ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Mixed 12 Tenses Exercises MCQ Test With Answers

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Explanations

1. In recent decades, the efficiency of the United Nations _____ by a growing number of countries.
✔ **C) has been questioned**
In recent decades describes a period that started in the past and continues up to now, so we need the present perfect. The subject (**the efficiency**) receives the action, so the verb is passive: **has been questioned**. Not **was questioned**, because the simple past would need a finished time such as **in the 1990s**.

2. We _____ no problems whatsoever with the dam since it _____ forty years ago.
✔ **C) have had / was constructed**
In **since** sentences, the main clause uses the present perfect for a situation lasting up to now: **We have had no problems**. The **since** clause names the starting point, a finished past event, so it takes the simple past: **it was constructed forty years ago**. **Ago** always goes with the past simple, never with the present perfect or past perfect.

3. Before I got to the end of his article, I felt I knew everything there _____ about the North American Free Trade Agreement.
✔ **B) was to know**
The fixed expression **everything there is to know** means 'all the facts about a subject'. The story is in the past (**I got**, **I felt**), so it becomes **everything there was to know**. The other options do not form this idiom. Not **is known**, because it does not fit the past narrative.

4. It seems likely that by the end of the week, the costs involved in the construction of the bridge _____ by the Ministry.
✔ **E) will have been announced**
By the end of the week points to an action completed before a future moment, so we need the future perfect. The costs are announced **by the Ministry**, so it is passive: **will have been announced**. Not **would have been announced**: the main verb **seems** is in the present, so there is no reason to shift back to **would**.

5. One feels that there _____ any noticeable improvement in the city's traffic problem until all the local councils _____ their financial difficulties.
✔ **C) won't be / overcome**
The first clause predicts the future, so it takes **won't be**. In time clauses beginning with **until**, **when**, **before** or **as soon as**, English uses a present tense for future meaning, not **will**: **until they overcome**. That rules out **cannot be / will overcome**.

6. The Etruscans, who _____ a great part of Italy about 900 B.C., _____ from Asia Minor.
✔ **B) colonized / had originally come**
Both events are in the past, but they happened at different times. The Etruscans came from Asia Minor **before** they colonized Italy, so the earlier action takes the past perfect: **had originally come**. The later action, dated **about 900 B.C.**, takes the simple past: **colonized**. **Had colonized / originally came** reverses this order.

7. The orders were that we _____ the area within hours to prevent further loss of life.
✔ **E) had to evacuate**
The reporting verb is in the past (**The orders were**), so the obligation shifts back from **have to** to **had to evacuate**. Not **had evacuated**: an order is about something that must still be done, not something already completed.

8. As I _____ you yesterday, the undersecretary _____ over this afternoon's discussions.
✔ **B) told / will be presiding**
Yesterday is a finished past time, so the first gap takes the simple past **told**. **This afternoon** is still in the future, and the future continuous **will be presiding** describes an arranged activity in progress at that time. **Have told** is impossible with **yesterday**.

9. For a hundred years or so, some critics _____ that poetry is dying, and all that time poets _____ poems that later generations recognize as great.
✔ **A) have maintained / have been writing**
For a hundred years or so and **all that time** describe a period that continues up to the present. This calls for the present perfect **have maintained** and the present perfect continuous **have been writing**, which stresses an ongoing activity. The simple past (**maintained / wrote**) would wrongly suggest the period is over.

10. What I _____ is that we _____ to think seriously about a thorough reform in the legal system.
✔ **C) am proposing / begin**
The speaker is making a proposal right now, so the present continuous **am proposing** fits. Verbs of suggesting such as **propose**, **suggest** and **recommend** are followed by a **that** clause with the base form (the subjunctive): **that we begin**. Not **have begun**: a proposal is about a future action.

11. When the Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli _____ a map of Mars in 1877, he _____ a large number of straight linear features, which he called "canali", that is, channels.
✔ D) published / noted
In 1877 is a finished past time. The two actions happen in sequence within that past, so both take the simple past: **published** and **noted**. The present tenses and the present perfect cannot be used with a past date. **Had noted** would wrongly put the noting before the publishing.

12. In the past few months, our company director _____ more mettle than most industrialists _____ in an entire career.
✔ E) has shown / do
In the past few months means a period up to now, so the first gap needs the present perfect **has shown**. The comparison describes a general truth about industrialists, so it uses the present simple **do**: **more mettle than most industrialists do in an entire career**. **Mettle** means courage and determination when things are difficult.

13. The history of the Venetian republic _____ to an end in 1797 when Venice _____ over to Austria by Napoleon.
✔ D) came / was handed
In 1797 is a finished past date, so both verbs take the simple past. **Came to an end** is active. **Was handed over to Austria by Napoleon** is passive, because Venice received the action. **Had been handed** is not suitable: the handing over did not happen before the end; it caused it at the same time.

14. The Pacific markets _____ extremely competitive since the manufacturing capacity of many Far Eastern countries _____ to improve at the turn of the decade.
✔ E) have become / began
With **since**, the main clause describes a situation from a past point up to now, so it takes the present perfect: **have become**. The **since** clause gives the starting point in the past (**at the turn of the decade**), so it takes the simple past: **began**.

15. More than half of the 850 suspects currently detained by the police _____ in custody with no right to bail, even though the vast majority _____ with any offence, let alone convicted.
✔ B) are being held / have not been charged
Currently shows that the situation is happening now, so the first gap takes the present continuous passive **are being held**. The second gap takes the present perfect passive **have not been charged**. It describes the situation up to now, and it fits **let alone convicted**, which repeats the participle. **Were held / are not charged** does not match **currently**.

16. When they heard the sirens across the valley, the relief workers in the camp knew that another group of flood victims _____ before long.
✔ D) would be arriving
The reporting verb **knew** is in the past, so a future idea moves back to **would**: this is the 'future in the past'. **Would be arriving** describes an expected future event seen from that past moment, and **before long** means 'soon'. Not **will arrive**, because **will** does not fit after the past tense **knew**.

17. Last week's supplementary budget package _____ to prevent Japan's economy from plunging even lower.
✔ C) was designed
Last week's places the action in the finished past. The package did not design anything; someone designed it, so the verb must be passive: **was designed**. **Has designed** and **had designed** are active, so they would mean the package did the designing.

18. The company _____ earlier this week that it _____ all its staff out of the regional office.
✔ C) announced / had pulled
Earlier this week refers to a finished past time, so the main verb takes the simple past: **announced**. The withdrawal was completed before the announcement, so the reported clause takes the past perfect: **had pulled**. **Had announced / pulled** reverses the order of the two events.

19. To the astronomers of the Middle Ages, the most important classical authorities on natural philosophy _____ Aristotle and Ptolemy, since both _____ frameworks that explained the whole universe.
✔ C) were / had created
The sentence describes the past (**the astronomers of the Middle Ages**), so the main verb is the simple past **were**. Aristotle and Ptolemy created their frameworks long before the Middle Ages, so the earlier action takes the past perfect: **had created**. **Are / have created** would describe the present view, not the medieval one.

20. The city council still _____ a vast public park system that _____ a network of cycle paths spanning the city.
✔ D) maintains / includes
Still shows a permanent situation that continues now, so the present simple **maintains** fits. **Include** describes a state, not an action, so it is normally used in the simple form: **includes**. The past and future forms in the other options do not match **still**.