

# THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

at **Sam Houston**<sup>TM</sup>  
STATE UNIVERSITY

# Verb Tenses

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## 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.

Select information taken from  
Lunsford, Ronald F. and Bill Bridges. *The Longwood Guide to Writing*

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### **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.