

Aggie Grammar Guide: Verb Tense and Form

Answer Key

What follows are options for answers to the practices. In reality, writers can choose from many correct options.

Intermediate Practice

- 1) Present Continuous. I **am majoring** in Linguistics at UC Davis.
- 2) Present Perfect Continuous. UCD students **have been dealing** with tuition increases for the last 10 years.
- 3) Future Continuous. After I graduate, I **will be looking** for a job.
- 4) Past Continuous. Before I applied, I **was thinking** of attending UC Davis because of its great reputation.
- 5) Past Perfect Continuous. Before I came to UC Davis, I **had been going** to school for 12 years.
- 6) Future Perfect. By this time next year, I **will have passed** all my classes.
- 7) Simple Past. My Chicano/a Studies professor **affected** me the most.
- 8) Future Perfect Continuous. By this time next year, I **will have been attending** UC Davis for two years.
- 9) Present Perfect: I **have developed** my ability to write technical reports.
- 10) Simple Present. My UCD professors **are** kind and helpful.
- 11) Simple Future. The next quarter **will begin** in June.

Advanced Practice

What follows is the correct paragraph and responses to each question that follows.

Corrected paragraph:

(1) I **have been** “learning” English since elementary school. (2) The reason I **added** quotation marks **is** that in almost every Chinese school, rather than teaching students how to actually use English as a tool to communicate, educators **teach** students how to deal with English exams, which **consist** mostly of vocabulary and grammar. (3) After starting my college life in America, I **am** now proficient in reading and writing but still **lack** the ability to speak English in front of people. (4) Actually, this issue **has become** a major problem among Chinese students in American colleges. (5) I once **read** an article **written** by a professor at a university in America. (6) In the article, the author **said** that there **are** more and more Chinese students who **are coming/come** to America nowadays and they often **get** nice grades in class. (7) However, unlike native speakers, these Chinese students barely **speak** or **ask** questions during lectures.

Sentence 1: I **was** “learning” English since elementary school.

- i. Is each verb in sentence 1 in a logical tense? No. “Was” should be “have been” because the word “since” is an adverb that indicates an action that started in the past and continues into the present.

Sentence 2: The reason I **added** quotation marks **is** that in almost every Chinese school, rather than teaching students how to actually use English as a tool to communicate, educators **teach** students how to deal with English exams, which **consist** mostly of vocabulary and grammar.

- i. Is each verb in sentence 2 in a logical tense? Yes
- ii. Is there a tense switch within sentence 2? Yes. The author logically shifts from past (“added”) to present (“is,” “teach,” “consist”). This is logical because the action of adding quotation marks happened in the past, whereas the other verbs indicate general facts, which are always in the present tense.
- iii. Is there a tense shift between “have been” in sentence 1 and “added” in sentence 2? Yes. This shift is logical because the first action is ongoing, while the second action is completed.

Sentence 3: After starting my college life in America, I **am** now proficient in reading and writing but still **had lacked** the ability to speak English in front of people.

- i. Is each verb in sentence 3 in a logical tense? No. While “am” and “started” are logical, “had lacked” should be “lack,” which is the present tense, to be consistent with “am.”
- ii. Is there a tense switch within sentence 3? The original sentence has a tense shift from present (“am”) to past perfect (“had lacked”), but it is illogical. After changing “had lacked” to “lack,” both verbs are logically in the present tense and there is no tense shift.
- iii. Is there a tense shift between “consist” in sentence 2 and “am” in sentence 3? There is no tense shift between the sentences, and this is logical because the author is continuing to discuss general facts.

Sentence 4: Actually, this issue **has become** a major problem among Chinese students in American colleges.

- i. Is each verb in sentence 4 in a logical tense? Yes
- ii. Is there a tense shift between “lack” in sentence 3 and “has become” in sentence 4? Yes, although both are types of present tenses; “lack” is the simple present and “has become” is the present perfect. This shift is logical because the author is moving from a general fact (lacking the ability to speak English in front of people) to an action that started in the past and continues to the present (English ability being a problem for Chinese students).

Sentence 5: I once **read** an article **written** by a professor at a university in America.

- i. Is each verb in sentence 5 in a logical tense? Yes
- ii. Is there a tense switch within sentence 5? There is no tense shift in the sentence, and this is logical because the author is describing past actions. (Note: “written” is a reduced form of “which was written,” which is the passive past tense).
- iii. Is there a tense shift between “has become” in sentence 4 and “read” in sentence 5? Yes. Sentence 4 is in the present perfect tense (“has become”), while sentence 5 is in the past tense (“read,” “written”). This shift is logical because the author is moving from discussing an ongoing problem to actions the author completed in the past.

Sentence 6: In the article, the author **said** that there **are** more and more Chinese students who **came** to America nowadays and they often **get** nice grades in class.

- i. Is each verb in sentence 6 in a logical tense? No. "Said," "are," and "get" are all logical, but "came" should be "come" or "are coming" because the adverb "nowadays" indicates present time.
- ii. Is there a tense switch within sentence 6? The original sentence logically shifts between past ("read") and present ("are"), but the shift back to past ("came") is illogical. After revising "came" to "come" or "coming," the shift between past ("said") and present ("are," "come/coming," "get") is logical because the author starts by describing a past action (an attribution to something the article's author wrote in the past) and moves to describing general facts, which are in the present tense.
- iii. Is there a tense shift between "written" in sentence 5 and "said" in sentence 6? There is no shift between the sentences, and this is logical because the author is continuing to discuss the article's author in the past.

Sentence 7: However, unlike native speakers, these Chinese students barely **speak** or **ask** questions during lectures.

- i. Is each verb in sentence 7 in a logical tense? Yes
- ii. Is there a tense switch within sentence 7? No. Both verbs are present ("speak," "ask"), and this is logical because the author is speaking generally.
- iii. Is there a tense shift between "get" in sentence 6 and "speak" in sentence 7? No. The author logically continues to use present tense in sentences 6 and 7 to indicate that they are continuing to discuss Chinese students generally.