In grammar, the **sequence of tenses** is a rule of a particular language governing the relationship between the grammatical tenses of verbs in related clauses or sentences to show the temporal relationship of the events to which they refer.

1. The sequence of tenses is the principle according to which the tense of the verb in the subordinate clause is suited to the tense of the verb in the main clause.
2. If the verb in the main clause is in the present or future tense, the verb in the subordinate clause can be in any tense—present, past or future—according to the sense to be conveyed.

Examples: I know what she does.
   - I know what she did.
   - I know what she will do.
   - She will say that her friends have deserted her.
3. If the verb in the main clause is in the past tense, the verb in the subordinate clause must be in the past tense.

Examples: I knew that she was an honest and sincere girl.
   - He promised that he would help me.
   - Nobody knew how he died.
4. There are three exceptions to the rule at serial number 3 above.

They are:
(a) In case, the verb in the subordinate clause expresses a universal truth or a habitual fact, the verb must always be in the present tense, even if the verb in the main clause is in the past

   Examples: Sundari told me that the earth moves round the sun.
   - Sunil told me that the sun rises in the east.
   - She told me that she gets up early in the morning.
   - He said to me that man is mortal.

(b) When the subordinate clause is introduced by the word than, the verb in the subordinate clause may be in any tense required by the sense.

   Examples: She liked me more than she likes you.
   - He helped me more than he helps his children.

(c) If the subordinate clause is an adverb clause expressing reason or place, the verb in the subordinate clause may be in any tense according to the sense implied.

   Examples:
A palace stood where you find a park now.
I did not go where she goes daily.
He failed because he is weak in English.

5. If the subordinate clause is an adjective clause, the verb used therein may be in any tense according to the sense implied, even if the verb in the principal clause is in the past tense.

Examples:
- She met a boy who worked hard.
- He met a boy who will work hard.

6. If the subordinate clause shows the purpose of an action mentioned in the principal; (main) clause, and of the conjunctions of purpose, such as that, so that, in order, that etc. is used to introduce the subordinate clause, the word may is used when the verb in the main clause is in the present or future tense, and might, when it is in the past tense.

Examples:
- She works hard so that she may pass.
- I shall work hard so that I may pass.
- He worked hard in order that he might pass.

7. If the subordinate clause is introduced by as if, or as though, the word were is used to denote present tense, and had been, to denote past tense.

Examples:
- She behaves as if she were mad.
- He walks as if he were lame.
- He talked as though he had been a person in authority.
- The child cries as if it were hurt.

8. In conditional sentences, the subordinate clause generally takes a verb in the present tense, even if the verb in the main clause is in the future tense.

Examples:
- If I go to Kashmir, I shall bring a silk saree for you.
- If it rains, I shall stay at home.
- Unless she gives up her bad habits, nobody will like her.

In each of the aforesaid three sentences, the verb in two subordinate clause is in the present tense, while the verb in the main clause is in the future tense. But the sense of the sentence as a whole refers to future time.

9. In conditional sentences, if the verb in the main clause is in the future tense, the subordinate clause of time introduced by when, before, until, after, till, etc., should be in the present tense.

Examples:
- I shall tell you, when she comes.
- She will wait till you return.
- He will not come until you call him.
- She will come when you invite her.