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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute Grammar

### Tenses



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*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Neil**

Welcome to 6 Minute Grammar with me, Neil...

**Catherine**

And me, Catherine. Hello.

**Neil**

In today's programme we're looking at six different English tenses.

**Catherine**

And our first tense is: the present simple. So, Neil, a question: Where do you live?

**Neil**

**I live** in London. And the present simple **I live** tells us this is a fact, or a permanent situation. London is home.

**Catherine**

Good - and as well as facts, we use the present simple for regular activities too, with phrases like **every day** or **on Saturdays**. For example **we bring you 6 Minute Grammar on Tuesdays!**

**Neil**

Indeed, and words like **usually**, **sometimes**, **always**, and **often** go with the present simple.

**Catherine**

Here's Harry with an example.

**Harry**

**6 Minute Grammar usually finishes** with a quiz!

**Catherine**

That's true, it does. And our second tense is: the present continuous.

**Neil**

Yes, and one of the uses of the present continuous tense to talk about activities happening now. Here's Harry, with an example.

**Harry**

**You're listening** to 6 Minute Grammar right now.

**Neil**

That's an activity happening now. But here's a different example.

**Harry**

I'm from near Bristol, but **I'm living** in London at the moment.

**Catherine**

The present continuous **I'm living** tells us that this is a temporary situation. London isn't Harry's permanent home. With this use of the present continuous, look out for time expressions like **at the moment, this year, these days**.

**Neil**

And a sentence like **I'm studying Russian this month** doesn't mean I'm studying it right this minute. It means I'm doing it off and on, around this time.

**Catherine**

So far so good. But Neil: if we use the present continuous tense for things happening now, why do we say things like **I understand** and **that coffee smells good**? That's happening now - but we used the present simple.

**Neil**

Good question! And the answer is, some verbs don't take a continuous form. They're often verbs of thinking or feeling like **understand** or **smell**, or **know, believe, remember, hear, sound, want, need**. We keep them in the simple tense.

**IDENT**

6 Minute Grammar from BBC Learning English.

**Catherine**

And we're talking about tenses. Now for tenses three and four: that's the past simple and the present perfect. And our examples are from a postcard that our colleague Finn sent us – and he's on holiday in India, the lucky man. So Harry, can you read it for us please?

**Harry**

Hello from Goa! **Have you ever been** here? **We arrived** two days ago. **It's been** really hot **since** then. **I've already done** some sunbathing but we **haven't seen much yet**.

**Catherine**

Lucky Finn. So: let's look at the tenses. The sentence **we arrived two days ago** is past simple.

**Neil**

Yes: use the past simple when something clearly finished in the past. It often goes with phrases like **two days ago**, **yesterday**, and **last month**.

**Catherine**

But with the present perfect, we don't usually say when things happened. We just want to know whether something has happened or not.

**Neil**

So, Finn's sentences **I've already done some sunbathing** and **we haven't seen much yet** are good examples of this.

**Catherine**

Exactly. And the words **already**, **yet** and **just** often go with the present perfect. Examples please Harry...

**Harry**

**Have you ever been** here? **It's been** really hot **since** then.

**Neil**

With the present perfect, we're interested in past experiences more than past times or dates. So we use **ever** and **never**. **Have you ever been** to Goa, Catherine?

**Catherine**

No: **I've never been** to Goa Neil. I'd like to, but I never have. And if we need to talk about when things happened, we can use the words **for** and **since** with the present perfect. Finn's **been** in Goa **for two days**; and it's **been** really hot **since he arrived**. Now for our next tense, and here's Harry with more of Finn's postcard.

**Harry**

**We're going to visit** the market **tomorrow**, and we're coming home **next Wednesday**.

**Neil**

We use **going to with an infinitive verb** for things you plan or expect to happen. Finn has a plan to visit the market tomorrow.

**Catherine**

Yes, and Finn also says **we're coming home next Wednesday**. And that's tense six, the present continuous for future arrangements.

**Neil**

Yes. It's like **going to** but it's a definite arrangement. He's probably got his plane tickets.

**Catherine**

Right. So that's our six tenses. And now it's quiz time!! Question one. Which is correct? Is it a) **I'm needing** some new shoes or b) **I need** some new shoes?

**Neil**

It's b) **I need** some new shoes. Question two: which is correct: a) **Did you see** Luke since Saturday? Or b) **Have you seen** Luke since Saturday?

**Catherine**

And it's b) **Have you seen** Luke since Saturday. And the last one: which is correct? Is it a) It's **going to rain** tomorrow. Or b) **It's raining** tomorrow.

**Neil**

It's a) **It's going to rain** tomorrow.

**Catherine**

Well done if you got those right. That brings us to the end of the programme.

**Neil**

There's more about this on our website at [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). Join us again for more 6 Minute Grammar.

**Both**

Bye!