

Tenses

Tenses play a crucial role in the English language. It denotes the time an action takes place, whether sometime in the past, in the present or will take some time in the future.

Types of tenses

From a general view of tenses, this module will go on to discuss each tense in detail with examples and also New way to learn Tense with Examples and Exercises. The table below gives a glimpse of the way tenses are used using the verb 'play'

Past

Present

Future

Simple

Played (verb+ed)

Plays (verb+s)

will/shall play (will/shall+verb)

Perfect

had played (had+past participle)

has/have played (has/have+past participle)

will/shall have played(will/shall+past participle)

Continuous

was/were playing(was/were+verb+ing)

is/am/are playing(is/am/are+verb+ing)

will/shall be playing(will/shall be+verb+ing)

Perfect Continuous

had been playing (had been+verb+ing)

Types of Tenses

PAST TENSE

1) Simple Past Tense-

Indicates an action took place before the present moment and that has no real connection with the present time.

For example, "He danced in the function." (The action took place in the past, is finished and is completely unrelated to the present)

"He flew to alThriday."

Note

a. The verb 'flew' is an irregular verb which does not take 'ed' in the past tense like regular verbs.

b. The form of Simple Past Tense is - verb + ed

2) Past Perfect Tense-

Indicates an action in the past that had been completed before another time or event in the past.

For example, "He had exercised before it started to rain."

"He had slept before I came back from the market."

Note

a. The form of Past Perfect Tense is- had + verb (past participle form or the 3rd form of the verb)

3) Past Continuous Tense-

Indicates an action going on at some time in the past or an action in the past that is longer in duration than another action in the past.

For example, "It was getting darker."

"The light went out while they were reading."

Note

a. The form of Past Continuous Tense is- was/were + verb + ing

4) Past Perfect Continuous Tense-

Indicates an action in the past that took place before another time or event in

the past and continued during the second event/time point in the past.

For example, "At that time, he had been writing a novel for two months."

"He had been exercising when I called."

Note

a. The form of Past Perfect Continuous Tense is- had + been + verb + ing

PRESENT TENSE

1) Simple Present Tense-

Indicates an action that is generally true or habitual. That is, it took place in the past, continue to take place in the present, and will take place in the future. This tense is used to denote

-a habitual action- for instance, "He walk to school."

-general truths- for instance, "The sun rises in the east", "Honesty is the best policy."

-a future event that is part of a fixed timetable- for instance, "The match starts at 9 o' clock."

Note

a. The form of Simple Present Tense is- verb (infinitive without 'to' and agreeable with the subject)

2) Present Perfect Tense-

Indicates an action that has been completed sometime before the present moment, with a result that affects the present situation.

For example, "He has finished the work."

"He has slept."

Note

a. The form of Present Perfect Tense is- has/have + verb (past participle form or 3rd form of the verb)

3) Present Continuous Tense-

Indicates an action that is taking place at the moment of speaking.

For example, "She is walking."

"I am studying."

Note

a. the form of Present Continuous Tense is- is/am/are + verb + ing

4) Present Perfect Continuous Tense-

Indicates an action that started in the past and is continuing at the present time.

For example, "He has been sleeping for an hour."

Note

a. The form of Present Perfect Continuous Tense is- has/have + been + verb + ing

FUTURE TENSE

1) Simple Future Tense-

Indicates an action that will take place after the present time and that has no real connection with the present time.

For example, "She will visit her ailing grandmother soon."

"He will walk home."

Note

a. the form of Simple Future Tense is- will/shall + verb

2) Future Perfect Tense-

Indicates an action in the future that will have been completed before another time or event in the future.

For example, "By the time we arrive, he will have studied."

Note

a. The form of Future Perfect Tense is- will/shall have + verb(past participle form or 3rd form of the verb)

3) Future Continuous Tense-

Indicates an action in the future that is longer in duration than another action in the future.

For example, "He will be walking when it starts to rain."

Note

a. The form of Future Continuous Tense is-will/shall be + verb + ing

4) Future Perfect Continuous Tense-

Indicates an action in the future that will have been continuing until another time or event in the future.

For example, "He will have been exercising an hour at 2:00."

Note

a. The form of Future Perfect Continuous Tense is- will/shall have been + verb + ing

Articles, Determiners, and Quantifiers

Articles, determiners, and quantifiers are those little words that precede and modify nouns:

the teacher, a college, a bit of honey, that person, those people, whatever purpose, either way, your choice

Sometimes these words will tell the reader or listener whether we're referring to a specific or general thing (the garage out back; A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!); sometimes they tell how much or how many (lots of trees, several books, a great deal of confusion). The choice of the proper article or determiner to precede a noun or noun phrase is usually not a problem for writers who have grown up speaking English, nor is it a serious problem for non-native writers whose first language is a romance language such as Spanish. For other writers, though, this can be a considerable obstacle on the way to their mastery of English. In fact, some students from eastern European countries — where their native language has either no articles or an altogether different system of choosing articles and determiners — find that these "little words" can create problems long after every other aspect of English has been mastered.

Determiners are said to "mark" nouns. That is to say, you know a determiner will be followed by a noun. Some categories of determiners are limited (there are only three articles, a handful of possessive pronouns, etc.), but the possessive nouns are as limitless as nouns themselves. This limited nature of most determiner categories, however, explains why determiners are grouped apart from adjectives even though both serve a modifying function. We can imagine that the language will never tire of inventing new adjectives; the determiners (except for those possessive nouns), on the other hand, are well established, and this class of words is not going to grow in number. These categories of determiners are as follows: the articles (an, a, the — see below; possessive nouns (Joe's, the priest's, my mother's); possessive pronouns, (his, your, their, whose, etc.); numbers (one, two, etc.); indefinite pronouns (few, more, each, every, either, all, both, some, any, etc.); and demonstrative pronouns. The demonstratives (this, that, these, those, such) are discussed in the section on Demonstrative Pronouns. Notice that the possessive nouns differ from the other determiners in that they, themselves, are often

accompanied by other determiners: "my mother's rug," "the priest's collar," "a dog's life."

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This categorization of determiners is based on *Understanding English Grammar* by Martha Kolln. 4th Edition. MacMillan Publishing Company: New York. 1994.

Some Notes on Quantifiers

Like articles, quantifiers are words that precede and modify nouns. They tell us how many or how much. Selecting the correct quantifier depends on your understanding the distinction between Count and Non-Count Nouns. For our purposes, we will choose the count noun trees and the non-count noun dancing:

#The following quantifiers will work with count nouns:

many trees

a few trees

few trees

several trees

a couple of trees

none of the trees

#The following quantifiers will work with non-count nouns:

not much dancing

a little dancing

little dancing
a bit of dancing
a good deal of dancing
a great deal of dancing
no dancing

#The following quantifiers will work with both count and non-count nouns:

all of the trees/dancing
some trees/dancing
most of the trees/dancing
enough trees/dancing
a lot of trees/dancing
lots of trees/dancing
plenty of trees/dancing
a lack of trees/dancing

In formal academic writing, it is usually better to use many and much rather than phrases such as a lot of, lots of and plenty of.

There is an important difference between "a little" and "little" (used with non-count words) and between "a few" and "few" (used with count words). If I say that Tashonda has a little experience in management that means that although Tashonda is no great expert she does have some experience and that experience might well be enough for our purposes. If I say that Tashonda has little experience in management that means that she doesn't have enough experience. If I say that Charlie owns a few books on Latin American literature that means that he has some some books — not a lot of books, but probably enough for our purposes. If I say that Charlie owns few books on Latin American literature, that means he doesn't have enough for our purposes and we'd better go to the library.

Unless it is combined with of, the quantifier "much" is reserved for questions

and negative statements:

Much of the snow has already melted.

How much snow fell yesterday?

Not much.

Note that the quantifier "most of the" must include the definite article the when it modifies a specific noun, whether it's a count or a non-count noun: "most of the instructors at this college have a doctorate"; "most of the water has evaporated." With a general plural noun, however (when you are not referring to a specific entity), the "of the" is dropped:

Most colleges have their own admissions policy.

Most students apply to several colleges.

An indefinite article is sometimes used in conjunction with the quantifier many, thus joining a plural quantifier with a singular noun (which then takes a singular verb):

Many a young man has fallen in love with her golden hair.

Many an apple has fallen by October.

This construction lends itself to a somewhat literary effect (some would say a stuffy or archaic effect) and is best used sparingly, if at all.

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Predeterminers

The predeterminers occur prior to other determiners (as you would probably guess from their name). This class of words includes multipliers (double, twice, four/five times); fractional expressions (one-third, three-quarters, etc.); the words both, half, and all; and intensifiers such as quite, rather, and such.

The multipliers precede plural count and mass nouns and occur with singular count nouns denoting number or amount:

This van holds three times the passengers as that sports car.

This time we added five times the amount of water.

In fractional expressions, we have a similar construction, but here it can be replaced with "of" construction.

Charlie finished in one-fourth [of] the time his brother took.

Two-fifths of the respondents reported that half the medication was sufficient.

The intensifiers occur in this construction primarily in casual speech and writing and are more common in British English than they are in American English. The intensifier "what" is often found in stylistic fragments: "We visited my brother in his dorm room. What a mess!"

This room is rather a mess, isn't it?

The ticket-holders made quite a fuss when they couldn't get in.

What an idiot he turned out to be.

Our vacation was such a grand experience.

Half, both, and all can occur with singular and plural count nouns; half and all can occur with mass nouns. There are also "of constructions" with these words ("all [of] the grain," "half [of] his salary"); the "of construction" is required with personal pronouns ("both of them," "all of it"). The following chart (from Quirk and Greenbaum) nicely describes the uses of these three predeterminers:

Predeterminers

The Articles

The three articles — a, an, the — are a kind of adjective. The is called the definite article because it usually precedes a specific or previously mentioned noun; a and an are called indefinite articles because they are used to refer to something in a less specific manner (an unspecified count noun). These words are also listed among the noun markers or determiners because they are almost invariably followed by a noun (or something else acting as a noun).

The is used with specific nouns. The is required when the noun it refers to represents something that is one of a kind:

The moon circles the earth.

If you would like help with the distinction between count and non-count nouns, please refer to Count and Non-Count Nouns.

We use a before singular count-nouns that begin with consonants (a cow, a barn, a sheep); we use an before singular count-nouns that begin with vowels or vowel-like sounds (an apple, an urban blight, an open door). Words that begin with an h sound often require an a (as in a horse, a history book, a hotel), but if an h-word begins with an actual vowel sound, use an an (as in an hour, an honor). We would say a useful device and a union matter because the u of those words actually sounds like yoo (as opposed, say, to the u of an ugly incident). The same is true of a European and a Euro (because of that consonantal "Yoo" sound). We would say a once-in-a-lifetime experience or a one-time hero because the words once and one begin with a w sound (as if they were spelled wuntz and won).

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary says that we can use an h- word that begins with an unstressed syllable. Thus, we might say an hisTORical moment, but we would say a HIStory book. Many writers would call that an affectation and prefer that we say a historical, but apparently, this choice is a matter of personal taste.

First and subsequent reference: When we first refer to something in written text, we often use an indefinite article to modify it.

A newspaper has an obligation to seek out and tell the truth.

In a subsequent reference to this newspaper, however, we will use the definite article:

There are situations, however, when the newspaper must determine whether the public's safety is jeopardized by knowing the truth.

Another example:

"I'd like a glass of orange juice, please," John said.

"I put the glass of juice on the counter already," Sheila replied.

Exception:

When a modifier appears between the article and the noun, the subsequent article will continue to be indefinite:

"I'd like a big glass of orange juice, please," John said.

"I put a big glass of juice on the counter already," Sheila replied.

Generic reference: We can refer to something in a generic way by cautioning any of the three articles. We can do the same thing by omitting the article altogether.

A beagle makes a great hunting dog and family companion.

The golden retriever is a marvelous pet for children.

Irish setters are not the highly intelligent animals they used to be.

The difference between the generic indefinite pronoun and the normal indefinite pronoun is that the latter refers to any of that class ("I want to buy a beagle, and any old beagle will do.") whereas the former (see beagle sentence) refers to all members of that class.

Proper nouns: We use the definite article with certain kinds of proper nouns:

Geographical places: the Sound, the Sea of Japan, the Mississippi, the West, the Smokies, the Sahara (but often not when the main part of the proper noun seems to be modified by an earlier attributive noun or adjective: We went swimming at the Ocean Park)

Pluralized names (geographic, family, teams): the Netherlands, the Bahamas, the Hamptons, the Johnsons, the New England Patriots

Public institutions/facilities/groups: the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Sheraton, the House, the Presbyterian Church

Newspapers: the Hartford Courant, the Times

Nouns followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with "of": the leader of the gang, the president of our club

Abstract nouns: Abstract nouns—the names of things that are not tangible—are sometimes used with articles, sometimes not:

The storm upset my peace of mind. He was missing just one thing: peace of mind.

Injustice was widespread within the judicial system itself. He implored the judge to correct the injustice.

Her body was racked with grief. It was a grief he had never felt before.

Zero articles: Several kinds of nouns never use articles. We do not use articles with the names of languages ("He was learning Chinese." [But when the word Chinese refers to the people, the definite article might come into play: "The Chinese are hoping to get the next Olympics."]), the names of sports ("She plays badminton and basketball."), and academic subjects ("She's taking economics

and math. Her major is Religious Studies.")

When they are generic, non-count nouns and sometimes plural count-nouns are used without articles. "We like wine with our dinner. We adore Baroque music. We use roses for many purposes." But if an "of phrase" comes after the noun, we use an article: "We adore the music of the Baroque." Also, when a generic noun is used without an article and then referred to in a subsequent reference, it will have become specific and will require a definite article: "The Data Center installed computers in the Learning Center this summer. The computers, unfortunately, don't work."

Common count nouns are used without articles in certain special situations:

idiomatic expressions

using be and go We'll go by train. (as opposed to "We'll take the train.)

 He must be in school.

with seasons In spring, we like to clean the house.

with institutions He's in church/college/jail/class.

with meals Breakfast was delicious.

 He's preparing dinner by himself.

with diseases He's dying of pneumonia.

 She has cancer

(You will sometimes hear "the measles," "the mumps," but these, too, can go without articles.)

with time of day We traveled mostly by night.

We'll be there around midnight.

Principles of Choosing an Article

Choosing articles and determiners: Briefly defined, a determiner is a noun-marker: when you see one, you know that what follows is a noun or

noun phrase. There is a list of such words in the table below. When you place your mouse-cursor over a word or pair of related words (such as either/neither), you will see in the right-hand frame an image describing the kinds of words that word can modify.

Zero article (see table below) means either that no article would be appropriate with that kind of noun or that that kind of noun can be used (in that context) without an article.

Verbs

What is a verb?

Verbs are the action words in a sentence that describe what the subject is doing. Along with nouns, verbs are the main part of a sentence or phrase, telling a story about what is taking place. In fact, without a verb, full thoughts can't be properly conveyed, and even the simplest sentences, such as Maria sings, have one. Actually, a verb can be a sentence by itself, with the subject, in most case you, implied, such as, Sing! and Drive!

When learning the rules of grammar, schoolchildren are often taught that verbs are 'doing' words, meaning they signify the part of the sentence which explains the action taking place: He ran away, she eats chocolate cake on Sundays, the horses gallop across the fields. Ran, eats and gallop are the 'action' parts of those sentences, thus they are the verbs. However, it can be confusing because not all verbs are easily identifiable as action: I know your name, Jack thought about it, we considered several applications. These are non-action verbs, i.e. those that describe a state of being, emotion, possession, sense or opinion. Other non-action verbs include include love, agree, feel, am, and have.

How to Recognize a Verb

As you can see from the examples above, one clue to help you recognize a verb is its location compared to the subject. Verbs almost always come after a noun or pronoun. These nouns and pronouns are referred to as the subject. The verb thought comes after the noun Jack, so the action Jack (subject) was taking was thinking (verb).

Mark eats his dinner quickly.

We went to the market.

You write neatly in your notebook.

They thought about all the prizes in the competition.

Here are some other ways to recognize verbs in a sentence:

If you're not sure if a word is a verb, ask yourself, "Can I do _____?"

Can I think, wonder, walk, yawn? Yes, so these are verbs.

You can also ask, "What is happening?"

In the sentence Mark eats his dinner quickly, what is happening? Eating is happening, so eating is the verb.

In the sentence They thought about all the prizes what is happening? Thought (thinking) is happening, so thought is the verb.

Physical Verbs – Definition and Examples

Physical verbs are action verbs. They describe specific physical actions. If you can create a motion with your body or use a tool to complete an action, the word you use to describe it is most likely a physical verb. For example, Joe sat in his chair, the dog breathes quickly after she chases her ball, and should we vote in the election? Even when the action isn't very active, if the action is done by the body or a tool, consider it a physical verb.

Physical Verb Examples

The physical verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

Let's run to the corner and back.

I hear the train coming.

Call me when you're finished with class.

Mental Verbs – Definition and Examples

Mental verbs have meanings that are related to concepts such as discovering, understanding, thinking, or planning. In general, a mental verb refers to a cognitive state.

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Mental Verb Examples

The mental verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

I know the answer.

She recognized me from across the room.

Do you believe everything people tell you?

States of Being Verbs – Definition and Examples

Also known as linking verbs, state of being verbs describe conditions or situations that exist. State of being verbs are inactive since no action is being performed. These verbs, forms of to be, such as am, is, are, are usually complemented by adjectives.

States of Being Verb Examples

The state of being verbs in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

I am a student.

We are circus performers.

Please is quiet.

Types of Verbs

There are many types of verbs. In addition to the main categories of physical verbs, mental verbs, and state of being verbs, there are several other types of verbs. In fact, there are more than ten different types of verbs that are grouped together by function.

List of all Verb Types

Action Verbs

Action verbs express specific actions and are used any time you want to show action or discuss someone doing something. It's important to remember that the action does not have to be physical.

Action verb examples:

Run

Dance

Slide

Jump

Think

Do

Go

Stand

Smile

Listen.

The action verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

I run faster than David.

He does it well.

She thinks about poetry all day long

Transitive Verbs

Transitive verbs are action verbs that always express doable activities that relate or affect someone or something else. These other things are generally direct objects, nouns or pronouns that are affected by the verb, though some verbs can also take an indirect object, such as show, take, and make. In a sentence with a transitive verb, someone or something receives the action of the verb.

Transitive verb examples:

Love

Respect

Tolerate

Believe

Maintain.

The transitive verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

Gary ate the cookies.

The transitive verb is ate, Gary is the subject, because it is Gary who is doing the eating, and the cookies are the direct object, because it is the cookies that are being eaten. Other examples:

He kicked John.

John punches him.

They sold the tickets.

Examples of verbs used with both direct and indirect objects:

They sell him the tickets.

In this sentence, the tickets are the direct object while him is the indirect object.

Mary baked her mother a pie.

In this sentence, a pie is the direct object while her mother is the indirect object.

Intransitive Verbs

Intransitive verbs are action verbs that always express doable activities. They are different from transitive verbs because there is no direct object following an intransitive verb.

Intransitive verb examples:

Walk

Laugh

Cough

Play

Run

The intransitive verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

We travelled to London.

The intransitive verb is travelled, the subject is we, because we are doing the travelling, but London is not a direct object because London is not receiving the action of the verb. Other examples:

I sneeze in the morning.

He arrived with moments to spare.

Kathryn sat away from the others.

John eats before leaving for school.

The last example shows that the verb eats can be both transitive and intransitive depending on whether there is a direct object or not. If the sentence read: John eats the cookies before leaving for school, eats would be transitive as there is a direct object – the cookies.

By the way, some verbs can be both transitive and intransitive. These verbs

include: start, leave, change, live, stop.

Auxiliary Verbs

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Grammar Rules

Grammar rules Verbs

Verbs

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The state of being verbs in the following sentences are in bold for easy

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I am a student.

We are circus performers.

Please is quiet.

Types of Verbs

There are many types of verbs. In addition to the main categories of physical verbs, mental verbs, and state of being verbs, there are several other types of verbs. In fact, there are more than ten different types of verbs that are grouped together by function.

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Transitive verbs are action verbs that always express doable activities that relate or affect someone or something else. These other things are generally direct objects, nouns or pronouns that are affected by the verb, though some verbs can also take an indirect object, such as show, take, and make. In a sentence with a transitive verb, someone or something receives the action of the verb.

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The transitive verb is ate, Gary is the subject, because it is Gary who is doing the eating, and the cookies are the direct object, because it is the cookies that are being eaten. Other examples:

He kicked John.

John punches him.

They sold the tickets.

Examples of verbs used with both direct and indirect objects:

They sell him the tickets.

In this sentence, the tickets are the direct object while him is the indirect object.

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The last example shows that the verb eats can be both transitive and intransitive depending on whether there is a direct object or not. If the sentence read: John eats the cookies before leaving for school, eats would be transitive as there is a direct object – the cookies.

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Phrasal verbs aren't single words; instead, they are combinations of words that are used together to take on a different meaning to that of the original verb. Phrasal verb examples:

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I took my time when I went to the shops (past tense)

Julie makes cake for the classroom (present tense)

Julie made a cake for the classroom (past tense)

She sees a silhouette shaped like a man in the window (present tense)

She saw a silhouette shaped like a man in the window (past tense)

We come to Aunt Jane's for Thanksgiving each year (present tense)

We came to Aunt Jane's for Thanksgiving each year (past tense).

You should also remember that auxiliary verbs 'do' and 'have' are also irregular verbs:

I do agree.

He does it often.

We have done our homework early.

They do their homework on Fridays.

I have a suspicion about Fran

Fran has a devious look.

We have no money left.

They have had a cough twice this winter.

Active and Passive Voice

Examples of Active and Passive Voice

The active voice describes a sentence where the subject performs the action stated by the verb. It follows a clear subject + verb + object construct that's easy to read. In fact, sentences constructed in the active voice add impact to your writing.

With passive voice, the subject is acted upon by the verb. It makes for a murky, roundabout sentence; you can be more straightforward with active voice. As such, there are many ways to change the passive voice to the active voice in your sentences.

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The Subject Changes in Each Voice

Before we explore a wealth of examples, let's review some active writing tips. You'll notice that, in the passive voice examples below, there are a few key words

Pay special attention to the subject in each sentence. Is the subject performing the action denoted by the verb? If so, chances are you have a nice, clear sentence, written in active voice.

In the passive voice, however, the subject is no longer performing the action of the verb. Rather, it's being acted upon by the verb. Put another way, the subject of a sentence in the passive voice is no longer the "doer" of the action, but the recipient of the action. Meanwhile, what was the subject of a sentence in the active voice (the "doer") becomes the "agent" in the equivalent passive voice sentence

- is roamed; is viewed

was - was changed; was run

were - were eaten; were corroded

Active and Passive Voice Comparison

As you read through the following example sentences, you'll start to become an active voice expert.

Active Voice

Passive Voice

A. Harry ate six shrimp at dinner.

P. At dinner, six shrimp were eaten by Harry.

A. Beautiful giraffes roam the savannah.

P. The savannah is roamed by beautiful giraffes.

A. Sue changed the flat tire.

P. The flat tire was changed by Sue.

A.We are going to watch a movie tonight.

P.A movie is going to be watched by us tonight.

A. I ran the obstacle course in record time.

P.The obstacle course was run by me in record time.

A.The crew paved the entire stretch of highway.

P.The entire stretch of highway was paved by the crew.

A.Mom read the novel in one day.

P.The novel was read by Mom in one day.