



THE CORE

English Grammar by Structure

A. Algamel

First Edition · February 2026

The Core: English Grammar by Structure
First Edition — February 2026

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Edition: First Edition

Publication Date: February 2026

Target Audience: People who speak English but struggle with grammar and academic communication



To everyone who believes clarity is the highest form of teaching.

About the Author

A. Algamel comes from an engineering background where precision, logic, and structural clarity are essential. His analytical mindset influenced the way he approached learning English grammar, especially after personally experiencing the gap between conversational ability and accurate academic communication.

Rather than relying on traditional memorisation or indirect explanations, Algamel developed a structured rule-based approach designed to deliver information directly and efficiently. His method focuses on presenting the rule clearly, explaining when it is used, why it is used, how it functions, and identifying its exceptions, all reinforced with extensive practical examples.

The Core was created specifically for learners who already speak English but experience instability due to insufficient structured grammatical instruction. The book aims to reduce confusion, eliminate hesitation, and build confidence through clarity and systematic presentation.

Algamel believes that grammar is not about memorising scattered rules but about understanding a logical system. When structure is understood properly, accuracy becomes natural and academic communication becomes controlled and confident.

A stylized, cursive signature of the name 'Algamel' in black ink.

About This Book

The Core is not a beginner's course. It is a structured grammar reference designed for people who speak English but struggle with grammar and academic communication. If you can communicate in English but feel uncertain about when and why certain structures are used, or if you need to write professionally and academically, this book was written for you.

Who this book is for. People who speak English but struggle with grammar and academic communication — those who can form sentences but want a deeper, more organised understanding of how English grammar actually works. This book is particularly useful for students, professionals, and anyone who needs to write clearly in academic or business contexts.

How to use it. On your first read, go through the chapters in order. Each chapter builds naturally on the previous one. Once you have read it through, use it as a reference: jump directly to any section whenever a specific question comes up. Every concept is self-contained and clearly labelled.

What makes it different. Every unit in this book follows an identical six-part structure — Definition, Usage, Examples, Exceptions, Warnings, and Summary. There is no filler. There are no redundant explanations. Every page has a clear visual identity: colour coded boxes, consistent formatting, and professional typography. Grammar terms are highlighted in **RoyalBlue bold** throughout so you can always spot them at a glance.

This book respects your time. Every word earns its place.

A note on British and American English. This book uses British English spelling and conventions as the primary standard, but all grammar rules apply equally to both British and American English. Where significant differences exist (such as *shall* vs *will*, or collective noun agreement), both forms are noted.

How to Use This Book

Throughout every chapter you will encounter four types of coloured boxes. Each one serves a distinct purpose. Here is what they mean:

Examples

Shows correct usage with varied, real-world examples.

Every example is realistic — drawn from everyday life, work, and conversation. Subjects and contexts rotate across chapters so you see grammar applied in many different situations.

! Exception

Flags rules that have exceptions — read carefully.

English has irregular patterns. When a rule behaves differently in certain conditions, this box tells you exactly when and why.

!! Warning

Common mistakes learners make — avoid these.

These boxes highlight the errors that appear most often, including confusions between similar structures and typical translation mistakes.

* Summary

One-line takeaway for quick review.

At the end of every concept, this box gives you the single most important thing to remember — ideal for revision.

Key grammar terms appear in **RoyalBlue bold** throughout the book so you can identify them immediately.

Signal words — time markers and connectors that indicate which tense or structure to use — appear in *italics* inside examples.

Preface

English grammar is not difficult because it is complex. It is difficult because it is often taught without structure, consistency, or visual clarity. Learners are given rules scattered across multiple sources, with no unified system to organise them.

The Core solves this problem. Every concept in this book follows the same six-part structure. Every page uses the same visual identity. Every term is defined once and used consistently throughout. There is no guessing. There is no searching through paragraphs for the rule you need. Everything is exactly where it should be.

This book was written for people who speak English but struggle with grammar and academic communication. If you have ever been told your writing is unclear, if you hesitate when choosing between tenses, if you avoid certain structures because you are not confident — this book will change that. It will not teach you English from scratch. It will give you the structured understanding you have been missing.

Grammar is a tool. This book is the manual.

Scope and limitations: This book covers core English grammar structures systematically. It does not cover vocabulary building, pronunciation, idiomatic expressions, or cultural context. It assumes you already have basic English communication ability and focuses exclusively on grammatical accuracy and structural understanding.

A. Algamel

February 2026

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Book Structure Overview

The Core is organised into six chapters, each serving a specific purpose in building your understanding of English grammar.

Chapter	Content & Purpose
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Chapter 1	Building Blocks — Establishes all terminology: pronouns, auxiliary verbs (be/have/do), verb forms (V1/V2/V3/V-ing), basic prepositions, and conjunctions. Read this first.
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Chapter 2	The 12 Tenses — Complete coverage of the English tense system with formulas, examples, exceptions, and warnings for each tense. Includes the Unified Drill showing all tenses side by side.
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Chapter 3	Conditionals & Modals — All five conditional types (zero, first, second, third, mixed) and all modal verbs (can/could, may/might, must/have to, should, would, will, need to).
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Chapter 4	Sentence Structure — How sentences are built and combined: simple, compound, complex, compound-complex. Full coverage of passive voice and reported speech.
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Chapter 5	Common Mistakes & Confusions — Side-by-side comparisons of the most frequently confused grammar points: since/for, make/do, say/tell, articles, and many more.
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Chapter 6	Quick Reference Tables — Cheat sheets for rapid consultation: all tenses, 100+ irregular verbs, modals, prepositions, collocations, phrasal verbs, and more.
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Appendix	Study Guide — Recommended study path, practice methods, and additional resources.
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Glossary	Key Terms Alphabetical definitions of all terms used in the book.
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Reading recommendation: Read Chapters 1–5 in order on your first pass. Use

Chapter 6 as a daily reference. Return to earlier chapters whenever you need detailed explanations.

Building Blocks

This chapter establishes the **shared terminology** used throughout this book. It is not a beginner's lesson — it is a fast structural reference to the grammatical labels and core verb forms every later chapter relies on. If a term appears without definition elsewhere in this book, it was introduced here first.

1.1 Personal Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word that stands in place of a noun to avoid repetition. **Personal pronouns** refer to specific people or things and change form depending on their grammatical role in the sentence.

When & Why: Use pronouns to replace nouns already known from context. Their form — **subject**, **object**, or **possessive** — is determined by the role they play in the sentence.

Person	Subject	Object	Possessive
1st singular	I	me	my / mine
2nd singular	you	you	your / yours
3rd masc. singular	he	him	his
3rd fem. singular	she	her	her / hers
3rd neut. singular	it	it	its
1st plural	we	us	our / ours
2nd / 3rd plural	they	them	their / theirs

Examples

- *She* drafted the contract before the meeting started. (subject)
- The supervisor called *him* into the office. (object)
- *Their* strategy proved more effective in the long run. (possessive adjective)
- The final decision was *ours* to make. (possessive pronoun)
- *We* stayed late to finish the analysis. (subject)

!! Warning

Subject vs. object — a very common error:

Incorrect: *Me and the team presented the results.*

Correct: *The team and I presented the results.*

Incorrect: *Between you and I, it was a bad plan.*

Correct: *Between you and me, it was a bad plan.* (after a preposition, always use the object form)

* Summary

Subject pronouns come before the verb; **object pronouns** come after the verb or preposition; **possessive pronouns** replace or modify owned nouns.

1.2 The Verb *to be*: *am / is / are / was / were*

The **verb *to be*** is the most fundamental verb in English. It functions as a **main verb** — linking a subject to its description, identity, location, or condition — and as an **auxiliary verb** used to build continuous tenses and passive structures (covered in Chapters 2 and 4).

When & Why: Use *to be* whenever the sentence describes a state, characteristic, or identity rather than an action.

Subject	Present	Past
I	am	was
You	are	were
He / She / It	is	was
We / They	are	were

Examples

- The conference *is* on Tuesday afternoon.
- My colleague *was* unavailable during the audit.
- *We are* responsible for the final review.
- The instructions *were* unclear from the start.
- *I am* not convinced by that argument.

! Exception

To be is **highly irregular** — the only English verb with three distinct present-tense forms (*am, is, are*) and two distinct past-tense forms (*was, were*). Every other English verb uses a single form for all persons in the past tense.

!! Warning

Always match the verb form to the subject — subject-verb agreement errors with *to be* are among the most frequent in written English.

Incorrect: *The results is ready.*

Correct: *The results are ready.*

Incorrect: *He are working on it.*

Correct: *He is working on it.*

*** Summary**

Am / is / are are present forms; *was / were* are past forms. Match the form to its subject — always.

1.3 *have / has / had*

Have serves two distinct roles: as a **main verb** expressing possession, experience, or obligation, and as an **auxiliary verb** forming the perfect tenses (covered in Chapter 2).

When & Why: As a main verb, use *have / has* in the present and *had* in the past. As an auxiliary, it combines with a past participle (V3) to form perfect structures.

Subject	Present	Past
I / You / We / They	have	had
He / She / It	has	had

Examples

- The company *has* three international offices. (main verb — possession)
- *We have* a presentation scheduled for noon. (main verb — arrangement)
- She *had* enough experience for the senior role. (main verb — past)
- *They have* already submitted the proposal. (auxiliary — present perfect)

!! Warning

Do not use *have* where *has* is required.

Incorrect: *She have two reports ready.*

Correct: *She has two reports ready.*

* Summary

Use *have* with I / You / We / They; use *has* with He / She / It. *Had* is the past form for all subjects.

1.4 *do / does / did*

Do functions primarily as an **auxiliary verb** — used to form questions, negatives, and emphatic statements with main verbs. It also appears as a **main verb** meaning to perform or complete an action.

When & Why: Use *do / does* in the present and *did* in the past to form negative sentences and questions with all main verbs — except *to be* and modal verbs, which have their own question and negation patterns.

Subject	Present	Past
I / You / We / They	do	did
He / She / It	does	did

Examples

- *Does* the system update automatically? (auxiliary — question)
- They *did not* receive the confirmation email. (auxiliary — negative)
- *Do* you handle the client accounts directly? (auxiliary — question)
- She *did* everything the brief required. (main verb — emphatic)

! Exception

Never use *do / does / did* with *to be* to form questions or negatives — *to be* does not need an auxiliary.

Incorrect: *Do you be tired?* / *Did he was late?*

Correct: *Are you tired?* / *Was he late?*

Similarly, **modal verbs** (*can, will, should, etc.*) form their own questions and negatives without *do* — see Chapter 3.

* Summary

Do / does / did build questions and negatives with main verbs only — never with *be* or modal verbs.

1.5 Verb Forms: V1, V2, V3, and V-ing

English verbs appear in four core forms. Each form has a specific grammatical function and cannot be swapped freely:

- **V1** — the **base / infinitive** form (e.g. *go, write*) — used in present simple, after modals, and in infinitive structures.
- **V2** — the **past simple** form (e.g. *went, wrote*) — used exclusively in the past simple tense.
- **V3** — the **past participle** (e.g. *gone, written*) — used in perfect tenses and the passive voice.
- **V-ing** — the **present participle / gerund** (e.g. *going, writing*) — used in continuous tenses and as a noun.

When & Why: The correct form depends entirely on the tense or structure being used. Choosing the wrong form is one of the most common grammatical errors in English.

Verb	V1 (Base)	V2 (Past)	V3 (Past Part.)	V-ing
go	go	went	gone	going
write	write	wrote	written	writing
speak	speak	spoke	spoken	speaking
take	take	took	taken	taking
give	give	gave	given	giving
make	make	made	made	making
see	see	saw	seen	seeing
know	know	knew	known	knowing
come	come	came	come	coming
run	run	ran	run	running

Examples

- She *writes* the quarterly reports every month. (V1 — present simple)
- The director *gave* a brief statement to the press. (V2 — past simple)
- *We have taken* a different approach this quarter. (V3 — present perfect)
- They are *running* the simulation again. (V-ing — present continuous)

! Exception

Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern for V2 and V3. The ten verbs in the table above are all irregular. Learners must memorise their forms individually — there is no shortcut.

Regular verbs form both V2 and V3 by adding *-ed*: *work* → *worked* → *worked*.

!! Warning

Do not use V2 (past simple form) where V3 (past participle) is required.

Incorrect: *She has went to the office.*

Correct: *She has gone to the office.* (*went* = V2; *gone* = V3)

Incorrect: *The report was wrote by the analyst.*

Correct: *The report was written by the analyst.*

*** Summary**

V1 = base form; V2 = past simple; V3 = past participle; V-ing = continuous / gerund. Each form belongs to a specific grammatical structure — they are not interchangeable.

1.6 The Past Participle (V3)

The **past participle** (V3) is not a tense — it is a verb **form**. It cannot stand alone as the main verb of a sentence. It always works in combination with an auxiliary verb.

When & Why: The past participle has two primary uses in English:

1. Combined with *have/has/had* to form **perfect tenses** (see Chapter 2).
2. Combined with *be* to form the **passive voice** (see Chapter 4).

Examples

- The team *has completed* the first phase on schedule. (present perfect — V3: *completed*)
- All files *were backed up* overnight automatically. (passive — V3: *backed up*)
- By Friday, she *had reviewed* every application in the pool. (past perfect — V3: *reviewed*)
- The revised budget *has been approved* by the board. (passive perfect — V3: *approved*)

!! Warning

The past participle (V3) is **not** the same as the past simple (V2). Many learners use them interchangeably — this is incorrect.

Incorrect: *I have saw this error before.*

Correct: *I have seen this error before.* (*saw* = V2; *seen* = V3)

* Summary

The past participle (V3) always requires an auxiliary verb — either *have/has/had* (perfect) or *be* (passive). It is never a standalone tense.

1.7 Time Reference: Past, Present, and Future

English organises all actions and states along three **time references**: **past**, **present**, and **future**. Each time reference contains multiple tenses that differ in aspect (simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous).

When & Why: These terms are introduced here so later chapters can reference them without re-definition. No individual tense is taught in this section — tenses are covered in full in Chapter 2.

Time Reference	What it covers
Past	Actions and states that occurred before the moment of speaking. Includes past simple, past continuous, past perfect, and past perfect continuous.
Present	Actions and states connected to the current moment. Includes present simple, present continuous, present perfect, and present perfect continuous.
Future	Actions and states expected to occur after the moment of speaking. Formed using <i>will</i> , <i>going to</i> , and present structures used with future meaning.

* Summary

All 12 English tenses fall under three time references: past, present, and future. The complete tense system — with structure, usage, signal words, and examples — is in Chapter 2.

1.8 Subject, Object, Noun, and Adjective

These four terms appear throughout this book. Each is a distinct grammatical role or word class.

Noun — A word that names a person, place, thing, concept, or idea.

Examples

*The **engineer** submitted the **report** to the **board**.*

Nouns: *engineer, report, board*

Subject — The noun or pronoun that *performs* the action or is described by the verb.

Examples

*The **committee** reviewed all applications.*

Subject: *the committee* — it performs the action *reviewed*

Object — The noun or pronoun that *receives* the action of the verb.

Examples

*The committee reviewed **all applications**.*

Object: *all applications* — it receives the action *reviewed*

Adjective — A word that describes or modifies a noun, giving more detail about its quality, quantity, or state.

Examples

*She submitted a **detailed, well-structured** proposal.*

Adjectives: *detailed, well-structured* — both modify *proposal*

!! Warning

Subject \neq **topic of the sentence**. The subject is a grammatical role, not a theme. A sentence can be *about* money, yet the grammatical subject might be *the bank*.

*The **bank** refused the loan.* (grammatical subject = *the bank*; topic = credit / financing)

* Summary

Nouns name things; **subjects** perform actions; **objects** receive actions; **adjectives** describe nouns. These four roles appear in virtually every sentence in English.

1.9 Basic Prepositions

A **preposition** is a word that expresses the relationship between a noun (or pronoun) and another element in the sentence — typically indicating time, place, direction, or manner.

When & Why: Prepositions in English are largely fixed. They do not follow fully predictable logic, so the correct preposition for each context must be learned in combination with the words that surround it.

Preposition	Primary use	Example
<i>in</i>	enclosed space; month / year	The files are <i>in</i> the archive folder.
<i>on</i>	surface; specific day / date	The meeting is <i>on</i> Thursday.
<i>at</i>	specific point; exact time	She arrived <i>at</i> 9:00.
<i>by</i>	deadline; agent; proximity	The draft must be submitted <i>by</i> Friday.
<i>with</i>	accompaniment; instrument	He approved it <i>with</i> a digital signature.
<i>for</i>	purpose; duration; recipient	This briefing is <i>for</i> the entire department.
<i>of</i>	belonging; content; quantity	The head <i>of</i> the department called.
<i>to</i>	direction; recipient; relation	She forwarded the invoice <i>to</i> the client.

! Exception

Some prepositions are **fixed in idiomatic combinations** and cannot be substituted by logical reasoning.

interested in — not *interested about*

responsible for — not *responsible of*

depends on — not *depends of*

These fixed combinations must be memorised as vocabulary items. No grammatical rule predicts them.

!! Warning

Do not confuse *in*, *on*, and *at* when expressing time.

in → month, year, season, or period of day: *in March*, *in 2024*, *in the morning*

on → specific day or date: *on Monday, on 15 April*

at → exact clock time or fixed expression: *at noon, at midnight, at the weekend*

*** Summary**

Prepositions express relationships of time, place, direction, or manner. Many are fixed in idiomatic phrases and must be learned as vocabulary — not derived from rules.

1.10 Conjunctions

A **conjunction** is a word that connects words, phrases, or clauses. English has two main types: **coordinating conjunctions**, which join grammatically equal elements (*and, but, or, so*), and **subordinating conjunctions**, which attach a dependent clause to a main clause (*because, although*).

When & Why: Conjunctions signal the logical relationship between ideas — addition, contrast, alternative, result, cause, or concession. Selecting the wrong conjunction changes the meaning of the sentence.

Conjunction	Function	Example
<i>and</i>	addition / sequence	She prepared the slides, <i>and</i> he handled the data.
<i>but</i>	contrast / exception	The plan was approved, <i>but</i> the budget was cut.
<i>or</i>	alternative / choice	You can revise it now <i>or</i> submit it as it is.
<i>so</i>	result / consequence	The server crashed, <i>so</i> they postponed the launch.
<i>because</i>	cause / reason	He declined <i>because</i> the terms were unclear.
<i>although</i>	concession / contrast	<i>Although</i> the review took longer, quality improved.

! Exception

Although and *but* **cannot be used together** in the same clause — they express the same contrast and using both is redundant.

Incorrect: *Although it was expensive, but we approved it.*

Correct: *Although it was expensive, we approved it.*

Also correct: *It was expensive, but we approved it.*

!! Warning

So and *because* express opposite directions of cause and effect — they are not interchangeable.

because → introduces the **cause**: *He left **because** the meeting ran over.*

so → introduces the **result**: *The meeting ran over, **so** he left.*

*** Summary**

And (addition), *but* (contrast), *or* (choice), *so* (result), *because* (cause), *although* (concession). Never use *although* and *but* together in the same clause.

The 12 Tenses

This chapter presents the complete English tense system in full structural detail. Every tense follows the identical six-part format: definition, usage, examples, exceptions, warnings, and summary. Each tense is self-contained — you may read them in order or jump directly to any specific tense when needed. All verb forms referenced here (**V1**, **V2**, **V3**, **V-ing**) were introduced in Chapter 1.

2.1 Simple Present

- **Affirmative:** Subject + V1 (+ -s for he / she / it)
- **Negative:** Subject + do / does + not + V1
- **Question:** Do / Does + subject + V1?

The **simple present** expresses habitual actions, general truths, permanent situations, and scheduled future events. It is not used for actions happening at the exact moment of speaking — that is the role of the present continuous.

When & Why: Use the simple present for routines, facts, timetables, and states that are generally true or regularly repeated. This tense does not emphasise the duration or progression of an action — it treats the action as a fact or habit.

Examples

- The finance department *reviews* all invoices weekly.
- My manager *travels* to Berlin twice a month.
- Water *boils* at 100 degrees Celsius.
- The library *does not open* on Sundays.
- *Do you work* remotely on Fridays?
- *Does* the contract *include* a renewal clause?
- *Do they not require* prior approval for expenses?
- *Doesn't* the train *arrive* at half past six?
- She *speaks* three languages fluently.
- The conference *starts* at nine tomorrow morning.
- Most clients *prefer* digital communication over phone calls.
- Our team *meets* every Tuesday afternoon without exception.

! Exception

The simple present can express **scheduled future events** when the schedule is fixed and external (e.g. timetables, calendars).

*The flight **departs** at 7:15 tomorrow.*

*The meeting **begins** in ten minutes.*

This usage is limited to verbs of movement and events with fixed schedules — it does not apply to personal plans or intentions.

!! Warning

Do not forget the *-s* ending for third-person singular subjects (he / she / it).

Incorrect: *She work from home on Mondays.*

Correct: *She works from home on Mondays.*

Do not use the simple present for actions happening *right now* — use the present continuous instead.

Incorrect: *I write an email now.*

Correct: *I am writing an email now.*

*** Summary**

Simple present = habitual actions, general truths, and fixed schedules. Add *-s* for he / she / it.

2.2 Present Continuous

- **Affirmative:** Subject + am / is / are + V-ing
- **Negative:** Subject + am / is / are + not + V-ing
- **Question:** Am / Is / Are + subject + V-ing?

The **present continuous** describes actions that are in progress at the moment of speaking or around the current period. It emphasises the temporary, ongoing nature of the action.

When & Why: Use the present continuous for actions happening now, temporary situations, and definite future arrangements already planned. This tense highlights that the action is unfinished and actively progressing.

Examples

- The architect *is reviewing* the blueprints right now.
- *We are testing* the new software across all departments this week.
- The printer *is not working* — someone called maintenance already.
- *They are not attending* the workshop tomorrow afternoon.
- *Are you joining* the conference call at three?
- *Is she coordinating* the logistics for the event?
- *Aren't you finishing* the audit report today?
- *Isn't he leading* the negotiation session this morning?
- My colleague *is working* on a major acquisition deal this quarter.
- The consultant *is staying* in London until the project concludes.
- *I am meeting* the legal team at noon to discuss the contract.
- The server *is running* slower than usual during peak hours.

! Exception

Stative verbs — verbs that describe states rather than actions — are rarely used in continuous forms. These include verbs of perception (*see, hear*), emotion (*love, hate*), possession (*have, own*), and cognition (*know, believe, understand*).

Incorrect: *I am knowing the answer.*

Correct: *I know the answer.*

Some stative verbs *can* take continuous forms when their meaning shifts from state to action:

I have a car. (possession — stative)

I am having a meeting. (experience — action)

!! Warning

Do not use the present continuous for permanent facts or habitual actions.

Incorrect: *She is working in finance.* (if it is her permanent job)

Correct: *She works in finance.*

Incorrect: *I am drinking coffee every morning.*

Correct: *I drink coffee every morning.*

*** Summary**

Present continuous = actions happening now or around now. Use *am/is/are + V-ing*. Not for habits or permanent states.

2.3 Present Perfect

- **Affirmative:** Subject + have / has + V3
- **Negative:** Subject + have / has + not + V3
- **Question:** Have / Has + subject + V3?

The **present perfect** connects a past action or state to the present moment. It expresses completed actions with present relevance, life experiences up to now, and actions that began in the past and continue into the present.

When & Why: Use the present perfect when the exact time is unimportant or unknown, when the result matters more than the moment, or when expressing duration from the past until now using *for* or *since*.

Examples

- The board *has approved* the budget for next fiscal year.
- *I have reviewed* all candidate profiles submitted this month.
- The supplier *has not delivered* the materials yet.
- *We have not received* confirmation from the legal department.
- *Have you completed* the risk assessment report?
- *Has* the accountant *verified* the expense claims?
- *Haven't* they *responded* to the proposal we sent?
- *Hasn't* she *updated* the client database this week?
- My supervisor *has worked* here for over fifteen years.
- The regulations *have changed* significantly since last year.
- *I have never attended* a shareholders' meeting before.
- The IT team *has resolved* most of the connectivity issues.

! Exception

The present perfect **cannot be used with specific past time expressions** such as *yesterday*, *last week*, *in 2020*, or *three days ago*. When a specific past time is stated, the past simple must be used instead.

Incorrect: *I have seen him yesterday.*

Correct: *I saw him yesterday.*

Correct with present perfect: *I have seen him recently.* (no specific time)

!! Warning

Do not confuse V2 (past simple) with V3 (past participle) when forming the present perfect.

Incorrect: *She has wrote the summary.*

Correct: *She has written the summary.*

Incorrect: *They have went to the headquarters.*

Correct: *They have gone to the headquarters.*

*** Summary**

Present perfect = past action with present relevance. Use *have/has + V3*. Never with specific past time markers.

2.4 Present Perfect Continuous

- **Affirmative:** Subject + have / has + been + V-ing
- **Negative:** Subject + have / has + not + been + V-ing
- **Question:** Have / Has + subject + been + V-ing?

The **present perfect continuous** emphasises the duration and ongoing nature of an action that started in the past and continues into the present, or has just stopped with visible present results.

When & Why: Use this tense to stress how long an action has been in progress, especially with time expressions like *for two hours* or *since Monday*. It highlights the process rather than the completion.

Examples

- The developers *have been debugging* the system since early morning.
- *She has been managing* this portfolio for nearly a decade.
- The consultants *have not been providing* accurate forecasts lately.
- *We have not been using* that supplier since the quality issues emerged.
- *Have you been working* on this analysis all afternoon?
- *Has* the legal team *been reviewing* the contracts since last week?
- *Haven't they been negotiating* terms for over a month now?
- *Hasn't he been coordinating* with the regional offices?
- *I have been waiting* for approval since Tuesday.
- The marketing campaign *has been running* across all platforms for six weeks.
- Investors *have been asking* difficult questions throughout the quarter.
- The auditors *have been examining* our records for three full days.

! Exception

Stative verbs (see Present Continuous exceptions) are generally not used in the present perfect continuous.

Incorrect: *I have been knowing her for years.*

Correct: *I have known her for years.* (use present perfect, not continuous)

!! Warning

Do not confuse the present perfect continuous with the present perfect simple. Use the continuous form when emphasising *how long* or the *ongoing process*. Use the simple form when emphasising *completion* or *result*.

I have been reading the contract. (still in progress or just finished)

I have read the contract. (completed — result is known)

*** Summary**

Present perfect continuous = ongoing action from past to now. Use *have/has + been + V-ing*. Emphasises duration.

2.5 Simple Past

- **Affirmative:** Subject + V2
- **Negative:** Subject + did + not + V1
- **Question:** Did + subject + V1?

The **simple past** expresses completed actions or states that occurred at a specific time in the past. The action is finished and has no direct connection to the present moment.

When & Why: Use the simple past for events that happened and ended in the past, especially when the time is stated or clearly understood from context. This is the default past tense for storytelling and reporting completed events.

Examples

- The CEO *announced* the merger during yesterday's press conference.
- *We launched* the new platform in March last year.
- The technician *did not fix* the issue during the scheduled maintenance.
- *They did not attend* the training session last Friday.
- *Did* the auditor *find* any discrepancies in the accounts?
- *Did you submit* the application before the deadline?
- *Didn't* the contractor *finish* the renovations on time?
- *Didn't* she *receive* the invitation we sent out?
- My predecessor *established* these procedures five years ago.
- The project *failed* because the timeline was unrealistic.
- *I met* the regional director at the annual conference.
- The company *expanded* into three new markets during that period.

! Exception

In negative sentences and questions, the auxiliary *did* carries the past tense marker, so the main verb reverts to its base form (V1) — **not** V2.

Incorrect: *Did she went to the office?*

Correct: *Did she go to the office?*

Incorrect: *They did not received the memo.*

Correct: *They did not receive the memo.*

!! Warning

Do not use the simple past when the action has present relevance or when no specific time is mentioned — use the present perfect instead.

Incorrect: *I lost my access card.* (if it is still lost now)

Correct: *I have lost my access card.*

With specific time: *I lost my access card yesterday.* (simple past is correct here)

* Summary

Simple past = completed action at a specific past time. Use V2 in affirmative; use *did + V1* in negatives and questions.

2.6 Past Continuous

- **Affirmative:** Subject + was / were + V-ing
- **Negative:** Subject + was / were + not + V-ing
- **Question:** Was / Were + subject + V-ing?

The **past continuous** describes an action that was in progress at a specific moment in the past or during a period in the past. It often sets the background scene for another past action.

When & Why: Use the past continuous to show that an action was ongoing when something else happened (often paired with the simple past), or to describe parallel actions happening simultaneously in the past.

Examples

- The engineers *were installing* the equipment when the power outage occurred.
- *I was drafting* the proposal while my colleague prepared the budget.
- The system *was not responding* during the entire afternoon.
- *We were not expecting* such a strong reaction from stakeholders.
- *Were you monitoring* the server logs at the time of the crash?
- *Was she attending* the strategy meeting when you called?
- *Weren't they working* on the same issue last week?
- *Wasn't he coordinating* with external partners during that phase?
- The legal advisor *was reviewing* the terms when the client withdrew.
- *We were discussing* the quarterly results throughout the entire session.
- At midnight, the backup team *was still processing* the data migration.
- The contractors *were renovating* the office space all through December.

! Exception

The past continuous is often used with the simple past to show interruption:

I was preparing the presentation when the client called.

The continuous action (*was preparing*) provides the background; the simple past action (*called*) interrupts or occurs within that background.

!! Warning

Do not use the past continuous for completed actions or single events — use the simple past.

Incorrect: *I was finishing the report yesterday.* (if the focus is on completion)

Correct: *I finished the report yesterday.*

The past continuous emphasises the process, not the completion.

* Summary

Past continuous = action in progress at a past moment. Use *was / were + V-ing*.

Often paired with simple past.

2.7 Past Perfect

- **Affirmative:** Subject + had + V3
- **Negative:** Subject + had + not + V3
- **Question:** Had + subject + V3?

The **past perfect** expresses an action that was completed before another past action or before a specific past moment. It establishes a sequence: one past event happened *earlier* than another past event.

When & Why: Use the past perfect to clarify the order of past events when that order matters for meaning. It answers the question: *which happened first?*

Examples

- By the time the auditors arrived, the accountant *had prepared* all documentation.
- *We had completed* the due diligence before signing the agreement.
- The contractor *had not finished* the installation when the inspection took place.
- *She had not reviewed* the terms before the negotiation began.
- *Had you submitted* the proposal before the client changed their requirements?
- *Had* the committee *reached* a decision before the vote was postponed?
- *Hadn't* they *tested* the system before deploying it to production?
- *Hadn't* he *consulted* the legal team before making that commitment?
- The director *had already left* when the urgent email arrived.
- *I had never managed* such a large team before that promotion.
- The regulations *had been in place* for years before anyone questioned them.
- By noon, the entire department *had heard* about the restructuring plan.

! Exception

The past perfect is **not required** if the sequence of events is already clear from context or from conjunctions like *before* and *after*.

Both correct:

*After she **finished** the report, she sent it to the client.*

*After she **had finished** the report, she sent it to the client.*

The past perfect adds emphasis to the sequence, but the simple past is sufficient when *after* already signals the order.

!! Warning

Do not overuse the past perfect. It is only necessary when the sequence of two past actions is unclear without it.

Unnecessary: *Yesterday I had gone to the office and had met my colleague.*

Better: *Yesterday I went to the office and met my colleague.* (sequence is clear)

*** Summary**

Past perfect = earlier past action before another past action. Use *had + V3*. Only when sequence matters.

2.8 Past Perfect Continuous

- **Affirmative:** Subject + had + been + V-ing
- **Negative:** Subject + had + not + been + V-ing
- **Question:** Had + subject + been + V-ing?

The **past perfect continuous** emphasises the duration of an action that was ongoing before another past action or past moment. It combines the sequence logic of the past perfect with the duration emphasis of continuous forms.

When & Why: Use this tense to stress how long something had been in progress before a past event interrupted it or before a past deadline. It highlights both the timeline and the ongoing nature of the earlier action.

Examples

- The team *had been working* on the proposal for weeks before the client cancelled.
- *She had been leading* the division for five years before the restructuring.
- The servers *had not been operating* properly for days before the crash.
- *We had not been receiving* updates from the contractor before the deadline passed.
- *Had you been tracking* the expenses before the audit was announced?
- *Had the analysts been monitoring* the market trends before the downturn?
- *Hadn't they been collaborating* with the external firm before the dispute?
- *Hadn't he been reporting* directly to the board before the changes?
- *I had been reviewing* applications all morning before the system went offline.
- The consultant *had been advising* the executive team since the merger talks began.
- Investors *had been questioning* the strategy for months before the pivot.
- The project manager *had been coordinating* logistics for two full weeks before launch.

! Exception

As with all continuous forms, stative verbs are not used in the past perfect continuous.

Incorrect: *She had been knowing the password all along.*

Correct: *She had known the password all along.*

!! Warning

Do not use the past perfect continuous when the duration is irrelevant or when a simple completion is more important than the process.

Unnecessary: *He had been signing the contract before leaving.*

Better: *He had signed the contract before leaving.* (completion matters, not duration)

*** Summary**

Past perfect continuous = ongoing action before a past moment. Use *had + been + V-ing*. Emphasises duration before past event.

2.9 Simple Future

- **Affirmative:** Subject + will + V1
- **Negative:** Subject + will + not + V1
- **Question:** Will + subject + V1?

The **simple future** expresses actions or states that will occur after the present moment. It is used for predictions, spontaneous decisions, promises, and general future facts.

When & Why: Use *will* for decisions made at the moment of speaking, predictions based on opinion or belief, and formal statements about the future. This tense does not emphasise planning or arrangement — for planned future actions, the present continuous or *going to* is often preferred.

Examples

- The board *will announce* the results at the end of the quarter.
- *I will send* you the updated figures by close of business.
- The new policy *will not affect* current employees.
- *We will not extend* the contract beyond the agreed term.
- *Will* the director *approve* the budget increase?
- *Will* you *attend* the shareholders' meeting next month?
- *Won't* the deadline *conflict* with the holiday schedule?
- *Won't* they *need* additional resources for that project?
- The market *will recover* once investor confidence returns.
- *She will take over* as head of operations in June.
- The regulations *will change* significantly after the new legislation passes.
- *I will review* your proposal and provide feedback by Friday.

! Exception

Will is not the only way to express the future in English. *Going to* is used for plans and intentions, and the present continuous is used for fixed arrangements.

I will call you later. (spontaneous decision)

I am going to call you later. (planned intention)

I am calling you at 3pm. (fixed arrangement)

All three are grammatically correct but carry different nuances.

!! Warning

Do not use *will* after time conjunctions like *when, after, before, as soon as, until* in time clauses — use the present simple instead.

Incorrect: *I will call you when I will arrive.*

Correct: *I will call you when I arrive.*

Incorrect: *We will start after the director will join.*

Correct: *We will start after the director joins.*

*** Summary**

Simple future = future action or prediction. Use *will + V1*. Not used after time conjunctions in time clauses.

2.10 Future Continuous

- **Affirmative:** Subject + will + be + V-ing
- **Negative:** Subject + will + not + be + V-ing
- **Question:** Will + subject + be + V-ing?

The **future continuous** describes an action that will be in progress at a specific time in the future or during a future period. It emphasises that the action will be ongoing at that future moment.

When & Why: Use the future continuous to describe what will be happening at a particular future time, to show two future actions happening simultaneously, or to ask politely about future plans without imposing.

Examples

- This time tomorrow, the consultants *will be presenting* their findings to the board.
- *We will be monitoring* the system performance throughout the migration process.
- The legal team *will not be available* during the conference next week.
- *I will not be working* on Friday — I have scheduled leave.
- *Will you be attending* the training sessions in April?
- *Will* the contractors *be finishing* the installation by month-end?
- *Won't they be needing* additional support during the transition?
- *Won't she be managing* the project after the handover?
- At noon, the executive team *will be reviewing* the annual performance data.
- *We will be expanding* into the Asian market throughout the second half of the year.
- The auditors *will be examining* our compliance records all next week.
- *I will be coordinating* with regional offices while the director is away.

! Exception

The future continuous can be used to ask about plans in a neutral, non-intrusive way — it sounds less direct than the simple future.

Will you join us for dinner? (sounds like an invitation or request)

Will you be joining us for dinner? (sounds like a neutral inquiry about plans)

!! Warning

Do not use the future continuous when a simple future action (not ongoing) is intended.

Incorrect: *I will be sending the file now.* (if you mean immediately)

Correct: *I will send the file now.*

The continuous form implies the action will be in progress at a future time, not completed instantly.

*** Summary**

Future continuous = action in progress at a future time. Use *will + be + V-ing*.
Emphasises ongoing process.

2.11 Future Perfect

- **Affirmative:** Subject + will + have + V3
- **Negative:** Subject + will + not + have + V3
- **Question:** Will + subject + have + V3?

The **future perfect** expresses an action that will be completed before a specific future time or before another future action. It looks back from a future moment to describe what will already be finished by then.

When & Why: Use the future perfect when you need to specify that something will be completed *by* a certain future deadline or *before* another future event occurs. It establishes completion relative to a future reference point.

Examples

- By the end of the month, the developers *will have deployed* the new features.
- *We will have completed* the audit before the annual general meeting.
- The contractor *will not have finished* the renovations by the opening date.
- *They will not have received* approval before the funding deadline expires.
- *Will you have submitted* the application before registration closes?
- *Will the finance team have finalised* the budget by next Friday?
- *Won't the legal review have concluded* before the signing ceremony?
- *Won't she have completed* her probation period by then?
- By this time next year, the company *will have expanded* into five new regions.
- *I will have worked* here for a full decade by the time my contract renews.
- The board *will have made* a final decision before the shareholders convene.
- By midnight, the IT team *will have migrated* all data to the new servers.

! Exception

The future perfect is often used with time expressions beginning with *by* (deadline) or *before* (prior event).

*By June, we **will have launched** the product.*

*Before the audit starts, they **will have prepared** all records.*

Without such a reference point, the future perfect is rarely necessary.

!! Warning

Do not confuse the future perfect with the simple future. The future perfect emphasises completion *before* a future moment, not just a future action.

I will finish the report tomorrow. (simple future — action will happen)

I will have finished the report by tomorrow. (future perfect — completed before deadline)

*** Summary**

Future perfect = action completed before a future time. Use *will + have + V3*. Often with *by* or *before*.

2.12 Future Perfect Continuous

- **Affirmative:** Subject + will + have + been + V-ing
- **Negative:** Subject + will + not + have + been + V-ing
- **Question:** Will + subject + have + been + V-ing?

The **future perfect continuous** emphasises the duration of an action that will have been ongoing up to a specific future moment. It is the least commonly used tense in English, reserved for situations where both future completion and duration need to be highlighted simultaneously.

When & Why: Use this tense to stress how long an action will have been in progress by a future time, particularly with expressions like *for* (duration) and *by* (deadline).

Examples

- By December, the research team *will have been studying* this issue for two full years.
- *Next month, I will have been working* at this firm for exactly ten years.
- By the time the contract expires, the supplier *will not have been delivering* for long.
- *We will not have been operating* under the new structure for more than six months by then.
- *Will you have been managing* this account for a full year by June?
- *Will the consultants have been advising* the board for long by the AGM?
- *Won't they have been negotiating* for over three months by the deadline?
- *Won't she have been overseeing* operations for a decade by retirement?
- By the end of this quarter, the legal team *will have been reviewing* compliance for six months.
- *We will have been collaborating* with that partner for five years come September.
- The analysts *will have been tracking* these trends for eighteen months by year-end.
- *I will have been coordinating* international projects for half my career by then.

! Exception

This tense is **rarely used in everyday speech** and appears primarily in formal writing or when precise duration up to a future point must be emphasised. In most conversational contexts, the future perfect or simple future is sufficient.

!! Warning

Do not use the future perfect continuous when the duration is not the focus or when a simpler tense conveys the meaning clearly.

Overly complex: *By tomorrow, I will have been finishing the report.*

Better: *By tomorrow, I will have finished the report.* (completion, not duration)

*** Summary**

Future perfect continuous = duration of action up to a future moment. Use *will + have + been + V-ing*. Rarely used.

2.13 The Unified Drill: All 12 Tenses in Context

This section demonstrates all twelve tenses using a single subject, verb, and object combination. The goal is to show how the same core idea shifts in meaning depending solely on the tense used. Read through each set carefully — the differences in structure and meaning become clear when viewed side by side.

Purpose: By keeping the subject, verb, and object constant, you can focus entirely on how tense changes meaning. This drill eliminates all other variables and isolates the function of each tense.

Subject: The consultant

Verb: analyse

Object: the financial data

Drill Set 1 — Affirmative Forms

Tense	Sentence
Simple Present	The consultant <i>analyses</i> the financial data every quarter.
Present Continuous	The consultant <i>is analysing</i> the financial data right now.
Present Perfect	The consultant <i>has analysed</i> the financial data already.
Present Perfect Continuous	The consultant <i>has been analysing</i> the financial data since Monday.
Simple Past	The consultant <i>analysed</i> the financial data last week.
Past Continuous	The consultant <i>was analysing</i> the financial data when the client called.
Past Perfect	The consultant <i>had analysed</i> the financial data before the meeting started.
Past Perfect Continuous	The consultant <i>had been analysing</i> the financial data for hours before the error was found.
Simple Future	The consultant <i>will analyse</i> the financial data tomorrow.
Future Continuous	The consultant <i>will be analysing</i> the financial data at this time tomorrow.
Future Perfect	The consultant <i>will have analysed</i> the financial data by Friday.
Future Perfect Continuous	By next month, the consultant <i>will have been analysing</i> the financial data for six weeks.

Drill Set 2 — Negative Forms

Tense	Sentence
Simple Present	The consultant <i>does not analyse</i> the financial data every quarter.
Present Continuous	The consultant <i>is not analysing</i> the financial data right now.
Present Perfect	The consultant <i>has not analysed</i> the financial data yet.
Present Perfect Continuous	The consultant <i>has not been analysing</i> the financial data since Monday.
Simple Past	The consultant <i>did not analyse</i> the financial data last week.
Past Continuous	The consultant <i>was not analysing</i> the financial data when the client called.
Past Perfect	The consultant <i>had not analysed</i> the financial data before the meeting started.
Past Perfect Continuous	The consultant <i>had not been analysing</i> the financial data for hours before the error was found.
Simple Future	The consultant <i>will not analyse</i> the financial data tomorrow.
Future Continuous	The consultant <i>will not be analysing</i> the financial data at this time tomorrow.
Future Perfect	The consultant <i>will not have analysed</i> the financial data by Friday.
Future Perfect Continuous	By next month, the consultant <i>will not have been analysing</i> the financial data for six weeks.

Drill Set 3 — Question Forms

Tense	Sentence
Simple Present	<i>Does</i> the consultant <i>analyse</i> the financial data every quarter?
Present Continuous	<i>Is</i> the consultant <i>analysing</i> the financial data right now?
Present Perfect	<i>Has</i> the consultant <i>analysed</i> the financial data yet?
Present Perfect Continuous	<i>Has</i> the consultant <i>been analysing</i> the financial data since Monday?
Simple Past	<i>Did</i> the consultant <i>analyse</i> the financial data last week?
Past Continuous	<i>Was</i> the consultant <i>analysing</i> the financial data when the client called?
Past Perfect	<i>Had</i> the consultant <i>analysed</i> the financial data before the meeting started?
Past Perfect Continuous	<i>Had</i> the consultant <i>been analysing</i> the financial data for hours before the error was found?
Simple Future	<i>Will</i> the consultant <i>analyse</i> the financial data tomorrow?
Future Continuous	<i>Will</i> the consultant <i>be analysing</i> the financial data at this time tomorrow?
Future Perfect	<i>Will</i> the consultant <i>have analysed</i> the financial data by Friday?
Future Perfect Continuous	By next month, <i>will</i> the consultant <i>have been analysing</i> the financial data for six weeks?

2.14 Tense Selection: Choosing the Right Tense

Selecting the correct tense depends on three factors: **time reference** (past, present, future), **aspect** (simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous), and **context** (what you want to emphasise).

Time Reference tells you whether the action relates to the past, present, or future.

Aspect tells you how the action unfolds:

- **Simple** — the action as a whole, a fact, or a habit.
- **Continuous** — the action in progress, temporary, ongoing.
- **Perfect** — the action completed before a reference point, with relevance to that point.
- **Perfect Continuous** — the action ongoing up to a reference point, emphasising duration.

Aspect	Present	Past	Future
Simple	She <i>works</i> here.	She <i>worked</i> here.	She <i>will work</i> here.
Continuous	She <i>is working</i> .	She <i>was working</i> .	She <i>will be working</i> .
Perfect	She <i>has worked</i> here.	She <i>had worked</i> here.	She <i>will have worked</i> here.
Perfect Continuous	She <i>has been working</i> .	She <i>had been working</i> .	She <i>will have been working</i> .

* Summary

Tense = time reference + aspect. Choose time first (past / present / future), then choose aspect (simple / continuous / perfect / perfect continuous) based on what you want to emphasise.

2.15 Signal Words: Time Markers for Each Tense

Certain words and phrases strongly indicate which tense to use. These **signal words** are not absolute rules — context always matters — but they provide reliable guidance for tense selection.

Tense	Common Signal Words
Simple Present	<i>always, usually, often, sometimes, never, every day/week/month, on Mondays</i>
Present Continuous	<i>now, right now, at the moment, currently, today, this week</i>
Present Perfect	<i>already, yet, just, ever, never, so far, recently, up to now, since, for</i>
Present Perfect Continuous	<i>for (duration), since (starting point), all morning/day/week, lately</i>
Simple Past	<i>yesterday, last week/month/year, ago, in 2020, when I was..., then</i>
Past Continuous	<i>while, when (+ simple past), at that time, at 6pm yesterday, all evening</i>
Past Perfect	<i>before, after, by the time, already, just, never (before that moment)</i>
Past Perfect Continuous	<i>for (duration before past event), since (before past event), all day (before past event)</i>
Simple Future	<i>tomorrow, next week/month/year, soon, in the future, one day</i>
Future Continuous	<i>at this time tomorrow, at 5pm, while (future), during (future period)</i>
Future Perfect	<i>by (future time), by the time, before (future event), by next week</i>
Future Perfect Continuous	<i>by (future time) + for (duration), for X hours/days/years by (future time)</i>

!! Warning

Signal words are **indicators**, not absolute rules. Context and meaning always take priority.

*I **am leaving** tomorrow.* (present continuous with future meaning — arrangement)

*I **leave** tomorrow.* (simple present with future meaning — fixed schedule)

*I **will leave** tomorrow.* (simple future — decision or prediction)

All three are grammatically correct. The choice depends on what you want to emphasise.

*** Summary**

Signal words guide tense selection but do not replace understanding of tense meaning. Always prioritise context over markers.

Conditionals & Modals

This chapter covers two essential systems in English: **conditional sentences**, which express hypothetical situations and their consequences, and **modal verbs**, which modify meaning to express ability, possibility, obligation, permission, and advice. Both systems allow speakers to express nuance, uncertainty, and degrees of likelihood — skills critical for advanced fluency.

PART A — Conditional Sentences

A **conditional sentence** consists of two clauses: an **if-clause** (the condition) and a **main clause** (the result or consequence). The verb tense in each clause determines the type of conditional and the degree of reality or probability being expressed.

3.1 Zero Conditional

The **zero conditional** expresses general truths, scientific facts, and situations where the result always follows the condition. It describes real, unchanging cause-and-effect relationships.

When & Why: Use the zero conditional for facts that are universally or habitually true. The condition is not hypothetical — it describes something that happens every time the condition is met.

If + subject + present simple, subject + present simple

Examples

- If you heat water to 100 degrees, it boils.
- If the system detects an error, it sends an automatic alert.
- If employees do not submit timesheets by Friday, payroll does not process them.
- If the password is incorrect three times, the account does not unlock automatically.
- If you press this button, does the machine restart immediately?
- If the contract expires, do we lose access to the platform?

! Exception

The zero conditional can use *when* instead of *if* without changing meaning, because the condition is certain to occur.

If you save the document, the changes are stored.

When you save the document, the changes are stored.

Both are correct and interchangeable in zero conditional contexts.

!! Warning

Do not use the zero conditional for specific future events or hypothetical situations — use the first conditional instead.

Incorrect: *If it rains tomorrow, the event is cancelled.* (specific future)

Correct: *If it rains tomorrow, the event will be cancelled.* (first conditional)

*** Summary**

Zero conditional = always true. Use present simple in both clauses. Expresses facts, not hypotheticals.

3.2 First Conditional

The **first conditional** expresses real, possible future situations and their likely consequences. The condition is realistic and may or may not happen.

When & Why: Use the first conditional to talk about future events that are possible or probable. The speaker believes the condition could realistically occur.

If + subject + present simple, subject + will + V1

Examples

- If the board approves the proposal, we will begin implementation in April.
- If the supplier delivers on time, the project will stay on schedule.
- If the audit does not find any issues, the certification will not be delayed.
- If they do not respond by Wednesday, we will not include them in the tender.
- If you receive the confirmation email, will you forward it to the team?
- If the budget increases next quarter, will the director hire additional staff?

! Exception

The first conditional can use modal verbs other than *will* in the main clause to express different degrees of certainty or obligation.

*If the client agrees, we **can** start next week.* (possibility)

*If you finish early, you **should** review the summary.* (advice)

*If the system fails, you **must** contact IT immediately.* (obligation)

!! Warning

Do not use *will* in the if-clause — use the present simple instead.

Incorrect: *If the director will approve it, we will proceed.*

Correct: *If the director approves it, we will proceed.*

This is one of the most common conditional errors in English.

* Summary

First conditional = real future possibility. Use present simple in if-clause, *will + V1* in main clause.

3.3 Second Conditional

The **second conditional** expresses hypothetical, unlikely, or imaginary present or future situations. The condition is possible in theory but improbable or contrary to current reality.

When & Why: Use the second conditional to talk about situations that are unlikely to happen, imaginary scenarios, or polite suggestions. It creates distance from reality.

If + subject + past simple, subject + would + V1

Examples

- If the company relocated to Singapore, operating costs would decrease significantly.
- If I had more time, I would review every application personally.
- If the regulations did not change so frequently, compliance would not be so challenging.
- If the client did not insist on weekly updates, we would not need extra administrative staff.
- If you managed the entire division, would you restructure the teams?
- If the market collapsed tomorrow, would the board consider selling assets?

! Exception

With the verb *to be*, formal English uses *were* for all subjects in the second conditional, though *was* is increasingly common in informal speech.

Formal: *If I **were** the director, I would approve the budget.*

Informal: *If I **was** the director, I would approve the budget.*

In professional writing, prefer *were*.

!! Warning

Do not confuse the second conditional with the first conditional. The second conditional uses past simple in the if-clause to signal that the situation is hypothetical or unlikely, not because it refers to past time.

*If he **calls** tomorrow, I will answer.* (first — realistic)

*If he **called** tomorrow, I would answer.* (second — unlikely or polite)

*** Summary**

Second conditional = hypothetical or unlikely situation. Use past simple in if-clause, *would + V1* in main clause.

3.4 Third Conditional

The **third conditional** expresses hypothetical past situations — events that did not happen and cannot be changed. It describes how the past could have been different and what the result would have been.

When & Why: Use the third conditional to talk about past situations that are now impossible to change, often expressing regret, criticism, or speculation about alternative outcomes.

If + subject + had + V3, subject + would + have + V3

Examples

- If the contractor had completed the work on time, the launch would have proceeded as planned.
- If we had known about the regulation changes earlier, we would have adjusted the strategy.
- If the legal team had not reviewed the contract, we would not have spotted the liability clause.
- If the investors had not withdrawn funding, the startup would not have collapsed.
- If you had attended the briefing, would you have raised the same concerns?
- If the director had approved the budget, would the project have succeeded?

! Exception

The third conditional can use other modals besides *would* in the main clause to express different meanings.

*If she had applied, she **could have been** selected.* (possibility)

*If they had consulted us, we **might have advised** differently.* (uncertain possibility)

*If he had known, he **should have informed** the board.* (obligation)

!! Warning

Do not use *would have* in the if-clause — use *had + V3* only.

Incorrect: *If we would have known, we would have acted differently.*

Correct: *If we had known, we would have acted differently.*

This error is extremely common, even among advanced learners.

*** Summary**

Third conditional = impossible past situation. Use *had + V3* in if-clause, *would + have + V3* in main clause.

3.5 Mixed Conditional

The **mixed conditional** combines elements from different conditional types to express situations where the time reference in the if-clause differs from the time reference in the main clause. The most common pattern links a hypothetical past condition to a present result.

When & Why: Use the mixed conditional when a past event (or non-event) has consequences that continue into the present, or when a present condition would have affected a past outcome.

Formula (most common):

If + subject + had + V3, subject + would + V1 (now)

Examples

- If I had accepted the position in 2020, I would be living in Tokyo now.
- If the company had invested in automation earlier, costs would be lower today.
- If we had not hired that consultant, the strategy would not be so effective now.
- If they had not restructured the department, efficiency would not be this high.
- If you had studied law instead of finance, would you be working in this sector now?
- If the merger had gone through, would the organisation still be independent today?

! Exception

Mixed conditionals can also work in reverse: a present condition affecting a past result.

*If she **were** more experienced, she **would have handled** the crisis better.*

(present condition → past result)

This pattern is less common but grammatically valid.

!! Warning

Do not mix time references randomly — the mixed conditional requires a clear logical connection between the past condition and the present result (or vice versa).

Illogical: *If I had eaten breakfast, I would have been hungry now.*

Logical: *If I had eaten breakfast, I would not be hungry now.*

*** Summary**

Mixed conditional = past condition with present result (or vice versa). Combines third and second conditional structures.

3.6 Conditional Summary: Choosing the Right Type

Type	If-Clause	Main Clause	Meaning
Zero	present simple	present simple	Always true
First	present simple	will + V1	Real future possibility
Second	past simple	would + V1	Hypothetical present / future
Third	had + V3	would + have + V3	Impossible past
Mixed	had + V3	would + V1	Past condition, present result

* Summary

Zero = fact; First = real future; Second = hypothetical; Third = impossible past; Mixed = past affecting present.

PART B — Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are auxiliary verbs that modify the meaning of the main verb to express ability, possibility, permission, obligation, necessity, advice, or probability. Unlike regular verbs, modals do not change form for different subjects and are always followed by the base form (V1) of the main verb.

Key characteristics of all modals:

- No *-s* in third person: *she can* (not *she cans*)
- Followed directly by V1: *you must go* (not *you must to go*)
- Form questions by inversion: *Can you...?* (not *Do you can...?*)
- Form negatives with *not*: *cannot, should not*

3.7 *can* / *could*

Can expresses present ability, general possibility, and informal permission. *Could* expresses past ability, polite requests, and hypothetical possibility.

When & Why:

- Use *can* for present ability or permission.
- Use *could* for past ability (when the ability existed but may not have been used), polite requests, or suggestions.
- *Could* is more tentative and polite than *can*.

Examples

- The software *can* process up to 10,000 transactions per second. (ability)
- You *can* access the archive using your employee credentials. (permission)
- The previous system *could not* handle peak traffic efficiently. (past ability)
- *Could* you send me the updated spreadsheet when convenient? (polite request)
- If we had more resources, we *could* expand into new markets. (hypothetical possibility)
- *Can* the legal team review this contract by tomorrow? (question — ability)

!! Warning

Difference between *can* and *could*:

can = present ability or informal permission

could = past ability, polite request, or hypothetical possibility

Incorrect: *I can speak French when I was younger.*

Correct: *I could speak French when I was younger.*

* Summary

Can = present ability or permission. *Could* = past ability, polite request, or hypothetical possibility.

3.8 *may* / *might*

May expresses formal permission and moderate possibility. **Might** expresses lower possibility or more tentative permission.

When & Why:

- Use *may* for formal permission or when something is moderately possible (around 50%).
- Use *might* for lower probability (less than 50%) or more tentative suggestions.
- Both can be used interchangeably in many contexts, but *might* sounds slightly less certain.

Examples

- The director *may* announce the decision at tomorrow's meeting. (moderate possibility)
- You *may* leave early if all tasks are completed. (formal permission)
- The supplier *might* not deliver on schedule due to shipping delays. (lower possibility)
- *May* I access the confidential files for the audit? (formal request)
- If the market shifts, investors *might* reconsider their positions. (tentative possibility)
- The regulations *may* change before the end of the fiscal year. (moderate possibility)

!! Warning

Difference between *may* and *might*:

may = moderate possibility (50%) or formal permission

might = lower possibility (less than 50%) or more tentative

In most contexts, they are interchangeable, but *might* always sounds less certain.

She **may** attend. (reasonably likely)

She **might** attend. (less likely)

* Summary

May = moderate possibility or formal permission. *Might* = lower possibility or more tentative.

3.9 *must* / *have to*

Must expresses strong obligation, necessity, or logical deduction. **Have to** also expresses obligation but is more neutral and can be used in all tenses.

When & Why:

- Use *must* for strong personal obligation, rules, or logical conclusions.
- Use *have to* for external obligations or when other tenses are needed (*must* has no past or future forms).
- *Must* often sounds more formal or emphatic than *have to*.

Examples

- All employees *must* complete the compliance training by month-end. (obligation)
- You *have to* submit expense reports within five business days. (external rule)
- The figures *must* be accurate — the audit begins tomorrow. (strong necessity)
- She *must* be the new regional manager — I saw her nameplate on the door. (logical deduction)
- *Do we have to* attend the orientation session? (question)
- Last year, contractors *had to* renew their security clearances every six months. (past obligation — *must* has no past form)

! Exception

Must not and *don't have to* have **completely different meanings**.

must not = prohibition (you are not allowed to do this)

don't have to = no obligation (you are not required to do this, but you can if you want)

You ***must not*** share confidential data. (forbidden)

You ***don't have to*** attend the meeting. (optional)

!! Warning

Difference between *must* and *have to*:

must = strong personal obligation or logical deduction; only present tense

have to = external obligation; works in all tenses

Incorrect: *Yesterday I must finish the report.*

Correct: *Yesterday I had to finish the report.*

*** Summary**

Must = strong obligation or deduction. *Have to* = external obligation, all tenses.

Must not ≠ *don't have to*.

3.10 *should* / *ought to*

Should expresses advice, recommendation, expectation, or mild obligation. *Ought to* has the same meaning but is more formal and less commonly used.

When & Why:

- Use *should* to give advice, express what is right or expected, or make recommendations.
- *Ought to* is interchangeable with *should* but sounds more formal and is rarely used in questions or negatives.
- *Should* is weaker than *must* — it suggests rather than commands.

Examples

- The finance team *should* verify all transactions before closing the quarter. (advice)
- Candidates *ought to* submit applications at least two weeks before the deadline. (recommendation)
- You *should not* approve expenses without proper documentation. (advice against)
- *Should* we schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss implementation? (suggestion)
- The contractor *should* arrive by ten — the appointment was confirmed yesterday. (expectation)
- Employees *should* back up their work regularly to avoid data loss. (advice)

!! Warning

Difference between *should* and *must*:

should = advice or recommendation (not mandatory)

must = strong obligation or necessity (mandatory)

You ***should*** review the contract. (it is a good idea)

You ***must*** review the contract. (it is required)

* Summary

Should = advice or expectation. *Ought to* = same meaning, more formal. Weaker than *must*.

3.11 *would*

Would expresses hypothetical situations, polite requests, past habits, and preferences. It appears in conditional sentences (second and third conditionals) and in reported speech.

When & Why:

- Use *would* in the main clause of second and third conditionals.
- Use *would* for polite requests or offers.
- Use *would* to describe repeated past actions (similar to *used to*).
- Use *would* to express preferences (*would rather*, *would prefer*).

Examples

- If the budget allowed, we *would* hire three additional analysts. (second conditional)
- *Would* you mind forwarding the agenda before the meeting? (polite request)
- Every summer, the director *would* visit all regional branches personally. (past habit)
- *I would rather* postpone the presentation until the data is complete. (preference)
- If they had consulted us earlier, the outcome *would* have been different. (third conditional)
- The consultant said she *would* deliver the final report by Thursday. (reported speech)

!! Warning

Do not use *would* in the if-clause of conditionals (except in very formal or literary contexts expressing willingness).

Incorrect: *If you would call me, I would explain.*

Correct: *If you called me, I would explain.*

Exception (formal): *If you would be so kind as to wait, I will fetch the documents.*

* Summary

Would = hypothetical situations, polite requests, past habits, preferences. Core modal for second and third conditionals.

3.12 *will* / *shall*

Will expresses future actions, predictions, promises, and spontaneous decisions. *Shall* is used in formal British English for offers and suggestions with *I* and *we*, but is rare in modern usage.

When & Why:

- Use *will* for all future predictions, promises, and decisions.
- Use *shall* (rare) for formal offers or suggestions with *I/we*.
- In American English, *will* has almost entirely replaced *shall*.

Examples

- The board *will* review the proposal at next week's session. (future action)
- *I will* ensure all documentation is submitted before the deadline. (promise)
- The new regulations *will* take effect from the first of January. (future fact)
- *Shall* we schedule the meeting for Tuesday afternoon? (formal suggestion)
- *I shall* inform the committee of your concerns immediately. (formal, British)
- The contractor *will not* complete the installation before the inspection date. (negative prediction)

!! Warning

Difference between *will* and *shall*:

will = standard future modal, used in all contexts

shall = formal or legal contexts, offers/suggestions with *I/we*

In modern English, *will* is almost always the correct choice. *Shall* survives primarily in legal documents and very formal British English.

* Summary

Will = future actions, predictions, promises. *Shall* = formal offers or suggestions (rare in modern usage).

3.13 *need to*

Need to expresses necessity or requirement. Unlike true modals, *need to* behaves like a regular verb and requires *do/does/did* for questions and negatives.

When & Why: Use *need to* to express that something is necessary or required, often due to external circumstances. It is similar in meaning to *must* and *have to* but is more common in everyday speech.

Examples

- The accountant *needs to* reconcile all accounts before the fiscal year closes. (necessity)
- *We need to* update the client database with the latest contact information. (requirement)
- You *do not need to* submit a formal application — an email is sufficient. (no necessity)
- *Do I need to* bring identification to the security checkpoint? (question)
- The legal team *needed to* review every clause before signing. (past necessity)
- Investors *need to* see consistent quarterly growth before committing further capital. (requirement)

!! Warning

Difference between *need to*, *must*, and *have to*:

All three express necessity, but:

must = strong, often personal or formal

have to = external obligation, works in all tenses

need to = general necessity, most common in speech

I must finish this today. (personal determination)

I have to finish this today. (external deadline)

I need to finish this today. (neutral necessity)

* Summary

Need to = necessity or requirement. Behaves like a regular verb (uses *do/does/did*). Similar to *must* and *have to*.

3.14 Modal Verbs: Summary Table

Modal	Primary Meaning(s)
<i>can</i>	Present ability, permission, general possibility
<i>could</i>	Past ability, polite request, hypothetical possibility
<i>may</i>	Formal permission, moderate possibility (50%)
<i>might</i>	Lower possibility (less than 50%), tentative suggestion
<i>must</i>	Strong obligation, logical deduction (present only)
<i>have to</i>	External obligation, necessity (all tenses)
<i>should</i>	Advice, recommendation, expectation
<i>ought to</i>	Same as <i>should</i> , more formal (rare)
<i>would</i>	Hypothetical situations, polite requests, past habits, preferences
<i>will</i>	Future actions, predictions, promises, spontaneous decisions
<i>shall</i>	Formal offers/suggestions with <i>I/we</i> (rare in modern English)
<i>need to</i>	Necessity, requirement (behaves like regular verb)

* Summary

Modals modify meaning: ability (*can*), possibility (*may/might*), obligation (*must/have to*), advice (*should*), hypothetical (*would*), future (*will*).

3.15 Modal Verbs in Different Time References

Most modals refer to the present or future. To express past meaning, modals combine with **perfect infinitive** (*have + V3*).

Modal	Present / Future	Past
<i>can</i>	She <i>can</i> handle it.	She <i>could</i> handle it. / She <i>was able to</i> handle it.
<i>must</i>	He <i>must</i> attend.	He <i>had to</i> attend. / He <i>must have</i> attended.
<i>should</i>	You <i>should</i> check.	You <i>should have</i> checked.
<i>may/might</i>	They <i>may</i> agree.	They <i>may have</i> agreed. / They <i>might have</i> agreed.
<i>would</i>	I <i>would</i> accept.	I <i>would have</i> accepted.

Examples

- The director *must have approved* the budget — the project has already started. (deduction about past)
- You *should have informed* the client before making that decision. (past advice — criticism)
- They *might have received* the notification, but they did not respond. (past possibility)
- I *could have attended* the conference, but I had a scheduling conflict. (past possibility that did not happen)

!! Warning

Should have + V3 often expresses regret or criticism about a past action that did not happen.

You ***should have checked*** the contract. (you did not check — this is criticism)

This structure is common in professional feedback and post-mortem analysis.

* Summary

To express past meaning with modals, use *modal + have + V3*. Common in deductions, regrets, and criticism.

Sentence Structure

This chapter explains how English sentences are constructed, combined, and transformed. It covers the four sentence types based on clause structure, then examines two major transformations: **passive voice** (shifting focus from actor to action) and **reported speech** (converting direct speech into indirect form). Understanding sentence structure is essential for writing clearly and varying sentence complexity appropriately.

4.1 Simple Sentence

A **simple sentence** contains one independent clause with a single subject and a single predicate (verb phrase). It expresses one complete thought.

When & Why: Use simple sentences for clarity, emphasis, and directness. They are the foundation of all other sentence types. A simple sentence can be short or long, but it contains only one main clause.

Structure: Subject + Verb (+ Object / Complement)

Examples

- The architect submitted the revised plans.
- Investors questioned the quarterly forecast.
- The legal department approved all documentation within two business days.
- Our regional offices operate independently under corporate guidelines.
- The compliance officer identified several procedural gaps during the audit.
- Market conditions deteriorated rapidly throughout the final quarter.

!! Warning

A simple sentence can have compound subjects or compound verbs and still remain a simple sentence as long as it contains only **one independent clause**.

The director and the CFO reviewed and approved the proposal.

(compound subject + compound verb = still a simple sentence)

* Summary

Simple sentence = one independent clause. One subject, one verb, one complete thought.

4.2 Compound Sentence

A **compound sentence** contains two or more independent clauses joined by a **coordinating conjunction** (*and, but, or, so*) or by a semicolon. Each clause can stand alone as a complete sentence.

When & Why: Use compound sentences to link related ideas of equal importance. They create flow and show relationships between actions or statements without subordinating one to the other.

Structure: Independent Clause + Conjunction + Independent Clause

Examples

- The proposal was comprehensive, but the budget was insufficient.
- The contractor completed the installation, and the system went live immediately.
- You can submit the application online, or you can deliver it in person.
- The market shifted unexpectedly, so the board postponed the expansion plan.
- The audit revealed no major issues; the certification was granted without delay.
- Employees requested flexible hours, and management approved the policy change.

!! Warning

Do not join two independent clauses with only a comma — this creates a **comma splice**, which is a grammatical error.

Incorrect: *The director approved the plan, the team began implementation.*

Correct: *The director approved the plan, and the team began implementation.*

Also correct: *The director approved the plan; the team began implementation.*

* Summary

Compound sentence = two or more independent clauses joined by coordinating conjunction or semicolon. Equal importance.

4.3 Complex Sentence

A **complex sentence** contains one independent clause and at least one **dependent (subordinate) clause**. The dependent clause cannot stand alone and is introduced by a **subordinating conjunction** such as *because, although, when, if, while, or since*.

When & Why: Use complex sentences to show cause-and-effect, contrast, time relationships, or conditions. The dependent clause provides context or explanation for the main clause.

Structure: Independent Clause + Dependent Clause (or reverse)

Examples

- The project was delayed because the supplier failed to deliver critical components.
- Although the initial results were promising, the board decided to suspend further investment.
- When the audit concludes, the finance team will publish the annual report.
- The contractor cannot proceed until the permits are issued by the local authority.
- If the regulations change, compliance costs will increase significantly.
- While the director was reviewing the proposal, the client withdrew their interest.

! Exception

When the dependent clause comes **before** the independent clause, use a comma to separate them. When the dependent clause comes **after**, no comma is needed (unless the clause is non-essential).

***Because** the deadline was tight, we worked through the weekend.*

*We worked through the weekend **because** the deadline was tight. (no comma)*

!! Warning

A dependent clause **cannot stand alone** as a sentence — it is a fragment.

Incorrect: *Because the system crashed. We lost all unsaved data.*

Correct: *Because the system crashed, we lost all unsaved data.*

Also correct: *We lost all unsaved data because the system crashed.*

* Summary

Complex sentence = one independent clause + one or more dependent clauses.
Shows relationships like cause, contrast, time.

4.4 Compound-Complex Sentence

A **compound-complex sentence** contains at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause. It combines the structures of compound and complex sentences.

When & Why: Use compound-complex sentences to express multiple related ideas with varying levels of importance and logical relationships. This structure is common in formal writing and detailed explanations.

Structure: Independent Clause + Dependent Clause + Conjunction + Independent Clause (or variations)

Examples

- Although the proposal was approved, the budget was reduced, and the timeline was extended.
- The contractor completed the installation, but the system did not function properly because the configuration was incorrect.
- When the director reviewed the report, she identified several errors, so the team revised the entire document.
- If the audit finds no issues, the certification will be granted, and operations can continue without interruption.
- The legal team raised concerns about liability, and the board postponed the decision until external counsel could be consulted.
- While the market was volatile, investors remained cautious, but the company maintained its dividend policy.

!! Warning

Compound-complex sentences can become difficult to follow if too many clauses are combined. In professional writing, clarity is more important than complexity.

Overly complex: *Although the director approved the plan, and the budget was allocated, the contractor could not begin because the permits had not been issued, so the timeline was revised.*

Better: Break into two sentences for readability.

* Summary

Compound-complex sentence = two or more independent clauses + one or more dependent clauses. Most complex structure.

4.5 Passive Voice

The **passive voice** shifts focus from the subject performing the action (the agent) to the object receiving the action. In passive constructions, the grammatical subject is not the doer — it is the receiver of the action.

When & Why: Use the passive voice when:

- The action is more important than who performed it.
- The agent is unknown, obvious, or irrelevant.
- You want to emphasise the receiver of the action.
- Writing in formal, scientific, or technical contexts where the process matters more than the person.

Formula (general):

Subject + be (conjugated) + V3 (+ by agent)

Passive Forms by Tense:

Tense	Passive Structure
Simple Present	am / is / are + V3
Present Continuous	am / is / are + being + V3
Present Perfect	have / has + been + V3
Simple Past	was / were + V3
Past Continuous	was / were + being + V3
Past Perfect	had + been + V3
Simple Future	will + be + V3
Future Perfect	will + have + been + V3
Modal Passive	modal + be + V3

Examples

- All invoices *are reviewed* by the finance department before payment. (simple present)
- The contract *is being negotiated* by both legal teams this week. (present continuous)

- The budget *has been approved* by the board of directors. (present perfect)
- The proposal *was submitted* three weeks before the deadline. (simple past)
- The system *was being tested* when the power failure occurred. (past continuous)
- By the time we arrived, all decisions *had been made* without consultation. (past perfect)
- The new policy *will be implemented* across all departments next month. (simple future)
- By year-end, the entire infrastructure *will have been upgraded* to the latest standards. (future perfect)

! Exception

The agent (the person or thing performing the action) can be included using *by*, but it is often omitted in passive constructions when the agent is obvious, unknown, or unimportant.

*The report was prepared **by the analyst**.* (agent included)

The report was prepared. (agent omitted — focus on report)

Omitting the agent is more common in formal and technical writing.

!! Warning

Do not overuse the passive voice. While it is appropriate in formal and technical contexts, excessive use makes writing indirect and harder to follow.

Passive (weak): *The decision was made by the committee that the proposal should be rejected.*

Active (stronger): *The committee decided to reject the proposal.*

Use the passive only when it serves a clear purpose — otherwise, prefer the active voice.

* Summary

Passive voice = *be + V3*. Shifts focus from actor to action. Use when agent is unknown, obvious, or less important.

4.6 Reported Speech

Reported speech (also called **indirect speech**) is used to report what someone said without quoting their exact words. When converting from direct speech to reported speech, verb tenses typically shift backward (backshift), and pronouns, time expressions, and place expressions change to match the reporter's perspective.

When & Why: Use reported speech in formal writing, professional communication, and storytelling when exact quotations are unnecessary or inappropriate. It allows you to summarise or paraphrase what was said.

Reporting Statements

Structure: Subject + reporting verb (*said, told, explained, mentioned*) + (that) + reported clause

Tense Backshift Rules:

Direct Speech	Reported Speech	Example
Present Simple	Past Simple	" <i>I work here.</i> " → He said he <i>worked</i> there.
Present Continuous	Past Continuous	" <i>I am reviewing it.</i> " → She said she <i>was reviewing</i> it.
Present Perfect	Past Perfect	" <i>I have finished.</i> " → He said he <i>had finished</i> .
Past Simple	Past Perfect	" <i>I completed it.</i> " → She said she <i>had completed</i> it.
Will	Would	" <i>I will attend.</i> " → He said he <i>would attend</i> .
Can	Could	" <i>I can help.</i> " → She said she <i>could help</i> .
Must	Had to	" <i>I must leave.</i> " → He said he <i>had to leave</i> .

Reporting Questions

Yes/No Questions: Use *if* or *whether* + statement word order (no inversion).

Wh- Questions: Use the question word + statement word order (no inversion).

Examples

- **Direct:** *"Do you have the files?"*
Reported: She asked *if I had* the files.
- **Direct:** *"Where is the meeting?"*
Reported: He asked *where the meeting was*.
- **Direct:** *"Have you completed the audit?"*
Reported: The director asked *whether we had completed* the audit.
- **Direct:** *"When will the report be ready?"*
Reported: The client asked *when the report would be ready*.

Reporting Commands and Requests

Structure: Subject + reporting verb (*told, asked, ordered, advised*) + object + *to* + V1

Examples

- **Direct:** *"Submit the report by Friday."*
Reported: The manager *told me to submit* the report by Friday.
- **Direct:** *"Please review the contract carefully."*
Reported: The lawyer *asked us to review* the contract carefully.
- **Direct:** *"Do not share this information."*
Reported: The director *told the team not to share* that information.
- **Direct:** *"Check the figures before submitting."*
Reported: The accountant *advised me to check* the figures before submitting.

Time and Place Expression Changes

When reporting speech, time and place references shift to match the reporter's perspective.

Direct Speech	Reported Speech	Example
now	then / at that time	"I am busy now." → He said he was busy <i>then</i> .
today	that day	"I will call today." → She said she would call <i>that day</i> .
tomorrow	the next day / the following day	"I will finish tomorrow." → He said he would finish <i>the next day</i> .
yesterday	the day before / the previous day	"I sent it yesterday." → She said she had sent it <i>the day before</i> .
next week	the following week	"I will attend next week." → He said he would attend <i>the following week</i> .
last week	the previous week	"I met him last week." → She said she had met him <i>the previous week</i> .
here	there	"I work here." → He said he worked <i>there</i> .
this	that	"I need this file." → She said she needed <i>that</i> file.

! Exception

If the reporting verb is in the **present tense** (*says, tells*), or if the reported information is still true at the time of reporting, tense backshift is **optional**.

*She **says** she **is** busy.* (no backshift — still true now)

*He **said** the meeting **is** on Tuesday.* (still true — meeting has not happened yet)

Backshift is mandatory only when the reporting verb is past and the situation has changed.

!! Warning

Do not forget to change pronouns and possessives to match the reporter's perspective.

Direct: *"I have completed my report."*

Incorrect: *She said I have completed my report.*

Correct: *She said she had completed her report.*

Do not forget to change question word order to statement word order in reported questions.

Direct: *"Where is the file?"*

Incorrect: *He asked where was the file.*

Correct: *He asked where the file was.*

* Summary

Reported speech = indirect reporting of what was said. Backshift tenses, change pronouns, adjust time/place expressions. Use statement word order in reported questions.

4.7 Sentence Structure: Summary Overview

Type	Structure	Clauses
Simple	One independent clause	1 independent
Compound	Two or more independent clauses joined by conjunction or semicolon	2+ independent
Complex	One independent clause + one or more dependent clauses	1 independent + 1+ dependent
Compound-Complex	Two or more independent clauses + one or more dependent clauses	2+ independent + 1+ dependent

* Summary

Simple = 1 clause. Compound = 2+ independent. Complex = 1 independent + dependent. Compound-complex = 2+ independent + dependent.

Common Mistakes & Confusions

This chapter addresses the most frequently confused grammar points in English. Each entry presents the confusion side by side: incorrect usage in **red**, correct usage in **green**, followed by a clear rule. These are not new concepts — they are direct comparisons designed to eliminate persistent errors. If you have ever hesitated between two similar structures, this chapter provides the answer.

5.1 *since* vs *for*

Incorrect:

*The consultant has been working on this project **since** three months.*

*I have lived here **for** 2019.*

Correct:

*The consultant has been working on this project **for** three months.*

*I have lived here **since** 2019.*

Rule: Use *for* + duration (length of time). Use *since* + starting point (when it began).

!! Warning

for = for two hours, for a week, for ten years

since = since Monday, since March, since 2020, since the merger

5.2 Articles: *a* / *an* / *the* / no article

Incorrect:

*She is **a** engineer at **the** Microsoft.*

*I need **the** advice about **a** career change.*

*He works in **a** finance.*

Correct:

*She is **an** engineer at Microsoft.*

*I need advice about **a** career change.*

He works in finance.

Rule:

- Use *a* before consonant sounds; *an* before vowel sounds.
- Use *the* for specific, known items.
- Use no article for general concepts, abstract nouns, and most proper nouns.

!! Warning

No article: company names, most countries, abstract nouns (advice, information, finance), general plural nouns

Use *the*: specific items already mentioned, unique things (*the sun*), superlatives (*the best*)

5.3 *make vs do*

Incorrect:

The accountant **did** a mistake when calculating expenses.

We need to **do** a decision before the deadline.

She **does** progress every quarter.

Correct:

The accountant **made** a mistake when calculating expenses.

We need to **make** a decision before the deadline.

She **makes** progress every quarter.

Rule:

- Use *make* for creating, producing, or causing something: *make a decision, make progress, make a plan, make money, make an offer.*
- Use *do* for performing actions or tasks: *do work, do business, do research, do homework, do your best.*

!! Warning

Fixed with *make*: mistake, decision, progress, money, offer, plan, choice, effort

Fixed with *do*: work, business, research, job, task, favour, damage

5.4 *say / tell / speak / talk*

Incorrect:

The director **said me** the results yesterday.

She **told** that the meeting was postponed.

Can you **speak** me about the contract?

Correct:

The director **told me** the results yesterday.

She **said** that the meeting was postponed.

Can you **talk to me** about the contract?

Rule:

- *say* + (that) + clause — no indirect object directly after *say*
- *tell* + person + information — always requires an indirect object
- *speak* = formal communication or languages: *speak English, speak at a conference*
- *talk* = informal conversation: *talk to someone, talk about something*

!! Warning

say = He said (that) the budget was approved.

tell = He told me (that) the budget was approved.

Never: *say me* or *tell that*

5.5 *used to / be used to / get used to*

Incorrect:

*I **used to** working remotely now.*

*She **is used to** work long hours when she was younger.*

*We **get used to** have weekly meetings in the past.*

Correct:

*I **am used to** working remotely now.*

*She **used to** work long hours when she was younger.*

*We **used to** have weekly meetings in the past.*

Rule:

- *used to + V1* = past habit or past state (no longer true)
- *be used to + V-ing / noun* = be accustomed to (present state)
- *get used to + V-ing / noun* = become accustomed to (process of adaptation)

!! Warning

used to = I used to commute daily. (past habit — I do not anymore)

be used to = I am used to commuting daily. (accustomed now)

get used to = I am getting used to commuting daily. (adapting now)

5.6 *too* vs *enough*

Incorrect:

The proposal is **enough** complex to require legal review.

We do not have **too** time to complete the analysis.

She is **too** qualified for this position. (if you mean sufficiently)

Correct:

The proposal is complex **enough** to require legal review.

We do not have **enough** time to complete the analysis.

She is qualified **enough** for this position.

Rule:

- *too* = excessive, more than necessary (negative meaning): *too expensive*, *too complicated*
- *enough* = sufficient, adequate: *good enough*, *enough resources*
- Position: *too* + adjective; adjective + *enough*

!! Warning

too = The deadline is **too** tight. (excessively tight — negative)

enough = The deadline is tight **enough**. (sufficiently tight — acceptable)

5.7 *so* vs *such*

Incorrect:

It was **so** complicated process that we hired external consultants.

The director is **such** experienced that everyone trusts her judgment.

Correct:

It was **such** a complicated process that we hired external consultants.

The director is **so** experienced that everyone trusts her judgment.

Rule:

- *so* + adjective / adverb: *so expensive, so quickly*
- *such* + (article) + (adjective) + noun: *such a problem, such high costs*

!! Warning

so modifies adjectives: *so **complex**, so **urgent***

such modifies nouns: *such **complexity**, such an **urgent matter***

5.8 *each vs every*

Incorrect:

Every of the candidates was interviewed separately.

Each employee must attend the training. (if emphasising the group)

Correct:

Each of the candidates was interviewed separately.

Every employee must attend the training.

Rule:

- *each* = individual focus, can be followed by *of*: *each person, each of them*
- *every* = group focus, cannot be followed by *of*: *every person* (not *every of them*)
- Both take singular verbs.

!! Warning

each = emphasis on individuals within a group

every = emphasis on the group as a whole

Each department submitted its own report. (individual focus)

Every department submitted a report. (group focus)

5.9 *some vs any*

Incorrect:

*Do you have **some** questions about the proposal?*

*We do not have **some** available slots this week.*

*There are not **some** errors in the report.*

Correct:

*Do you have **any** questions about the proposal?*

*We do not have **any** available slots this week.*

*There are not **any** errors in the report.*

Rule:

- Use *some* in affirmative sentences and in offers/requests where *yes* is expected.
- Use *any* in negative sentences and questions.

!! Warning

some in questions = offers or requests expecting *yes*:

*Would you like **some** coffee?* (offer)

any in questions = genuine questions:

*Do you have **any** coffee?* (neutral question)

5.10 *little / few / a little / a few*

Incorrect:

We have **few** time before the presentation starts.

There are **little** candidates qualified for the senior role.

A little employees attended the optional training session.

Correct:

We have **little** time before the presentation starts.

There are **few** candidates qualified for the senior role.

A few employees attended the optional training session.

Rule:

- *little / a little* + uncountable nouns: *little time, a little information*
- *few / a few* + countable nouns: *few people, a few documents*
- *little / few* = negative meaning (not much, not many)
- *a little / a few* = positive meaning (some, a small amount)

!! Warning

little = almost none (negative)

a little = some, a small amount (positive)

few = almost none (negative)

a few = some, a small number (positive)

We have **little** time. (not enough — problem)

We have **a little** time. (some time — okay)

5.11 *already* / *yet* / *still* / *just*

Incorrect:

*Have you finished the audit **already**?*

*The contractor has **yet** completed the installation.*

*She **still** has not responded to the inquiry.* (word order)

Correct:

*Have you finished the audit **yet**?*

*The contractor has **already** completed the installation.*

*She **still** has not responded to the inquiry.* (or: She has **still** not responded.)

Rule:

- *already* = something happened sooner than expected (affirmative sentences)
- *yet* = something has not happened but is expected (negative sentences and questions)
- *still* = something continues (often with negatives: *still not*)
- *just* = very recently (affirmative sentences)

!! Warning

already = affirmative: *I have **already** reviewed it.*

yet = negative or question: *I have not reviewed it **yet**.* / *Have you reviewed it **yet**?*

still = continuation: *I am **still** reviewing it.*

just = recent completion: *I have **just** reviewed it.*

5.12 *during* / *for* / *while*

Incorrect:

The system crashed **during** three hours.

She called **while** the meeting.

We worked remotely **for** the lockdown period.

Correct:

The system crashed **for** three hours.

She called **during** the meeting.

We worked remotely **during** the lockdown period.

Rule:

- *during* + noun (event or period): *during the meeting, during the audit*
- *for* + duration (length of time): *for three hours, for two weeks*
- *while* + clause (subject + verb): *while I was working, while the director spoke*

!! Warning

during = *during the conference, during March* (event or period)

for = *for two hours, for a week* (duration)

while = *while I was presenting, while she reviewed it* (clause)

5.13 *despite / although / however*

Incorrect:

Despite the budget was approved, the project was delayed.

Although the high costs, we proceeded with the plan.

The proposal was rejected, **however**, it was resubmitted later. (punctuation)

Correct:

Although the budget was approved, the project was delayed.

Despite the high costs, we proceeded with the plan.

The proposal was rejected; **however**, it was resubmitted later.

Rule:

- *despite* + noun / *despite the fact that* + clause
- *although* + clause (subject + verb)
- *however* = adverb, requires semicolon before or full stop; comma after

!! Warning

despite = *despite* **the delay**, *despite* **the fact that** it was late

although = *although* **it was delayed**, *although* **we waited**

however = The plan failed; **however**, we learned valuable lessons.

5.14 Dummy Subjects: *it* vs *there*

Incorrect:

There is important to review the contract carefully.

It are three candidates waiting in the lobby.

There seems that the deadline will be extended.

Correct:

It is important to review the contract carefully.

There are three candidates waiting in the lobby.

It seems that the deadline will be extended.

Rule:

- Use *it* for time, weather, distance, and with adjectives describing situations: *it is necessary, it is clear, it seems*
- Use *there* to indicate existence or presence: *there is, there are, there was*
- *There* agrees with the noun that follows: *there is one / there are three*

!! Warning

it = **It** is essential to verify all data. (situation / judgment)

there = **There** are several issues to address. (existence)

5.15 Relative Pronouns: *who* / *which* / *that*

Incorrect:

The consultant **which** prepared the report has extensive experience.

The proposal **who** was submitted last week was approved.

The director, **that** joined last year, restructured the division.

Correct:

The consultant **who** prepared the report has extensive experience.

The proposal **that** was submitted last week was approved.

The director, **who** joined last year, restructured the division.

Rule:

- *who* = people
- *which* = things, animals, or clauses
- *that* = people or things (but not after commas in non-defining clauses)

!! Warning

Defining clause (essential information — no commas): use *who*, *which*, or *that*

*The consultant **who** led the project has resigned.*

Non-defining clause (extra information — with commas): use *who* or *which* only (not *that*)

*The consultant, **who** led the project, has resigned.*

Never use *that* after a comma.

5.16 More Common Confusions

affect vs effect

The new policy will **effect** all departments.

The new policy will **affect** all departments.

Rule: *affect* = verb (to influence). *effect* = noun (the result).

The changes **affected** productivity. / The **effect** was significant.

its vs it's

The company announced **it's** quarterly results.

The company announced **its** quarterly results.

Rule: *its* = possessive (belonging to it). *it's* = contraction of *it is* or *it has*.

less vs fewer

There are **less** applicants this year than last year.

There are **fewer** applicants this year than last year.

Rule: *fewer* + countable nouns. *less* + uncountable nouns.

Fewer employees, **less** time.

borrow vs lend

Can you **borrow** me your notes from the meeting?

Can you **lend** me your notes from the meeting?

Rule: *borrow* = receive temporarily. *lend* = give temporarily.

I **borrowed** the file from her. / She **lent** me the file.

rise vs raise

The director **rose** concerns about the timeline.

The director **raised** concerns about the timeline.

Rule: *rise* = go up (intransitive — no object). *raise* = lift something (transitive — requires object).

Costs **rose** sharply. / The board **raised** the budget.

lay vs lie

She **laid** down to rest after the long meeting.

She **lay** down to rest after the long meeting.

Rule: *lay* = put something down (transitive — requires object): *lay, laid, laid*.

lie = recline or be positioned (intransitive): *lie, lay, lain*.

Please **lay** the documents on the desk. / The files **lie** on the desk.

good vs well

The presentation went **good**.

The presentation went **well**.

Rule: *good* = adjective (describes nouns). *well* = adverb (describes verbs).

She is a **good** manager. / She manages **well**.

then vs than

The revised proposal is better **then** the original.

The revised proposal is better **than** the original.

Rule: *than* = comparison. *then* = time sequence.

This option is cheaper **than** that one. / We reviewed it, **then** approved it.

advice vs advise

The consultant gave us valuable **advise**.

The consultant gave us valuable **advice**.

Rule: *advice* = noun (uncountable). *advise* = verb.

I need your **advice**. / Can you **advise** me?

lose vs loose

We cannot afford to **loose** this client.

We cannot afford to **lose** this client.

Rule: *lose* = verb (to misplace or fail to keep). *loose* = adjective (not tight).

Do not **lose** the documents. / The connection is **loose**.

5.17 Summary: Most Common Errors

Confusion	Wrong	Correct
<i>since / for</i>	since three months	for three months
<i>make / do</i>	do a decision	make a decision
<i>say / tell</i>	say me	tell me
<i>too / enough</i>	enough expensive	too expensive
<i>some / any</i>	Do you have some?	Do you have any?
<i>little / few</i>	few time	little time
<i>already / yet</i>	Have you finished already?	Have you finished yet?
<i>during / for</i>	during three hours	for three hours
<i>despite / although</i>	despite it was late	although it was late
<i>who / which</i>	the person which	the person who

* Summary

Most errors come from confusing similar words with different grammar rules. Memorise the patterns in this chapter — they eliminate 90% of common mistakes.

Quick Reference Tables

This chapter is a cheat sheet. It contains no explanations — only clean, structured tables designed for rapid reference. Use this chapter when you need to verify a verb form, check a preposition, or confirm a formula quickly. All concepts presented here were explained in full in previous chapters.

6.1 The 12 Tenses

Complete reference table showing formula, signal words, and examples for all twelve tenses.

Tense	Formula	Signal Words	Example
Simple Present	S + V1 (-s)	always, usually, every day	She <i>works</i> remotely.
Present Continuous	S + am/is/are + V-ing	now, right now, currently	She <i>is working</i> now.
Present Perfect	S + have/has + V3	already, yet, just, since, for	She <i>has worked</i> here for years.
Present Perfect Continuous	S + have/has + been + V-ing	for, since, all day	She <i>has been</i> <i>working</i> since morning.
Simple Past	S + V2	yesterday, last week, ago	She <i>worked</i> late yesterday.
Past Continuous	S + was/were + V-ing	while, when, at that time	She <i>was</i> <i>working</i> when I called.
Past Perfect	S + had + V3	before, after, by the time	She <i>had</i> <i>worked</i> there before.
Past Perfect Continuous	S + had + been + V-ing	for, since (before past event)	She <i>had been</i> <i>working</i> for hours.
Simple Future	S + will + V1	tomorrow, next week, soon	She <i>will work</i> from home tomorrow.
Future Continuous	S + will + be + V-ing	at this time tomorrow	She <i>will be</i> <i>working</i> at noon.
Future Perfect	S + will + have + V3	by (future time), before	She <i>will have</i> <i>worked</i> by Friday.
Future Perfect Continuous	S + will + have + been + V-ing	by (time) + for (duration)	She <i>will have</i> <i>been working</i> for a decade by then.

6.2 Irregular Verbs

Alphabetical list of the most common irregular verbs with all four forms.

V1 (Base)	V2 (Past)	V3 (Past Participle)	V-ing
arise	arose	arisen	arising
be	was/were	been	being
bear	bore	borne	bearing
beat	beat	beaten	beating
become	became	become	becoming
begin	began	begun	beginning
bend	bent	bent	bending
bet	bet	bet	betting
bid	bid	bid	bidding
bind	bound	bound	binding
bite	bit	bitten	biting
bleed	bled	bled	bleeding
blow	blew	blown	blowing
break	broke	broken	breaking
bring	brought	brought	bringing
build	built	built	building
burn	burnt	burnt	burning
burst	burst	burst	bursting
buy	bought	bought	buying
catch	caught	caught	catching
choose	chose	chosen	choosing
come	came	come	coming
cost	cost	cost	costing
cut	cut	cut	cutting
deal	dealt	dealt	dealing
dig	dug	dug	digging
do	did	done	doing
draw	drew	drawn	drawing
drink	drank	drunk	drinking
drive	drove	driven	driving
eat	ate	eaten	eating
fall	fell	fallen	falling

V1 (Base)	V2 (Past)	V3 (Past Participle)	V-ing
lose	lost	lost	losing
make	made	made	making
mean	meant	meant	meaning
meet	met	met	meeting
pay	paid	paid	paying
put	put	put	putting
read	read	read	reading
ride	rode	ridden	riding
ring	rang	rung	ringing
rise	rose	risen	rising
run	ran	run	running
say	said	said	saying
see	saw	seen	seeing
seek	sought	sought	seeking
sell	sold	sold	selling
send	sent	sent	sending
set	set	set	setting
shake	shook	shaken	shaking
shine	shone	shone	shining
shoot	shot	shot	shooting
show	showed	shown	showing
shut	shut	shut	shutting
sing	sang	sung	singing
sink	sank	sunk	sinking
sit	sat	sat	sitting
sleep	slept	slept	sleeping
slide	slid	slid	sliding
speak	spoke	spoken	speaking
spend	spent	spent	spending
spin	spun	spun	spinning
split	split	split	splitting
spread	spread	spread	spreading

6.3 Modal Verbs Summary

Quick reference for all modal verbs with their primary meanings.

Modal	Meaning	Example
<i>can</i>	Ability, permission, possibility	The team <i>can</i> complete it by Friday.
<i>could</i>	Past ability, polite request, possibility	<i>Could</i> you review this document?
<i>may</i>	Formal permission, moderate possibility	The director <i>may</i> approve the budget.
<i>might</i>	Lower possibility, tentative suggestion	The client <i>might</i> extend the contract.
<i>must</i>	Strong obligation, logical deduction	All staff <i>must</i> attend the briefing.
<i>have to</i>	External obligation (all tenses)	We <i>have to</i> submit reports monthly.
<i>should</i>	Advice, recommendation, expectation	You <i>should</i> verify the figures.
<i>ought to</i>	Same as should (more formal)	Employees <i>ought to</i> read the policy.
<i>would</i>	Hypothetical, polite request, past habit	If I knew, I <i>would</i> tell you.
<i>will</i>	Future, prediction, promise	The board <i>will</i> decide tomorrow.
<i>shall</i>	Formal offer/suggestion (rare)	<i>Shall</i> we begin the meeting?
<i>need to</i>	Necessity (behaves like regular verb)	We <i>need to</i> update the system.

6.4 Prepositions of Time

When to use *at*, *on*, *in*, and other time prepositions.

Preposition	Usage & Examples
<p><i>at</i></p> <p><i>at 9:00, at noon, at midnight, at the weekend, at Christmas</i></p>	Exact time, fixed expressions
<p><i>on</i></p> <p><i>on Monday, on 15 March, on New Year's Day, on weekdays, on the morning of the 10th</i></p>	Specific days and dates
<p><i>in</i></p> <p><i>in January, in 2025, in summer, in the morning, in the 21st century</i></p>	Months, years, seasons, parts of day, longer periods
<p><i>by</i></p> <p><i>by Friday, by 5pm, by the end of the month</i></p>	Deadline (not later than)
<p><i>until / till</i></p> <p><i>until midnight, until the meeting ends</i></p>	Continuation up to a point
<p><i>from...to</i></p> <p><i>from Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm</i></p>	Starting and ending points

6.5 Prepositions of Place

When to use *at*, *on*, *in*, and other place prepositions.

Preposition	Usage & Examples
<p><i>at</i></p> <p><i>at the office, at the entrance, at 42 High Street, at the conference</i></p>	<p>Specific point or location</p>
<p><i>on</i></p> <p><i>on the desk, on the third floor, on Oxford Street, on the wall</i></p>	<p>Surface, floor, street name</p>
<p><i>in</i></p> <p><i>in the building, in the room, in London, in the UK, in the folder</i></p>	<p>Enclosed space, city, country</p>
<p><i>above / over</i></p> <p><i>above the average, over the threshold</i></p>	<p>Higher than</p>
<p><i>below / under</i></p> <p><i>below the benchmark, under the table</i></p>	<p>Lower than</p>
<p><i>between</i></p> <p><i>between the offices, between 9am and 5pm</i></p>	<p>Two items or points</p>
<p><i>among</i></p> <p><i>among the candidates, among the options</i></p>	<p>More than two items</p>
<p><i>beside / next to</i></p> <p><i>beside the entrance, next to the printer</i></p>	<p>At the side of</p>
<p><i>behind</i></p> <p><i>behind the building, behind schedule</i></p>	<p>At the back of</p>
<p><i>in front of</i></p> <p><i>in front of the audience, in front of the entrance</i></p>	<p>Before, facing</p>

6.6 Conjunctions by Function

Conjunctions organised by their logical function in sentences.

Function	Conjunction	Example
Addition	and, as well as, moreover, furthermore	The plan was approved, <i>and</i> the budget was allocated.
Contrast	but, yet, however, whereas, while	The proposal was strong, <i>but</i> the timing was poor.
Cause / Reason	because, since, as	The launch was delayed <i>because</i> testing was incomplete.
Result / Consequence	so, therefore, thus, consequently	The server crashed, <i>so</i> the deadline was extended.
Condition	if, unless, provided that, as long as	<i>If</i> the audit passes, certification will be granted.
Concession	although, though, even though, despite	<i>Although</i> costs rose, profits remained stable.
Time	when, while, before, after, until, as soon as	<i>When</i> the director arrives, the meeting will begin.
Purpose	so that, in order to	We scheduled extra sessions <i>so that</i> everyone could attend.
Alternative	or, either...or, neither...nor	You can email the form <i>or</i> submit it in person.

6.7 Conditional Sentences Summary

All five conditional types with formulas and examples.

Type	If-Clause	Main Clause	Example
Zero	present simple	present simple	If you save the file, it backs up automatically.
First	present simple	will + V1	If the client agrees, we will proceed.
Second	past simple	would + V1	If I had more time, I would review it thoroughly.
Third	had + V3	would + have + V3	If we had known, we would have acted differently.
Mixed	had + V3	would + V1	If I had accepted the role, I would be living abroad now.

6.8 Common Collocations: *make*

Fixed expressions using *make* — memorise these combinations.

Collocation	Example
make a decision	The board will <i>make a decision</i> next week.
make a mistake	The accountant <i>made a mistake</i> in the calculations.
make progress	The project is <i>making progress</i> steadily.
make an effort	We must <i>make an effort</i> to improve communication.
make a plan	The director <i>made a plan</i> for the restructuring.
make money	The investment <i>made money</i> in the first quarter.
make a profit	The division <i>made a profit</i> despite market conditions.
make a loss	The subsidiary <i>made a loss</i> for three consecutive years.
make an appointment	Please <i>make an appointment</i> with the legal team.
make a phone call	She <i>made a phone call</i> to the regional office.
make a suggestion	The consultant <i>made a suggestion</i> about workflow.
make a complaint	Several clients <i>made complaints</i> about delays.
make an offer	The competitor <i>made an offer</i> to acquire the company.
make a choice	Investors must <i>make a choice</i> before the deadline.
make a change	Management <i>made changes</i> to the policy.

6.9 Common Collocations: *do*

Fixed expressions using *do* — memorise these combinations.

Collocation	Example
do work	The contractor will <i>do the work</i> next month.
do business	We <i>do business</i> with suppliers across Europe.
do research	The analyst is <i>doing research</i> on market trends.
do a job	She <i>did an excellent job</i> on the presentation.
do a task	Please <i>do this task</i> before the meeting.
do homework	Employees must <i>do their homework</i> before negotiations.
do your best	The team <i>did their best</i> under difficult circumstances.
do damage	The data breach <i>did significant damage</i> to reputation.
do harm	The delay <i>did no harm</i> to the overall timeline.
do a favour	Could you <i>do me a favour</i> and forward that email?
do an exercise	Trainees must <i>do the exercises</i> at the end of each module.
do an experiment	The lab <i>did experiments</i> to verify the hypothesis.
do the shopping	The office manager <i>does the shopping</i> for supplies weekly.
do the accounts	The bookkeeper <i>does the accounts</i> every Friday.
do an audit	External auditors <i>do an audit</i> annually.

6.10 Common Collocations: *have*

Fixed expressions using *have* — memorise these combinations.

Collocation	Example
have a meeting	We <i>have a meeting</i> scheduled for Tuesday.
have a conversation	The director <i>had a conversation</i> with the stakeholders.
have a discussion	Let us <i>have a discussion</i> about the budget.
have an appointment	I <i>have an appointment</i> with the legal advisor at noon.
have a break	The team will <i>have a break</i> after the presentation.
have a problem	The contractor <i>has a problem</i> with the specifications.
have difficulty	Employees <i>have difficulty</i> accessing the new system.
have an effect	The policy change <i>had an effect</i> on productivity.
have an impact	The merger <i>had an impact</i> on all departments.
have a chance	You will <i>have a chance</i> to ask questions afterward.
have an opportunity	She <i>had an opportunity</i> to lead the project.
have a look	Could you <i>have a look</i> at these figures?
have a word	The manager would like to <i>have a word</i> with you.
have experience	The candidate <i>has experience</i> in financial auditing.
have access	All staff <i>have access</i> to the shared drive.

6.11 Common Collocations: *take*

Fixed expressions using *take* — memorise these combinations.

Collocation	Example
take action	The board must <i>take action</i> immediately.
take a decision	The committee will <i>take a decision</i> tomorrow.
take responsibility	The director <i>took responsibility</i> for the oversight.
take control	The new CEO <i>took control</i> of operations last month.
take charge	She will <i>take charge</i> of the regional division.
take time	The review process <i>takes time</i> to complete properly.
take place	The annual conference <i>takes place</i> in September.
take part	All departments <i>took part</i> in the consultation.
take notes	Please <i>take notes</i> during the briefing.
take a break	The team will <i>take a break</i> at 3pm.
take a risk	Investors are reluctant to <i>take risks</i> currently.
take an exam	Candidates must <i>take an exam</i> before certification.
take advice	The board <i>took advice</i> from external consultants.
take into account	We must <i>take into account</i> all variables.
take advantage of	The company <i>took advantage of</i> market conditions.

6.12 Subject-Verb Agreement

Rules for matching verbs to their subjects correctly.

Subject Type	Verb	Example
Singular noun	Singular verb	The director <i>reviews</i> all proposals.
Plural noun	Plural verb	The directors <i>review</i> all proposals.
Uncountable noun	Singular verb	The information <i>is</i> confidential.
<i>each / every / everyone / everybody</i>	Singular verb	Everyone <i>has</i> received the memo.
<i>some / any / all / most</i>	Depends on noun	Some data <i>is</i> missing. / Some files <i>are</i> missing.
Collective noun (team, committee, board)	Singular (UK: can be plural)	The team <i>has</i> completed the project.
<i>neither...nor</i>	Verb agrees with nearest noun	Neither the director nor the managers <i>were</i> informed.
<i>either...or</i>	Verb agrees with nearest noun	Either the consultant or the analysts <i>are</i> responsible.

6.13 Question Formation

How to form questions with different verb types and tenses.

Question Type	Structure	Example
Yes/No with <i>be</i>	Am/Is/Are/Was/Were + S + ...?	<i>Is</i> the director available?
Yes/No with main verb	Do/Does/Did + S + V1 + ...?	<i>Did</i> the client approve the proposal?
Yes/No with modal	Modal + S + V1 + ...?	<i>Can</i> you attend the meeting?
Yes/No with perfect	Have/Has/Had + S + V3 + ...?	<i>Have</i> you reviewed the contract?
Wh- question with <i>be</i>	Wh- + am/is/are/was/were + S + ...?	<i>Where is</i> the conference room?
Wh- question with main verb	Wh- + do/does/did + S + V1 + ...?	<i>When did</i> the project start?
Wh- question with modal	Wh- + modal + S + V1 + ...?	<i>Why should</i> we postpone the launch?
Wh- as subject	Wh- + verb + ...? (no inversion)	<i>Who approved</i> the budget?

6.14 Reported Speech: Tense Backshift

How tenses change when converting direct speech to reported speech.

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
present simple	past simple
present continuous	past continuous
present perfect	past perfect
past simple	past perfect
will	would
can	could
may	might
must	had to

6.15 Reported Speech: Time & Place Changes

How time and place expressions shift in reported speech.

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
now	then / at that time
today	that day
tomorrow	the next day / the following day
yesterday	the day before / the previous day
next week	the following week
last week	the previous week / the week before
this	that
these	those
here	there
ago	before

6.16 Passive Voice: All Tenses

Passive voice formulas for all major tenses.

Tense	Passive Formula	Example
Simple Present	am/is/are + V3	The report <i>is reviewed</i> weekly.
Present Continuous	am/is/are + being + V3	The contract <i>is being negotiated</i> .
Present Perfect	have/has + been + V3	The budget <i>has been approved</i> .
Simple Past	was/were + V3	The proposal <i>was submitted</i> last week.
Past Continuous	was/were + being + V3	The system <i>was being tested</i> .
Past Perfect	had + been + V3	All documents <i>had been prepared</i> .
Simple Future	will + be + V3	The policy <i>will be implemented</i> soon.
Future Perfect	will + have + been + V3	The work <i>will have been completed</i> by Friday.
Modal Passive	modal + be + V3	The application <i>must be submitted</i> online.

6.17 Comparative & Superlative Forms

How to form comparatives and superlatives correctly.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative	Rule
cheap	cheaper	cheapest	1 syllable: -er / -est
large	larger	largest	
big	bigger	biggest	double consonant
easy	easier	easiest	2 syllables ending -y: -ier / -iest
happy	happier	happiest	
expensive	more expensive	most expensive	2+ syllables: more / most
efficient	more efficient	most efficient	
good	better	best	irregular
bad	worse	worst	irregular
far	farther/further	farthest/furthest	irregular

6.18 Common Phrasal Verbs (Business & Professional)

Essential phrasal verbs for professional and academic contexts.

Phrasal Verb	Meaning & Example
carry out	Execute, perform — <i>The team carried out the audit efficiently.</i>
call off	Cancel — <i>The director called off the meeting due to scheduling conflicts.</i>
put off	Postpone — <i>We put off the decision until more data was available.</i>
bring up	Mention, raise (a topic) — <i>The consultant brought up several concerns.</i>
point out	Indicate, draw attention to — <i>The auditor pointed out discrepancies in the accounts.</i>
turn down	Reject, refuse — <i>The board turned down the acquisition proposal.</i>
look into	Investigate — <i>The legal team is looking into the compliance issue.</i>
follow up	Continue action, check progress — <i>Please follow up with the client next week.</i>
set up	Establish, arrange — <i>We set up a new subsidiary in Frankfurt.</i>
take over	Assume control — <i>The new director took over in January.</i>
hand in	Submit — <i>All staff must hand in timesheets by Friday.</i>
fill in / out	Complete (a form) — <i>Please fill in the application form.</i>
go over	Review — <i>Let us go over the contract terms once more.</i>
work out	Calculate, resolve — <i>The accountant worked out the final costs.</i>
break down	Analyse in detail, stop functioning — <i>The consultant broke down the expenses by category.</i>

6.19 Sentence Connectors & Transitions

Linking words and phrases for coherent academic and professional writing.

Function	Connectors
Addition	furthermore, moreover, in addition, additionally, also, besides
Contrast	however, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the other hand, in contrast
Result	therefore, thus, consequently, as a result, for this reason, accordingly
Example	for example, for instance, such as, namely, specifically
Emphasis	indeed, in fact, actually, certainly, clearly, obviously
Summary	in conclusion, to sum up, in summary, overall, in short
Sequence	first, second, then, next, finally, meanwhile, subsequently
Clarification	in other words, that is, namely, to clarify, to put it differently

6.20 Quantifiers

Words expressing quantity with countable and uncountable nouns.

Quantifier	Used With	Example
much	Uncountable (negative & question)	We do not have <i>much</i> time.
many	Countable (negative & question)	There are not <i>many</i> options.
a lot of / lots of	Both (affirmative mainly)	We have <i>a lot of</i> work.
little	Uncountable (negative meaning)	There is <i>little</i> evidence.
a little	Uncountable (positive meaning)	We have <i>a little</i> time.
few	Countable (negative meaning)	<i>Few</i> candidates qualified.
a few	Countable (positive meaning)	<i>A few</i> employees attended.
some	Both (affirmative)	We need <i>some</i> information.
any	Both (negative & question)	Do you have <i>any</i> questions?
no	Both (negative meaning)	There are <i>no</i> errors.
all	Both	<i>All</i> staff must attend.
most	Both	<i>Most</i> clients prefer email.
several	Countable	<i>Several</i> departments participated.
enough	Both	We have <i>enough</i> resources.

6.21 Word Order in Statements

Standard English word order for declarative sentences.

Position	Element
1. Subject	The consultant
2. Adverb of frequency	always, usually, often, sometimes, rarely, never
3. Auxiliary verb	is, has, will, can, should
4. Main verb	reviewed
5. Object	the proposal
6. Adverb of manner	carefully, thoroughly, efficiently
7. Adverb of place	in the office, at headquarters
8. Adverb of time	yesterday, last week, at 3pm

Example:

*The consultant **always has reviewed the proposals carefully in the office before meetings.***

* Summary

Standard word order: Subject — Frequency Adverb — Auxiliary — Main Verb — Object — Manner — Place — Time.

6.22 How to Use This Chapter

This chapter is designed for rapid consultation. Bookmark the tables you reference most frequently. All concepts summarised here were explained in full in Chapters 1 through 5. If you need deeper understanding of any structure, return to the relevant chapter for complete coverage with examples, exceptions, and warnings.

Recommended usage:

- Keep this chapter open when writing — use it to verify tense formulas, check prepositions, and confirm collocations quickly.
- Print or bookmark the pages you reference most often for faster access.
- Use the irregular verbs table when unsure about V2 or V3 forms.
- Refer to the modal verbs summary when choosing between similar modals.

The Core is complete. Use it as a reference, return to it when questions arise, and remember: clarity is the highest form of teaching.

Appendix: Study Guide

Recommended Study Path

For first-time readers:

1. Read Chapter 1 (Building Blocks) completely — it establishes all terminology.
2. Read Chapter 2 (The 12 Tenses) in order — do not skip any tense.
3. Study the Unified Drill at the end of Chapter 2 carefully — it shows how tenses differ.
4. Read Chapter 3 (Conditionals & Modals) — focus on the differences between similar modals.
5. Read Chapter 4 (Sentence Structure) — pay special attention to passive voice and reported speech.
6. Read Chapter 5 (Common Mistakes) — this eliminates most persistent errors.
7. Bookmark Chapter 6 (Quick Reference Tables) for daily use.

For reference use:

- Use the table of contents to jump directly to any concept.
- Use Chapter 6 for quick verification of formulas and forms.
- Use the summary boxes at the end of each section for rapid review.
- Use the warning boxes to check common mistakes before submitting written work.

How to Practice

Grammar is learned through application, not memorisation.

After reading each chapter:

1. Write 5–10 sentences using the structure you just learned.
2. Vary the subjects, verbs, and contexts deliberately.
3. Check your sentences against the formulas and examples in the book.
4. Read professional texts (articles, reports, academic papers) and identify the structures you have learned.
5. When you encounter a structure you do not recognise, return to this book and locate it.

Do not try to memorise everything at once. Focus on one chapter at a time. Return to previous chapters when needed. Grammar understanding builds gradually through repeated exposure and application.

Additional Resources

This book is a grammar reference, not a complete language course. To complement your study:

- **Reading:** Read extensively in English — news articles, professional reports, academic journals. Notice how the structures from this book appear in real contexts.
- **Writing:** Write regularly — emails, reports, essays. Apply the structures consciously until they become automatic.
- **Listening:** Watch professional presentations, lectures, and interviews. Pay attention to how speakers use tenses and modals.
- **Feedback:** Have your writing reviewed by proficient English speakers or editors. Use their corrections to identify which chapters to review.

The Core gives you the structure. Consistent practice gives you fluency.

For Educators and Tutors

This book is designed to be used both for self-study and in classroom settings. If you are using **The Core** with students:

- Assign one section at a time rather than entire chapters.
- Use the example boxes as templates — ask students to create similar sentences with different vocabulary.
- Use the warning boxes as diagnostic tools — if students make these errors, direct them to the relevant section.
- Use the Unified Drill (Chapter 2) as a tense comparison exercise in class.
- Use Chapter 5 (Common Mistakes) as a diagnostic test — present the incorrect sentences and ask students to identify and correct the errors.
- Encourage students to keep Chapter 6 (Quick Reference) accessible during all writing tasks.

The consistent structure of this book makes it easy to integrate into any curriculum. Every concept is self-contained and can be taught independently or as part of a sequence.

Glossary of Key Terms

This glossary defines the grammatical terms used throughout this book. All terms are listed alphabetically for quick reference.

- Adjective** A word that describes or modifies a noun (e.g. *detailed, efficient*).
- Adverb** A word that modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb (e.g. *quickly, very*).
- Auxiliary Verb**
A helping verb used with a main verb to form tenses, questions, or negatives (e.g. *be, have, do*, modals).
- Clause** A group of words containing a subject and a verb. Can be independent (stands alone) or dependent (requires main clause).
- Conditional Sentence**
A sentence expressing a condition and its result, using *if*-clauses.
- Conjunction** A word that connects words, phrases, or clauses (e.g. *and, but, because*).
- Continuous Aspect**
Verb forms using *be + V-ing* to emphasise ongoing action.
- Dependent Clause**
A clause that cannot stand alone as a complete sentence (also called subordinate clause).
- Direct Speech**
Exact words spoken, enclosed in quotation marks.
- Gerund** The *-ing* form of a verb used as a noun (e.g. *Swimming is good exercise*).
- Independent Clause**
A clause that can stand alone as a complete sentence.
- Infinitive** The base form of a verb, often with *to* (e.g. *to work, to analyse*).
- Modal Verb** An auxiliary verb expressing ability, possibility, permission, or obligation (e.g. *can, must, should*).
- Noun** A word naming a person, place, thing, or concept.
- Object** The noun or pronoun receiving the action of the verb.
- Participle** A verb form used with auxiliaries: past participle (V3) or present participle (V-ing).

Passive Voice A construction where the subject receives the action rather than performing it (e.g. *The report was written*).

Past Participle (V3)

The third form of a verb, used in perfect tenses and passive voice (e.g. *written, completed*).

Perfect Aspect

Verb forms using *have + V3* to connect actions to a reference point.

Preposition A word expressing relationships of time, place, or direction (e.g. *in, on, at*).

Pronoun A word that replaces a noun (e.g. *he, she, they*).

Reported Speech

Indirect reporting of what someone said, without quotation marks (also called indirect speech).

Simple Aspect

Verb forms expressing actions as facts, habits, or completed events without emphasising duration.

Stative Verb A verb describing a state rather than an action (e.g. *know, believe, own*). Rarely used in continuous forms.

Subject The noun or pronoun performing the action or being described by the verb.

Subordinating Conjunction

A conjunction introducing a dependent clause (e.g. *because, although, when*).

Tense A verb form indicating time reference (past, present, future) and aspect (simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous).

Transitive Verb

A verb that requires a direct object (e.g. *write, send*).

Intransitive Verb

A verb that does not take a direct object (e.g. *arrive, sleep*).

V1 (Base Form)

The dictionary form of a verb (e.g. *go, write*).

V2 (Past Simple)

The past tense form of a verb (e.g. *went, wrote*).

V3 (Past Participle)

The form used in perfect tenses and passive voice (e.g. *gone, written*).

V-ing (Present Participle)

The *-ing* form used in continuous tenses and as gerunds (e.g. *going, writing*).

Thank You

You have reached the end of **The Core**.

This book was designed to give you clarity, structure, and confidence
in understanding English grammar.

If you found this book helpful, please share it with others
who are working to improve their academic and professional communication.

A. Algamel

February 2026



Clarity is the highest form of teaching.

THE CORE

English Grammar by Structure

What makes this book different:

- **Structured approach** — Every concept follows the same six-part format
- **Visual clarity** — Color-coded boxes, consistent typography, professional
- **Complete coverage** — All 12 tenses, conditionals, modals, structures
- **No filler** — Every word earns its place
- **Real examples** — Professional and academic contexts throughout
- **Quick reference** — Tables and summaries for rapid consultation

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First Edition · February 2026

