

Tense and aspect are two different concepts in the English tense system that regularly lead to confusion for German learners.

Tense can be defined as:

Changes in the form of a verb that show when an action takes place. Based on this we can distinguish two different tenses in English: the past and the present.

Aspect can be defined as:

A grammatical category which reflects the way in which the verb action is regarded or experienced with respect to time.

The so-called Progressive Aspect is actually not a tense, but an aspect and not to be mixed up with the tenses.

The following general rules apply:

The Progressive Form indicates that a situation is in progress.

- It expresses temporary duration of the action.
- It can also imply that the action is incomplete.
- The Progressive often focuses attention on the action itself.

Signal words:

Some adverbs usually only occur with either the Simple or the Progressive Form. They can be a very reliable guide to which aspect should be used in a specific context.

The Progressive Form is used with the following adverbs of temporary duration: *at present, at the moment, currently.*

The Simple Form is used with the following adverbs of frequency: *always, frequently, never, normally, occasionally, often, rarely, seldom, sometimes, usually.*

Stative verbs:

Stative verbs express a state and usually use the Simple Form.

There are five types of stative verbs:

Type 1: state of „being“ or „having“:

be, apply to, belong, have, contain, lack

Type 2: intellectual states (large class):

assume, believe, doubt, expect, forget, hope

Type 3: emotional states or attitudes (large class):

agree, consider, hate, intend, like, love, need

Type 4: states of perception (closed class):

feel, hear, see, smell, taste, appear, seem

Type 5: states of physical sensations (small class)

ache, hurt, itch, tickle

Attention!: In certain cases stative verbs can use the Progressive Form.