

# Verb Tenses in English

A Basic Review with Exercises

Rush University Center for Academic Excellence

**English has three major verb tenses, which are divided according to time:**

**past, present, and future.**

**These three can be further subdivided into *aspects*. Aspects have more to do with meaning than time:**

**simple, progressive, perfect, perfect progressive**

All in all, there are 12 verb tense subtypes or categories in English .

The Big Three *Aspects*:

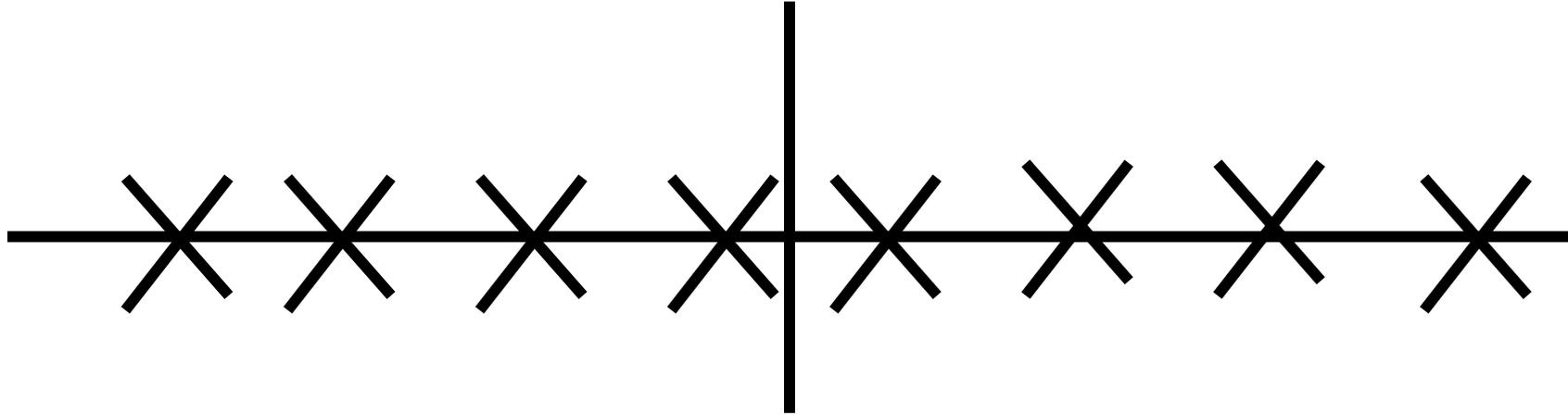
**Simple**

**Progressive**

**Perfect**

# The Simple Present

Expresses a habit or often repeated action. Adverbs of frequency such as, *often, seldom, sometimes, never, etc.* are used with this tense.



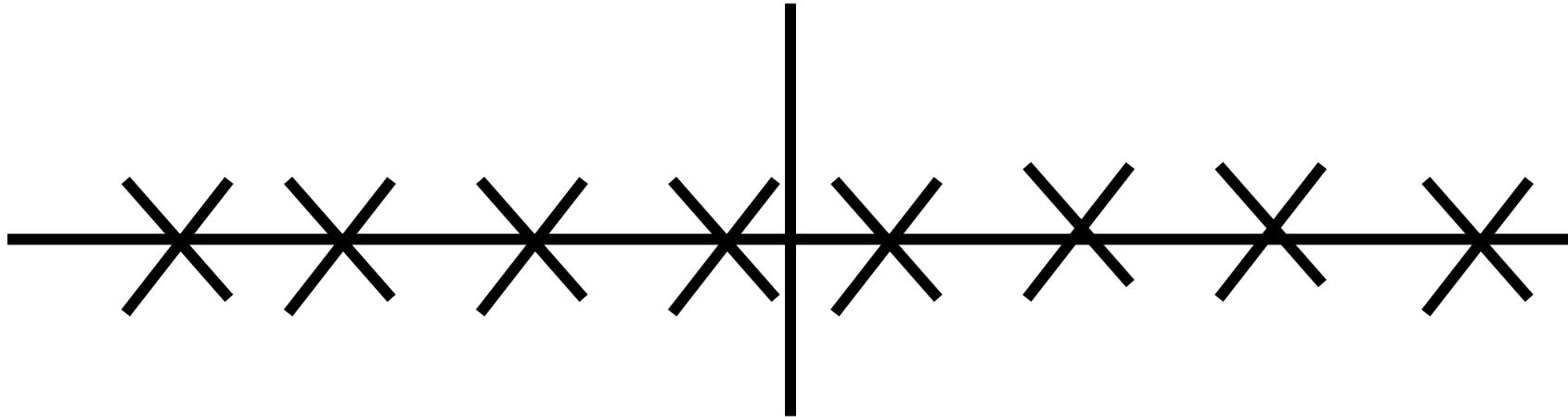
She goes to work every day.

They *always* eat lunch together.

He *rarely* drinks.

# The Simple Present

It also expresses general truths or facts that are timeless.



Snow falls in the December in Minnesota.

Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.

Leaves turn red, orange, and brown in the fall.

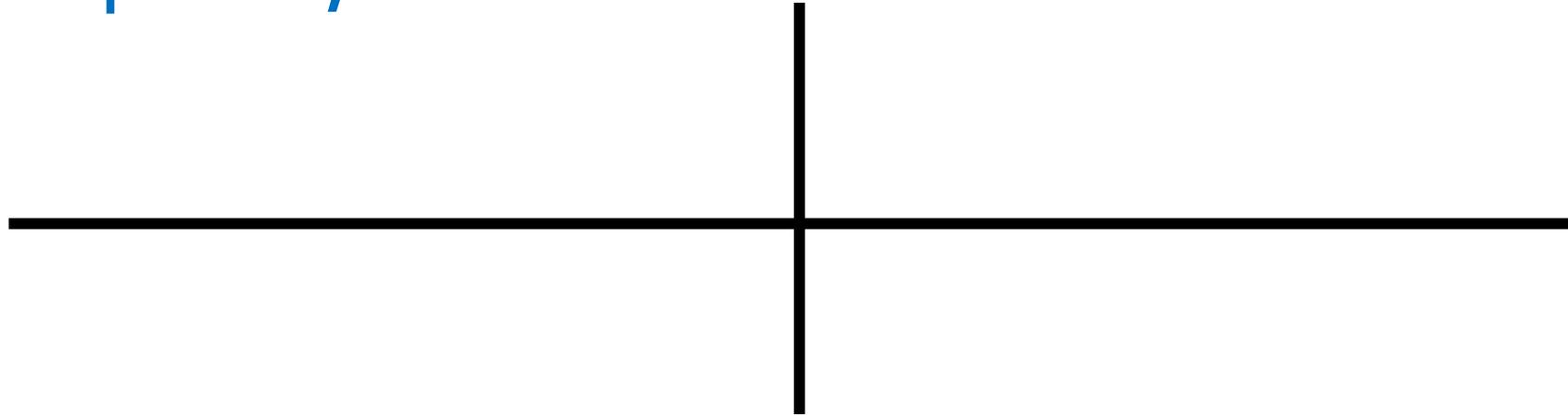
# The Present Progressive or Continuous be + verb + ing

This tense is used to describe an action that is occurring right now (at this moment, today, this year, etc.). The action has begun and is still in progress.

She is typing a paper for her class.  
He can't talk. He is fixing the sink right now.

# The Present Progressive or Continuous      be + verb + ing

The present progressive can also be used to describe an action that is occurring in the present, but is temporary.



**NOW**

We are living with friends until our new house is ready.

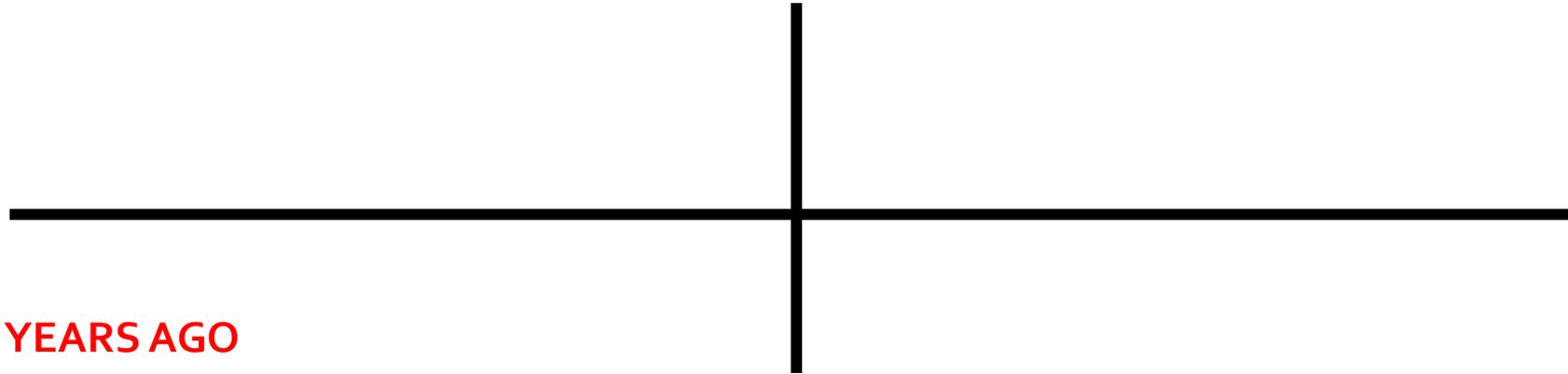
She is working in Chicago, but plans to move to New York next year.

I am going to the store. Do you need anything?

# The Present Perfect

have + past participle

The present perfect is used to talk about an event that began in the past and continues up to the present.



TEN YEARS AGO

She has loved him for ten years. NOW

2000

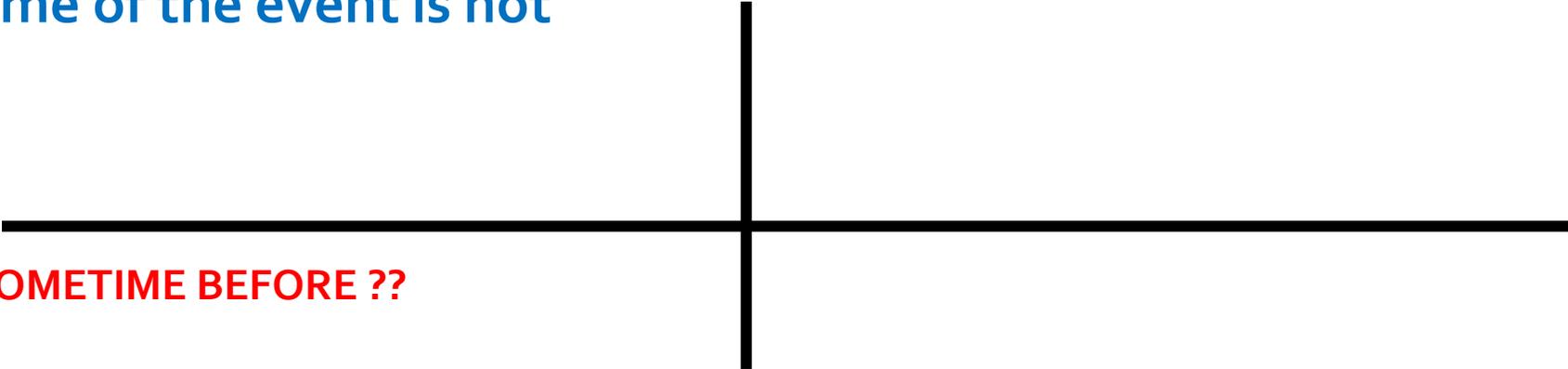
NOW

They have lived in Chicago since 2000.

# The Present Perfect

## Have + past participle

The present perfect is also used to talk about an event that was completed in the past, but the specific time of the event is not important.



SOMETIME BEFORE ??

I have read *War and Peace* before.

I have also seen the movie version, too.

NOW

He has just washed the car.

Maria has just come home.

# Practice

## Action that happens repeatedly

I always \_\_\_\_\_ to the ice cream shop on Friday nights.

I never \_\_\_\_\_ or drink.

## Facts

Whales \_\_\_\_\_ the largest marine creatures.

The sun \_\_\_\_\_ in the west and \_\_\_\_\_ in the east.

**Action happening now or close to  
the time of speaking:**

We \_\_\_\_\_ in class. (sit)

It \_\_\_\_\_ heavily right now. (rain)

We \_\_\_\_\_ a grammar activity.  
(do)

# Temporary situations

I \_\_\_\_\_ Chicago until I can find a better job in Milwaukee. (live)

He \_\_\_\_\_ there while he's in college. (work)

Mary \_\_\_\_\_ some exercises to strengthen her legs until she makes a full recovery. (do)

We \_\_\_\_\_ the train to work this summer because of the road construction. (take)

## Action that started in the past and lasts until now

He \_\_\_\_\_ her ever since they met. (like)

They \_\_\_\_\_ each other ever since they started working together.  
(hate)

Maria \_\_\_\_\_ Ivan for almost 20 years. (know)

Igor \_\_\_\_\_ familiar with that author for a long time.  
(be)