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PRIMARY 4 · ENGLISH · GRAMMAR

Grammar

Theory and worked examples

Tenses and Their Clue Words

A tense tells us WHEN an action happens. The verb (the action word) changes its form to show the time. Before you choose an answer, look for a clue word that tells you the time. Then pick the tense that matches it.

> TIP
> **Underline the clue word first. The clue word decides the tense, not the word that "sounds right".**

Tense	When we use it	Clue words	Example
Simple present	habits and facts	every day, always, usually, often, never	Mr Lim always waters his plants in the morning.
Present continuous	happening right now	now, Look!, Listen!, Keep quiet!, at the moment	Listen! The birds are singing outside my window.
Simple past	finished in the past	yesterday, last week, two days ago, just now, in 2024	Our class planted a mango tree last Monday.
Simple future	will happen later	tomorrow, next week, soon, later	Grandma will arrive from Penang tomorrow.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Every Sunday, Kavitha _____ (help) her mother at the market stall.

1. Find the clue words: "Every Sunday". This is a habit, so use the simple present.
2. "Kavitha" is one person, so the verb takes -s: "helps".

Every Sunday, Kavitha helps her mother at the market stall.

TRY THIS T1 · answer in the Answer Key at the back

Kumar _____ (drop) his pencil on the floor just now.

Answer: _____

The Past Continuous: While, When and As

The past continuous shows an action that was going on (in the middle of happening) at a time in the past. Form it with was / were + verb-ing. Often a short action in the simple past cuts it short.

TRAP

The short action that cuts in does NOT take -ing. Say "when the phone rang", not "when the phone was ringing".

- While / As + past continuous: "While Dad was driving to work, it began to pour."
- Past continuous + when + simple past: "We were having dinner when the phone rang."
- The long action takes was / were + -ing. The short action that cuts in takes the simple past.
- Use "was" with I, he, she, it and one person or thing. Use "were" with you, we, they and two or more.

WORKED EXAMPLE

The twins _____ (play) chess in the living room when the lights went out.

1. Two actions in the past: playing chess (long) and the lights going out (short).
2. The long action was going on when the short one cut in, so use the past continuous.
3. "The twins" are two people, so use "were": "were playing".

The twins were playing chess in the living room when the lights went out.

TRY THIS T2 · answer in the Answer Key at the back

As Halimah _____ (cross) the road, a cyclist rang his bell at her.

Answer: _____

QUICK REMINDER

The long action takes was / were + -ing; the short action that cuts in takes the simple past. Example: I was brushing my teeth when the tap broke.

The Present Perfect: has / have + Past Participle

The present perfect joins the past to now. Form it with has / have + the past participle (the third form of the verb: done, eaten, finished). Use it when an action has finished but we do not say exactly when, or when it started in the past and is still true now.

TRAP

"since" and "for" need has / have. "I know Ali since Primary 1" is wrong. Say "I have known Ali since Primary 1." Also, never use "yesterday" or "last week" with has / have.

- already, just, yet: "The bus has just left." "Have you fed the fish yet?"
- since + a starting point: since Monday, since 8 a.m., since 2020.
- for + a length of time: for two hours, for three weeks, for a long time.
- Use "has" with he, she, it and one person. Use "have" with I, you, we, they.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Choose the correct answer: My neighbours _____ in Tampines for six years.
(1) live (2) are living (3) have lived (4) lived

1. Clue words: "for six years". The living started in the past and is still true now.
2. That is the present perfect: has / have + past participle.
3. "My neighbours" is plural, so "have lived".

(3) have lived

TRY THIS T3 · answer in the Answer Key at the back

Wei Ming _____ (already / pack) his bag for the school camp.

Answer: _____

QUICK REMINDER

"since" + a starting point and "for" + a length of time need has / have. Example: Aunty May has kept goldfish since 2022.

Verb Forms: Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs do not add -ed, so learn all three forms. Use the past on its own ("She swam") and the past participle after has / have ("She has swum").

TRAP

"He catched the ball" is wrong. Say "He caught the ball."

Verb	Past	Past participle	Verb	Past	Past participle	Verb	Past	Past participle
begin	began	begun	eat	ate	eaten	see	saw	seen
break	broke	broken	fall	fell	fallen	sing	sang	sung
bring	brought	brought	fly	flew	flown	sleep	slept	slept
buy	bought	bought	forget	forgot	forgotten	swim	swam	swum
catch	caught	caught	give	gave	given	take	took	taken
choose	chose	chosen	go	went	gone	teach	taught	taught
come	came	come	hide	hid	hidden	throw	threw	thrown
do	did	done	know	knew	known	wear	wore	worn
drink	drank	drunk	run	ran	run	write	wrote	written

TRY THIS T4 · answer in the Answer Key at the back

The pigeon _____ (fly) away yesterday, but it has _____ (fly) back to its nest now.

Answer: _____

QUICK REMINDER

Irregular verbs: past on its own, past participle after has / have. Example: The baby slept for an hour. He has slept well.

Subject-Verb Agreement: One or More Than One

The subject is the person or thing that does the action. The verb must agree with (match) the subject. A singular subject (one) takes a singular verb. A plural subject (more than one) takes a plural verb.

REMEMBER

A verb + s goes with ONE subject. "The girl sings." "The girls sing."

- "and" joins two subjects into a plural subject: "Ben and his sister are in the choir." "My friend and I were at the library."
- I and you are special: "I am", "I was"; "you are", "you were" (even for one person).

Singular subject (one)	Plural subject (more than one)
is / was	are / were
has	have
does	do
runs, eats, plays (verb + s)	run, eat, play

WORKED EXAMPLE

Pei Shan and her cousin _____ (was / were) at the swimming complex last Saturday.

1. Find the subject: "Pei Shan and her cousin". "and" joins two people.
2. Two people make a plural subject.
3. "last Saturday" is in the past. Plural + past = "were".

Pei Shan and her cousin were at the swimming complex last Saturday.

TRY THIS T5 · answer in the Answer Key at the back

The flowers in our garden _____ (smell / smells) very sweet.

Answer: _____

QUICK REMINDER

"and" joins two subjects, so the verb is plural. Example: My grandpa and grandma go for a walk every evening.

CHAPTER 1

Practice Questions

Part 2: Grammar



In the practice questions

47 questions, 47 marks. Read each question carefully and write your answers in the spaces given. The answers are on page 259.

- Section A: Grammar MCQ: 20 questions, 20 marks
- Section B: Correct Form of the Word: 10 questions, 10 marks
- Section C: Correct the Underlined Word: 8 questions, 8 marks
- Section D: Challenge: 9 questions, 9 marks

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

PRIMARY 4 · ENGLISH · GRAMMAR

Grammar

Section A: Grammar MCQ

For each question, four options are given. One of them is the correct answer. Choose the correct answer and write its number (1, 2, 3 or 4) in the brackets.

1 "_____ shoes on the top shelf over there are mine," said Priya. ( ) [1]

(1) These (2) Those (3) This (4) That

2 Ahmad _____ his grandparents in Malacca last weekend. ( ) [1]

(1) visits (2) is visiting (3) visited (4) will visit

3 Shh! Grandpa _____ his afternoon nap on the sofa. ( ) [1]

(1) is taking (2) takes (3) took (4) has taken

4 The school sports day will be held _____ Friday, 22 May. ( ) [1]

(1) in (2) at (3) since (4) on

5 All pupils must _____ their name tags during the school trip. ( ) [1]

(1) wears (2) wear (3) wearing (4) to wear

6 Nurul and her brother _____ at the void deck when the rain started. ( ) [1]

(1) is (2) was (3) were (4) are

7 Daniel wanted to buy the storybook, _____ he did not have enough money. ( ) [1]

(1) but (2) so (3) or (4) because

8 Please put only _____ sugar in my tea because I do not like it too sweet. ( ) [1]

(1) many (2) few (3) a few (4) a little

9 There is _____ umbrella in the corridor. Does anyone know whose it is? ( ) [1]

① a ② an ③ the ④ any

10 Mrs Goh gave Mei Ling and _____ a sticker for helping her. ( ) [1]

① me ② I ③ myself ④ mine

11 My cousin Kumar enjoys _____ stories to his little sister at bedtime. ( ) [1]

① read ② to read ③ reads ④ reading

12 The old man did not want to slip, so he walked _____ across the wet floor of the market. ( ) [1]

① careful ② carefully ③ carelessly ④ more careful

13 Of all the pupils in our class, Siti is the _____ singer. ( ) [1]

① good ② better ③ best ④ well

14 After a long talk, our class decided _____ a drinks stall at the Children's Day fair. ( ) [1]

① to run ② running ③ run ④ ran

15 Pupils _____ use their mobile phones during lessons. It is against the school rules. ( ) [1]

① should ② can ③ will ④ must not

16 Very _____ pupils came for the extra lesson on Saturday, so Miss Lee was disappointed. ( ) [1]

① a few ② few ③ a little ④ much

17 Mrs Tan threw away the bananas _____ had turned black. ( ) [1]

① who ② where ③ which ④ whose

18 Mr Rahman, together with his pupils, _____ planting sunflowers in the school garden now. ( ) [1]

① is ② are ③ were ④ was

19 Aunt Lina _____ the floor when the doorbell rang. ( ) [1]

① sweeps ② is sweeping ③ has swept ④ was sweeping

20 Jason _____ his homework already, so he can watch television now. ( ) [1]

① finishes ② finish ③ has finished ④ is finishing

Section B: Correct Form of the Word

Write the correct form of the word in the brackets in the space given.

21 My grandfather is very fit. Every morning, he _____ (jog) around the park near our flat. [1]

22 Look! The monkeys _____ (climb) up the tall tree. [1]

23 Siti _____ (buy) a new pair of shoes two days ago. [1]

24 The children _____ (swim) in the pool when the lifeguard blew his whistle. [1]

25 Next Saturday, our class _____ (visit) the Science Centre. [1]

26 I have _____ (write) three letters to my pen pal this month. [1]

27 The puppy hurt _____ (it) when it jumped off the sofa. [1]

28 This is the _____ (good) chicken rice I have ever tasted. [1]

29 My school bag is _____ (heavy) than my sister's bag. [1]

30 The pupils listened _____ (quiet) to the story about the brave mouse deer. [1]

Section C: Correct the Underlined Word

Each sentence has one underlined word that is wrong. Write the correct word on the answer line.

31 Raju <u>eated</u> two plates of fried rice for lunch yesterday.
Answer: _____ [1]