



Overview of Dutch Tenses

Dutch has a tense system that is broadly similar to English, although some tenses are used differently. The overview below explains the main Dutch tenses and their most common uses.

Onvoltooid tegenwoordige tijd (OTT) – Present Simple

Usage

The Present Simple is used for actions happening now, habits and routines, general truths, and sometimes for events in the near future.

Examples

Ik leer Nederlands.

→ I am learning Dutch.

Wij wonen in Utrecht.

→ We live in Utrecht.

Morgen ga ik naar school.

→ Tomorrow I am going to school.

Onvoltooid verleden tijd (OVT) – Past Simple

Usage

The Past Simple is used to describe completed actions, past habits, and events in stories or narratives.

Examples

Ik werkte gisteren thuis.

→ I worked from home yesterday.

Zij gingen naar het park.

→ They went to the park.

Toen was ik nog jong.

→ I was still young then.

Voltooid tegenwoordige tijd (VTT) – Present Perfect

Usage

The Present Perfect is used for past actions that have a connection to the present or whose result is still relevant now. It is very similar to the English Present Perfect. However, the meaning is often similar to that of the Past Simple.

Examples

Ik heb mijn huiswerk gemaakt.

→ I have done my homework.

Zij is naar Amsterdam gegaan.
→ She has gone to Amsterdam.

We hebben een nieuwe auto gekocht.
→ We have bought a new car.

Voltooid verleden tijd (VTT) – Past Perfect

Usage

The Past Perfect describes an action that happened before another event in the past.

Examples

Ik had al gegeten voordat hij kwam.
→ I had already eaten before he arrived.

Zij was vertrokken voordat het begon te regenen.
→ She had left before it started raining.

We hadden de film al gezien.
→ We had already seen the film.

Onvoltooid tegenwoordige toekomstige tijd (OTTT) – Future Simple

Usage

The Future Simple is used for future events, plans, promises, predictions, and assumptions.

Examples

Ik zal morgen werken.
→ I will work tomorrow.

Hij zal je helpen.
→ He will help you.

We zullen later bellen.
→ We will call later.

Note: In everyday Dutch, the Present Simple is often used instead of the Future Simple when the future meaning is clear from the context.

Voltooid tegenwoordige toekomstige tijd (VTTT) – Future Perfect

Usage

The Future Perfect describes an action that will be completed before a specific point in the future.

Examples

Ik zal het boek hebben gelezen.
→ I will have read the book.

Zij zullen aangekomen zijn voor acht uur.
→ They will have arrived before eight o'clock.

We zullen het werk hebben afgemaakt.

→ We will have finished the work.

Onvoltooid verleden toekomstige tijd (OVTT) – Conditional Present / Future in the Past

Usage

This tense is used for polite requests, hypothetical situations, and actions that were seen as future from a point in the past.

Examples

Ik zou graag koffie willen.

→ I would like a coffee.

Hij zei dat hij zou komen.

→ He said that he would come.

We zouden je helpen.

→ We would help you.

Voltooid verleden toekomstige tijd (VVTT) – Conditional Perfect

Usage

The Conditional Perfect describes actions that would have happened if certain conditions had been met.

Examples

Ik zou zijn gekomen, maar ik was ziek.

→ I would have come, but I was ill.

Zij zouden het hebben gedaan.

→ They would have done it.

We zouden eerder zijn vertrokken.

→ We would have left earlier.

Note: Although Dutch has eight tenses, beginners mainly need to master the **Present Simple (OTT)**, **Past Simple (OVT)**, **Present Perfect (VTT)**, and **Future Simple (OTTT)**. The remaining tenses are used less frequently and can be learned later.