

Use of tenses

Present simple: a) states/activities that are always true

Two and two is four.

The sun rises in the east.

b) repeated activities, regular events

I study English every day.

Present continuous: a) activities/events in progress at the time of speaking

What are you doing right now? I am studying English.

b) temporary activities/events

He is living in a hall of residence. (temporarily, during his studies)

But: He lives with his parents in a terraced house. (permanently)

Past simple: activities/events completed in the past, with no relation to the present

I lived in Prague when I was a child.

He graduated two years ago.

Expressions often used with past simple:

yesterday, last week, last month, last year, in (2000), (5 years) ago, from (Monday) to (Saturday)

Past continuous: activities/events in progress in the past

When I came to see him, he was writing letters.

Compare: *The situation changed.* (it is different now)

The situation was changing. (it was in the process of changing as we observed it, but we do not know whether the change was completed)

Present perfect simple: activities/events taking place in the past but connected with the present

a) through their duration

I have lived in Pilsen for ten years. (up to now, probably even now)

I have lived in Pilsen since 2001.

b) through their consequences

I have lost my keys. (I can't open the door now).

Expressions often used with present perfect:

so far, up to now, never, (not) yet, already, recently, for (two) years, since (Monday), in the last few years, this week/month/year, how long?

Compare: *I studied English for two years.* (at some point in the past)

I have studied English for two years. (till now)

I have never been to England. (so far)

He passed the exam; I never thought he would.

(I "never thought" relates to the past event "he passed the exam")

Present perfect continuous: activities/events in progress in the past for a period until now, either still in progress or recently finished
I have been studying English for two years.
Present perfect simple and present perfect continuous are often interchangeable (see examples above).

Past perfect/Past perfect continuous: activities/events that took place before a point in the past or before another past activity/event
When I arrived, the lecturer had already started.
When I arrived, the lecturer had been speaking for about ten minutes.

Future tense: activities/events we expect or know will happen
The conference will take place next year.

“be going to” is used for future activities/events expressing
a) intention
I am going to draw a diagram to make it easier for you to understand.
b) prediction based on outside evidence
Look at the clouds, it's going to rain.

Notes:

- The English system of tenses is much more complex than the Czech. Compare the different ways of translating the Czech present tense.

Studuji angličtinu každý den.

*I **study** English every day.*

Co **děláš?** Právě **studuji** angličtinu.

*What **are you doing?** I **am studying** English.*

Studuji angličtinu pět let.

*I **have studied** English for five years.*

*I **have been studying** English for five years.*

- The commonly used tenses in scientific English are the present, past and present perfect tenses. The other tenses and the continuous forms are not very frequent.

See also Guidelines for Academic Writing: How to write a paper (Guidelines for writing a paper).

EXERCISES

I. Translate.

1. Pracuješ ve fakultní laboratoři každý den?

.....

2. Ano, pracuji, ale dnes tam nepracuji, protože učím.

.....

3. Budu pracovat ve fakultní laboratoři zítra. (je to můj záměr)

.....

4. Myslím, že tam budu pracovat dnes odpoledne.

.....
5. Nepracoval jsem ve fakultní laboratoři tento týden, ale pracoval jsem tam minulý týden.
.....

6. Pracoval jsem ve fakultní laboratoři v minulosti, ale teď tam nepracuji.
.....

7. Pracoval jsem v jiné laboratoři, než jsem začal pracovat zde.
.....

8. Je to velmi zkušený laborant – pracoval v laboratoři už dříve.
.....

9. Pracuje v laboratoři a má tu práci rád.
.....

10. Zítra budeme pravděpodobně pracovat ve fakultní laboratoři.
.....

11. Pracoval jsi vůbec někdy v laboratoři?
.....

12. Jak dlouho pracuješ v naší laboratoři?
.....

13. Pracuji tu už pět let.
.....

14. Pracuji tu od roku 2006.
.....

II. Fill the gaps in the sentences below, using the right tenses and forms of the verbs in the right-hand column.

1. I hope I one semester at a foreign university. (spend)
2. I my doctoral thesis in English. (it's my intention) (write)
3. He several papers in the last two years. (publish)
4. The book two years ago. (appear)
5. That problem never before. (discuss)
6. I in Prague before I to Pilsen (study, come)
7. All the reasons for the proposed changes already
..... (explain)
8. That method fully by my colleague
at tomorrow's session. (describe)
9. First the equipment, then we
several experiments and the results. (test, do)
(you are describing the procedure you chose) (analyse)
10. The proposed control strategy in Fig. 2. (describe)
(sentences 10 and 11: you are referring to something in your paper/presentation)
11. The results of our measurement in Table 3. (present)
12. I from this University in 2010. (graduate)
13. At present I for a PhD degree. (study)
14. All these changes in the 1990s. (make)

III. Correct the following sentences.

1. I am interested in electric drives for a long time.
.....

- 2. I work at the University for five months.
.....
- 3. Electricity is used for more than one hundred years.
.....
- 4. I have read the paper a few days ago.
.....
- 5. It remains the same for many years.
.....
- 6. This problem is not solved yet.
.....
- 7. This is what was done so far.
.....
- 8. I have not attended this course last year.
.....
- 9. Now I describe this method in detail.
.....
- 10. He cannot come – he teaches now.
.....
- 11. How long are you working on this project?
.....
- 12. The database is not created yet.
.....
- 13. I never heard anything so strange.
.....
- 14. This technology is developing rapidly in the last few years.
.....
- 15. This problem has been first discussed at our conference in 2008.
.....
- 16. The rapid development of MOSFETs in the last few years made them very attractive.
.....
- 17. The first experiments have been performed in the 1980s.
.....
- 18. I saw only one case like this so far.
.....