



What are some of your favorite ways of relaxing? Which ones are most effective when you are feeling under stress?

## GOALS

- Learn why mastering verb tenses is important in writing
- Understand two problems writers commonly encounter with verb tenses
- Form and use verb tenses correctly in exercises and writing assignments



## LEARN WHAT THE ERROR IS

### Errors with Verb Tenses

Verb tense refers to the time that a verb expresses. The form of the verb *ride* in the sentence *We rode our bicycles to campus* indicates that the action took place in the past, not in the present or future. Verb-tense errors are of two kinds: the incorrect choice of a verb tense in a sentence or the inappropriate shifting of verb tenses in a paragraph or a group of paragraphs. The editing symbol for an error with verb tense is *vt*.

Errors marked verb tense (*vt*) may also relate to aspect. The progressive and perfect tenses express aspect, which refers to that part of an event or action that goes beyond past, present, or future. For example, the following sentences both describe actions that take place in the present: *Matt studies in the library in the evening* and *Matt is studying in the library this evening*. However, the difference in meaning between the two actions is one of aspect. In the first sentence, *studies* indicates a habitual action. In the second sentence, *is studying* indicates a temporary action in progress. Aspect can also be used to show the duration of an action (*I worked . . .* vs. *I was working on my essay yesterday*) or the relationship of an action in the past to present and future time (*Alicia moved . . .* vs. *Alicia has moved to a new apartment*).

Verb-tense errors are global (more serious) errors and can make a piece of writing difficult for the reader to understand. Time is an important message expressed by the verb in English, so a writer must be able to control verb tenses in order for the reader to understand when actions and events take place. If you do not control verb tenses, your readers will have great difficulty following the sequence of events in your writing.

### Suggestions for Reducing Errors

- Review the verb-tense chart in this unit to make sure you understand the uses of the 12 verb tenses in English. Carefully study the six most commonly used verb tenses: the simple present, the present progressive, the simple past, the past progressive, the future, and the present perfect. Pay special attention to the present perfect tense, one of the most difficult tenses to master for learners of English.
- Remember that in English, even when you have a stated time word or phrase (such as *last week*, *tomorrow*, or *yesterday*), the verb must also express time: *We went to the movies yesterday*.



## Check Your Understanding

- Be aware of how you move from one verb tense to another in a piece of writing (the sequencing of verbs). Avoid unnecessary shifts in tense, yet also be aware that you will often need to use several different verb tenses. The sample paragraphs in this unit will guide you in using different verb tenses in your writing.
- Examine the verb tenses in your academic, professional, and leisure-time reading material in order to become aware of the variety of verb tenses that can occur in a piece of writing. Note that when a writer shifts to a different verb tense, this shift is often signaled by a time-reference word or phrase, such as *when I was in high school*, *yesterday*, or *tomorrow*. These words alert the reader to a shift from one time frame to another.

Write answers to the following questions. Share your answers with another student.

1. Why are verb-tense errors such serious errors?
2. Aside from time, what other kinds of information do some verb tenses convey?

## GRAMMAR JOURNAL ENTRY 1 VERB TENSES

*Respond to the following in your grammar journal.*

1. Describe your week so far. What have you done? Overall, has this week been hectic, busy, routine, or slow?
2. Underline all of the verbs in this journal entry and notice what different verb tenses you have used. Do you think they are correct? If you are not sure, check with a classmate, a tutor, or your instructor.

## UNDERSTAND COMMON PROBLEMS

This section presents two problems that writers commonly encounter with verb tenses. First, take the pre-test to see what you already know about verb tenses. When you finish, check your answers on page 350. Then, carefully study each problem and the examples that illustrate it. Pay particular attention to those problems that correspond to the pre-test questions you had difficulty with. Remember that becoming aware of the types of errors you most often make with verb tenses will increase your chances of avoiding these errors in your writing.

## Pre-test

### What Do You Already Know?

Test your ability to recognize and correct errors with verb tenses.

- A** Correct the marked verb-tense errors. These are examples of the two common problems that are presented in this unit.

**Problem 1** Since I moved to my new house 15 days ago, I <sup>*vt*</sup> was very busy.

**Problem 2** Human beings make mistakes. Sometimes, we do things we <sup>*vt*</sup> regretted later.

- B** Underline and correct the one error in each of the following items. (The errors are not in any particular order.)

- Many students like to go abroad to study. Now I am in my second year of college, and I just find out yesterday that I have been accepted to go to Brazil.
- Last week, my parents sent me money for my tuition bill, and I pay it today.

### Two Common Problems

*vt*  
Incorrect: Alex has sent out several job applications last month.

Correct: Alex sent out several job applications last month.

Explanation: The action of sending out the applications has been completed. Thus, the simple past tense is needed.

*vt*  
Incorrect: I was in the United States since last year.

Correct: I have been in the United States since last year.

Explanation: The action of being in the United States started in the past and is continuing into the present. Thus, the present perfect tense is needed.

*vt*  
Incorrect: At present, I live in the dormitory, but I decided to move out next year.

Correct: At present, I live in the dormitory, but I have decided to move out next year.

#### Problem 1

An incorrect verb tense has been used in a sentence or clause.



Explanation: Since no definite time has been given and since the decision to move into an apartment has probably been recently made, the present perfect tense is needed.

Incorrect: Students <sup>*vt*</sup> pay less tuition last year than this year.

Correct: Students paid less tuition last year than this year.

Explanation: Less tuition was paid by students last year. Thus, a past-tense verb is needed to agree with the time expression *last year*.

Incorrect: Yosemite <sup>*vt*</sup> was one of the most popular of all the national parks.

Correct: Yosemite is one of the most popular of all the national parks.

Explanation: The comment about Yosemite is a general statement that is true in the present. Thus, the present tense is needed.

Incorrect: Many students <sup>*vt*</sup> participate in the graduation ceremony next month.

Correct: Many students will participate (or are participating) in the graduation ceremony next month.

Explanation: The ceremony will take place next month. Thus, a verb that shows future time is needed to agree with the time expression *next month*.

**SELF-HELP STRATEGY:** Make sure that the verb tense you use fits the time you want to express. For example, if you are writing about something that will happen in the future, the verb should express future time. Also, remember that even when the time is indicated with a time word, such as *yesterday*, *today*, or *tomorrow*, the verb must still show the time of the action. When the time is not clearly stated, think carefully about the time you are trying to express. In the following sentence, the time is not stated in words, yet the writer is remembering a past action now. Thus, the verb *remember* is in the present tense even though the verb *had* and *went* are in the past tense.

EXAMPLE: I <sup>[right now]</sup> remember the fun we <sup>[past]</sup> had when we all <sup>[past]</sup> went to Disneyland.

**Problem 2**

The verb tenses shift inappropriately from one time frame to another within a piece of writing.

Incorrect: Although this is my first year in college, I have already found that there <sup>vt</sup> were some differences between high school and college. One of the things I <sup>vt</sup> learned in college is that a person has to be independent.

Explanation: Since the writer is in his or her first year of college, he or she appropriately started out in the present time frame (*is, have found*). However, the writer then inappropriately shifts to the past (*were, learned*) instead of staying in the present.

Correct: Although this is my first year in college, I have already found that there are some differences between high school and college. One of the things I have learned in college is that a person has to be independent.

Incorrect: Most students have many different expectations and ideas about college before they actually enter. Some of these expectations are similar to reality, yet some are quite different. Before I started college, I <sup>vt</sup> have imagined how the classes and teachers would be and came to the conclusion that they <sup>vt</sup> will not be any different from those in high school.

Explanation: The writer appropriately begins in the present with two general statements. However, the writer needs to shift to the past when writing about an experience that took place before she started college.

Correct: Most students have many different expectations and ideas about college before they actually enter. Some of these expectations are similar to reality, yet some are quite different. Before I started college, I imagined (OR had imagined) how the classes and teachers would be and came to the conclusion that they would not be any different from those in high school.

**SELF-HELP STRATEGY:** Remember that although you want to avoid unnecessary shifts in verb tense, it is often appropriate to shift tenses in a piece of writing. See the Review Grammar Solutions section for suggestions on how to master verb-tense sequencing.



# REVIEW GRAMMAR SOLUTIONS

## Forms and Uses of Verb Tenses

The following charts provide an explanation of the forms and uses of verb tenses. Begin by reviewing all of the tenses. Then, study more carefully those tenses that you find difficult.

SIMPLE PRESENT	
USE	EXAMPLES
To express a habitual or repeated action in the present or to express a condition that is true at any time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thuy <u>rides</u> her bicycle to school every day.</li> <li>• I <u>am</u> not a morning person. In fact, I usually <u>do not get up</u> until 10:00 AM.</li> </ul>
To express general truths that are timeless (well-known laws or principles or even generally accepted truths about people, places, and customs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water <u>boils</u> at 100°C.</li> <li>• Generally speaking, Spaniards <u>eat</u> dinner much later than Americans <u>do</u>.</li> <li>• College students often <u>do not get</u> enough sleep.</li> </ul>
To report what appears in print. This use is common in academic writing when the writer is referring to texts and quotations. In the example, even though Norman Cousins wrote his article in the past, the writer has put the underlined verb in the present tense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In his article "The Communication Collapse," Norman Cousins <u>asserts</u> that schools encourage poor writing habits by forcing students to write under time pressure. (<b>Note:</b> The writer could also use the past tense, <i>asserted</i>.)</li> </ul>
To describe past events as if they were happening now. This use is called the <i>historical present</i> . In the example, taken from a longer account of a visit to India, the writer has chosen to narrate his adventures using the present tense, even though the trip is over.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My friend and I <u>arrive</u> at the Mumbai airport on February 25. Jim <u>meets</u> us with a taxi, and we <u>drive</u> to what is to be our apartment for nearly three weeks. The drive <u>is</u> culture shock number one.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
Base form of the verb (infinitive without to). For third-person singular, add -s or -es.	
<b>Examples:</b> I write, you write, we write, he/she/the student writes, they/the students write	

## PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

USE*	EXAMPLES
To express that an action or activity is happening right now (at this moment, today, this year); the action has begun and is still happening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tammy <u>is working</u> on the first draft of her essay.</li> <li>• Monica <u>is majoring</u> in aeronautical engineering.</li> </ul>
To express that an action or activity is happening at the present time and is temporary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark <u>is working</u> for his uncle. (allows for the possibility that Mark may not work for his uncle permanently)</li> </ul>
To express that an action is already in progress at a specified point of time in the present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When my roommate gets home after class, I <u>am</u> usually <u>cooking</u>.</li> <li>• At 8:00 PM, Teresa <u>is</u> usually <u>studying</u> in the library.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
am/is/are + present participle (-ing)	
<p><b>Examples:</b> I am reading, you are reading, he/she/the student is reading, we are reading, they/the students are reading</p>	

\*When a verb expresses a state of being (a stative verb), it cannot be used in the progressive tense. See "Stative Verbs" on page 15.

## SIMPLE PAST

USE	EXAMPLES
To indicate that an action or event took place at a specific time in the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I <u>visited</u> Korea last year.</li> <li>• Last night we <u>saw</u> a movie about India.</li> </ul>
To indicate that an action or event occurred over a period of time in the past with the implication that it is no longer true in the present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I <u>lived</u> in Los Angeles for 15 years.</li> <li>• Barbara <u>was</u> on the volleyball team in college.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
Regular verbs: base form + -ed	
<p><b>Examples:</b> I walked, you walked, he/she/the student walked, we walked, they/the students walked</p>	
<p><b>Note:</b> Many verbs have irregular past-tense forms. Some common irregular past-tense forms include <i>took</i>, <i>ate</i>, and <i>came</i>. You can find irregular past-tense forms in the dictionary under the entry for the base form of the verb. Consult a learner's dictionary for a list of common verbs that have irregular past-tense forms.</p>	



## PAST PROGRESSIVE

USE	EXAMPLES
To express that an activity was in progress at a specific point of time in the past, or was in progress and was interrupted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At 8:00 PM last night, I <u>was studying</u> in the library.</li> <li>I <u>was cooking</u> when the phone rang.</li> </ul>
To show that an activity lasted for a period of time in the past (emphasis on the duration).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gerald <u>was cooking</u> while you <u>were sleeping</u>.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
was/were + present participle (-ing)	
<p><b>Examples:</b> I was reading, you were reading, he/she/the student was reading, we were reading, they/the students were reading</p>	

## PRESENT PERFECT

USE	EXAMPLES
To express that an action or state began in the past and continues in the present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hiroaki <u>has lived</u> in Ohio for two years.</li> <li>I <u>have known</u> Hiroaki since he came to Ohio.</li> </ul>
To indicate that an action or event occurred some time in the past, although the exact time is not specified or important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alex <u>has moved</u> back to France.</li> <li>I <u>have already filed</u> my income taxes.</li> </ul>
<b>Note:</b> This tense can also indicate that an event has very recently happened. The adverb <i>just</i> is often used in this case.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I <u>have just completed</u> the application.</li> </ul>
To indicate that an action or event has occurred more than once in the past (specific times are not given or important).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Susan <u>has seen</u> the doctor several times about her allergy problem.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
has/have + past participle	
<p><b>Examples:</b> I have walked, you have walked, he/she/the student has walked, we have walked, they/the students have walked</p>	
<p><b>Note:</b> Many past-participle forms are irregular (for example, <i>known, seen, written, met</i>). Consult a learner's dictionary for a list of common irregular verbs.</p>	

## PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

USE	EXAMPLES
To emphasize the duration of an activity that started in the past and continues into the present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I <u>have been waiting</u> for you for an hour.</li> <li>• Abdul <u>has been living</u> here for two years.</li> </ul>
To indicate that an activity has been in progress recently (the activity started in the past and is still going on).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ramon <u>has been reading</u> the book <i>War and Peace</i>.</li> <li>• I <u>have been thinking</u> about moving out of the dormitory.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
<i>has/have + been + present participle (-ing)</i>	
<p><b>Examples:</b> I have been waiting, you have been waiting, he/she/the student has been waiting, we have been waiting, they/the students have been waiting</p>	

## PAST PERFECT

USE	EXAMPLES
To indicate that an action was completed before another action began in the past or to indicate that an action was completed by a definite time in the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I <u>had</u> never <u>read</u> anything by Jane Austen until last month.</li> <li>• In English class I suddenly realized that I <u>had forgotten</u> to bring my textbook.</li> </ul>
<b>Note:</b> If the word <i>before</i> or <i>after</i> is in the sentence, the simple past may be used instead of the past perfect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After all my friends <u>left</u> (or <u>had left</u>), I cleaned up the apartment.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
<i>had + past participle</i>	
<p><b>Examples:</b> I had called, you had called, he/she/the student had called, we had called, they/the students had called</p>	
<p><b>Note:</b> Many past-participle forms are irregular (for example, <i>written</i>, <i>met</i>, <i>known</i>). Consult a learner's dictionary for a list of common verbs that have irregular past-participle forms.</p>	



## PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

USE	EXAMPLES
To emphasize the duration of an activity that was completed before another action or time in the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I <u>had been waiting</u> for him for an hour when he finally arrived.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
<i>had + been + present participle (-ing)</i> <p><b>Examples:</b> I had been waiting, you had been waiting, he/she/the student had been waiting, we had been waiting, they/the students had been waiting</p>	

## FUTURE

USE	EXAMPLES
To express that an action, event, or state will occur in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I <u>will drive</u> you to the airport tomorrow.</li> <li>Terry <u>will graduate</u> next June.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
<i>will + base form</i> <p><b>Examples:</b> I will attend, you will attend, he/she/the student will attend, we will attend, they/the students will attend</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Do not use an -s on the base form of the verb in the third-person singular.</p>	
OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT EXPRESSING FUTURE TIME	
Future time can also be expressed in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <i>am/is/are going to + base form</i> <p><b>Examples:</b> We <u>are going to take</u> the midterm on Friday. The city <u>is going to have</u> a parade on July 4.</p> </li> <li>           simple present or present progressive (especially with verbs of arriving and departing)           <p><b>Examples:</b> The plane <u>leaves</u> at 8:00 PM this evening. The plane <u>is leaving</u> at 8:00 PM this evening.</p> </li> <li> <i>would</i> (when the future is expressed in a sentence that is in past time)           <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Present/future time:</b> The instructor <u>says</u> that the exam <u>will cover</u> the first five units of the textbook.  <b>Past time:</b> The instructor <u>said</u> that the exam <u>would cover</u> the first five units of the textbook.               </li> <li> <b>Present/future time:</b> Even though I plan to go to college next year, I <u>do not know</u> how demanding college classes <u>will be</u>.  <b>Past time:</b> When I <u>was</u> in high school, I <u>did not know</u> how demanding college classes <u>would be</u>.               </li> </ol> </li> </ul>	

## FUTURE PROGRESSIVE

USE	EXAMPLES
To express that an action will be happening over a period of time at some specific point in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even though I <u>will be studying</u> when you call, I will answer the phone.</li> </ul>
To emphasize the duration of an action in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lin <u>will be working</u> on this essay for the next week.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
will + be + present participle (-ing)	
<p><b>Examples:</b> I will be leaving, you will be leaving, he/she/the student will be leaving, we will be leaving, they/the students will be leaving</p>	

## FUTURE PERFECT

USE	EXAMPLES
To indicate that an activity will be completed before another event or time in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maria <u>will have finished</u> her Ph.D. by the time she leaves for France.</li> <li>• We <u>will have written</u> five essays by the end of the semester.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
will + have + past participle	
<p><b>Examples:</b> I will have gone, you will have gone, he/she/the student will have gone, we will have gone, they/the students will have gone</p>	

## FUTURE PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

USE	EXAMPLES
To indicate that an action has been in progress for a period of time before another event or time in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carlos <u>will have been working</u> on his dissertation for three years before he gets his Ph.D. degree.</li> <li>• By this time next year, I <u>will have been living</u> here for two years.</li> </ul>
FORMATION	
will + have + been + present participle (-ing)	
<p><b>Examples:</b> I will have been practicing, you will have been practicing, he/she/the student will have been practicing, we will have been practicing, they/the students will have been practicing</p>	



## Stative Verbs

Stative verbs describe a state rather than show an action. We don't use these verbs in the progressive tenses.

### Examples:

Incorrect: You are seeming nervous. Do you have a test today?

Correct: You seem nervous. Do you have a test today?

Incorrect: That hamburger was smelling delicious!

Correct: That hamburger smelled delicious!

Incorrect: The students will be appreciating the fact that the test has been postponed.

Correct: The students will appreciate the fact that the test has been postponed.

Incorrect: James has always been understanding math better than chemistry.

Correct: James has always understood math better than chemistry.

Stative verbs are most commonly used to express the following states.

TO SHOW THOUGHTS OR GIVE OPINIONS	TO SHOW ATTITUDES	TO SHOW EMOTIONS	TO SHOW OWNERSHIP OR POSSESSION	TO REFLECT THE SENSES	TO DESCRIBE A STATE OF BEING
believe	appreciate	hate	belong to	feel	appear
feel (= think)	(dis)agree	(dis)like	have	hear	be
forget	hope	fear	owe	see	cost
know	mind	love	own	smell	look (like)
mean	need		possess	taste	seem
realize	prefer				sound (like)
remember	think				tend
suppose	want				weigh
think	wish				
understand					

Some verbs can be both stative and active. However, the meaning of the verb is different. As active verbs, they can be used in the progressive tense.

### Examples:

Stative meaning: Arnold looks unhappy. (This describes Arnold's appearance.)

Active meaning: He is looking for his mother. (This means "He is searching for his mother.")

Stative meaning: I think she is wonderful. (This means "In my opinion, she is wonderful.")

Active meaning: I am thinking about Ana. (This means "My mind is focusing on Ana.")

Stative meaning: Hydrogen sulfide smells bad. (This means "It gives off a bad odor.")

Active meaning: He is smelling the soup. (This means "He is trying to see what the soup smells like.")

Stative meaning: Soap feels slippery. (This describes what the soap is like when you touch it.)

Active meaning: He is feeling the burner to see if it is hot. (This means "He is touching the burner.")

Stative meaning: The sample weighs 80 grams. (This describes how much the sample weighs.)

Active meaning: She is weighing the sample. (This means she is trying to determine its weight.)

The simple present with *have* means to "own" or "possess."

Correct: I have a car.

Incorrect: I am having a car.

Correct: She has a lot of free time.

Incorrect: She is having a lot of free time.



For stative verbs in the passive voice, see Unit 5, "Passive Voice."

In certain special expressions, you can use the progressive with *have*, such as *have a good time*, *have difficulty*, *have a problem*, and *have dinner*.

Frank is having a good time tonight. (He is enjoying himself.)

Gloria is having trouble with her car. (Her car is not working properly.)

## Verb-Tense Sequencing

*Verb-tense sequencing* refers to the way a writer moves from one verb tense to another. Knowing how to do this is one of the most important keys to using verb tenses correctly.

Sometimes a shift in verb tenses is appropriate and sometimes it is not, as illustrated in the following paragraphs. In paragraph A, the underlined verb *were* shows where a shift occurs from present to past. This shift is **not** appropriate because the writer is still commenting in general about men in his or her country. General statements that are true in the present require the simple present tense, so the writer should have used *are* instead of *were*.

- A.** Many men in my country do not encourage their wives to work outside the home because they think women should not do anything but housework and child care. However, these men were wrong. They will never know what their wives can do or who their wives might become.

In paragraph B, the underlined verbs also show a shift from present to past. However, this shift is appropriate because the writer has moved from a discussion of what is true in the present to a discussion of what it was like before computers. In this way, the comparison between present and past is immediately clear.

- B.** Computers are an integral part of our modern lives. At home, we use them for writing letters, online banking or shopping, and doing income taxes, to name just a few examples. With the Internet, we browse for information, read, and communicate. In the workplace, we use computers for tasks ranging from simple word processing all the way up to designing airplanes. Before homes and offices had computers, our world was very different. Letters had to be typed on a typewriter and it was difficult to correct mistakes. Engineers drafted and designed projects using pens, paper, and drawing boards. Students and researchers went to the library to manually search for materials they needed. From writing to designing to communicating, computers have made our lives easier and more enjoyable both in the home and at the workplace.

## How Verb Tenses Work Together

A writer usually uses several different verb tenses in a piece of writing and must be able to switch back and forth between tenses automatically. The two passages that follow, along with the notes for each one, will show you how various verb tenses work together in a text to show time.

### Passage 1

In this student paragraph, the writer explains why a certain class is hard for first-year college students. Each verb or verb phrase is underlined and explained.

A difficult class for first-year students at my college is (*general truth*) Introduction to Psychology (Psychology 1). One reason why it is (*general truth*) so hard is that most students have had (*began in the past and continues in the present*) insufficient preparation for the demands of the class. Back in high school, for most of their classes, students did not do (*past fact*) much reading and preparation before each lecture. Students in Psychology 1 must complete (*modal; present time*) long reading assignments to understand the lectures and to do well on the exams. I took (*past action*) Psychology 1 last quarter, and we were assigned (*past action in passive voice*) hundreds of pages each week. Not only did I have to finish (*modal; past action*) the readings before class in order to really understand the lecture but also I had to review (*modal; past action*) them before exams. In high school, we simply brought (*past action*) our books to class where we read (*past action*) a page and then discussed (*past action*) it. Another reason this class is (*general truth*) hard is that psychology consists (*general truth*) of many difficult concepts such as how the brain works, how infants develop, and how humans learn (*general truths*). Many of the concepts sound the same but are, in reality, different (*general truths*). What made (*past action*) them particularly hard in this class was (*past action*) that we had to apply (*modal; past fact*) these concepts to problem-solving on the tests. It is (*general truth*) clear that first-year students are justified (*general truth, stative passive*) when they label (*general truth*) Psychology 1 as hard, but if they devote (*conditional; real*) time to studying, go (*conditional; real*) to all the classes and discussion sections, and seek (*conditional; real*) help when needed, they will do (*conditional; future result*) well in the class.

### Passage 2

In this introduction to a longer essay, the writer summarizes an article by the American author, Eudora Welty (1909–2001).

The writer uses three tenses: the simple present, the simple past, and the present perfect. An explanation for why these three verb tenses are used is given at the end of the passage.

In her article, "Listening," Eudora Welty tells how she became committed to reading and writing through listening. Welty was first introduced to the world of books when she was three years old. She reports that her mother



read to her all day long, in every room of the house. Because of her mother's reading to her, Welty developed a love of books, and she also learned to listen to what she heard and what she read. She says, "Ever since I was first read to, then started reading to myself, there has never been a line read that I didn't hear." She feels that her ability to listen to words has influenced her in her desire to write and her ability to write, as she has "always trusted this voice." Although Welty does not say it directly, it is clear that her mother served as an excellent role model because she taught her the love of reading.

## Explanation of Verb-Tense Use

1. The writer uses simple present tense to report what Welty wrote in her article. The writer can choose either the simple present or simple past in this case, but the writer must be consistent. Note the use of *tells*, *reports*, *says*, and *feels* to relate what Welty wrote in her article.
2. The writer uses the simple past to refer to Welty's childhood experience because all this happened when Welty was a child.
3. In the quotation from the article, the writer uses the tenses used by Welty. Of course, Welty was still alive at the time of her article and the use of the present perfect ("*there has never been a line ...*") is appropriate.
4. The writer uses the present perfect to indicate that the action began in the past and is still true at the present time. In this paragraph, the present time includes the present time of the article, when Welty was still alive.

## IMPROVE YOUR WRITING STYLE

### CHOOSING THE MOST APPROPRIATE VERB TENSE

*Writers often have a choice of verb tenses that are similar but not exactly the same in meaning. Sometimes you may want to choose one tense over another for a specific reason. At other times, you may have options, with your choice of tense creating little difference in meaning. For you, as advanced writers, what is important is to be aware of the differences that can be created by the use of one verb tense over another. The sentences that follow illustrate some of the differences you should become aware of.*

Continued on page 20.

## IMPROVE YOUR WRITING STYLE (CONT.)

### CHOOSING THE MOST APPROPRIATE VERB TENSE

*Examples:*

- a. We decided to go to the movies. (simple past tense)
- b. We have decided to go to the movies. (present perfect tense)

*Explanation of difference:* In both sentences above, the decision to go to the movies has already been made. The present perfect tense in sentence b makes it clear that the decision has either just been made or has been made recently. Also, with sentence a, the meaning could be that we decided to go to the movies and already went. However, in sentence b, the action of going to the movies has not yet been completed.

*Examples:*

- a. It rained yesterday. (simple past tense)
- b. It was raining yesterday. (past progressive tense)

*Explanation of difference:* The use of the past progressive tense was raining in sentence b emphasizes the duration of time that it rained yesterday: it rained over a period of time. In sentence a, in contrast, the verb in the simple past tense does not indicate whether or not it rained briefly or over a period of time. A time reference word, such as all day (It rained all day) or briefly (It rained briefly) would have to be used with the verb to indicate how long it rained.

*Examples:*

- a. We had eaten dinner when you came over to visit. (past perfect tense)
- b. We ate dinner when you came over to visit. (past tense)
- c. We had eaten dinner before you came over to visit. (past perfect tense)
- d. We ate dinner before you came over to visit. (past tense)

*Explanation of difference:* In sentences a and b, the time that the eating took place in relation to the action of coming over to visit is different. In sentence a, the past perfect tense indicates that the action of eating had already happened before the action of coming over to visit. In sentence b, in contrast, the action of eating occurred at the same time or even slightly after the action of coming over happened. Note, however, that in sentences c and d, the action of eating in both cases was finished before the action of coming over to visit happened. The subordinating conjunction before in sentences c and d clearly indicates that the action of eating comes first in both cases.



*Examples:*

- a. I am studying in the library. (present progressive tense)  
 b. I study in the library. (simple present tense)

*Explanation of difference:* Although both verbs are in the present, their meanings are different. In sentence a, the present progressive tense shows that the action of studying is happening either exactly at the moment of speaking or for a temporary period of time in the present. In other words, the studying in the library is happening right now or for a period of time in the present (such as this week) that is considered temporary. In contrast, the simple present tense in sentence b indicates that the action of studying in the library is done on a regular basis (for example, every night).

## PRACTICE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

### EXERCISE 1

Directions: Decide whether each of the following sentences is correct (C) or incorrect (I). If it is incorrect, make the correction. Be prepared to explain why your choice of verb tense is correct.

Example: I Since I have been a college student, I ~~made~~<sup>have made</sup> many new friends.

- \_\_\_ 1. I was interested in physics since high school.
- \_\_\_ 2. Having good social skills is essential for my job, and I decide to take a class in personal communication.
- \_\_\_ 3. Since she was a child, she likes sports, especially water sports, such as swimming and waterskiing.
- \_\_\_ 4. Mario graduate as a veterinarian in January of last year.
- \_\_\_ 5. Hector speaks Spanish and comes from Costa Rica.
- \_\_\_ 6. First, we went to Italy. Then, we travel to Austria and Germany. Finally, we visit Spain.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The professor had given an introduction to the course yesterday, the first day of class.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. There are rumors that college tuition is higher next year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. By the time of the presidential election, the candidates will have campaigned in most, if not all, of the 50 states.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. In my opinion, voting in elections was very important.

## EXERCISE 2

Directions: Fill in each blank with the correct tense of the verb in parentheses. For some blanks, more than one verb tense is possible.

One quality that \_\_\_\_\_ *helps* \_\_\_\_\_ (help) students succeed in their studies is self-discipline. Self-discipline \_\_\_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (be) particularly important in college. I \_\_\_\_\_ (3) \_\_\_\_\_ (learn) a great deal about self-discipline by observing two of my friends. I have noted that my roommate Betsy \_\_\_\_\_ (4) \_\_\_\_\_ (plan) her time every night before she \_\_\_\_\_ (5) \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to bed. She \_\_\_\_\_ (6) \_\_\_\_\_ (write) down what she \_\_\_\_\_ (7) \_\_\_\_\_ (have) to do the next day and how much time she \_\_\_\_\_ (8) \_\_\_\_\_ (spend) doing each activity. First, she \_\_\_\_\_ (9) \_\_\_\_\_ (schedule) time for attending classes and working. She also \_\_\_\_\_ (10) \_\_\_\_\_ (set) aside time for socializing, running, studying, and eating. By having a timetable and sticking to it, Betsy \_\_\_\_\_ (11) \_\_\_\_\_ (be) always able to accomplish a lot more than I can. Another friend, Jo, \_\_\_\_\_ (12) \_\_\_\_\_ (discipline) herself by not doing anything unless she \_\_\_\_\_ (13) \_\_\_\_\_ (complete) all of her homework and reading. One night last semester, I \_\_\_\_\_ (14) \_\_\_\_\_ (invite) her to go out to dinner, but she \_\_\_\_\_ (15) \_\_\_\_\_ (refuse) because she \_\_\_\_\_ (16) \_\_\_\_\_ (not finish) her physics homework. I wish I could be as disciplined as these two friends of mine are. I \_\_\_\_\_ (17) \_\_\_\_\_ (know) that self-discipline is important if I want to be successful in college. Thus, next term I \_\_\_\_\_ (18) \_\_\_\_\_ (make) an effort to discipline myself.



**EXERCISE 3**

Directions: Fill in each blank with the correct form of the verb given in parentheses. Pay particular attention to the sequence of tenses you use. For some blanks, more than one verb tense is possible.

October 31, 2012

Internship Office  
Mighty Corporation  
Hometown, CA 90001

Dear Dr. Martinez:

I \_\_\_\_\_ (1) (read) your advertisement in our campus newspaper yesterday and \_\_\_\_\_ (2) (write) to apply for a summer internship position. I \_\_\_\_\_ (3) (hear) many wonderful things about your company and would be very interested in working for you.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (4) (graduate) last June from the University of Michigan with a B.S. in electrical engineering. After graduating from college, I \_\_\_\_\_ (5) (fulfill) a lifelong dream of traveling to Japan, the country of my parents' origin. Currently, I \_\_\_\_\_ (6) (work) on my M.S. degree in electrical and computer engineering at Stanford University. I \_\_\_\_\_ (7) (complete) my degree next June, at which time I would like to work full time for a company such as yours.

As you can imagine, the summer internships you offer are exactly what I \_\_\_\_\_ (8) (look) for. The internship will not only be valuable to me in terms of professional experience, but, I believe, will also help me focus my studies in my second year of the M.S. program to reflect what I \_\_\_\_\_ (9) (need) when I am working for the computer industry in the future. Because of its proximity to my university, Stanford, I \_\_\_\_\_ (10) (visit) your company's Hometown branch a number of times. I am especially interested in working at this site because of its focus on research and development. In addition, as someone who is bilingual and bicultural (English and Japanese), I \_\_\_\_\_ (11) (find) the idea of an internship with a multinational company such as yours particularly appealing.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (enclose) a copy of my résumé for your consideration. Please  
 do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or wish to set up an  
 interview.

Sincerely,

*Peter E. Engineer*

Peter E. Engineer

#### EXERCISE 4

**Directions:** The following student paragraph has 11 verb-tense errors. Cross out each incorrect verb and write the correct verb above it. For some verbs, more than one option is possible. The first error has been corrected for you.

I have a positive attitude toward writing in English. When I first <sup>came</sup> ~~come~~ to the United States, I am very confused about using English, a new and strange language. But as time go by, my feeling toward the language begin to change. I force myself to write even though it was hard at first. I write a lot, and I become more confident each time I write. Now, although I am more confident about writing, I still have many problems to overcome. I find that writing takes a great deal of time, and one has to be patient and disciplined in order to be good at it. At times, I was frustrated and impatient with my writing. In fact, sometimes I sat for hours and cannot write even a word. Nevertheless, despite my frustration and long hours of work, I tend to have a positive attitude toward writing in English. Even though English was not my native language, I have found that I simply like to write.

#### EXERCISE 5

**Directions:** The following student paragraph has eight verb-tense errors. Cross out each incorrect verb and write the correct verb above it. In some cases, more than one option is possible. The first error has been corrected for you.

Children of immigrants who do not speak English often <sup>function</sup> ~~functioned~~ more like adults than children. As a child of immigrant parents myself, I have often had to act as an adult. Ever since my family arrived here five years ago, I take care



of them in many ways. I have had to pay the rent, the utilities, the telephone, and any other bills. I translated letters from English to Vietnamese for the whole family. When a family member was sick, I had gone along to the doctor to explain the problem and to translate the doctor's suggestions. I believe it has been good for me to do all these things because it prepared me for what I face when I am living on my own. Having adult responsibilities gave me the chance to understand what the world is like outside of my home. It provides me with hands-on training and has been beneficial for me.

### EXERCISE 6

**Directions:** The following student paragraph has nine verb-tense errors. Cross out each incorrect verb and make the correction above it. The first error has been corrected for you.

Luckily for me, at the very end of my first semester here at college, my grades changed for the better. My Chemistry 1A class last semester is one example. At the start of the semester, I did not understand the materials or the problems. I was confused when I read and <sup>tried</sup>try to solve problems. Even though I did the homework and go to all the laboratory sessions, my understanding did not seem to improve. In fact, on my first and second tests, I receive a D and an F. After receiving those two grades, I start to realize that I had to change the way I was studying. I decide to put myself on a strict schedule and to go to the library every day after dinner. I continue to follow this plan until the end of the semester. Even now, I still cannot believe how well I had done on my final. I received a B on the final and a C for the semester. This is what I think happen: When I reviewed all the materials systematically, I am able to understand principles of chemistry that I did not understand before.

### EXERCISE 7

**Directions:** Choose a news article to read. Underline all the verbs in one or two paragraphs. Can you explain why the different verb tenses were used? If you are unsure of any of them, ask a classmate, a tutor, or your instructor.

**Post-test****What Do You Know Now?**

**A** Decide whether the underlined verb tense in each of the following sentences is correct (C) or incorrect (I). If it is incorrect, make the correction.

- \_\_\_ 1. My high school teacher used the same textbook for algebra since 2009.
- \_\_\_ 2. When they will begin taking a Chinese language class, many students are nervous about learning the writing system.
- \_\_\_ 3. After he had studied three hours for his Spanish quiz, my roommate decided to go to bed and get a good night's sleep.
- \_\_\_ 4. It is seeming very cold in the classroom, and most students are wearing jackets.
- \_\_\_ 5. World War I lasts from 1914–1918.
- \_\_\_ 6. Access to higher education means that even though a college education can be expensive, most students can still go to college.
- \_\_\_ 7. The instructor wrote the grammar exam last Friday when she suddenly realized she had forgotten to teach a particular point.
- \_\_\_ 8. An article in today's paper focuses on 20 inventions that have changed our lives.
- \_\_\_ 9. In a recent article, Lawrence Thomas, a teacher in Kansas, says that he never votes. He also said that he is against paying taxes.
- \_\_\_ 10. Yesterday we celebrated Thanksgiving and most of us ate turkey; many of us also eat pumpkin pie.

**B** Check (✓) the sentence that has the correct verb tense for the meaning indicated.

1. Habitual action

- \_\_\_ a. Mark is riding the bus to school because it is raining.
- \_\_\_ b. Mark rides the bus to school when it is raining.



2. An action that is happening right now

\_\_\_\_\_ a. Many students at my school major in communications.

\_\_\_\_\_ b. Many students at my school are majoring in communications.

3. An action that began in the past and continues into the present

\_\_\_\_\_ a. Women have made great progress in closing the gender gap in salaries.

\_\_\_\_\_ b. Women made great progress in closing the gender gap in salaries.

**C** Find and underline the inappropriate tense shift in each paragraph and correct it.

1. In 1849, many people came to Northern California to hunt for gold. They soon found that looking for it was hard and dangerous work. Many then decide to open up businesses to sell equipment and supplies to the miners. Some became very wealthy because they had struck gold above ground.

2. Although there are many different routes to obtaining an education, going to college is not the only path. In her article, "Where Learning Takes Place," retired English professor Patricia Harrelson shares her philosophy that attending college is not the only means of getting an education. Harrelson sees self-directed learning as learning that does not occur in a classroom. She listed such activities as cooking, gardening, and parenting as self-directed education. Although Harrelson views self-directed learning as something that cannot be achieved in a formal college setting, it is my belief that self-directed learning and traditional college learning can be combined.

**D** Correct the underlined errors in verb tense.

Finals week is a time of great pressure for college students. In many courses, a big percentage of the final grade is based on the final exam, and the final itself covered an entire semester of material taught. Also, all final exams are taken during just one week. Some students study for

three or four, maybe even five, finals during finals week. This can really be exhausting, especially for first-year students who have experienced finals week for the first time. What students find the most difficult of all was to have two final exams on the same day. Last quarter was my first experience of finals week. I had never thought that I would ever spend so much time studying. In fact, the night before my math final, I slept for only two hours. I stay up all night trying to memorize all of the equations for the final. After the math final, I come home and went straight to bed. I think having a week of no classes before finals week would ease the pressure and help students perform better because they would have more time to study.

**E** Fill in each blank with the correct tense of the verb in parentheses.

American English is spoken in the United States, and British English is spoken in the United Kingdom. Americans and British can easily understand each other, but American English has distinctive features of its own. For example, since the 1600s it \_\_\_\_\_ (borrow) words from other languages, such as *canyon* from Spanish and *squash* and *igloo* from native American languages.

Another interesting feature of American English is its accents and dialects. Many of our accents today reflect where the early immigrants \_\_\_\_\_ (2) (come) from or the languages they \_\_\_\_\_ (3) (speak), such as German, or their English accents, such as Scotch Irish. The most well-known dialect, African American Vernacular English (AAVE), began with the slave trade in the early 1700s. Without a common language to communicate with each other, the slaves \_\_\_\_\_ (4) (begin) to speak their own form of English, learned from traders and plantation owners. That language \_\_\_\_\_ (5) (become) a dialect with its own grammatical rules.

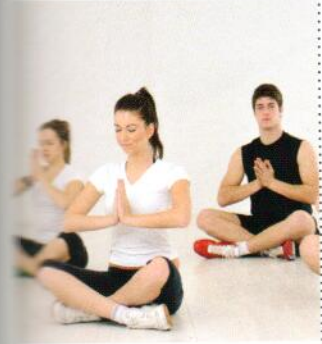


## APPLY WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED TO WRITING

Select a writing topic and follow the steps in Appendix A on page 337.

### Topic 1:

In our fast-paced lives, it is more important than ever to build in time for relaxation. Different individuals find different activities relaxing. While some people find it relaxing to do yoga, others might find relaxation in taking a leisurely walk, watching a new movie, or reading a good book. Describe several activities you personally find relaxing and comment on how each is beneficial or enjoyable.



### Topic 2:

Explain what different kinds of jobs are available for people in your field of study. Then, explain either what you do as a career or what your career goals are (i.e., what kind of work you would like to do in the future). If you do not have a specific goal, suggest what you might be interested in considering. Finally, comment on what the current job market is like for those in your field.

### Topic 3:

Write about a historical event that had or is continuing to have major effects, either positive or negative, on your country. First, explain the event. Then, analyze its effects, making it clear whether you consider these effects to be positive or negative.