Whenever we write sentences, we use verbs to state the action that is occurring. These actions can happen now (present tense), at an earlier point in time (past tense), or sometime later on (future tense). While you can use different verb tenses to describe different points in time, unnecessary or accidental changes can confuse the reader. Use this handout as a guide so that you’ll know how to identify what type of verb you’re using and when you should use it.

# List of Verb Tenses

Below is a list of verb tenses, including the specific time or time frame they indicate and an example of that verb tense in a sentence. In the sentence below, we will be working with the base verb “to walk.”

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| List of Verb Tenses |
| Verb Tense | Example in a Sentence |
| **Present Tense** (happening right now) | I **walk** to school. |
| **Present Progressive** (happening now but will end at some point) | I **am walking** to school. |
| **Past Tense** (happened in the past) | I **walked** to school. |
| **Future Tense** (happening at some point later from now) | I **will walk** to school. |
| **Future Progressive** (something that will happen continuously) | I **will be walking** to school. |
| **Past Progressive** (happened in the past but no longer occurring) | I **was walking** to school. |
| **Present Perfect** (something that just recently ended) | I **have walked** to school. |
| **Past Perfect** (in the past, something completed before another action occurred) | I **had just walked** to school when my friend **met** me at the entrance. |
| **Present Perfect Progressive** (started in the past, happening now, and will continue into the future) | I **have been walking** to school since I was seven years old. |
| **Past Perfect Progressive** (something was continuously occurring but stopped before another action occurred) | I **had been walking** to school when the UFO **crashed** into the street. |
| **Future Perfect Progressive** (describes a continuous action that will complete or finish in the future) | By the time I **have arrived** at school, I **will have been fighting** aliens for twenty minutes, and I will be the best alien fighter on Earth. |

# Verb Tense Switch

A verb tense switch occurs when we switch between verb tenses in a sentence or passage without meaning to also indicate a switch in time or time frame. Below is an example of a verb tense switch and how it could be corrected.

### Example:

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| **Verb tense switch:** “I was walking to Publix when I see a car accident.”This is **wrong** because the second verb in the sentence, “see,” is *present tense*, when the first part of the sentence, “was walking,” is *past progressive*.**Consistent verb tense:** “I was walking to Publix when I saw a car accident.” This is **correct** because it is describing an event that was occurring in the past when another event happened. This is *past perfect progressive*. |