

A Brief Overview of German Verb Tenses and their Usages (Simplified)

<i>Tense name(s) in English</i>	<i>Tense name in German</i>	<i>Time of action (Formula for creating tense)</i>	<i>Examples in German</i>	<i>Meanings in English</i>
Past perfect (Pluperfect)	Plusquam- perfekt	Remote past (die weitere Vergangenheit). Indicates an action having occurred prior to the time of the narrative. Typically used with the word <i>schon</i> "already." <i>(Präteritum of auxiliary + Partizip II)</i>	Sie hatte den Kuchen schon gegessen. Er war schon nach Hause gefahren. Ich hatte den Film schon gesehen. Sie hatten mich schon gefragt.	She had already eaten the cake. He had already gone home. I had already seen the movie. They had already asked me.
Present perfect (Conversational past)	Perfekt	Past time (die Vergangenheit). Completed action. Used for reporting actions having occurred in the past. Typically used in spoken language, also found in letters and journalistic reports. <i>(Präsens of auxiliary + Partizip II)</i>	Sie hat den Kuchen gegessen. Er ist nach Hause gefahren. Ich habe den Film gesehen. Sie haben mich gefragt.	She ate the cake. He went home. I saw the movie. They asked me.
Preterit (Simple past)	Präteritum	Past time (die Vergangenheit). Completed action. Used for reporting actions having occurred in the past. Typically used in written language, especially fiction writing or a narrative where the events are connected. <i>(Präteritum)</i>	Sie aß den Kuchen. Er fuhr nach Hause. Ich sah den Film. Sie fragten mich.	She ate the cake. He went home. I saw the movie. They asked me.
Present	Präsens	Present time (die Gegenwart). General truth (no specific time, always true). Future time (usually with a time element). <i>(Präsens)</i>	Sie isst immer Kuchen. Er fährt morgen nach Hause. Ich sehe jede Woche einen Film. Sie fragen ständig. (Präsens)	She always eats cake. He is going home tomorrow. I see a movie every week. The constantly ask.
Future	Futur	Future time (die Zukunft). Present time when the certainty is in doubt. <i>(werden + Infinitiv)</i>	Sie wird den Kuchen essen. Er wird wohl jetzt nach Hause fahren. Ich werde den Film sehen. Sie werden mich wohl fragen.	She is going to eat the cake. He is probably going home now. I will see the movie. They'll probably be asking me.