A QUICK GUIDE TO VERB TENSES
DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTRE

**SIMPLE PAST**
- Happened before another past action
  - He had eaten before he went to work.
- Happened at a defined moment in the past
  - She went to bed last night.
- Happened just before something else happened
  - He was studying before his exam.

**PRESENT TENSE**
- Began in the past & continues into the present
  - She has lived in Halifax for 5 years.
- Happened at an unspecified moment in the past
  - He ate.
- Happens regularly; daily routines & habits
  - He eats vegetables to stay healthy.

**PAST PERFECT**
- Happened very recently in the past & has an effect in the present
  - He has eaten.

**PRESENT PERFECT**
- An action that has not yet happened, but will happen before another action.
  - She will have eaten before she will exercise.

**FUTURE PERFECT**
- A future action at a specific moment
  - She will be visiting her mother tomorrow.
- Duration of an action up to a specified point in the future
  - He will be working on his essay until tomorrow.
  - Activity that will be in progress at a specific point in the future
  - She will be skiing next week.

**SIMPLE FUTURE**
- An action that has not yet happened.
  - He will exercise tonight.

*CONTINUOUS also known as PROGRESSIVE*
- Happening NOW
  - He is eating his sandwich.
- Happening around present moment, but began in very recent past & will end in the near future
  - She is working on her essay.
- Scheduled future event
  - He is meeting Jen tomorrow.

Prepared by K. Patriquin. Sources: [http://esl.about.com/od/grammarstructures/ig/Tenses-Chart/presentc2.htm](http://esl.about.com/od/grammarstructures/ig/Tenses-Chart/presentc2.htm); [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/601/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/601/01/)