

What Is Past and Present Tense?

Past and present tense is all about time. The tense is determined by when an action is happening. If an action has already happened it is past tense, if it is happening now it is present tense and if it is about to happen it is future tense.

Verbs are doing words. They describe an action (what is happening). Your child will start to collect together a variety of different action words that they can use. They will act out different actions (e.g. jumping, running, dancing, skipping) and explore what verbs mean.

Changing the tense of a verb often involves changing the verb itself by adding -ed, -ing or changing the verb to an irregular form. These changes mean that your child will have to learn a series of different spelling rules and patterns. For example:

hike - hiked - hiking

pat - patted - patting

copy - copied - copying

Being able to recognise and use different tenses in sentences is a key skill your child will learn. They will also begin to decide if they want a sentence they're writing to be past or present tense and use the correct verb form to match this.

They will also start to use past and present progressive tense. The past progressive tense is used to describe an on-going activity in the past. Often, it is used to set the scene for another action. For example:

He was sleeping peacefully, when the bird crashed into the window.

She was painting the door, when the phone rang.

The present progressive tense is used for an on-going action in the present. For example:

They are fishing in the river.

The train is arriving in two minutes.

Step 1

Adding -ed Spelling Rules

As your child's knowledge of past and present tense verbs increases, they will learn a variety of different spelling rules for changing verb forms. They will learn to add -ed and -ing to verbs that end in 'y'. In this case, the 'y' is changed to an 'i' before adding 'ed' (for example, cried, copied). This isn't the case when adding 'ing' because this would result in 'ii' (this only happens with skiing and taxiing). When adding -ing, your child will just add the suffix (for example, copying, crying). This suffix fortune teller can be a good way to explore these new spelling patterns.



Adding -ed and -ing

Being able to accurately change the verb tense forms is an important spelling skill for your child to learn. When adding -ed or -ing to a verb ending in 'e', your child needs to remove the 'e' first. For example:

hike - hiking - hiked

joke - joking - joked

tape - taping - taped

An exception to this rule is the verb 'be', which becomes 'being', not 'bing'. Spelling rule worksheets are a great way to practise these spelling patterns and rules with your child.

Step 2

Step 3

Adding -ing Spelling Rules

The tense of a verb can change the way that it is spelt. When adding -ed and -ing to verbs, there are a number of different rules that affect how the verbs are spelt in their different forms. When adding -ed or -ing to a verb that has one syllable and ends in a single consonant after a vowel, your child will need to double the consonant before adding the 'ed' or 'ing'. For example:

pat - patted - patting
drop - dropped - dropping
hum - hummed - humming

The only letter where this doesn't happen is the letter 'x' - this is never doubled. For example, mix - mixed - mixing. Playing this game together can be an interactive way for your child to practise different spelling rules at home.



Irregular Verbs Past Tense

Some verbs have irregular past tense versions (the verb changes totally, rather than just adding a suffix like -ed or -ing). Your child will learn to identify these irregular past tense verbs and identify when to use them in sentences. For example:

run - ran

swim - swam

creep - crept

You could try using these display posters as a visual reminder of these types of verbs for your child.

Step 4

Step 5

Past and Present Tense

After your child has become familiar with present and past tense verbs, including how to spell them and when to use irregular ones, they will begin using them in their own writing, becoming more and more accurate with choosing the correct tense. They will begin to plan if their sentences will be past or present tense, then make consistent choices about which types of verbs to use. Doing activities that ask your child to decide if a sentence is past, present or future tense, is a great way to practise spotting and choosing the correct verb form.

Past Progressive Tense

Progressive tense is all about spotting actions that happen over time and for a longer period of time. Past progressive is used to describe an activity that is ongoing in the past, whereas present progressive is used to describe an ongoing activity that is happening in the present. Your child will learn to identify and use these different forms of past and present tense. For example:

She is drumming. (The drumming is happening now, but is continuing to happen = present progressive tense.)

He was shouting. (The shouting happened in the past and it lasted for a length of time = past progressive tense.)

Step 6