

Year 4 Past and Present Tense: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents

This step-by-step explanation to past and present tense can help you support your child's learning at home. Each subject is broken down into manageable chunks, providing you with a simple guide to follow when exploring past and present tense together, either as part of homework or if you decide to give your child some extra support. Whether your child is exploring past and present progressive tense in detail and is beginning to develop a greater understanding of present perfect tense, or they are investigating different forms of writing that use past and/or present tense and identifying which text types use the different tenses, you will find a step that matches where your child is at as well as some ideas for where to go next.

Within this area of the website, you will find a selection of resources intended to help your child learn about each step of this guide. Each step also contains a keyword or phrase that you can use to search the Twinkl site for more resources and activities, designed to support your child in achieving that stage. Simply type the keyword or phrase into the search bar and press enter to explore together.

We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. The contents of this resource are for general, informational purposes only. This guide is intended to offer parents general guidance on what subject areas tend to be covered in their child's year group and where they could support their children at home. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. There are some subject areas that we have intentionally not covered due to the nature of how they are taught or because a trained professional needs to teach these areas. We try to ensure that the information in our resources is correct but every school teaches the national curriculum in its own way. If you would like further guidance or are unsure in any way, we recommend that you speak to your child's teacher or another suitably qualified professional.

Past and Present Tense

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.

The past progressive tense is used to describe an ongoing 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 ongoing action in the present. For example:

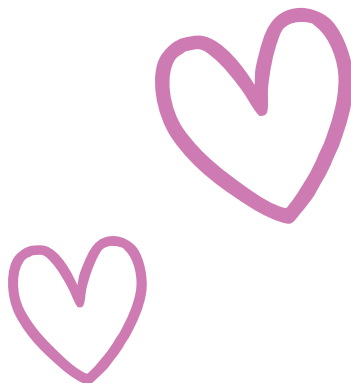
They are fishing in the river.

The train is arriving at the platform.

Your child will become more and more familiar with these two tenses at this point of key stage 2.

Your child will also begin to explore the present perfect tense. This refers to actions or states that:

- occur at an indefinite time in the past and have a consequence in the present (e.g. We have talked before. Here, it is clear the talking happened in the past but not clear when or if it happened more than once and over a longer period of time. The talking is also impacting what is happening in the present.)
- began in the past but continue into the present (e.g. He has grown impatient over the last few hours. Here, the growing impatience started in the past, but the person is still feeling impatient now.)



As well as using the resources found in this category and the suggested keyword searches to help your child with exploring past and present tense, As well as using the resources found in this category and the suggested keyword searches to help your child with exploring past and present tense, a few ideas for games and activities to help your child learn about past and present tense can be found below.

Present Progressive Activities Drawing

To practise the use of the present progressive tense, encourage your child to think of activities that begin now and may carry on for some time. Without using their voice, can they draw images that represent the action so that you can guess what it is? Then can they give a sentence that includes the present progressive tense? For example, they could draw a drum and drumstick to represent drumming, then say the sentence 'I am drumming at home.'

Changing Tenses

A great way for your child to practise using the correct verb tenses is to change one tense into another. You could use your child's favourite story or the reading book they have brought home from school. Ask them to change the tense and rewrite a part of the story in the opposite tense. For example, if the story is in past tense, can they rewrite it in present tense?

Recount Writing

To practise using different tenses, why not encourage your child to write a recount (or diary entry) about an event they have taken part in at the weekend? Remind your child to try and focus on how they can use the past progressive and present perfect tenses as well as simple past tense.

Explore Text Types

Look at an explanation text with your child. Can they spot the clues that tell them it's in present tense? Compare this to a story. Can they spot the difference between the two text types and recognise what makes one past and the other present tense? Split a piece of paper in half, then record the past tense clues on one side and the present tense clues on the other.



Step 1

Irregular Past Tense

Some verbs have irregular past tense versions where the verb changes totally, rather than just adding a suffix such as -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

Your child will hopefully feel confident about using irregular verbs at this stage, but it is always worth practising the skills to keep them fresh and clear. You could try using these display posters to act as a visual reminder of these types of verbs for your child.



Using Past and Present Tense

Once 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 and become more and more accurate with choosing the correct tense. At this stage, your child will be trying to use the correct verb tense in all of their writing and making consistent choices about which types of verbs to use. Doing activities that ask your child to identify and remember different forms of verb tenses is a good way to practise these skills and act as a reminder. You could have a go at some of the activities in this pack at home with your child, to explore different uses of tenses.

Step 2



Step 3

Past Progressive

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.)

This PowerPoint quiz offers your child an opportunity to practise spotting past and present progressive tenses, identifying which tense each phrase or sentence is in.

Present Perfect

Your child will learn about present perfect tense. This type of tense focuses on actions (verbs) that occur in the past but continue into the present or have consequences in the present. For example: Over the last few hours, he has grown hungry. In this example, the person started to grow hungry in the past but still feels hungry in the present. Your child will become more familiar with this tense type and begin using it consistently in their own writing. Why not try these worksheet activities with your child to practise this skill at home?

Step 4

Step 5

Diary Writing

During year 4, your child will continue to explore a range of different text types, including stories, instructions, diaries and explanation texts. Different styles of writing use different tenses. For example, diaries and stories tend to use past tense, whereas instructions and explanation texts usually use present tense. Your child will begin to become more and more familiar with which tense each text type uses and make appropriate word choices to match this. They will write an increasing range of text types, using the correct tense throughout. This diary writing activity pack is a good way to use a text type to explore tenses.



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Twinkl Boost is a range of intervention resources, created to support and lift learning with children at every level. These include our easy-to-use SATs and Phonics Screening resources.



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Imagine resources are designed to help your children to think creatively, question and imagine. Every week, a new topic consisting of five photos, each with related activities, is created.

Twinkl Originals are engaging stories written to inspire pupils from EYFS to KS2. Designed to encourage a love of reading and help curriculum-wide learning through accompanying resources.



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