

Teachers' version

Overview

Tenses in colour is a set of high-quality colour-coded charts for graphically and systematically presenting the English tense system. It aims to:

- be an improved version of the "time-lines" many trainers draw on the board to illustrate tenses.
- give consistent presentation of tenses from beginner to advanced level helps to consolidate and deepen performative and cognitive understanding of the tense system.
- give systematic presentation graphically highlights similarities between the tenses in structure and meaning
- make a clear distinction between meaning and form, although the meaning of each tense is built up exactly parallel to the form and using the same colour coding.

The charts are a unified way to understand the English tense system. Each tense is built up from one of the four timeframes (present, past, future and conditional) together with any of the three additional feature frames (progressive, passive and perfect). Each of these seven units is represented by a single colour-coded graphic frame.

These seven frames can be combined to give 32 different possible tenses.

Purists may complain that it is not correct to refer to these 32 forms, which should be variously referred to as aspects, etc. They are free to use their own terminology.

For example the future perfect, *she will have written*, is made by combining the building blocks for future (chart no. 6) and perfect (chart no. 8) to make the future perfect (chart no.14).

The graphic the colour coding of the verb phrase itself (e.g. will have written) corresponds exactly to colours of the frames making up the graphic.

(Other tenses such as "she is going to write" and "he used to write" which are not expressed in a single verb phrase but are broken by the particle "to" are dealt with separately in a compatible and analogous way to the above system.)

Mode of use

As a new tense is covered in lesson, the corresponding graphic can be printed and given out, to be referred to during presentation. OHP-transparencies could be used in a similar way.

The charts are not intended as activities in themselves but as graphical support for *any* activity which involves presentation of the tenses, from the students' first encounter with a new tense to one-minute revision before an activity which includes the tense in question.

Each chart has extensive explanations. to hide/show the explanations, end the presentation, click the "view" menu and then "markup"

The tenses are released under an open-source license. That means you are free to share and use them for non-commercial purposes, and you can alter them if you inform me (steve@pogol.net).

They are available online at <http://pogol.net/index.php?p=22>.

Teachers' version

The graphic for every tense starts with one of these four timeframes...

present



... And each tense starts in one of these four ways.

© Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 2

the 4 timeframes

... with present tense endings (grey letters)

Example: **she writes** (see chart 4)

past



... with past tense endings (yellow letters)

Example: **she wrote** (see chart 6)

future

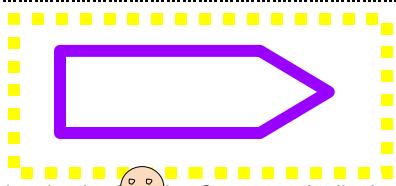


... with future tense endings (purple letters)

Example: **she will write** (see chart 7)

conditional

the conditional is like a combination of the past frame and the future frame.



... or with conditional endings (yellow and purple letters)

Example: **she would write** (see chart xx)

Teachers' version

© Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 3

the 3 feature frames

Some or all of these three feature frames can be added to the four basic timeframes to add extra meaning to the tense.

perfect



we will use **green** letters for perfect forms.

Example: **she has written** (see chart)

progressive



we will use **red** letters for progressive forms

Example: **she is writing** (see chart)

passive



we will use **blue** letters for passive forms.

Example: **it is written** (see chart)

Teachers' version

the forms of the verb

base	write	have	be
future	will write	will have	will be
present	write , writes	have , has	am , is , are
	the base, future and present forms are the same ...	except that the third person present has an "s" and that the verb "TO BE" is very irregular.
past	wrote	had	was , were
	the endings for the perfect and passive are always the same ...	The present and past forms of BE change not just the endings but the whole word. So we will mark the present and past forms with grey and yellow underlines.	
perfect	written	had	been
passive	written	had	been
progressive	writing	having	being

Teachers' version

present time

© Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 5

present

We use the present simple for things that are generally true, for example where I live and what I like.



we will use **grey** letters for present tense endings.

Ann is a journalist at FreeTime Magazine. **She writes** the Holiday Report.

Teachers' version

past time

© Steve Powell 1998; verbs in colour 6

past

We use the simple past when we talk about a finished, closed timeframe.

For instance, yesterday or last week or last year

this morning

now (5 p.m.)



We use the yellow past form of the first verb.

She wrote the Hawaii Report this morning, before her boss arrived.

Teachers' version

future time

© Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 7

future

We use the future tense when we talk about a later time, for instance tomorrow or next week or next year.

now

tomorrow



We use the **purple** help-verb WILL ...

... followed by the **purple** future form of the next verb.

She **will write the Report tomorrow - if she has time.**

Teachers' version

time up to now

© Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 8

present perfect

The frame for the present perfect relates the past ...

... to the present.

far today

now (3 p.m.)

We use the present perfect when we talk about a time that starts in the past but is still open now. E.g. this week, so far today.

We make the graphic for the present perfect by fitting the feature frame for the **perfect**



Usually the event has a result in the present.

we use a form of the **green** help-verb HAVE ...

... plus the **green** perfect form of the next verb.



She **has written** the Report already. Here it is!

for the **present** perfect we use the **present** form of the verb HAVE. Note the **grey** ending.

Teachers' version

slice of time in the present

Ve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 9

present progressive

We use the present progressive when we talk about a limited, present time.
It is like a short slice from a longer film

... right now ...

We are not interested in
the beginning or end of the action.
We are not interested in the result.

She is writing the report - but this is temporary.
Soon she will finish and so you can talk to her then.

We use the present of
the verb BE (am, is,
are). Note the grey
underline for the
present tense..

... followed by the -ing form
of the main verb. Note the red colour for the progressive..

She **is writing** the holiday report just now - so don't talk to her.

Teachers' version

passive focus

© Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 10

present passive

We use the present passive when we focus on the receiving end of an action.

We are not interested in who writes the report.
Only in the report itself.

We use the present of the **blue** verb BE (am, is, are). Note the **grey** underline for the present tense.....

... followed by the **blue, passive** form of the main verb.

The Report **is** **written** in three languages.

Teachers' version

slice of time up to now

Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 11

present perfect progressive

This tense combines the frames for the present, the perfect and the progressive ... to make a **slice of time up to now**.

... all morning ...

now (11 a.m.)



She is writing the Report.

At any time during the morning, an observer could say "she is writing the report" - looking through the progressive frame.

we use a form of the **green** help-verb **HAVE** for the perfect...
... plus the **green** perfect form of the next verb.

But **NOW** it is the end of the morning and the observer looks at the action through the progressive frame AND through the perfect frame and says ...

She has been writing the Report all morning - so she's tired.

Note the **grey** ending for the present

we use the **red** help-verb **BE** ...

... plus the **red** progressive form of the next verb.

Teachers' version

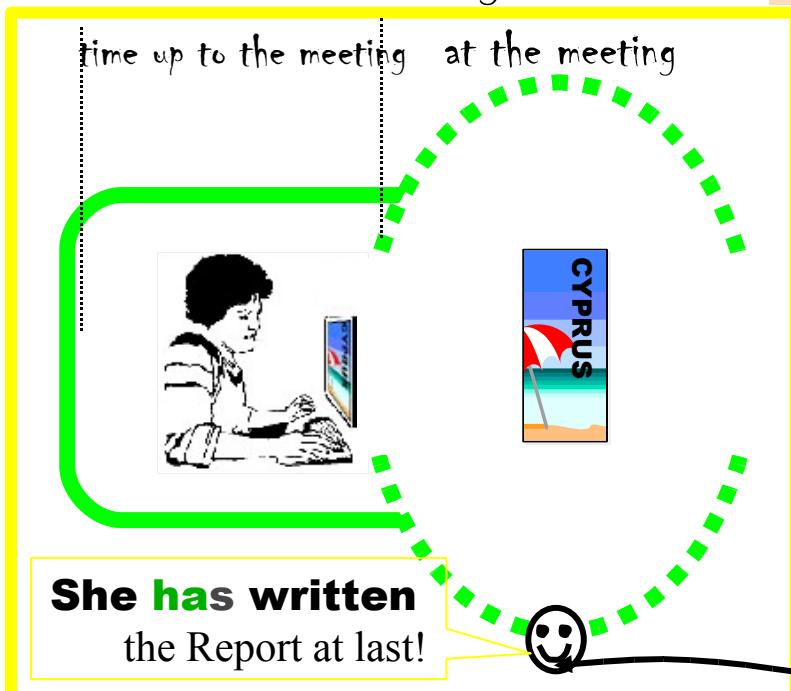
time up to the past

© Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 12

past perfect

this morning

now (1 p.m.)



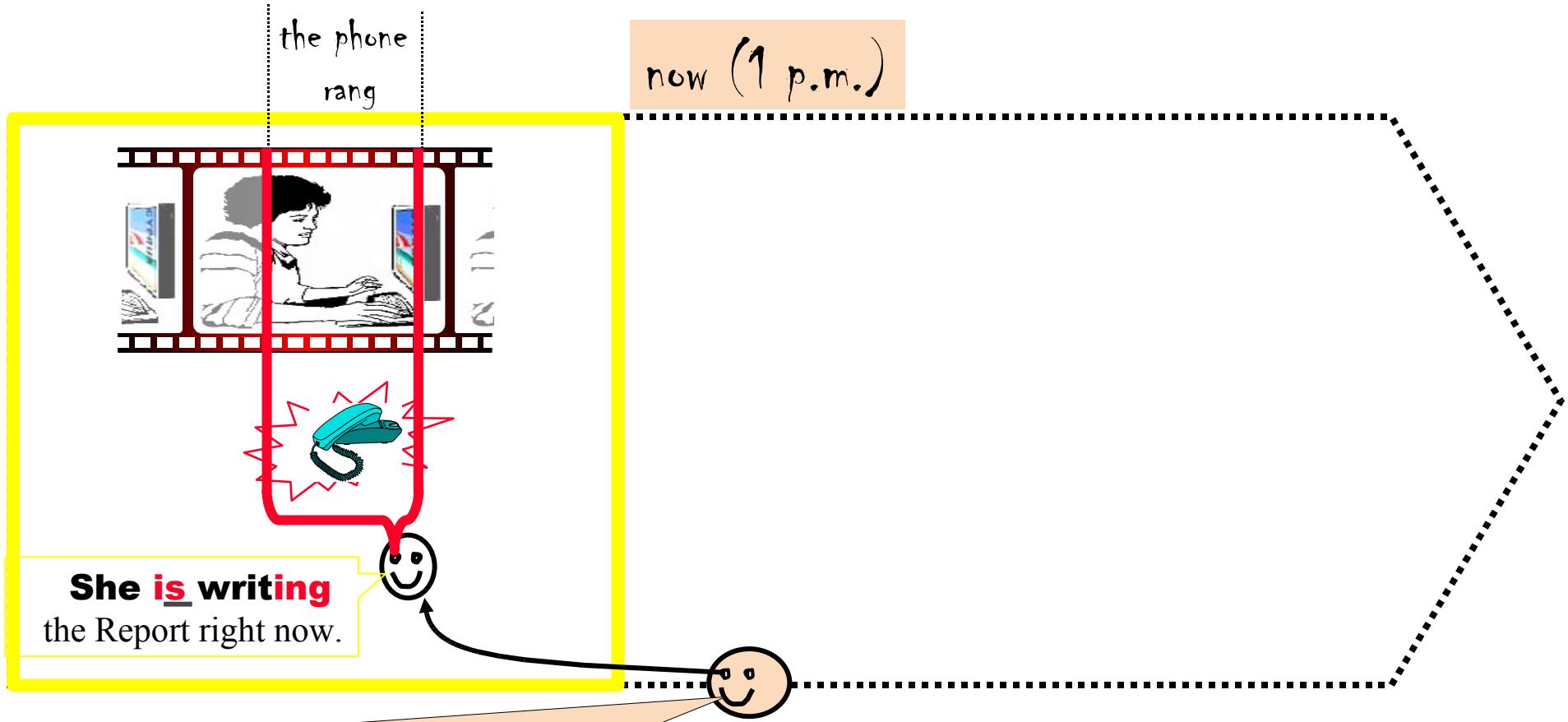
She felt great at the meeting because **she had written** the Report already.

Teachers' version

slice of time in the past

Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 13

past progressive



While **she was writing** the Report this morning, the phone rang.

Teachers' version

slice of time up to the past

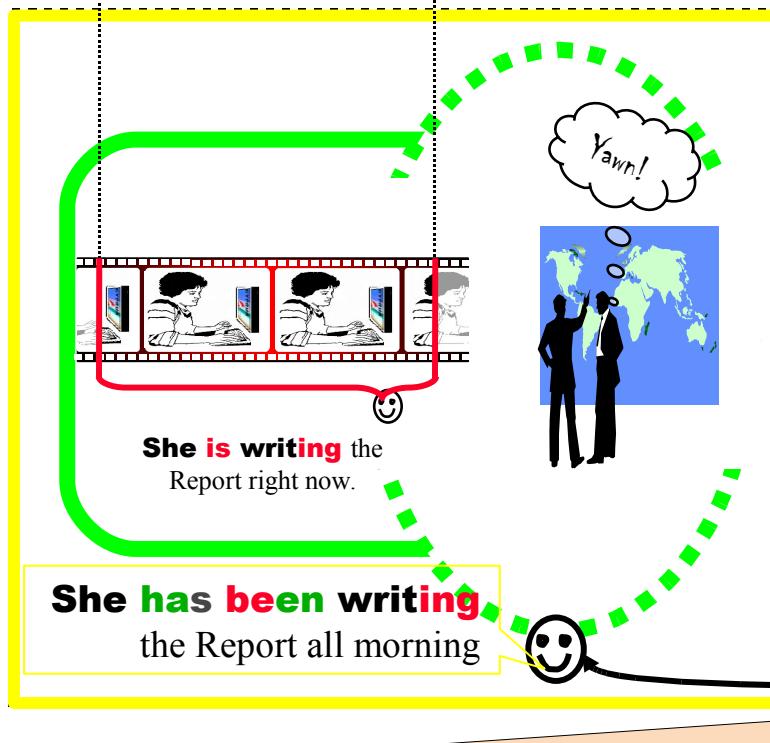
Powell 1998: verbs in colour 14

past perfect progressive

... all morning ...

at the meeting

now (1 p.m.)



She was tired at the meeting because she **had been writing** the Report all morning.

Teachers' version

time up to the future

© Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 15

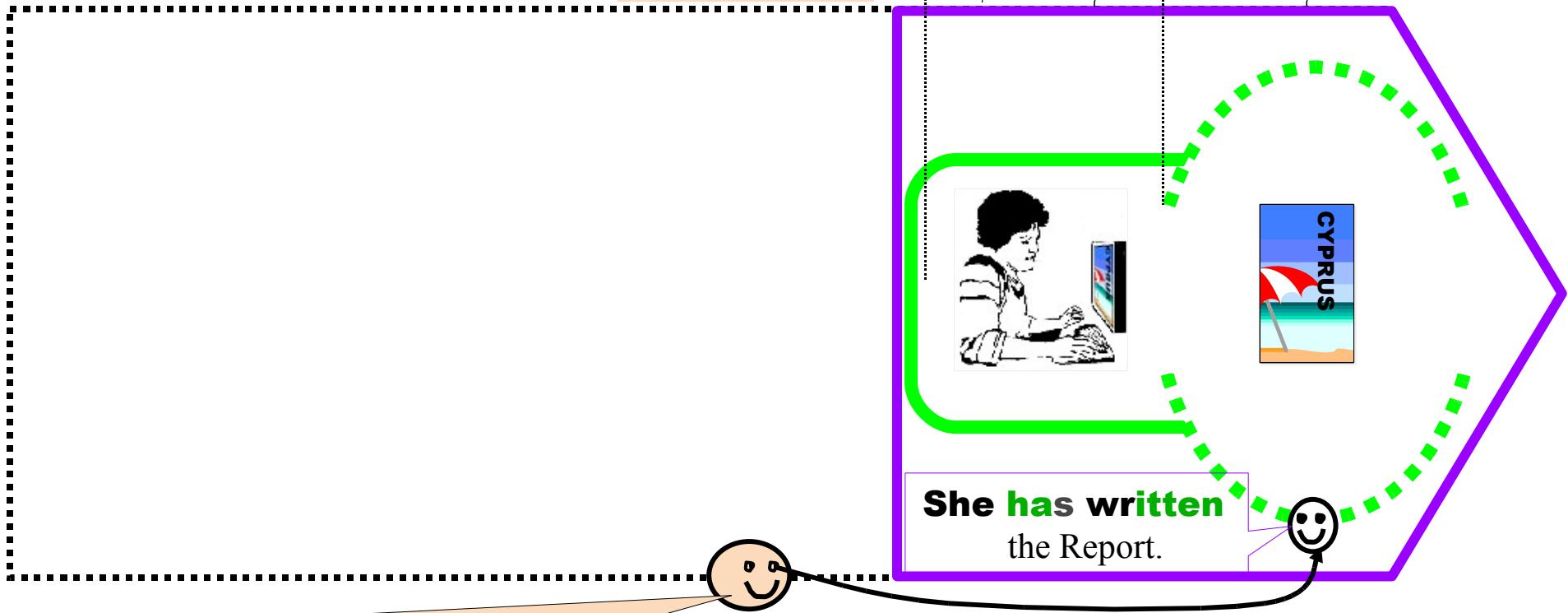
future perfect

now (1 p.m.)

this evening

before 8 p.m.

8 p.m.



She will have written the Report by 8 o'clock - so call her then.

Teachers' version

slice of time in the future

© Powell 1998: verbs in colour 16

future progressive

now (1 p.m.)

this evening



She is writing
the Report right now.

At 7 o'clock **she will be writing** the Report- so don't call her!

Teachers' version

slice of time up to the future

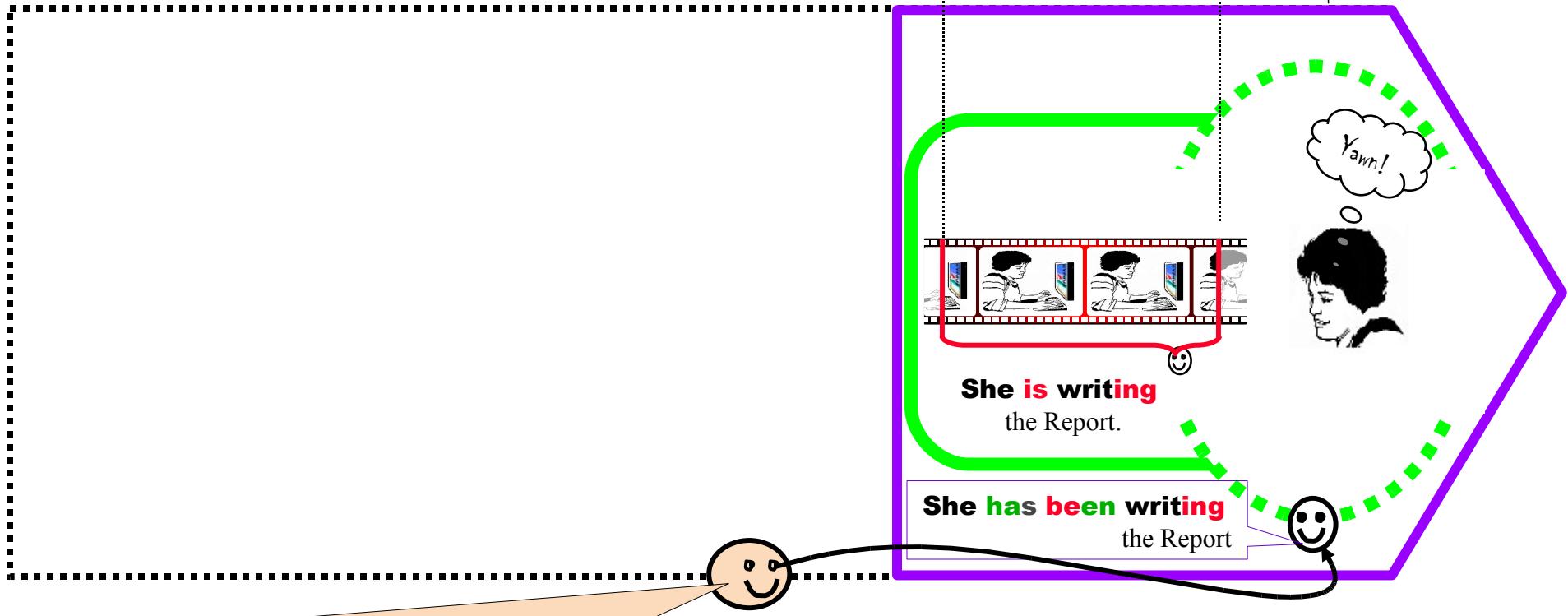
©WELL 1998: verbs in colour 17

future perfect progressive

now (1.p.m.)

5 or 6 hours

7 p.m.



By 7 o'clock **she will have been writing** for 5 or 6 hours - so she'll be tired

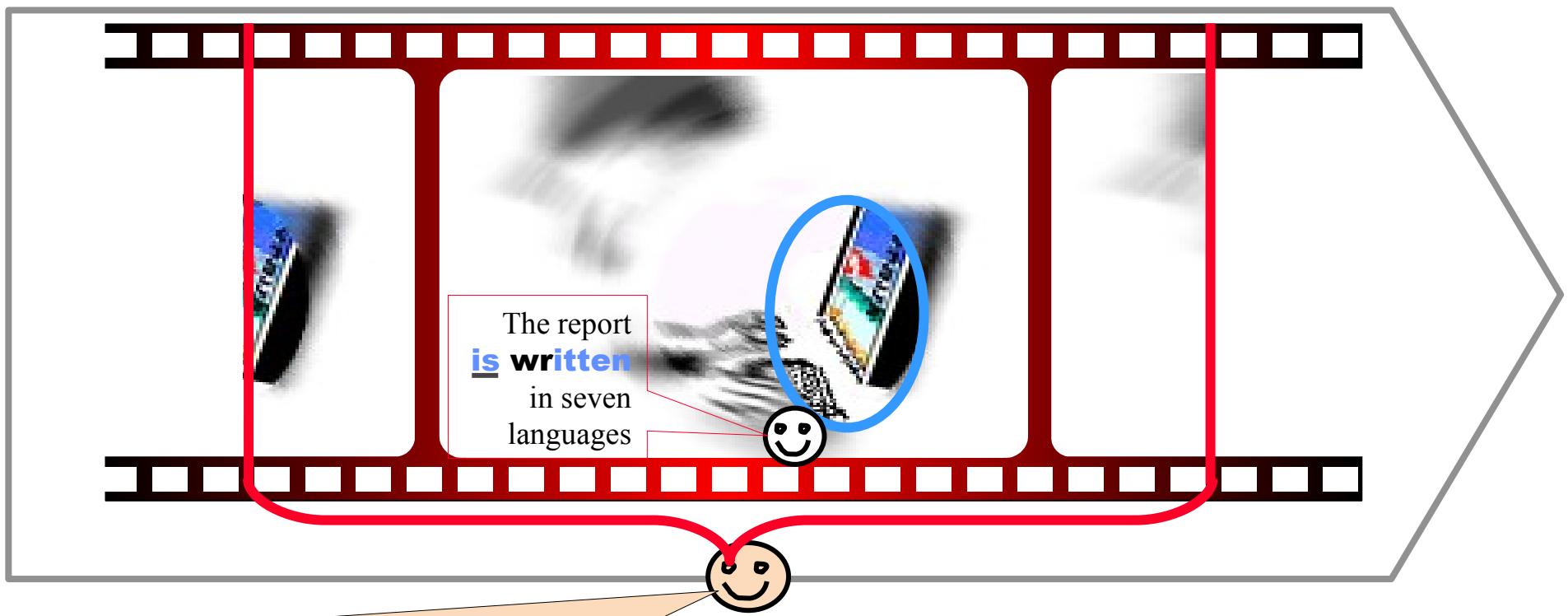
Teachers' version

slice of time in the present, passive focus

verbs in colour 18

present **progressive** **passive**

... ... at the moment



At the moment, the report **is being written** in seven languages.
Soon we will add Hungarian and Portuguese.

Teachers' version

past time, passive focus

Steve Powell 1998: verbs in colour 19

past passive

last year

this year



Last year the report **was written** in nine languages.