Verb Tenses

Present & Past Tense
Verb tenses help to show time within a text. Two primary verb tenses are present and past tense.

Present: She dashes down the street.
- This action is happening right now.
Past: She dashed down the street.
- This action has already happened.

Future Tense & Auxiliaries
Future tense is shown through adding another word, called an auxiliary, such as will. Auxiliary verbs are verbs added to another verb to create a different tense.

Future: She will dash out the door.
- This action has not happened but will occur at a future time.

Common auxiliary verbs: be, can, do, may, must, ought, shall, will, has, have, had
- Will is added to the verb “dash” in order to tell us that she runs out of the home in a future time.

Perfect Tense
The perfect tense shows that an action has been completed at a particular point in time.

Perfect Present: Mary has worked for the company for five years.
- This tense suggests Mary worked, and currently works, for the company.
Perfect Past: Mary published the paper that she had written.
- This tense suggests Mary wrote the paper before she published it.
Perfect Future: Mary will have run to the store before breakfast.
- This tense states Mary will have completed the action at a specific moment in the future (before breakfast).

Showing Time with Adverbs
Although the verb tenses above are commonly used to show time within a text, there are other common ways to denote when an action happens, such as using adverbs. Adverbs are words that modify other words. These modifying words often clarify when something happens.

Adverb Example: Josh finally threw a ball.
- The adverb finally tells in what order the actions are completed during a specific time.

Common adverbs that show time: early, finally, first, late, next, recently, soon.