent actions that take place or are about to take place. The main difference between the two verbs is that stative verbs cannot be used to represent continuous actions. Therefore stative verbs cannot be used to show progressive aspects. For example: I love cats. The sentence is stative and does not show continuity but merely states. James is eating an apple: contains a dynamic main verb- eating which is continuous.

Question 7: The simple past tense

The simple past tense has various functions they are: showing a past state, representing a hypothetical situation, a past routine, wishes (present wishes) and a past definite completed action. Examples are: What would you do if you won the lottery?-hypothetical. I wish I lived in Africa.-wish. I visited Shanghai last week- completed action at specific time. I used to play basketball- a past routine. From the examples it is clear that simple past tense show ' ED'ed actions.