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# English Basics Reference Guide

*For intermediate and advanced learners of English* (v1.21)

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Frequently Asked Questions</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Grammar and Vocabulary: common errors and confusing pairs . . .	5
2.2	Expressions and popular sayings . . . . .	17
2.3	Common spelling errors . . . . .	19
2.4	Slang and improper language . . . . .	20
2.5	Common Abbreviations . . . . .	21
<b>3</b>	<b>Irregular Verbs</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Verb tenses</b>	<b>28</b>
4.1	Present Simple . . . . .	28
4.1.1	Active Voice . . . . .	28
4.1.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	28
4.1.3	Use . . . . .	29
4.2	Present Continuous a.k.a. Present Progressive . . . . .	29
4.2.1	Active Voice . . . . .	29
4.2.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	30
4.2.3	Use . . . . .	30
4.3	Present Perfect Simple . . . . .	31
4.3.1	Active Voice . . . . .	31
4.3.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	31
4.3.3	Use . . . . .	32
4.4	Present Perfect Continuous a.k.a. Present Perfect Progressive . . . .	32
4.4.1	Active Voice . . . . .	32
4.4.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	33
4.4.3	Use . . . . .	33
4.5	Past Simple . . . . .	33
4.5.1	Active Voice . . . . .	33
4.5.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	34
4.5.3	Use . . . . .	34
4.6	Past Continuous a.k.a. Past Progressive . . . . .	35
4.6.1	Active Voice . . . . .	35
4.6.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	35
4.6.3	Use . . . . .	36
4.7	Past Perfect Simple . . . . .	36

4.7.1	Active Voice . . . . .	36
4.7.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	37
4.7.3	Use . . . . .	37
4.8	Past Perfect Continuous a.k.a. Past Perfect Progressive . . . . .	38
4.8.1	Active Voice . . . . .	38
4.8.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	38
4.8.3	Use . . . . .	38
4.9	Future Simple . . . . .	39
4.9.1	Active Voice . . . . .	39
4.9.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	39
4.9.3	Use . . . . .	40
4.10	Future Continuous a.k.a. Future Progressive . . . . .	41
4.10.1	Active Voice . . . . .	41
4.10.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	41
4.10.3	Use . . . . .	41
4.11	Future Perfect Simple . . . . .	42
4.11.1	Active Voice . . . . .	42
4.11.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	42
4.11.3	Use . . . . .	43
4.12	Future Perfect Continuous a.k.a. Future Perfect Progressive . . . . .	43
4.12.1	Active Voice . . . . .	43
4.12.2	Passive Voice . . . . .	43
4.12.3	Use . . . . .	43
<b>5</b>	<b>Modal Verbs</b>	<b>45</b>
5.1	Possibility . . . . .	45
5.2	Ability . . . . .	46
5.3	Certainty . . . . .	46
5.4	Impossibility . . . . .	46
5.5	Request . . . . .	46
5.6	Permission . . . . .	46
5.7	Obligation . . . . .	46
5.8	Necessity . . . . .	47
5.9	Prohibition . . . . .	47
5.10	Advice . . . . .	47
5.11	Regret/Reproach . . . . .	48
5.12	Expectation . . . . .	48
5.13	Suggestion . . . . .	48

<b>6</b>	<b>Conditional sentences</b>	<b>49</b>
6.1	Zero conditional . . . . .	49
6.2	First conditional . . . . .	49
6.3	Second conditional . . . . .	50
6.4	Third conditional . . . . .	50
6.5	Mixed conditional . . . . .	51
<b>7</b>	<b>Useful Links</b>	<b>52</b>

# 1 Introduction

This reference guide aims to be of help to intermediate and advanced learners of English. It is based on experience gathered through years of teaching, mainly in the final two years of secondary school. It is updated at frequent intervals. The main source for grammatical information is the *Cambridge Grammar of English* [1].

Since the common errors and frequently asked questions are difficult to structure, the search function is your best friend.

Remarks and questions are welcome via Smartschool.

## 2 Frequently Asked Questions

### 2.1 Grammar and Vocabulary: common errors and confusing pairs

#### A and An

The undefined article *a* is used before a consonant *sound*. The undefined article *an* is used before a vowel *sound*. Consider the following examples:

- *an hour*: you write a consonant, *h*, but do not pronounce it at the start of the word *hour*;
- *a history*: you write *and* pronounce the consonant sound, *h*, at the start of the word *history*;
- *an outsider*: you write *and* pronounce a vowel sound, *o*, at the start of *outsider*.

#### According to — In accordance with — Accordingly

*According to* means ‘in the opinion of’. You use it to refer to someone else’s opinion. You do not use *according to* when you want to refer to your own opinion. In that case, use ‘in my opinion’.

‘*According to* most scientists, global warming is one of the biggest challenges humanity has ever faced.’

*In accordance with* means ‘staying loyal to an idea’, as in

‘He always tried to live *in accordance with* his pacifist upbringing.’

*Accordingly* can mean ‘as a result of something’, as in

‘Power went out all over town. *Accordingly*, we lit some candles.’

It can also mean ‘appropriate for the situation or for a person’, as in

‘He acted like a child instead of an adult and we treated him *accordingly*.’

#### Actuality and Current Affairs

The expression *current affairs* refers to events currently happening in the world. *Actuality* is the state of being real, as in the following example:

‘You keep telling yourself that things are going to be fine but in *actuality*, the situation is quite different.’

### **Also/As well/Too vs. Either/Neither/Nor**

*Also, as well* and *too* are used in *positive* clauses, as in the following examples:

'I have a dog.' → 'I *also* have a dog.'

'I have a dog.' → 'I have a dog, *too*.'

*Either, neither* and *nor* are used in *negative* clauses, as in the following examples:

'I don't have a dog.' → 'I don't have a dog, *either*.'

'I don't have a dog.' → '*Neither* do I.'

'I don't have a dog.' → '*Nor* do I.'

### **Amount and Number**

A *number* is used to describe an exact quantity of something *countable*, as in

'A large *number* of *foxes* live in this area.'

A *fox* is a countable word (I can say *one fox, two foxes* etc.) so I use *number*. An *amount* is used to describe an exact quantity of something *uncountable*, as in

'A large *amount* of *snow* fell last night.'

*Snow* is an uncountable word (I cannot say *one snow, two snows* etc.) so I use *amount*.

### **As such**

The expression *as such* can only be used to refer to something in its exact definition, as in the following example:

'There were no vegetarian dishes *as such* but there were plenty of cheeses.'

## **Bad — Worse — Worst**

To strengthen the adjective *bad*, you change it into *worse* (the comparative form). To strengthen it even more, you change it into *worst* (the superlative form), as in

‘The first movie of the trilogy was *bad*, the second was *worse*, but the third was the absolute *worst*.’

No other forms of *bad* exist. Not *worser* or *most worst*, or any other horrible thing that you may read or hear anywhere.

## **Because**

*Because* is a conjunction which introduces a reason. It should always be part of a compound sentence: a sentence which consists of two (or more) clauses, as in the following example:

‘I was late for school today *because* I missed the train.’

or

‘*Because* I missed the train I was late for school today.’

In the example above, ‘I missed my train’ and ‘I was late for school’ are separate clauses which can stand on their own. You cannot, however, simply write: ‘*Because* I missed my train.’ In spoken English this rule can be broken but not in written English.

Note: if you want to start a simple sentence with a structure that expresses a reason, you can use one of the following:

‘*As a consequence*, I missed the train.’

‘*That’s why* I missed the train.’

‘*Hence* I missed the train.’

‘*Due to that* I missed the train.’



## **Borrow and Lend**

To *borrow* is to accept something from someone with the promise that you will return it later, as in

'I needed to *borrow* some money from Mark because I had run out of cash. I have promised to pay him back within one month.'

To *lend* is to give someone something with the promise that they will return it later, as in

'I *lent* Jane some money so she could pay for her father's operation. She's going to pay me back before the end of the month.'

## **Disinterested and Uninterested**

When you are *uninterested* you do not care about something. When you are *disinterested* you are able to look at something fairly and objectively because you can gain no personal advantage from the situation. Consider the following examples:

'He asked me to explain the situation several times but he looked completely *uninterested* when I did! How annoying!'

'I want to buy that house near the river. The owner told me he has never had problems with flooding but I'm not sure I can trust his word on it. After all, he wants to sell the house so he's not really *disinterested*, is he?'

## **Fewer and Less**

Strictly speaking, *less* is used for uncountable nouns and *fewer* for countable nouns, as in the following examples:

'Last year we had much *snow* in winter, but this year we had a lot *less*.' (*Snow* is an uncountable word, so I use *less*.)

'Many *students* failed the exam last year, but this term far *fewer* of them failed.' (*Students* is a countable word, so I use *fewer*.)

In spite of this rule, it is more and more common to see the use of *less* with countable words.

## Flaunt and Flout

To *flout* is to disobey or ignore something. To *flaunt* is to openly show something in a way not appreciated by others. Consider the following examples:

'You shouldn't *flout* the rules like that.'

'He won the lottery last month and he has been *flaunting* his money ever since.'

## Here you are and Please

*Here you are* is used when *giving* something to someone, as in the following example:

'Could you pass the salt, please?' — 'Of course. *Here you are.*'

*Please* is used when *asking* for something. The further forward you put it in a sentence, the more insistent you are. Consider the following three examples:

'Could you pass the salt, *please*?'

'Could you *please* open a window? It's terribly warm in here.'

'*Please* don't do that! You'll regret it for the rest of your life!'

## In Front Of and Before

The most straightforward difference between *in front of* and *before* is that the first is used for *location* while the second is used for *time*, as in the following examples:

'I couldn't see anything at the concert because a tall man was standing *in front of* me.'

'You should wash the car *before* you watch the football game.'

However, *before* can also be used to show the primary importance of something, as in

'To him, family comes *before* everything else.'

It can also be used to stress a hierarchy or in structures or expressions which have become rather fixed, as in

'He had to appear *before* a judge in court after the crime he had committed.'

'Kneel *before* your King!'

### **It's and Its**

*It's* is the contracted form of *it is*, as in

'*It's* a nice dog.'

*Its* is a possessive pronoun. It is the neutral equivalent of *his* and *her*, as in

'The house is nice but *its* roof needs to be repaired.'

### **Of and Off**

The word *off* can mean:

- *away from*, as in

'The island lies three kilometres *off* the coast.'

or as in

'Get *off* me!'

- the opposite of *on*, as in

'I always switch *off* the lights before leaving the house.'

The word *of* signals that something is a part of something or belongs to something, as in

'He wants to become president *of* the United States.'

'This is the house *of* my parents.'

### **Last and Latest**

*Last* is used to refer to the final something of a series of things. *Latest* means *most recent*.

'The seventh Harry Potter film was the *last* one.'

'Do you have the *latest* numbers on the tiger population in Siberia?'

## Learn and Teach

To *learn* is to acquire new knowledge or skills, as in

‘Today I *learnt* how to bake a cake. It was quite interesting.’

To *teach* is the act of making *other people* learn something, as in

‘Tomorrow I’m going to *teach* a lesson on baking a cake. I hope my students will find it interesting.’

## Lay and Lie

To *lay* is an irregular verb (to lay — laid — laid) which means *to put something down*, as in

‘I *laid* down the book on top of the desk.’

To *lie* can be

- a regular verb (to lie — lied — lied) which means *not telling the truth*, as in

‘Why do you always *lie* to me?’

- an irregular verb (to lie — lay — lain) which means *to assume a horizontal position*, as in

‘I felt ill and I *lay* down on the bed.’

## Let and Rent

To *let* is to offer a room, flat, house... that someone else can *rent*, as in

‘The house is too big for the two of us. Why don’t we *let* a few rooms? Students are always looking for places to live.’

To *rent* is to pay money to use something for a certain period of time, as in

‘Next month I’m going to *rent* a flat in the centre of Brussels for 700 euros per month.’

## Many and Much

*Many* is used in combination with countable words, as in

'*Many* houses were destroyed by the fire.'

The word *houses* is countable (one house, two houses...) so I use *many*. *Much* is used with uncountable words, as in

'*Much* snow fell last night.'

The word *snow* is uncountable (I cannot say one snow, two snows...) so I use *much*.

## Owe and Own

*To owe* means that you have an obligation or a duty to someone, as in

'I *owe* him a lot of money.'

The example shows that the speaker needs to give *him* a lot of money. *To own* means that you possess something, as in

'He *owns* several houses in the countryside.'

The example tells you that *he* possesses several houses.

## Price and Prize

A *price* is something you *pay*. A *prize* is something you *win*. Consider the following examples:

'Some shops don't show the *price* of their products. If you have to ask, you probably can't afford it.'

'The jury had a long discussion, but in the end they awarded Alice the first *prize*.'

## **Raise and Rise**

*Raise* is a transitive verb: you raise *something*, as in

'They've *raised* the price of petrol again!'

or as in

'Could you *raise* your hand before saying something in class, please?'

*Rise* is an intransitive verb: something rises, as in

'The plane *rises* into the air.'

## **Say and Tell**

*To say* is used in combination with a direct object only. You say *something*, as in

'I *say a lot of things* but not all of them are true.'

*To say* introduces direct speech, as in

He *said*: 'Show me the money!'

*To say* can also be followed by a *that*-clause as direct object, as in

'He *said that he would mow the lawn*.'

Note that you can also drop *that* in this example:

'He *said* he would mow the lawn.'

*To tell* is normally used in combination with an indirect and a direct object, as in

'She *told him the truth*.'

## **So**

*So* is a conjunction which expresses a reason. It should not be used as the start of a simple sentence. It introduces a reason clause in a compound sentence, as in:

'You failed your latest test *so* you will need to start working harder.'

It makes no sense to simply write: '*So* you will need to start working harder.' You can, however, drop *so* and simply write 'You will need to start working harder.'

### **Their, There and They're**

*Their* is a possessive pronoun. It shows that something belongs to someone, as in

'It's *their* house, not yours!'

*There* can be:

- an adverb denoting place, as in

'She's sitting over *there*.'

- a pronoun which can be seen as the equivalent of the Dutch *er*, as in

'*There* are some problems.'

*They're* is the contracted form of *they are*, as in

'*They're* the owners of the house.'

### **Than and Then**

*Than* is used in comparisons, as in

'I am a lot older *than* all of you.'

*Then* indicates a time difference, as in

'First I am going to go to the supermarket and *then* I am going to do the dishes.'

*Then* can also be used in the context of a condition, as in

'You need to study hard. Only *then* will you be able to pass this exam.'

### **Threat and Treat**

A *threat* (verb: *to threaten*) is a statement where you tell someone you will harm them. A *treat* (verb: *to treat*) is a gift to someone. Consider the following examples:

'He gave me a *threat*: either I gave him my money or he would beat me up.'

'He *threatened* to beat me up unless I gave him my money.'

'Last Christmas I got a wonderful *treat* from Santa Claus.'

'Last Christmas, Santa Claus *treated* me to a wonderful gift.'

Note: the verb *to treat* can also be linked to the noun *a treatment*, which refers to a medical procedure, or to a behaviour. Consider the following examples:

'The doctors *treated* her well and she recovered quickly.'

'The doctors tested an experimental *treatment* on her and it worked.'

'You should not let him *treat* you like that!'

'His *treatment* of that child is completely unacceptable!'

### **Till and Until**

Both words are correct. *Until* is spelled with a single *l*, *till* with a double *l*. You may also read '*til*', which is an abbreviation of *until*, but you should not use it in formal written communication.

Pedantic historic note: *till* is not an abbreviated form of *until*. *Till* is in fact an older word and has been in use since the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

### **To and Too**

Consider the following sentence:

'I want (1)*to* go (2)*to* France, (3)*too*, but it's (4)*too* expensive.'

1. In *to go*, the word *to* is part of the infinitive of the verb *go*.
2. In *to France*, the word *to* indicates a direction.
3. In *too*, the word is a synonym of *also*.
4. In *too expensive*, the word *too* strengthens the adjective *expensive*.



## **Want and Will**

The verb *want* expresses desire, as in

‘I really *want to* visit Norway some day.’

The verb *will* expresses the future, as in

‘She *will* be a celebrated musician one day.’

## **What and Which**

*Which* is generally used to refer to a limited number of options, as in the following example:

‘*Which* of these three books is your favourite?’

*What* is generally used to refer to an unknown or unlimited number of options, as in the following example:

‘*What* is your favourite book?’

Note: some situations can be tricky, as in the following example:

‘*What* route did you take to get here?’ vs. ‘*Which* route did you take to get here?’

Here, both options can be valid and it will often depend on context to figure out the better one.

## **We’re, Were and Where**

These three are often confused yet they differ in spelling, pronunciation and meaning. *We’re* is the contracted form of *we are*, as in

‘*We’re* not sure yet about our holiday destination for next year.’

*Were* is the past simple of *are*, as in

‘*We were* in France last summer and I really enjoyed it.’

*Where* is a question word, as in

‘*Where* do you live?’

## Who and Whom

Note that, both in the UK and the USA, the use of *whom* has been in decline since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most people will simply use *who* at all times. *Whom* is the traditional object-form of *who*. Consider the following two examples:

*'Who made these wonderful sandwiches?'*

*'Whom did you offer these sandwiches?'*

In the first example, *who* is the *subject* of the sentence. In the second, the subject is *you*. *Whom* is the *indirect object*. As stated above, most people nowadays will simply say: *'Who did you offer these sandwiches?'*

## You're and Your

*Your* and *you're* are homophones<sup>1</sup> but the word *your* is a possessive pronoun, as in

*'This is your house, isn't it?'*

while *you're* is the contracted form of *you are*, as in

*'He thinks you're the best candidate for the job.'*

## 2.2 Expressions and popular sayings

### I couldn't care less

The structure *I couldn't care less* means that you really don't care about something. You literally could *not* care less about it even if you tried. Consider the following example:

*'He told me all about his holiday in Singapore but I couldn't have cared less to be honest.'*

The structure *I could care less* (with a positive verb) means the complete opposite and makes very little sense.

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<sup>1</sup>Homophones are two or more words which are pronounced identically but which have a different meaning and spelling.

## Literally

The word *literally* has only one meaning: it tells us that a word or phrase means what it means in its most strict form and not anything more. Consider the following example:

'I *literally* told Frank to bring three oranges and two kiwis.'

In this example, the speaker told Frank to bring three oranges and two kiwis. Nothing else. Three oranges. Two kiwis. That was the message. The word *literally* means that there is no room for interpretation.

Consider the next example:

'WiFi at the restaurant was really slow. It was *literally* the worst thing ever.'

In this example, the word *literally* is used wrong. Calling slow WiFi *the worst thing ever* is an exaggeration. When you exaggerate, you use *figurative* and not *literal* language. *Literally the worst thing ever* is a contradiction in this context.

In short, do not use *literally* to make a statement stronger.

## To beg the question

*To beg the question* is a common expression which is often misused in the following sense:

'Someone simply walked out of the Louvre with the Mona Lisa last night. *That begs the question*: who left the door open?'

The correct structure here would have been: '*That raises the question*...'. *To beg the question* is actually the name of a *logical fallacy* where someone proves a statement not by using arguments but by repeating the statement itself:

'You know, I think freedom of speech is a very important human right, because it's very important that everyone can express their thoughts and ideas, no matter what they are.'

'I'm afraid you're *begging the question* there...'

## **You had better**

*You had better* is a structure used to indicate that you give someone advice. As such, it deals with the future and not the past. Consider the following example:

‘*You had better* clean up the house after tomorrow’s party or your parents will be mad.’

This structure can be contracted to *you’d better*, but NOT to *you better*, as in

‘*You’d better* clean up the house after tomorrow’s party or your parents will be mad.’

## **2.3 Common spelling errors**

### **1960s and ‘60s**

The plural of a decade is written without an apostrophe. ‘The nineteen sixties’ is written as *1960s* or can be abbreviated as *the ‘60s*. You do *not* write *1960’s*, since that would be the same as *1960 is*.

### **A lot**

*A lot* is a noun. It cannot be written as one word. Its original meaning is ‘a number of goods produced together’. This number could be quite high, hence *a lot* began to mean ‘many’ or ‘much’, as in

‘I have *a lot* of books about this topic.’

‘I feel *a lot* better now, thank you.’

Note that *a lot* is considered informal. In written English, use ‘many’ or ‘much’:

‘I have *many* of books about this topic.’

‘I feel *much* better now, thank you.’

### **Full and Beautiful**

The word *full* is spelled with a double *l* unless something is added to the word as in *beautiful* or *fulfil*.

## I

The first-person pronoun *I* is always written with a capital letter. The reason for this is not entirely clear, but in some places it goes back as far as the thirteenth century. Most likely, *I*, which started life as *ich* and later *ic* (obviously related to German *ich* and Dutch *ik*), seemed a bit small when written as a single letter. When printing came along in the fourteenth century, people could even mistake 'i' for a printing mistake. The choice for a capital letter, in other words, was simply about clarity. It had nothing to do with the English thinking of themselves as more important than other people.

## 2.4 Slang and improper language

### Ain't

It's *isn't*, not *ain't*, as in

'This is the final version of the text, *isn't* it?'

### Because and 'cause, cos, coz etc.

Unless you are using direct speech to literally describe someone's way of talking, always write *because* in full. Do not write *'cause*, *cos* or any other abbreviated form.

### Dunno

*Dunno* is slang for *don't know*, as in

'I *don't know* why I even need to explain this kind of thing.'

### Gonna

*Gonna* is slang for *going to*. Always write *going to*, as in

'I'm *going to* open the door.'

### Gotta

*Gotta* is slang for *have got to*. Always write *have got to*, as in

'I've *got to* go home right now or my Mum will kill me.'

## **Like**

The word *like* is often used as an interjection in spoken English. It should never be used as such in written language, as in

‘There were, like, hundreds of people waiting in line.’

This example is spoken language only.

## **R and Are**

*R* is the eighteenth letter of the alphabet. It is not a word. *Are* is a form of the verb *to be*, as in

‘Why *are* you such a good student?’

## **U and You**

*U* is the twenty-first letter of the alphabet. It is not a word. *You* is a personal pronoun, as in

‘Why are *you* such a good student?’

## **Wanna**

*Wanna* is slang for *want to*. Always write *want to*, as in

‘I *want to* go to the USA next year.’

## **Y and Why**

*Y* is the twenty-fifth letter of the alphabet. It is not a word. *Why* is a question word, as in

‘*Why* are you such a good student?’

## **2.5 Common Abbreviations**

Below you find a number of commonly used abbreviations and their meaning.

## **AD**

The abbreviation *AD* (American English *A.D.*) in full reads as *Anno Domini*, which is Latin for *in the year of our Lord*. It refers to a point in time after the birth of Christ, as in the following example:

‘The British Isles were invaded by the Normans in 1066 AD.’

## **am**

The abbreviation *am* (American English *a.m.*) in full reads as *ante meridiem*, which is Latin for *before midday*. It refers to a time after midnight but before midday. **Note:** 12am is midnight or *the start of the day*. 11.59am is one minute before noon.

## **BC**

The abbreviation *BC* (American English *B.C.*) in full reads as *Before Christ*. It refers to a point in time before the birth of Christ, as in the following example:

‘Julius Caesar was murdered in 44 BC.’

## **BCE**

The abbreviation *BCE* (American English *B.C.E.*) in full reads as *Before Common Era*. It can be used as an alternative to *BC*.

## **CE**

The abbreviation *CE* (American English *C.E.*) in full reads as *Common Era*. It can be used as an alternative to *AD*.

## **e.g.**

The abbreviation *e.g.* in full reads as *exempli gratia*, which is Latin for *example given*. It introduces one or more examples, as in the following sentence:

‘There is much art to be admired in Italy’s major cities, e.g.(,) Rome, Venice or Florence.’

Debate about the use of a comma after *e.g.* is still raging. Many style guides recommend that you use one.

## **f.e**

The abbreviation *f.e.* in full reads as *for example*. It introduces one or more examples, as in the following sentence:

‘There is much art to be admired in Italy’s major cities, f.e. Rome, Venice or Florence.’

## **i.e.**

The abbreviation *i.e.* in full reads as *id est*, which is Latin for *that is*. It can be used to clarify something in a text, as in the following example:

‘Only adults can drink alcohol in Britain, i.e.(,) people over 18.’

Debate about the use of a comma after *i.e.* is still raging. Many style guides recommend that you use one.

## **pm**

The abbreviation *pm* (American English *p.m.*) in full reads as *post meridiem*, which is Latin for *after midday*. It refers to a time between noon and midnight. **Note:** 12pm is noon. 11:59pm is one minute before midnight.



### 3 Irregular Verbs

Below you find a non-exhaustive table of irregular English verbs. Some verbs have both regular and irregular conjugations, in which case both have been provided.

More irregular verbs exist. Some of them are based on verbs in the table below, while others are rarely used and do not need to be studied by you at this point.

<b>Base Form</b>	<b>Past Simple</b>	<b>Past Participle</b>
arise	arose	arisen
awake	awoke	awoken
be	was/were	been
bear	bore	born
beat	beat	beaten
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bend	bent	bent
bet	bet	bet
bind	bound	bound
bite	bit	bitten
bleed	bled	bled
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
breed	bred	bred
bring	brought	brought
broadcast	broadcast	broadcast
build	built	built
burn	burnt/burned	burnt/burned
burst	burst	burst
buy	bought	bought
cast	cast	cast
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
cling	clung	clung
come	came	come
cost	cost	cost
creep	crept	crept
cut	cut	cut
deal	dealt	dealt
dig	dug	dug

dive	dove/dived	dived
do	did	done
draw	drew	drawn
dream	dreamt/dreamed	dreamt/dreamed
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
feed	fed	fed
feel	felt	felt
fight	fought	fought
find	found	found
fit	fit/fitted	fit/fitted
flee	fled	fled
fling	flung	flung
fly	flew	flown
forbid	forbade	forbidden
forget	forgot	forgotten
forgive	forgave	forgiven
freeze	froze	frozen
get	got	got
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
grind	ground	ground
grow	grew	grown
hang	hung	hung
have	had	had
hear	heard	heard
hide	hid	hidden
hit	hit	hit
hold	held	held
hurt	hurt	hurt
keep	kept	kept
kneel	knelt	knelt
know	knew	known
lay	laid	laid
lead	led	led
lean	leant/leaned	leant/leaned

leap	leapt/leaped	leapt/leaped
leave	left	left
lend	lent	lent
let	let	let
lie	lay	lain
light	lit	lit
lose	lost	lost
make	made	made
mean	meant	meant
meet	met	met
pay	paid	paid
prove	proved	proved/proven
put	put	put
quit	quit	quit
read	read	read
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
run	ran	run
saw	sawed	sawed/sawn
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
seek	sought	sought
sell	sold	sold
send	sent	sent
set	set	set
shake	shook	shaken
shine	shone	shone
shoe	shod	shod
shoot	shot	shot
show	showed	shown
shrink	shrank	shrunk
shut	shut	shut
sing	sang	sung
sink	sank	sunk
sit	sat	sat
sleep	slept	slept
speak	spoke	spoken

speed	sped	sped
spend	spent	spent
spill	spilt/spilled	spilt/spilled
spin	spun	spun
spit	spat	spat
split	split	split
spread	spread	spread
spring	sprang	sprung
stand	stood	stood
steal	stole	stolen
stick	stuck	stuck
sting	stung	stung
stink	stank	stunk
strike	struck	struck
swear	swore	sworn
sweep	swept	swept
swim	swam	swum
swing	swung	swung
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
tear	tore	torn
tell	told	told
think	thought	thought
throw	threw	thrown
understand	understood	understood
upset	upset	upset
wake	woke	woken
wear	wore	worn
weave	wove	woven
weep	wept	wept
win	won	won
wind	wound	wound
withdraw	withdrew	withdrawn
wring	wrung	wrung
write	wrote	written

## 4 Verb tenses

This section gives an overview of all English verb tenses, both in the active and in the passive voice. All possible forms (affirmative, negative, question, negative question) have been provided. Both long forms and contracted forms of the auxiliaries have been provided. Examples clarify the uses of the tenses.

### 4.1 Present Simple

#### 4.1.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the present simple is built by using the base form of the verb. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, an *s* is added.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I work I do not/don't work do I work? do I not/don't I work?	we work we do not/don't work do we work? do we not/don't we work?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you work you do not/don't work do you work? do you not/don't you work?	you work you do not/don't work do you work? do you not/don't you work?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he works (s)he does not/doesn't work does (s)he work? does (s)he not/doesn't (s)he work?	they work they do not/don't work do they work? do they not/don't they work?

#### 4.1.2 Passive Voice

The passive voice of the present simple is built by using the present simple form of *to be* as an auxiliary, followed by the past participle of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I am/'m healed I am not/'m not healed am I healed? am I not healed?	we are/'re healed we are not/'re not healed are we healed? are we not/aren't we healed?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you are/'re healed you are not/aren't healed are you healed? are you not/aren't you healed?	you are/'re healed you are not/aren't healed are you healed? are you not/aren't you healed?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he is/'s healed (s)he is not/isn't healed is (s)he healed? is (s)he not/isn't (s)he healed?	they are/'re healed they are not/aren't healed are they healed? are they not/aren't they healed?

### 4.1.3 Use

The present simple is a verb tense used to express *facts*, *habits* or *routines*. It can also be used to talk about *timetables*. Examples:

- 'The sun *is* the centre of our solar system.' (a fact)
- 'I *close* the door before I leave the house.' (a routine or a habit)
- 'She always *comes* to school by bicycle.' (a routine or a habit)
- 'The door *is locked* by me when I leave the house.' (a routine or a habit)
- 'My train *leaves* at eight o'clock tonight. (a timetable)

## 4.2 Present Continuous a.k.a. Present Progressive

### 4.2.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the present continuous is built by using the present simple of *to be* as an auxiliary, following by the gerund (the -ing form) of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I am/'m working I am/'m not working am I working? am I not working?	we are/'re working we are/'re not working are we working? are we not/aren't we working?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you are/'re working you are not/aren't working are you working? are you not/aren't you working?	you are/'re working you are not/aren't working are you working? are you not/aren't you working?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he is/'s working (s)he is not/isn't working is (s)he working? is (s)he not/isn't (s)he working?	they are/'re working they are not/aren't working are they working? are they not/aren't they working?

#### 4.2.2 Passive Voice

The passive voice of the present continuous is built by using the present simple of *to be* + *being* + the past participle of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I am/'m being healed I am/'m not being healed am I being healed? am I not being healed?	we are/'re being healed we are not/aren't being healed are we being healed? are we not/aren't we being healed?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you are/'re being healed you are not/aren't being healed are you being healed? are you not/aren't you being healed?	you are/you're being healed you are not/aren't being healed are you being healed? are you not/aren't you being healed?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he is/'s being healed (s)he is not/isn't being healed is (s)he being healed? is (s)he not/ isn't (s)he being healed?	they are/'re being healed they are not/aren't being healed are they being healed? are they not/aren't they being healed?

#### 4.2.3 Use

The present continuous is used to talk about events happening now, at this moment.  
Examples:

- 'I *am reading* about English verb tenses right now.'

- ‘Normally I travel to work by train, but this week I *am going* by car.’ (Note that in this example, ‘now’ is a fairly long period of time, namely ‘this week’. The present continuous is used to express the contrast with ‘normally’.)
- ‘The nights *are getting* a lot colder this time of the year, wouldn’t you say?’

### 4.3 Present Perfect Simple

#### 4.3.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the present perfect simple is built by using the present simple of *to have* as an auxiliary, followed by the past participle of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I have / 've worked I have not / haven't worked have I worked? have I not / haven't I worked?	we have / 've worked we have not / haven't worked have we worked? have we not / haven't we worked?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you have / 've worked you have not / haven't worked have you worked? have you not / haven't you worked?	you have / 've worked you have not / haven't worked have you worked? have you not / haven't you worked?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he has / 's worked (s)he has not / hasn't worked has (s)he worked? has (s)he not / hasn't (s)he worked?	they have / 've worked they have not / haven't worked have they worked? have they not / haven't they worked?

#### 4.3.2 Passive Voice

The passive voice of the present perfect simple is built by using the present simple of *to have + been* + the past participle of the main verb.



	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I have /'ve been healed I have not/haven't been healed have I been healed? have I not/haven't I been healed?	we have /'ve been healed we have not/haven't been healed have we been healed? have we not/haven't we been healed?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you have /'ve been healed you have not/haven't been healed have you been healed? have you not/haven't you been healed?	you have /'ve been healed you have not/haven't been healed have you been healed? have you not/haven't you been healed?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he has /'s been healed (s)he has not/hasn't been healed has (s)he been healed? has (s)he not/hasn't (s)he been healed?	they have /'ve been healed they have not/haven't been healed have they been healed? have they not/haven't they been healed?

### 4.3.3 Use

The present perfect simple is used to express actions which took place in the past but which have a result in the present, or actions which started in the past and carry on up to the present. Examples:

- 'I *have worked* here for ten years now.' (The person started working here ten years ago and still works here now.)
- 'I cannot enter the house because I *have lost* my key.' (Losing the key happened in the past, but the present result is that the person cannot enter the house now.)
- 'The museum *has been burgled* and five priceless paintings *have gone* missing.'

## 4.4 Present Perfect Continuous a.k.a. Present Perfect Progressive

### 4.4.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the present perfect continuous is built by using the present simple of *to have* + *been* + the gerund (the -ing form) of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I have/'ve been working I have not/haven't been working have I been working? have I not/haven't I been working?	we have/'ve been working we have not/haven't been working have we been working? have we not/haven't we been working?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you have/'ve been working you have not/haven't been working have you been working? have you not/haven't you been working?	you have/'ve been working you have not/haven't been working have you been working? have you not/haven't you been working?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he has/'s been working (s)he has not/hasn't been working has (s)he been working? has (s)he not/hasn't (s)he been working?	they have/'ve been working they have not/haven't been working have they been working? have they not/haven't they been working?

#### 4.4.2 Passive Voice

The present perfect continuous tense has no passive voice.

#### 4.4.3 Use

Just like the present perfect simple, the present perfect continuous is used to express actions which took place in the past but which have a result in the present, or actions which started in the past and carry on up to the present. In contrast to the present perfect simple, however, the continuous stresses the duration of the action. Examples:

- 'I *have been working* here for ten years now.'
- 'I *have been waiting* here for half an hour now and he still hasn't turned up.'

### 4.5 Past Simple

#### 4.5.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the past simple is built by using the base form of the verb + *ed*.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I worked I did not/didn't work did I work? did I not/didn't I work?	we worked we did not/didn't work did we work? did we not/didn't we work?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you worked you did not/didn't work did you work? did you not/didn't you work?	you worked you did not/didn't work did you work? did you not/didn't you work?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he worked (s)he did not/didn't work did (s)he work? did (s)he not/didn't (s)he work?	they worked they did not/didn't work did they work? did they not/didn't they work?

#### 4.5.2 Passive Voice

The passive voice of the past simple is built by using the past simple of *to be* + the past participle of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I was healed I was not/wasn't healed was I healed? was I not/wasn't I healed?	we were healed we were not/weren't healed were we healed? were we not/weren't we healed?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you were healed you were not/weren't healed were you healed? were you not/weren't you healed?	you were healed you were not/weren't healed were you healed? were you not/weren't you healed?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he was healed (s)he was not/wasn't healed was (s)he healed? was (s)he not/wasn't (s)he healed?	they were healed they were not/weren't healed were they healed? were they not/weren't they healed?

#### 4.5.3 Use

The past simple is used for an action which is over in the mind of the speaker. It lies completely in the past. Example:

- 'Yesterday, I *came* home and I *noticed* something strange: all the lights in the

house *were* on.'

## 4.6 Past Continuous a.k.a. Past Progressive

### 4.6.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the past continuous is built by using the past simple of *to be* as an auxiliary, followed by the gerund (the -ing form) of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I was working I was not/wasn't working was I working? was I not/wasn't I working?	we were working we were not/weren't working were we working? were we not/weren't we working?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you were working you were not/weren't working were you working? were you not/weren't you working?	you were working you were not/weren't working were you working? were you not/weren't you working?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he was working (s)he was not/wasn't working was (s)he working? was (s)he not/wasn't (s)he working?	they were working they were not/weren't working were they working? were they not/weren't they working?

### 4.6.2 Passive Voice

The passive voice of the past continuous is built by using the past simple of *to be* + *being* + the past participle of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I was being healed I was not/wasn't being healed was I being healed? was I not/wasn't I being healed?	we were being healed we were not/weren't being healed were we being healed? were we not/weren't we being healed?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you were being healed you were not/weren't being healed were you being healed? were you not/weren't you being healed?	you were being healed you were not/weren't being healed were you being healed? were you not/weren't you being healed?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he was being healed (s)he was not/wasn't being healed was (s)he being healed? was (s)he not/wasn't (s)he being healed?	they were being healed they were not/weren't being healed were they being healed? were they not/weren't they being healed?

#### 4.6.3 Use

The past continuous is used to talk about an activity which was going on in the past. Examples:

- 'I *was reading* a book when suddenly my dog ran into the room carrying a muddy stick.' (Note that in this example, the activity expressed by the past continuous (*was reading*) is interrupted by another activity (*ran*). Because of this, the past continuous is often said to express a *background activity*.)
- 'I thought he had finished the painting but he *was still working* on it.'

### 4.7 Past Perfect Simple

#### 4.7.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the past perfect simple is built by using *had* as an auxiliary, followed by the past participle of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I had/'d worked I had not/hadn't worked had I worked? had I not/hadn't I worked?	we had/'d worked we had not/hadn't worked had we worked? had we not/hadn't we worked?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you had/'d worked you had not/hadn't worked had you worked? had you not/hadn't you worked?	you had/'d worked you had not/hadn't worked had you worked? had you not/hadn't you worked?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he had/'d worked (s)he had not/hadn't worked had (s)he worked? had (s)he not/hadn't (s)he worked?	they had/'d worked they had not/hadn't worked had they worked? had they not/hadn't they worked?

#### 4.7.2 Passive Voice

The passive voice of the past perfect simple is built by using *had been* as an auxiliary, followed by the past participle of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I had/'d been healed I had not/hadn't been healed had I been healed? had I not/hadn't I been healed?	we had/'d been healed we had not/hadn't been healed had we been healed? had we not/hadn't we been healed?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you had/'d been healed you had not/hadn't been healed had you been healed? had you not/hadn't you been healed?	you had/'d been healed you had not/hadn't been healed had you been healed? had you not/hadn't you been healed?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he had/'d been healed (s)he had not/hadn't been healed had (s)he been healed? had (s)he not/hadn't (s)he been healed?	they had/'d been healed they had not/hadn't been healed had they been healed? had they not/hadn't they been healed?

#### 4.7.3 Use

The past perfect simple is used to express something which happened in a time before another time in the past. Because of this, the past perfect is sometimes called the 'before-past'. Examples:

- ‘When I came home, I noticed someone *had tried* to break into the house.’  
(The speaker thinks back to a point in the past (*came* and *noticed*) and, from that point, refers to something which had happened before that time (*had tried*)).
- ‘By the time the paramedics arrived, the victim *had died*.’

## 4.8 Past Perfect Continuous a.k.a. Past Perfect Progressive

### 4.8.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the past perfect continuous is built by using *had been* as an auxiliary, followed by the gerund (the -ing form) of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I had/'d been working I had not/hadn't been working had I been working? had I not/hadn't I been working?	we had/'d been working we had not/hadn't been working had we been working? had we not/hadn't we been working?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you had/'d been working you had not/hadn't been working had you been working? had you not/hadn't you been working?	you had/'d been working you had not/hadn't been working had you been working? had you not/hadn't you been working?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he had/'d been working (s)he had not/hadn't been working had (s)he been working? had (s)he not/hadn't (s)he been working?	they had/'d been working they had not/hadn't been working had they been working? had they not/hadn't they been working?

### 4.8.2 Passive Voice

The past perfect continuous tense has no passive voice.

### 4.8.3 Use

Like the past perfect simple, the past perfect continuous is used to express something which happened in a time before another time in the past. Unlike the past perfect simple, however, the past perfect continuous focuses on the duration of the action. Examples:

- ‘By the time he finally arrived, I *had been waiting* there for forty-five minutes.’

- 'I thought it was just a small side project of hers, but in fact she *had been working* on the novel for three years at that point.'

## 4.9 Future Simple

### 4.9.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the future simple is built by using *will* as an auxiliary, followed by the bare infinitive of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I will/'ll work I will not/won't work will I work? will I not/won't I work?	we will/'ll work we will not/won't work will we work? will we not/won't we work?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you will/'ll work you will not/won't work will you work? will you not/won't you work?	you will/'ll work you will not/won't work will you work? will you not/won't you work?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he will work (s)he will not/won't work will (s)he work? will (s)he not/won't (s)he work?	they will work they will not/won't work will they work? will they not/won't they work?

### 4.9.2 Passive Voice

The passive voice of the future simple is built by using *will be* as an auxiliary, followed by the past participle of the main verb.



	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I will/'ll be healed I will/'ll not be healed will I be healed? will I not/won't I be healed?	we will/'ll be healed we will/'ll not be healed will we be healed? will we not/won't we be healed?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you will/'ll be healed you will not/won't be healed will you be healed? will you not/won't you be healed?	you will/'ll be healed you will not/won't be healed will you be healed? will you not/won't you be healed?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he will/'ll be healed (s)he will not/won't be healed will (s)he be healed? will (s)he not/won't (s)he be healed?	they will/'ll be healed they will not/won't be healed will they be healed? will they not/won't they be healed?

#### 4.9.3 Use

The future simple can be used to express certainty about the future. This certainty can be the result of *factual information*, the *opinion* of the speaker, the *knowledge* of the speaker, a *promise* made by the speaker or an *instant decision* made by the speaker. Examples:

- 'I *will not be* present at next week's meeting because I *will still be* in Germany at that time.' (The speaker has enough information about his schedule to know this for certain.)
- 'Look at the state of things! The project *will never be finished* in time!' (The speaker is convinced that this will be the case.)
- 'If you give Mark any responsibility, I can guarantee you that he *will mess things up*.' (The speaker has a very strong opinion about Mark.)
- 'I promise I *will take* care of you as long as I live.' (The speaker makes a promise.)
- (doorbell rings) 'I'll get it!' (The speaker decides instantly.)

## 4.10 Future Continuous a.k.a. Future Progressive

### 4.10.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the future continuous is built by using *will be* as an auxiliary, followed by the gerund (the -ing form) of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I will/'ll be working I will not/won't be working will I be working? will I not/won't I be working?	we will/'ll be working we will not/won't be working will we be working? will we not/won't we be working?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you will/'ll be working you will not/won't be working will you be working? will you not/won't you be working?	you will/'ll be working you will not/won't be working will you be working? will you not/won't you be working?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he will/'ll be working (s)he will not/won't be working will (s)he be working? will (s)he not/won't (s)he be working?	they will/'ll be working they will not/won't be working will they be working? will they not/won't they be working?

### 4.10.2 Passive Voice

The future continuous tense has no passive voice.

### 4.10.3 Use

The future continuous is used to indicate that something will be going on at some point in the future. It can also be used to ask polite questions about the future. Examples:

- 'I *will be having* lunch with her next Friday.'
- 'We *will be seeing* a lot more of this type of thing in the near future.'
- 'Will you *be needing* any more of these chairs?'

## 4.11 Future Perfect Simple

### 4.11.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the future perfect simple is built by using *will have* as an auxiliary, followed by the past participle of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I will/'ll have worked I will not/won't have worked will I have worked? will I not/won't I have worked?	we will/'ll have worked we will not/won't have worked will we have worked? will we not/won't we have worked?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you will/'ll have worked you will not/won't have worked will you have worked? will you not/won't you have worked?	you will/'ll have worked you will not/won't have worked will you have worked? will you not/won't you have worked?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he will/'ll have worked (s)he will not/won't have worked will (s)he have worked? will (s)he not/won't (s)he have worked?	they will/'ll have worked they will not/won't have worked will they have worked? will they not/won't they have worked?

### 4.11.2 Passive Voice

The passive voice of the future perfect simple is built by using *will have been* as an auxiliary, followed by the past participle of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I will/'ll have been healed I will not/won't have been healed will I have been healed? will I not/won't I have been healed?	we will/'ll have been healed we will not/won't have been healed will we have been healed? will we not/won't we have been healed?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you will/'ll have been healed you will not/won't have been healed will you have been healed? will you not/won't you have been healed?	you will/'ll have been healed you will not/won't have been healed will you have been healed? will you not/won't you have been healed?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he will/'ll have been healed (s)he will not/won't have been healed will (s)he have been healed? will (s)he not/won't (s)he have been healed?	they will/'ll have been healed they will not/won't have been healed will they have been healed? will they not/won't they have been healed?

### 4.11.3 Use

The future perfect simple is used to talk about an action which will be completed before a specific point in the future. Examples:

- 'I'm sure she *will have sold* the house by the end of the year.'
- 'Do you believe they *will have found* a solution by that time?'

## 4.12 Future Perfect Continuous a.k.a. Future Perfect Progressive

### 4.12.1 Active Voice

The active voice of the future perfect continuous is built by using *will have been* as an auxiliary, followed by the gerund (the -ing form) of the main verb.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	I will/'ll have been working I will not/won't have been working will I have been working? will I not/won't I have been working?	we will/'ll have been working we will not/won't have been working will we have been working? will we not/won't we have been working?
2 <sup>nd</sup>	you will/'ll have been working you will not/won't have been working will you have been working? will you not/won't you have been working?	you will/'ll have been working you will not/won't have been working will you have been working? will you not/won't you have been working?
3 <sup>rd</sup>	(s)he will/'ll have been working (s)he will not/won't have been working will (s)he have been working? will (s)he not/won't (s)he have been working?	they will/'ll have been working they will not/won't have been working will they have been working? will they not/won't they have been working?

### 4.12.2 Passive Voice

The future perfect continuous tense has no passive voice.

### 4.12.3 Use

The future perfect continuous is used to express that something will have been going on for some time by a specific moment in the future. Examples:

- 'By the end of the year, they *will have been working* on the film project for over two years.'

- 'We *will have been living* here for seven years by next Christmas.'

## 5 Modal Verbs

Modal verbs change (*modify*) the meaning of other verbs. English has the following modal verbs and structures:

- can
- could
- be able to
- may
- might
- shall
- should
- ought to
- have to
- must
- will
- would
- need to
- needn't
- had better
- it's time
- be to

The following sections do not deal with each of these modal structures individually. Rather, they have been structured according to their function.

### 5.1 Possibility

- 'You *can* do that if you want.'
- 'You *could* ask him to help you move.'
- 'I suppose he *could* have committed the crime, given his history.'
- 'That *might* be Charles at the door.'
- 'You were driving like a maniac! You *could* have killed someone!' (*Theoretical possibility*)
- 'There's blood on the bumper of the car! You *might* have killed someone!' (*Actual possibility*)

## 5.2 Ability

- ‘She *can* play five musical instruments, but when I first met her she *could* only play the piano, and badly at that.’
- ‘Luckily, he *was able* to swim to shore after his boat capsized.’

## 5.3 Certainty

- ‘They’re late! Surely they *cannot/can’t* have forgotten about our appointment. They *must* be stuck in traffic.’

## 5.4 Impossibility

- ‘He *cannot/can’t* be the murderer: he’s got a perfect alibi.’

## 5.5 Request

- ‘*Can* I open the window, please?’
- ‘*Could* you try and fix the problem by tomorrow?’
- ‘*May* I ask what exactly I am supposed to do?’
- ‘*Might* I ask how you got in here?’

## 5.6 Permission

- ‘You *can* go and see her if you like.’
- ‘You *may* open the window if you feel it’s too warm in here.’

## 5.7 Obligation

- ‘You *have to* wear your seatbelt while driving.’ (External obligation)
- ‘I feel I *must* help her in this difficult time.’ (Internal obligation)
- ‘You *are to* be there at 10 o’clock tomorrow.’ (Formal obligation)
- ‘They *will* ensure that things proceed smoothly from now on.’

- 'You *shall* be less negligent from now on.'

## 5.8 Necessity

- 'You *need to* have a valid ID or passport on you when going out.'
- 'You *don't need to* bring your own food to the barbecue.'
- 'She *need not/needn't* worry about the situation.'
- 'You *don't have to* do all of it today, you know?'

## 5.9 Prohibition

- 'You *cannot/can't* enter this area without permission.'
- 'You *may not* speak to her like that.'
- 'You *must not/mustn't* do anything of the sort!'
- 'You *shall not/shan't* pass!'
- 'You *will not/won't* stand between me and my goal!'

## 5.10 Advice

- 'You *should* bring your books next time.'
- 'They *should not/shouldn't* open the window during the storm.'
- 'You *ought to* familiarise yourself with the material.'
- 'She *ought not to/oughtn't to* listen to such gossip.'
- 'You *had better/'d better* come with me right now.'
- 'It's *time* you went home.' (*It's time* is always followed by the past tense.)



### 5.11 Regret/Reproach

- 'You *should* have left home earlier.'
- 'I *should not/shouldn't* have wasted my time with this game.'
- 'He *ought to* have reminded you of that!'
- 'I *ought not to/oughtn't to* have forgotten her birthday.'
- 'We *might* have given him a bit more credit.' (Mild regret/reproach)

### 5.12 Expectation

- 'She *is to* take care of the cat while we are on holiday.'
- 'You *will* make sure that all doors are locked after the last employee leaves for the night.'

### 5.13 Suggestion

- '*Shall* we go to the cinema tonight?'

## 6 Conditional sentences

Conditional sentences are used to *speculate* about possible, unlikely or impossible events. They mostly, but not exclusively, make use of *if*. English has five types of conditional clauses:

zero conditional:	If James studies	,	he passes	the exam.
first conditional:	If James studies	,	he will pass	the exam.
second conditional:	If James studied	,	he would pass	the exam.
third conditional:	If James had studied	,	he would have passed	the exam.
mixed conditional:	If James had studied	,	he would pass	the exam.

### 6.1 Zero conditional

The zero conditional expresses a *general truth*. Consider the following example:

‘If James studies, he passes the exam.’

There is no doubt in the speaker’s mind about the consequences of studying: one thing (studying) will cause another (passing the exam). Other examples:

‘When you boil water, it evaporates.’

‘Your liver suffers if you are an alcoholic.’

The zero conditional is formed by using the *present simple* in the IF-clause and the *present simple* in the main clause. Note: in the zero conditional, *if* can be replaced by *when*. In this sense it is similar to a *time* clause.

### 6.2 First conditional

The first conditional deals with a *possible condition* and its *likely result*. Consider the following example:

‘If James studies, he will pass the exam.’

The speaker considers it *possible* that James will study. If this happens, there is a *likely chance* that James *will pass the exam*. Other examples:

‘If they leave now they will be able to catch their train.’

‘He won’t trust her anymore if she breaks her promise again.’

The first conditional is formed by using the *present simple* in the IF-clause and the *future simple* in the main clause.

### 6.3 Second conditional

The second conditional deals with a *hypothetical/theoretical condition* and its *likely result*. Consider the following example:

'If James studied, he would pass the exam.'

The speaker does not consider it likely that James will study. If James *did* study, however, there *would be* a likely chance of him passing the exam. Other examples:

'If you paid some attention, you might actually remember something from the lessons.'

'He would easily win the fight if he trained a bit harder.'

'If his instructions were a little clearer, we wouldn't be struggling right now.'

'If I were you, I would be more careful around him.'

'She would definitely want to come along if she were a little bit older.' (Note: in written English, 'if she was' should not be used. In spoken English, it is often used.)

The second conditional is formed by using the *past simple* in the IF-clause and *would/should/could/might + infinitive(/be + -ing form)* in the main clause.

### 6.4 Third conditional

The third conditional deals with an *unreal condition in the past* and its *likely result in the past*. Consider the following example:

'If James had studied, he would have passed the exam.'

The speaker knows that James hasn't studied, but he thinks that if James *had*, there is a likely chance that he *would have passed*. Other examples:

'They might never have known about it if you hadn't told them.'

'If the neighbours hadn't seen the fire and alerted us, we would never have made it out of the house alive.'

'If the teacher had given clear instructions, we would have completed the task in time.'

The third conditional is formed by using the *past perfect* in the IF-clause and *would/should/could/might + have + past participle(/been + -ing)* in the main clause.

## 6.5 Mixed conditional

The mixed conditional combines the third and second conditional. It deals with *an unreal condition in the past* and its *likely result in the present*. Consider the following example:

'If James had studied, he would pass the exam.'

The speaker knows that James has not studied. If James *had*, however, there is a likely chance that he *would pass the exam* now. Other examples:

'If you had helped me, I would not be in trouble right now.'

'I would be able to help you if you had told me what was wrong.'

'If you had taken some lecture notes you wouldn't be freaking out so much now.'

'If you had been more attentive she might be less dejected.'

The mixed conditional is formed by using the *past perfect* in the IF-clause and *would/should/could/might + infinitive(/be + -ing form)* in the main clause.

## 7 Useful Links

The following websites each contain dozens or hundreds of exercises on all possible grammatical topics. Since they have a self-correcting feature, it's quite easy to test yourself and immediately get feedback.

- <http://englishpage.com/>
- <http://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/grammar-exercises.html>
- [http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/exercises\\_list/alle\\_grammar.htm](http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/exercises_list/alle_grammar.htm)
- <http://www.englishexercises.org/>
- <http://www.agendaweb.org/>
- [http://www.english-4u.de/grammar\\_exercises.htm](http://www.english-4u.de/grammar_exercises.htm)
- <http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/grammar-vocabulary>
- <http://www.grammarbank.com/>

Other useful links:

- The University of Oxford Style Guide: [https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media\\_wysiwyg/University%20of%20Oxford%20Style%20Guide.pdf](https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/University%20of%20Oxford%20Style%20Guide.pdf)
- The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English: <https://www.ldoceonline.com/>
- The Free Dictionary: <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/>

## References

- [1] Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy. *Cambridge Grammar of English*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.