"TO BE" VERBS & VERB CONJUGATION

To understand the verb "to be," one needs to first understand *verb conjugation.* Conjugation is the process of identifying how a verb changes form based on 3 factors: tense, person (i.e. 1st, 2nd, or 3rd), and number (i.e. singular or plural).

Think of Tense, Person, and Number as making up a Rubik's Cube of information. The arrangement of combinations results in different verb forms.

English classes do not normally teach this concept because the English language is unusual; that is, unlike other languages, the verbs hardly change between these elements.

CONJUGATION TABLES

	Person	Tense		
		Present	**Past**	**Future**
Singular	1st	I write	I wrote	I will write
	2nd	You write	You wrote	You will write
	3rd	He/she writes	He/she wrote	He/she will write
Plural	1st	We write	We wrote	We will write
	2nd	You all write	You all wrote	You all will write
	3rd	They write	They wrote	They will write

With 'to write' and many other verbs, the forms follow a pattern that only changes between tense, with the exception of present 3rd person singular. The word "to be," unfortunately, is considered *irregular* in many languages. This means it does not follow the typical pattern. Instead…

	Person	Tense		
		Present	**Past**	**Future**
Singular	1st	I am	I was	I will be
	2nd	You are	You were	You will be
	3rd	He/she is	He/she was	He/she will be
Plural	1st	We are	We were	We will be
	2nd	You are	You were	You all will be
	3rd	They are	They were	They will be

However, there are technically more than 3 tenses. The others are simply less common. Just as one might say "I am writing/We had been writing/The man has been writing," the verb "to be" has other forms. These include "being" as well as "has/have/had been."

Ultimately, the forms of "to be" include the following:

- ❖ Am
- ❖ Are
- ❖ Is
- ❖ Was
- ❖ Were
- ❖ Be
- ❖ Being
- ❖ Been

But memorizing this list only goes so far. To fully understand, identify, and eventually remove the use of "to be" verbs, one needs to grasp how the verb functions in sentences and why it presents so differently from the base verb.

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