The Four Forms of Every Main Verb

The following list shows the forms for the regular verb help and the irregular verbs write and tear.

- General present tense: help, write, tear
- Past tense: helped, wrote, tore
- Past participle: helped, written, torn
- Present participle: helping, writing, tearing

The Six Verb Tenses

Present, Present Perfect, Past, Past Perfect, Future, and Future Perfect

The purpose of different verb tenses is to indicate the time an action occurs. With present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect, a helping verb is needed to show which tense will be used. The helping verb will go before the action verb. Here is a list of helping verbs:

- have
- has
- had
- do
- does
- did
- can
- shall
- may
- might
- must
- could
- should
- would
- will

Present

the action is happening now:

The man is helping.
I am writing a novel.
They tear pages from books.

Present Perfect

the action was completed very recently:

I have helped the first table.
She has written several short stories.
Ed has torn that ligament again.

Past

the action happened in the past:

The medicine helped yesterday.
We wrote the book reviews a month ago.
The girl tore her sleeve.
Past Perfect
The action was completed some time ago:
I have already helped Angela revise chapter two.
He had written only one essay when he enrolled.
Jasmine said that she had torn the note up.

Future
The action will happen in the future:
I will help fix dinner in an hour.
Kyle will write the article tonight.
It will tear eventually.

Future Perfect
The action will be completed by a certain point in the future:
I will already have helped decorate the gym before 5:00.
He won't have his evaluation written by this afternoon.
By next month, they will have torn this building down.

Consistency of Tense
You should choose a tense and stick with it. Do not shift tenses without a reason; it may confuse the reader. If you are writing about events in the past, use the past tense consistently.

I walked quietly along the path and admired the azure sky above.
We calculated effect sizes for persuasion and recognition of the message content.

You typically would use the present tense when you are writing about literature, whether you are discussing an author's viewpoint or describing events in a particular work. Present tense is also used when analyzing an assignment or describing results of research.

The wilderness surrounding DeSpain's original camp is the setting of Faulkner's "The Bear."
Confidence intervals that do not include zero indicate significant changes over time.