

Core principle: English verb conjugation can be described as the combination of a *tense* and an *aspect*.

1 The 2 tenses

The 2 grammatical tenses (tenses) ≠ physical time (time).

- The present: **Ø / s**
- The preterite: **-ED**

2 The 4 aspects

- The simple aspect: **Ø**
- The imperfective aspect: **BE-ING**
- The perfective aspect: **HAVE-EN**
- The double aspect: **HAVE-EN + BE-ING**

3 The 8 conjugations — tense-aspect combinations

PRESENT (Ø / S)

- The present simple (Ø + Ø/s)
- The present BE-ING (BE-ING + Ø/s)
- The present perfect simple (HAVE-EN + Ø/s)
- The present perfect BE-ING (HAVE-EN + BE-ING + Ø/s)

PRETERITE (-ED)

- The preterite simple (Ø + -ED)
- The preterite BE-ING (BE-ING + -ED)
- The past perfect simple (HAVE-EN + -ED)
- The past perfect BE-ING (HAVE-EN + BE-ING + -ED)

4 A few notes on these markers

- **Ø / s** — present marker: the bare verb stem (unchanged), or the s ending in the 3rd person singular.
- **-ED** — past marker.
- **HAVE-EN** — auxiliary *have* + past participle.
- **BE-ING** — auxiliary *be* + verb in -ing (here it really is the *-ing* ending).

Convention: $-ED$ = preterite and $-EN$ = past participle. This notational distinction tells the two apart; these are not the actual endings.