

the rules that hold a sentence together, drilled till they're reflex

## Tenses, the working map

- simple**: a fact or habitual action, I write, I wrote, I will write
- continuous**: an action in progress at that time, I am writing, I was writing
- perfect**: an action completed before another point, I have written, I had written
- perfect continuous**: an action that started earlier and is still going, I have been writing



simple past: a point  
sitting behind now,  
nothing reaching forward



present perfect: the  
action's span reaches  
from the past up to now

## Choosing the right tense

- a completed action with a clear past time word (yesterday, last year) takes **simple past**
- an action still true or continuing now takes **present perfect**, no exact time word attaches to it
- two past actions, one finished before the other began: the earlier one takes **past perfect**
- a timetable or scheduled event can take present simple: the exam starts at 10, the bus leaves at 6

## Subject-verb agreement \*

- the verb agrees with the **subject**, not with a noun sitting closer to it in the sentence
- a collective noun (team, family, jury) usually takes a singular verb when acting as one unit
- two subjects joined by and take a plural verb, unless they name one single idea (bread and butter is)
- either, neither, each, everyone, nobody all take a **singular** verb
- a subject followed by with, along with, as well as still agrees with the original subject alone

asked rarely, scores big

## Conditionals, beyond the tense chart

- zero conditional, a general truth: if you heat water, it boils, both clauses in present simple
- first conditional, a real future possibility: if it rains, we will stay in
- second conditional, an unreal present: if I had time, I would help, past tense form but present meaning
- third conditional, an unreal past: if I had known, I would have come, describes what didn't happen

## Determiners, by class

### Articles

a, an before a countable singular noun, the for a specific one already known

### Numbers

one, two, first, second, exact or ordinal counts before a noun

### Demonstratives

this, that, these, those, point to something by nearness and number

### Quantifiers

some, any, much, many, few, little, match to countable or uncountable nouns

### Possessives

my, your, his, her, its, our, their, show ownership before a noun