

## Expert Grammar 5.1

## Module 1

## Tenses in academic English (page 13)

## A Forms of tenses

- 1 In simple tenses we use the simple form of the verb, which may be the present form or the past form. We also use *do* as an auxiliary verb.  
*Many academics **work** at this university.*  
*The academics **don't teach** all the time; they also **research**.*  
*Do the academics **mark** exams?*  
*Where **do** the academics **work**?*  
*Most students **took** exams last year.*  
*Most students **didn't fail** their exams last year.*  
*Did most students **pass** their exams?*  
*Where **did** the students **go**?*
- 2 In continuous tenses we use the *-ing* form of the verb and *be* as an auxiliary verb.  
*The students **are leaving** the lecture theatre but they aren't going home.*  
*Are the students **using** the library more nowadays?*  
*Where **is** he **going**?*  
*Unfortunately, the students **weren't paying** much attention to the lecture, though the lecturer **was trying** hard to keep his lecture interesting.*  
*Were the students **studying** hard?*  
*Where **was** the **professor** going?*
- 3 In perfect tenses we use the past participle of the verb and *have* as an auxiliary verb.  
*He **has written** several books but he **hasn't finished** writing his current book yet.*  
*Has the new research project **begun** yet?*  
*Where **has** the **professor** **gone**?*  
*He **had learned** six languages before the age of 25.*  
*He **hadn't studied** the language before university.*  
*Had he **studied** any Korean?*  
*Which languages **had** he **studied** previously?*
- 4 Tenses can also be a combination of perfect and continuous forms.  
*I **haven't been practising** my Korean as much recently.*  
*He **had just been thinking** about his assignment.*
- 5 Future can be expressed in many ways in English. Various present forms are common.  
*He's **visiting** another university next month.*  
*They're **going to meet** outside the library later.*  
*The lecture **finishes** at 3pm.*  
*I'm about to go.*  
*They **expect** the project to finish on time.*  
 Some modal verbs, including *will*, *might* and *could*, are used to talk about the future (especially *will*). The continuous and perfect forms can be used, but they are rare in real life, especially in academic English.

*The university **will introduce** a new course next year.*  
*The students **might be protesting** this time next week.*  
*We'll **have finished** the project by this time tomorrow.*  
*The lecturer **will have been working** for forty years on 30 December.*

## B Use of tenses in academic English

Simple tenses are significantly more common than continuous or perfect tenses in academic English. Continuous tenses are relatively rare – much less common than in everyday conversation, for example.

## Passive v. active (page 13)

## A Use

Why use the passive?

- 1 A sentence usually begins with information that has already been mentioned. Choosing between the active and the passive allows us to place the already-mentioned information at the beginning of the sentence.  
*I gave her a drink. It **was made** by my friend.* NOT  
*I gave her a drink. My friend made it.* (My friend hasn't been mentioned before but the drink (it) has been mentioned before.)  
*Parts of South America's economy **are based on** agriculture. For example, coffee **is grown** there.* (The active version, *People grow coffee in South America*, is awkward because 'people' haven't been mentioned before.)
  - 2 Sometimes we don't want to, don't need to or can't mention who did something (e.g. it's not the main point, or we don't know who did it). The passive can help here.  
*The subjects **were asked** to sit in the chair and answer some questions.* (The person who did the action – a researcher – is not important information here, so it's missed out.)  
*The lost wallet **was handed in** to the police station.* (Possibly no one knows who handed it in.)  
*A mistake **has been made**.* (You need to mention the mistake but don't want to start an argument by blaming someone – or don't want to mention that you did it!)
- In academic English, the person who did an action is often not the main point, so the passive is used. For example, when describing processes or experimental procedures, it's not usually important to state who did them. While the passive is more common in academic writing than in more informal forms of writing, the active is still used for nearly 80 percent of main verbs in academic writing.

## B Form

- 1 We form the passive of the present simple and past simple with the appropriate form of *be* + past participle. We use the present form of *be* in the present simple passive and the past form of *be* in the past simple passive.