Alan Marsh

Exploring English:

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Zum Autor

Alan Marsh ist ein auf Malta lebender britischer Englischlehrer, der vor allem Englischlehrer aus allen Ländern dieser Welt weiterbildet. Ein großer Teil seines Wissens über die englische Grammatik, Lexik, Phonologie und Diskurs steckt in diesen drei Büchern.
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Who is this book for?

If you are going to become a teacher of English - or if you are already a teacher - you know that it is not enough to be able to speak and write English well - you also need to know how English works, and to be able to give explanations and to answer learners’ questions.

Or you may be a proficient user of English and are intrigued by - and would like to know more about - the explicit language systems underlying what people say and write spontaneously.

By means of a wide-ranging series of guided discovery tasks, this book engages you and involves you as you explore and develop your awareness of how the English language works.

The book explores grammar, functions, vocabulary, pronunciation and discourse systems and rules. It also includes examples of typical learner errors.

It is particularly designed for both prospective and practising TEFL, TESOL and mainstream education English as a foreign language teachers who may be following:

- preparatory courses for examinations which assess knowledge of English grammar, functions, vocabulary, pronunciation and discourse systems
- the language awareness components of TEFL/TESOL methodology courses
- the language awareness components of Cambridge ESOL TKT, ICELT, CELTA and DELTA and Trinity Cert. and Dip. TESOL courses

This three-volume edition contains a glossary of language terms and a full key to all the tasks and commentaries. It can therefore be used as a course book on teacher training courses and/or for self-study. Many of the exercises are also ideal for using with higher-level learners, especially those preparing for IELTS, Cambridge CAE and Proficiency and for those preparing for their Abitur, Baccalauréat and similar higher education examinations.
Features:

- An inductive, problem-solving approach to grammar, lexis, phonology and discourse
- Builds teachers’ and higher-level learners’ confidence by equipping them with a solid base in terminology and rules - and includes an extensive glossary of terms
- Provides typical learner errors and deals with common areas of learner difficulty including: futures, conditionals, the perfect aspect, modal verbs, phrasal verbs
- Clear, logical, step-by step approaches to describing and understanding language
- Written in clear, accessible language
- Many units are divided into levels: level 1 contains basic information and level 2 is for those who want to delve deeper
- Practice activities
- Full answer key and commentaries
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have worked for many years in the field of English as a Foreign Language teaching and my own journeys through grammar, lexis, phonology and discourse have been ones of constant discovery. The journeys have been guided by many, principally by the coursebooks I have taught (and learnt from) in over thirty years of teaching. However, I have also been fortunate enough to have had access to a number of excellent works of reference, and their influence underlies many of the pages in this work, although any errors and omissions are of course my own.

In particular I would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to the following excellent publications:

Rod Bolitho and Brian Tomlinson Discover English (Macmillan)
Michael Swan Practical English Usage (Oxford University Press)
Martin Parrot Grammar For English Language Teachers (Cambridge University Press)
Scott Thornbury An A-Z of ELT (Macmillan)

Alan Marsh
1 NAMING THE TENSES

AIM: The purpose of this unit is to help you to become familiar with the names of tenses and how they are formed.

Level 1

A 1. What do these sentences have in common, from a form point of view? Which words, or parts of words, appear in all 3 sentences?
   A1 I’m singing in the rain.
   A2 The sun was shining.
   A3 I’ll be thinking of you!

To name a tense follow the STEPS

STEP 1

Verb tenses which contain [BE] + Verb-ing are called continuous. Some grammar books call them progressive. The terms are interchangeable.

We also need to decide whether the tense name is past, present or future. To do this we look at the form of the verb [BE]. In sentence A1, am is present. So the name of the verb tense in I am singing is .............................................. present continuous (or present progressive). This book uses the term continuous.

2. What are the names of the tenses in sentences A2 and A3? Remember, look at the verb [BE] i.e. am / was / will be!

B STEP 2

1. What do these sentences have in common from a form point of view? Which words, or parts of words, appear in all 3 sentences?
   B1 I do it all the time.
   B2 The sun rose.
   B3 I’ll be there.

If the verb tense does not contain [BE] + Verb-ing, we call it simple.

2 Say which of these are simple tenses, and which are continuous / progressive tenses.
   1. He lives in Malta. ____________________________
   2. She’s working part-time. ____________________________
   3. I’ve been dying to meet you. ____________________________
   4. I’ve been given the sack. ____________________________
   5. It was working fine earlier on. ____________________________
   6. She loves swimming. ____________________________
   7. She was sure about it. ____________________________
   8. I’ll be seeing you. ____________________________
Now look at the verb in sentences B1, B2 and B3. In B1 the verb *I do* is present. So the verb tense is …………………………………. present simple.

3 What are the names of the verb tenses in B2 and B3?

**C** 1 And finally, what do these sentences have in common?

C1 She’s done it!
C2 They’d been waiting for ages before he finally …
C3 I’ll have done this three times over before you …
C4 I’ve been thinking of you, babe!

**STEP 3**

1 Verbs which contain a form of the verb [HAVE] + past participle are called **perfect** tenses

2 Say which of the following are perfect tenses and which are not.

1. He works so hard. ☒
2. She has been in the same job for 20 years. ☒
3. Romeo and Juliet loved each other. ☒
4. I’d already forgotten all about it ☒
5. It’s been cancelled. ☒
6. Then it’s left to marinate for 24 hours. ☒
7. We’ve been doing this for years. ☒
8. She has a new car. ☒
9. She was asked to leave. ☒
10. I’ll have finished this by tomorrow. ☒

Again, we also need to decide whether the tense name is past, present or future. To do this we look at the form of the verb [HAVE]. In sentence C1, have is present.

3 What form is the verb *have* in sentences C2, C3 and C4?

So now we can say C1 is **present perfect**, C2 is **past perfect**, C3 is **future perfect** and C4 is **present perfect**.
We also need to say whether they are simple or continuous/progressive. So we need to see whether [BE] + Verb-ing is included. If it is, it’s continuous (progressive); if it isn’t, it’s simple.

C1 is simple. So we can now give it its full name: present perfect simple.

4 What are sentences C2, C3 and C4 called?

Remember, ask yourself these questions when naming a tense:

1 Does the verb phrase contain a form of the verb [BE] and a Verb + ING?

2 If so, it’s a CONTINUOUS tense.

3 If not, it’s a SIMPLE tense.

4 If it’s a continuous tense, is [BE] (the auxiliary verb) in the Present (is, am, are), the Past (was, were) or the future (will be)? The answer will tell you if the verb tense is PRESENT CONTINUOUS, or PAST CONTINUOUS, or FUTURE CONTINUOUS.

5 If it’s a simple tense (i.e. not continuous), is the verb in the Present, Past or Future?

However, before deciding on whether your verb is: PRESENT SIMPLE or CONTINUOUS or PAST SIMPLE or CONTINUOUS or FUTURE SIMPLE or CONTINUOUS also ask yourself the following questions:

6 Does it contain a form of the verb [HAVE] and a past participle (the 3rd form)? If so, it’s nearly always a perfect tense.

7 If it doesn’t, then you don’t need to proceed any further.

8 If it is a perfect, then you have to decide which form of the perfect it is. We do this by looking at the form (not the meaning) of the verb [HAVE] (the auxiliary).

So We have finished and she has won are both examples of the PRESENT PERFECT (because have/has are present forms).

Similarly, we had finished and they had won are both examples of the PAST PERFECT. An example of the FUTURE PERFECT, then, is we will have finished by ten.

9 Finally, if it’s perfect, we also have to decide whether it’s PERFECT SIMPLE or PERFECT CONTINUOUS. Not a problem, really, as we would have already decided that by answering Questions 1 and 2. So I have finished is PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE and I’ve been waiting for ages is PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS.
A final thing to remember; don’t think of the MEANING but think of the FORM of the tense. Of course, She has been to Spain refers to the past (meaning) but when naming the tense we’re only interested in the form: have is present, so this is the present perfect.

NB These guidelines are mainly applicable to verbs in the active voice, although most are applicable to the passive voice too.

A few extras

We also use a few alternative forms for tenses. For example, an alternative future form is ‘[BE] going to’ e.g. it’s going to rain. This is often called the ‘[BE] going to’ future in course books, or simply the ‘going to’ future. We can also use this form in the future continuous e.g. I’m going to be moving house then and the future perfect e.g. Nobody’s going to have finished by then.

In the past simple, we sometimes use ‘used to’ e.g. we used to live in Spain’ and ‘would’ e.g. when he was a kid he’d get up to all sorts of mischief.

D TENSE NAMES: PRACTICE

1 Look at these sentences. Choosing from the list underneath, write the name of the appropriate tense alongside each sentence. E.g. Present Simple, Present Continuous.

Present Simple Present Continuous

Past Simple Past Continuous

‘Would’ past ‘Used to’ past

Future Simple (‘will’ future simple) Future Continuous (‘will’ future continuous)

‘[BE] going to’ future simple ‘[BE] going to’ future continuous

Present Perfect Simple Present Perfect Continuous

Past Perfect Simple Past Perfect Continuous

Future Perfect Simple (‘will’) Future Perfect Continuous (‘will’)

1 She does it _________________________________.
2 She did it _________________________________.
3 She had been doing it _______________________.
4 She will do it _______________________________.
5 She has been doing it _________________________.
6 She is doing it ______________________________.
7 She had done it ______________________________.
8 She’s going to do it ___________________________.
9 She will have done it _________________________.

Vorschau

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10 She was doing it ______________________________.
11 She will be doing it ______________________________.
12 She used to do it _______________________________.
13 She has done it ________________________________.
14 She will have been doing it ______________________.
15 She would do it now and again ____________________.
16 She’s going to be doing it ________________________.

E NAME THAT TENSE!
Name the underlined tense

1. By 6 p.m. the painter   will have finished
   Tense ________________________________

2. Ian had been jogging for 2 hours when he felt dizzy.
   Tense ________________________________

3. The match looked like ending in a draw
   until Smith scored in the last minute.
   Tense ________________________________

4. At 9 p.m. the musicians   will have been playing for nine hours.
   Tense ________________________________

5. When the police got to his house the criminal had already left.
   Tense ________________________________

6. This time tomorrow Paul will be travelling to London.
   Tense ________________________________

7. If you put ice in the sun it melts.
   Tense ________________________________

8. Hang on – I’ll be back in a second.
   Tense ________________________________

9. I was having a shower when there was a water cut.
   Tense ________________________________

10. I’m singing and dancing in the rain.
    Tense ________________________________
11. I’m going to make you love me.
Tense _____________________________

12. I’ve had it up to here!
Tense _____________________________

13. I’ve been missing you more than I can say.
Tense _____________________________

Level 2
A Read this (slightly adapted) story of Little Red Riding Hood below.

Outside Little Red Riding Hood’s cottage at the end of the forest, a big man-eating wolf crept up to the cottage door and (1) heard Little Red Riding Hood making arrangements to go and visit her grandmother, who lived on the other side of the forest. Little Red Riding Hood’s mother (2) had been baking all morning and Little Red Riding Hood (3) couldn’t wait to get started.

(4) Her mother was saying: ‘Take care, Little Red Riding Hood. Make sure you (5) don’t go through the forest. Some of our neighbours say (6) they’ve heard a wolf. I’m not sure that you should go.” Little Red Riding Hood reassured her mother. (7) “I’ve been looking forward to seeing Granny all week. Please don’t worry – (8) I’ll be very careful.”

The wolf licked its lips and sped off through the forest … towards the grandmother’s house. A few moments later Little Red Riding Hood set off. It was a beautiful day, the sun (9) was shining and soon (10) she’d almost reached her granny’s house. She sang to herself and admired the beautiful flowers which (11) were beginning to bloom. “In a little while (12) I’ll be having tea and cake with Granny and (13) we’ll be laughing about the stories (14) she’ll tell me about when my mother was a child and all the pranks (15) she’d get up to.” An hour later she was at her Grandmother’s door.

Little (16) did she know that the wolf (17) had already been to her Granny’s house, swallowed her up in one big gulp and (18) was waiting inside for the main course … Little Red Riding Hood. “By the end of the day (19) I’ll have eaten a very tasty two-course meal,” mused the wolf. “The first course was a bit tough, but (20) I’m really looking forward to the next course. Very tender and succulent, I’m sure. (21) This is going to be good!” Again, he rubbed his claws together and licked his lips in expectation.

Little Red Riding Hood opened the door and came in. For some odd reason (22) the wolf had dressed itself up in poor Granny’s clothes. And in a voice which he tried to make sound as similar to Granny’s as possible, it said, “Come closer, Little Red Riding Hood, so that (23) I can get a good look at you. (24) I’ve been waiting for this afternoon for a long, long time.” Well, (25) girls have changed a lot, and they’re certainly not as naive as (26) they used
to be (or as the wolf thought they were). Little Red Riding Hood took just one look at the wolf alias Granny, saw that the eyes, ears, claws and teeth looked nothing like her Granny’s, turned around and fled. The wolf leapt after her and (27) was catching up on her fast when all of a sudden (28) a woodsman appeared, took aim with his hunting rifle and killed the wolf on the spot. The huntsman was a neighbour and (29) had been hunting for the wolf since early in the morning. Now (30) he’d bagged his prey. In an instant (31) he’d slit open the wolf’s stomach and there inside was Granny, covered in slime, blood and bile, true, but her heart (32) was still beating. Little Red Riding Hood was overwhelmed with gratitude. They all hurried back to Little Red Riding Hood’s cottage. When her mother saw the state they were in she was filled with dread. (33) “What on earth has happened? Why (34) does Granny look like … this?” she asked, terrified. (35) "We’ve shot ourselves a wolf,” said the huntsman. Now sit down and (36) we’ll tell you all about it over a nice cup of tea. And after that, how (37) do you fancy a barbecue? (38) "We’re thinking of grilling some wolf chops tonight.”

“So how long (39) have you been doing this?” asked Little Red Riding Hood, who was still a little shell-shocked by the whole experience. “Doing what?” asked the huntsman. “Hunting wolves and, you know, rescuing damsels in distress”, replied Little Red Riding Hood. “Oh, come next Christmas (40) I’ll have been doing it for nigh on 20 years.” Little Red Riding Hood’s mother was impressed. But that’s another story …

Various tense structures are written in italics and numbered in the Little Red Riding Hood story. The names of the structures are listed below. Write the letter corresponding to the name of each structure next to the numbers below. The first one has been done for you, as an example.

a. present simple
   I work here
b. present continuous/progressive
   I’m working here
c. present perfect simple
   I’ve worked here
d. present perfect continuous
   I’ve been working here
e. past simple
   I worked here
f. past continuous
   I was working here
g. past perfect simple
   I had worked here
h. past perfect continuous
   I’d been working here
i. ‘would’ past
   I would work here (from time to time)
j. ‘used to’ past
   I used to work here
k. future simple/’will’ future
   I will work here
l. ‘will’ future continuous
   I’ll be working here
m. ‘[BE] going to’ future
   I’m going to work here
n. ‘[BE] going to’ future continuous
   I’m going to be working here
o. ‘will’ future perfect
   I’ll have worked here
p. ‘will’ future perfect continuous
   I’ll have been working here

1e 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30 32 32 33 34 35 36
37 38 39 40
2 IDENTIFYING ACTIVE AND PASSIVE

Level 1

**AIM:** The aim of this unit is to help you to identify passive structures and to name the tenses in passive structures.

**A** Look at these sentences. Decide:
1 the tense of each sentence  
2 what the **subject** and **object** are in each sentence.

1. She’s sending the emails now.
2. Shakespeare wrote Hamlet.
3. I’ve done it!!
4. We’re doing our house up.
5. They were driving the car too fast.
6. They speak English in this shop.
7. They’ll examine her later

**B** Now re-write the sentences in **A** so that they have a similar meaning and the same tense. Start each sentence with the object of the verb.

1. She’s sending the emails now.
   The emails __________________________________________

2. Shakespeare wrote Hamlet.
   Hamlet _____________________________________________

3. I’ve done it!!
   It __________________________________________________

4. We’re doing our house up.
   ___________________________________________________

5. They were driving the car too fast.
   ___________________________________________________

6. They speak English in this shop.
   ___________________________________________________

7. They’ll examine her later.
   ___________________________________________________
C  The re-written sentences are in the **passive** (or, to give it its full name, the **passive voice**). The original sentences are in the **active** (or, to give it its full name, the **active voice**). In all of the re-written sentences in B (i.e. the passive sentences), these two features appear:

\[
\text{[BE] + past participle.}
\]

Underline the form of the verb [BE] and **highlight** the past participle in each sentence.

Notice that in all the passive structures we can introduce the concept of *by [someone]*, though often we don’t do so because it is unnecessary or clumsy.

1. The emails are being sent right now (*by her*)
2. Hamlet was written by Shakespeare
3. It’s been done! (*by me*)
4. Our house is being done up (*by us*)
5. The car was being driven too fast (*by them*)
6. English is spoken in this shop (*by the staff*)
7. She’ll be examined later (*by experts*)

D  Look at these sentences. Write **passive** or **active** next to each one. Remember the two guidelines:

a)  Do they contain a form of the verb [BE] + past participle?

b)  If you added *by someone* (in the sense *done by someone*) would it still make sense?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | I have been to Spain     **passive**
| 2 | The letters have been posted **active**
| 3 | I was asked a lot of questions **passive**
| 4 | We've been doing this for ages **active**
| 5 | The letters are ready **active**
| 6 | They are being well looked after **active**
| 7 | It'll all be over soon **active**
| 8 | They'll be lying on the beach by now **active**
| 9 | We'll have finished by lunchtime **active**
| 10 | The stadium will be completed by next year **passive**
| 11 | He's going to be the winner **active**
| 12 | 1,000 workers are going to be made redundant **active**

To determine the tense of passive structures, look at the form of the [BE] structure.

In sentence 1 below, *is sending* is in the present continuous/progressive form - in the same tense as its *are being (sent)* passive counterpart in sentence 2:

1. *She’s sending the emails now* present continuous/progressive **active**
2. *The emails are being sent now* present continuous/progressive **passive**

E  Sentences 2. 3, 6, 10, 11 and 12 are passive. What tense are they? Remember, look at the verb [BE].
Level 2

Look at these two sentences:
1 Sarah changed the light bulb. 2 The light bulb was changed by Sarah.

In Sentence 1, ‘Sarah’ is the subject of the verb ‘changed’ – she’s the person/thing doing the action/influencing the verb. ‘Sarah’ is also the subject of the sentence and is placed at the beginning of the sentence, a normal position in English for this type of sentence.

‘The light bulb’ is the object of the verb ‘changed’ – it’s the person/thing to whom the action is done. We say the sentence is in the active voice.

In Sentence 2, ‘the light bulb’ is still the object of the verb ‘changed’, but now it’s the subject of the sentence, and so we place it at the beginning of the sentence. We say the sentence is in the passive voice.

So to recap so far:
In active sentences, the subject of the verb is the subject of the sentence.
In passive sentences, the object of the verb is the subject of the sentence.

Form of the passive
In Sentence 2, the verb is made up of the auxiliary (a form of the verb be and a past participle). The appropriate form of the verb be will depend on the tense which is appropriate in the context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>BE</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present simple</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present continuous</td>
<td>is being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past simple</td>
<td>was</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past continuous</td>
<td>was being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present perfect simple</td>
<td>has been</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present perfect continuous</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past perfect simple</td>
<td>had been</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past perfect continuous</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Used to’ past</td>
<td>used to be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Will’ future simple</td>
<td>will be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present modals</td>
<td>must/should be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past modals</td>
<td>must have been could have been</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘be going to’ future</td>
<td>is going to be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future continuous</td>
<td>will be being (not common)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future perfect simple</td>
<td>will have been</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future perfect continuous</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We rarely use the passive in the present/past/future perfect continuous, as it sounds very awkward.

**Uses of the passive**

There are several important uses of the passive, but they are all linked by one or both of the following ideas:

1. We are focusing our attention on the object of the verb, and so we make it the subject of the sentence.
   
   *The President has been assassinated!*

2. We want to avoid using the subject of the verb because it is unimportant, or obvious –
   
   *The beer is left to ferment* - or unknown - *My car’s been stolen!*
   
   - or the speaker does not want to put themselves ‘on the line’ as being directly accountable for what they are saying –
   
   *It is hoped that inflation will come down next year*
   
   - or does not want to be seen as being personally involved –
   
   *You have been warned! (compare with I’m warning you!)*
   
   *He is being punished for his unruly behaviour (compare with I’m punishing him)*

We therefore find the passive used often in news headlines (with the auxiliary **be** sometimes deleted) –

*President assassinated!* - in news reports 5000 people are reported to have died in the earthquake

*The beer is left to ferment* - in descriptions of processes

*Trespassers will be prosecuted.* - in formal signs and notices

*Customers are asked to use the trolleys provided*

*It is to be hoped that …*. - whenever we want or need to use an impersonal and formal style, e. g. in formal reports and official pronouncements

and when attention is focused on the object of the verb. This often happens because it’s the object of the verb that we’re really concerned about and frequently occurs when a previous sentence makes it more natural to put the object at the beginning of the sentence e. g.

*A: Why can’t you use your car?*

*B: It’s being repaired. (compare with Someone’s repairing it)*

**Alternative passives**

**Get** is sometimes used instead of **be** in passive constructions. It is often perceived as being more informal:

*I was caught ----------- I got caught*

*She’ll be beaten ----------- She’ll get beaten*

*That window will be broken ----------- That window will get broken*
We sometimes use **have + object + past participle** to talk about things which we arrange for other people to do for us, usually some kind of service, and sometimes with payment. Grammar reference books often call it the **causative ‘have’**.

- *I’m having my car serviced tomorrow*
- *I’m going to have my hair cut*
- *I’ll have you thrown out of here!*
- *She had her picture taken*

This structure can also be used to refer to an experience – something happens to us (and is therefore no longer called the causative ‘have’):

- *I had my bag stolen*
- *We had our house burnt down in the fire*

**Get** can also be used as an alternative to **have**:

- *I’m going to get my hair cut*
- *She got her picture taken*
- *I got my bag stolen*

### 3 TIME AND TENSE

**AIM:** The aim of this unit is to heighten your awareness of the relationship between real time (the past, the present, the future, all time) and the various verb forms used to express different aspects of time in English. It may be useful and helpful to go through Unit 1 **Naming the Tenses** before attempting this unit.

#### Level 1

**A** Look at these pairs of sentences. Are they both acceptable in English? If so, explain any differences in meaning.

1. (a) She’s smoking. (b) She smokes.
2. (a) I’m working hard these days. (b) I work hard.
3. (a) I live in Malta. (b) I’m living in Malta.
4. (a) I’m liking it. (b) I like it.
5. (a) The plane arrives at 7. (b) The plane’s arriving at 7.
6. (a) I think so. (b) I’m thinking so.
7. (a) I’m thinking of going to Spain next year. (b) I’m thinking a lot at night.
8. (a) I crossed the road and bumped into my friend. (b) I was crossing the road and bumped into my friend.
9. (a) When I arrived, he was cooking a meal. (b) When I arrived, he cooked a meal.
10. (a) When I arrived, she left. (b) When I was arriving, she was leaving.
11. (a) When I left home this morning, the birds were singing and the sun was shining. (b) When I left home this morning, the birds sang and the sun shone.
12. (a) We’re having a party next week. (b) We have a party next week.
13. (a) The local residents are getting angry. (b) The local residents get angry.
What conclusions can you draw about the differences between the meaning(s) of present/past simple tenses and present/past continuous (progressive) tenses?

Can you find any evidence in A1-13 for each of the following statements?

(i) **Continuous tenses** often imply that the speaker/writer sees an event as temporary in some way, or short-term, or having started recently, or a process of change has started.

(ii) They also often imply that an event is in progress around a point in time – either now (or around now), or in relation to another event in the past.

(iii) **The present simple** tense is mainly used for events which are repeated, or for characteristic traits, and states which the speaker/writer does not perceive as being temporary, short-term, or short-lived.

(iv) **The past simple** is used with events, actions and states which the speaker perceives as having been completed and which took place within a period of time in the past.

**Level 2**

**A** Look at these statements, all made by the same person. Try and put them in chronological order.

(a) I’m going to live in Italy.
(b) By the time I move to Italy, I’ll have spent 16 years in Malta.
(c) I live in Malta.
(d) I lived in the UK for 14 years.
(e) Before I moved to the UK, I’d lived in several other countries, including Holland, Germany and Cyprus.
(f) By the time I retire, I’ll have been living in the Mediterranean for about 25 years.

**B** Try and match these concepts to the sentences in A.

1. The past seen from the future (2 sentences)
2. The present
3. The past
4. The past seen from a more recent past
5. The future seen from the present

**C** Draw a time line for each of the concepts and sentences in A and B, as in the example for sentence (c)
Look at these statements. Do you agree with them?

1. Present tenses are always used to express present time in English.
2. Past tenses are always used to express past time in English.
3. The present simple refers to something which is a routine, or is permanent, or is regularly repeated.
4. The present continuous refers to something which is happening now.
5. The past continuous always refers to an interrupted action.
6. The past continuous is often used to describe what’s happening ‘in the background’ in a past narrative.
7. Both the present simple and the present continuous can refer to future time.

Draw time lines for Level 1 A 9 (a) and (b), and 10 (a) and (b)

4 MEANINGS AND USES OF THE TENSES

AIM: In this unit we look at some of the major meanings and uses of the different tenses in English. It may be useful and helpful to go through Unit 1 Naming the Tenses before attempting the unit. The meanings and uses below often form an important part of course book content. Some learners have considerable difficulty choosing which appropriate tense to use when they are speaking and writing.

Look at these typical mistakes made by learners. Try and think why they might have made these mistakes. The rest of this unit will clarify many of these areas of difficulty for learners.

1. I am German - I am coming from Germany.
2. She is working hard every day.
3. I am working here since last year.
4. I am in Malta since Sunday.
5. When have you arrived?
6. The ferry just left when we got there, so we waited for the next one.
7. I had left school in 2001 and I had finished university in 2005. I'm a lawyer now.
8. When I was a boy we would live in Italy for ten years.
9. I use to come to school by bus.
10. I can't come because I will go to the cinema tonight.
11. A: I'm afraid Becky’s out at the moment. Would you like to leave a message? 
B: No problem – I'm going to phone back later.
12. Tomorrow we go to a typical local restaurant.
13. I'll wait until you will finish.
14. This time tomorrow I am lying on a beach in Greece.
15. I am finished this by tomorrow evening.

First of all, we need to look at the concept of aspect. Look at this extract from the Glossary.
Aspect  
A category which tells us how a state or action is perceived by the speaker or writer. For example, the state/action can be seen as temporary, in progress, a state of being, a repeated action, habitual, or related to another time in the past, present or future. In English there are three aspects, **progressive** (or **continuous**), **simple** and **perfect**

a. *She's writing a letter*: **progressive** (**continuous**) aspect. The action is perceived as being in progress at the present time, and is temporary, not permanent.

b. *She writes for a living*: **simple** aspect. The verb is seen as a state (it is repeated and habitual), and therefore not perceived as temporary.

c. *She has a BMW*: **simple** aspect. The verb is seen as a state (in this case, a state of possession), and therefore not temporary.

d. *Oh no! I've lost my keys*: **perfect** aspect. A past event is seen in relation to the present moment.

The terms **progressive** and continuous are used synonymously by different commentators. This book uses the term **continuous**.

Continuous versus Simple

Look at this Glossary entry, too:

**Stative verbs** Verbs which usually refer to a state, which is usually considered as unchanging for a long period of time e. g. *I have a Fiat; my dad’s an engineer*

Stative verbs (or verbs that have stative meaning) are not normally used in the **continuous** form e. g.

- *I have a Fiat*  v  *I'm having a Fiat*
- *I knew him*  v  *I was knowing him*
- *I've been here for ages*  v  *I've been being here for ages*

Actions expressed in the **continuous** are often:

i) in progress  e. g. *He's working in the garden.*

ii) temporary  e. g. *I'm living in London.*

iii) incomplete  e. g. *Who's been eating my porridge?*

Perfect versus Non-Perfect

Actions and states expressed in the **perfect** often bear some relationship to a time other than that when the action occurred. Think of a bridge connecting two ‘times’. For example:

i) **Past Perfect** is a way of relating one point in the past to another point further in the past e. g. *she'd eaten by the time we arrived.*

ii) **Present Perfect** is a way of relating a point in the past to the present e. g. *I've eaten, thanks (so I'm not hungry now).*

iii) **Future Perfect** is a way of relating a point in the future to a point less far in the future (or to the present) e. g. *they'll have eaten by the time we get there.*
B Meanings related to ‘now’ 1

Look at these sentences, which are related to tenses 1 and 2 below. 
(a) Identify the tense (T) used in each sentence and (b) insert each sentence as an example in the appropriate explanation.

(a) He likes spaghetti. T ____  b. She’s working right now. T ____
c. She works in an office. T ____ d. She understands me. T ____
e. Prices are going up every day. T ____ f. I get up at 6 every day. T ____
g. People are dying of starvation all over the world. T ____

1. Present Simple

A a habitual action e. g. (1) ___________________________

B a characteristic or ‘permanent’ state/fact about someone or something e. g. (2) _____________   (3) ________________________

C verbs that are not normally used in the continuous when they refer to a state (rather than an event or action) e. g. to know, to like, to understand e. g. (4) __________________________

2. Present Continuous

a temporary action/event or temporary repeated action/event occurring in a period of time which includes ‘now’ e. g.
(5) __________________________
(6) __________________________
(7) __________________________

C Meanings related to ‘now’ 2

Look at these sentences, which are related to tense 3 below. Insert each sentence as an example in the appropriate explanation.

a. They’ve scored!   b. I’ve done a lot today.   c. I’ve always lived here.
d. We’ve done well this year   e. Oh no! I’ve lost my wallet!
f. I’ve been to France (= sometime in my life up to now.)
g. She hasn’t touched meat since she was 18.

3 Present Perfect Simple

A an action which was completed within a period of time (stated or understood) which is unfinished (this could include today, this week, this year, ‘in my life’, ‘ever’ etc.) e. g.(1) _____________
(2) _____________   (3) _____________

Often refers to past-present experience. In American English the past simple may be used in place of the present perfect in these uses.

B an action/event/state which began in the past and continues in the present (often qualified by ‘for’ or ‘since’ + time) e. g.
(4) __________________________ (5) __________________________