

Tense use in academic writing ... a beginner's guide

This is a summary of the tenses most commonly used in academic writing.

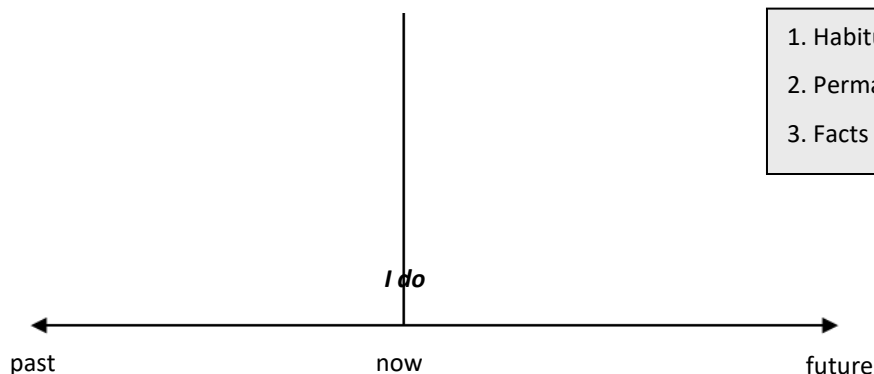
Purpose	Tense	Example
Information or concepts that are accepted in your field as a "fact" or "true"	Present	<p>The behavioural science approach <u>uses</u> scientific research to develop theories about human behaviour in organisations (Bartol, Martin, Tein & Mathews, 2006).</p> <p>Kingfishers <u>are</u> found throughout the mainland of New Zealand and some offshore islands. [ECOL103 assignment]</p> <p>Leisure, recreation, play, tourism and sport <u>are</u> all terms that are familiar to most people. [RECN101 assignment]</p>
"Historical" facts	Past	The quantitative management viewpoint <u>emerged</u> during World War Two (Bartol et al., 2006).
To make general statements about previous research, or summarise previous research from several sources	Present perfect	<p>Societies' consumeristic desires <u>have been satisfied</u> in the past through the commercial sector (Smith, 1997). [ERST312 assignment]</p> <p>The rising affluence of consumers <u>has led</u> to increasing national and international markets for goods and services (Stock & Lambert, 2001).</p> <p>Previous solutions <u>have been based</u> on technological and institutional foundations. [ECOL103 assignment]</p>
Report one specific piece of evidence	Past	<p>Ralph and Ralph (1977), in their census of the kingfisher population, <u>surveyed</u> a large area from the Waikato in the North Island to Christchurch in the South Island. [ECOL103 assignment]</p> <p>Psychologist John Neulinger <u>suggested</u> that when an activity is freely chosen and pursued for its own sake, then it should be considered leisure (Csikszentmihalyi & Kleiber, 1991). [RECN 101 assignment]</p>
To use examples of current practice (e.g. from a case study, or observations from a field trip)	Present	<p>This rest home <u>provides</u> health facilities for frail but mobile elderly people and also <u>provides</u> other benefits. [MKTG201 assignment]</p> <p>XXX <u>is</u> a well established Los Angeles-based manufacturer of fabrics and clothing that is currently experiencing a significant growth phase. [FINC204 assignment]</p>
To state your purpose or thesis	Present or past	<p>The purpose of this report <u>is</u> to discuss the investment relating to two large six-colour presses. [FINC204 assignment]</p> <p>This report <u>was prepared</u> for</p>
Recommendations	Present (+ modal)	<p>JDD <u>should position</u> itself as a high quality retirement complex that offers a total healthcare service. [MKTG201 assignment]</p> <p>The report <u>recommends</u> that press A is a better investment, because it has higher NPV and is likely to be more profitable. [FINC204 assignment]</p>

Examples from assignments by Lincoln University students, and from the following sources:

Bartol, K., Martin, D., Tein, M. & Mathews, G. (2006). *Management: A Pacific Rim focus*. North Ryde, NSW: McGraw-Hill.

Stock, J. & Lambert, D.M. (2001). *Strategic logistics management*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

1. Present simple



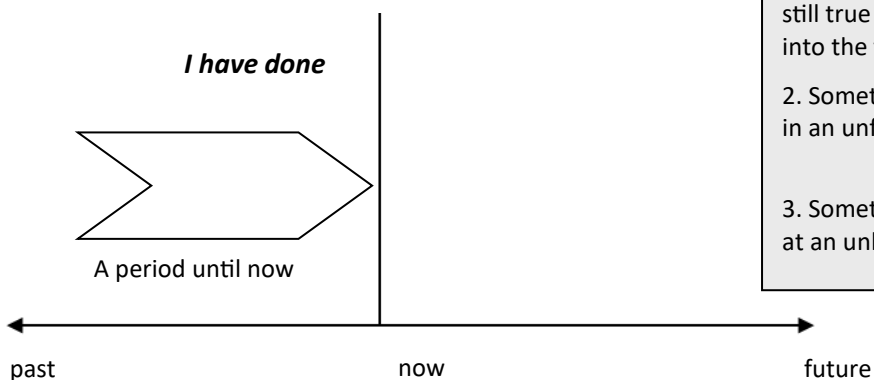
- 1. Habitual actions
- 2. Permanent situations
- 3. Facts that are always true

2. Past simple



- 1. Complete action/experience that happened in the past at a particular time
- 2. Past states/actions that were habitual/repeated over period of time

3. Present perfect



Shows connection between a past event/activity and the present

- 1. Something began in the past, is still true now and could continue into the future
- 2. Something happened in the past in an unfinished time period
- 3. Something happened in the past at an unknown or unstated time

More resources

If you would like to know more about using different tenses, visit our website at: <http://ltl.lincoln.ac.nz/> or ask at the Welcome Desk about the workshops, drop-in sessions, and individual appointments we offer.

Workshops

Drop-in

Appointments