

CHAPTER 5

COMMON ERRORS INVOLVING VERBS

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- Regular and irregular verbs: The four principal parts
- Using the correct tense
- Four irregular verbs: *Lie, lay, sit, and set*
- Writing paragraphs: Coherence in the paragraph through order of importance

One reason why so many mistakes are made in verb usage is that most sentences contain more than one verb, and consequently there are more chances to go wrong. Furthermore, the verbs most often used in the English language are irregular, which means that they change in a variety of ways. Therefore, they must be memorized. To make matters even worse, verbs change their forms and appearance more often than any other part of speech. As a result, they force us to pick our way through them carefully and deliberately.

Is the case hopeless, then? Is it impossible to learn to use verbs correctly and confidently? Not at all; despite these difficulties, problems with verbs fall into a few manageable categories. A common problem, for instance, is not knowing the correct form of the verb needed to express when a particular action is taking place. Another difficulty is not knowing the correct form of an irregular verb. This chapter will present solutions to these and other common problems that many writers and speakers have in using verbs.

Before we begin, however, look at the following sentences to see whether you have been using the correct verb form. Each sentence contains a verb that is often used incorrectly. The incorrect verb is in parentheses.

- Lila was surprised to see that we had *gone* (not *went*) to lunch already.
- Have you *brought* (not *brang* or *brung*) enough water for our kayaking trip?
- Who *sneaked* (not *snuck*) this lizard into my suitcase?
- Will's hopes *sank* (not *sunk*) when the Spurs lost possession of the ball.
- Cesar has *ridden* (not *rode*) the rollercoaster six times.

If you discovered that you have been using any of these verbs incorrectly, this chapter will give you some practical tips for their correct use. We will begin by examining the principal parts of regular and irregular verbs and will move next to the most common problems connected with the use of verbs, including shifts in tense and troublesome pairs like *lie* and *lay* and *sit* and *set*.

All verbs have four principal parts (or forms): the present, the past, the past participle, and the present participle. By learning these four parts, you can build all of the verb tenses. By the way, the word *tense* comes from a Latin word meaning “time.” When we talk about the **tense** of a verb, therefore, we mean the *time* expressed by the verb; for example, the *present* tense (or time), the *past* tense, and the *future* tense.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs form the **past** and **past participle** by adding *-ed* or *-d* to their present forms (*watch*, *watched*, and *watched*). The past participle is the form used with the helping verbs *have*, *has*, or *had* or with a form of *be* (*have been watched* and *were watched*). The **present participle** is formed by adding *-ing* to the **present** form, and it is used with a form of *to be* to form the other tenses (*am studying*, *was studying*, *have been studying*, and so on).

Here are the four principal parts of some common regular verbs.

Four Principal Parts of Common Regular Verbs			
Present	Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
offer	offered	offered	offering
attack	attacked	attacked	attacking
play	played	played	playing
travel	traveled	traveled	traveling
shout	shouted	shouted	shouting

Notice that the past (*offered, attacked, played*, and so on) and the past participle are identical and are formed by adding *-ed* or *-d* to the present. Remember, too, that the past participle is used with helping verbs to form past tenses: *I have offered, I had offered*, and *she has offered; I was offered, we were offered, and they had been offered*; and so on.

Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs are irregular in the way their past and past participle forms are made. Instead of adding *-ed* or *-d* for their past and past participle forms, irregular verbs change in ways that cannot be predicted. This means that you will have to memorize their past and past participle forms. Fortunately, irregular verbs form their present participles in the same way as regular verbs: by adding *-ing* to the present form.

To understand why it is difficult to make any generalization about irregular verbs, let us examine the verbs *sing* and *bring*. From our familiarity with the English language, we know that *sing* is the present (“I *sing* in church every Sunday”), *sang* is the past (“I *sang* last Sunday”), and *sung* is the past participle (“I have *sung* every Sunday this month”). Imagine the confusion of someone learning English who, having mastered *sing*, applies the same changes by analogy to the verb *bring*. He or she logically concludes that the past of *bring* is *brang* (“I *brang* my lunch yesterday”) and that the past participle is *brung* (“I have *brung* my lunch”)! To native speakers of English, these forms are humorous; to others who have not mastered the inconsistencies of our verbs, there is nothing within the verb *bring* to suggest that the past and past participle are *brought* (“I *brought* my lunch yesterday” and “I have *brought* my lunch”).

The English language contains over two hundred irregular verbs, and irregular verbs are the verbs most often used. Consult your dictionary if you are not sure about the past and past participle forms of irregular verbs. Do not trust your ear; what “sounds right” may only be the result of having repeatedly heard, said, and written the incorrect form. The “piano” you have been playing all these years may be out of tune.

On pages 94–96 is a list of some common irregular verbs, as well as a few regular verbs that often present problems. Practice their correct forms by putting *I* in front of the present and past forms, *I have* in front of the past participle form, and *I am* in front of the present participle form (*I begin, I began, I have begun, and I am beginning*). Practice saying them correctly until they sound correct and natural.

Suggestions for Using Irregular Verbs

1. Resist the temptation to add *-ed* to an irregular verb: do not write or say “*catched*,” “*bursted*,” “*knowed*,” and so on.
2. Use *have, has, and had* with the past participle (the forms in the third column of the chart that begins on page 94) to form past tenses.

94 Common Errors Involving Verbs

- She *has done* several music videos for her newest CD.
 - We *had begun* to eat dessert before the guest of honor finally arrived.
 - I *have flown* on an airplane and *ridden* on a train.
3. Use *am, are, is, was, were, has been,* and other forms of *be* with the past participle forms to form all verbs in the passive voice.
- Vanya *was given* a varsity letter for managing the softball team.
 - The dogs *were caught* before they could attack anyone.
 - The sketch *had been drawn* especially for my father and *was hung* over his fireplace.
4. Use forms of *be* before the present participle (the forms in the fourth column of the chart that begins on page 94) to form tenses where the action continues to happen.
- Chemistry *is beginning* to make more sense to me.
 - They *have been winning* more of their matches this season.
 - The soda cans *were bursting* from being put in the freezer by accident.

Common Irregular Verbs and Problem Regular Verbs

Present	Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
[I] arise	[I] arose	[I have] arisen	[I am] arising
awake	awoke or awaked	awaked, awoken	awaking
bear (carry)	bore	borne	bearing
begin	began	begun	beginning
blow	blew	blown	blowing
break	broke	broken	breaking
bring	brought	brought	bringing
burst	burst	burst	bursting
catch	caught	caught	catching
choose	chose	chosen	choosing
come	came	come	coming
dig	dug	dug	digging

(continued on next page)

Common Irregular Verbs and Problem Regular Verbs

Present	Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
[I] dive	[I] dived or dove	[I] dived	[I] diving
do	did	done	doing
drag	dragged	dragged	dragging
draw	drew	drawn	drawing
drink	drank	drunk	drinking
drive	drove	driven	driving
drown	drowned	drowned	drowning
eat	ate	eaten	eating
fly	flew	flown	flying
freeze	froze	frozen	freezing
give	gave	given	giving
go	went	gone	going
grow	grew	grown	growing
hang	hung	hung	hanging
hang (execute)	hanged	hanged	hanging
hide	hid	hidden	hiding
know	knew	known	knowing
lay	laid	laid	laying
lead	led	led	leading
leave	left	left	leaving
lie	lay	lain	lying
light	lighted or lit	lighted or lit	lighting
ride	rode	ridden	riding
ring	rang	rung	ringing
rise	rose	risen	rising
run	ran	run	running
see	saw	seen	seeing
set	set	set	setting

(continued on next page)

Common Irregular Verbs and Problem Regular Verbs

Present	Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
[I] shake	[I] shook	[I] shaken	[I] shaking
shine (glow)	shone	shone	shining
shine	shined	shined	shining (polish)
shrink	shrank, shrunk	shrunk or shrunken	shrinking
sing	sang	sung	singing
sink	sank	sunk	sinking
sit	sat	sat	sitting
sleep	slept	slept	sleeping
sneak	sneaked	sneaked	sneaking
speed	sped	sped	speeding
spring	sprang	sprung	springing
strike	struck	struck	striking
swim	swam	swum	swimming
swing	swung	swung	swinging
take	took	taken	taking
tear	tore	torn	tearing
throw	threw	thrown	throwing
wake	woke or waked	waked or woken	waking
wear	wore	worn	wearing
write	wrote	written	writing

TIPS on Forming the Past Tense, Past Participle, and Present Participle Forms

1. To form the past and past participle forms of a regular verb, add *-ed* or *-d* to the present form. To form the present participle, add *-ing* to the present form.
2. Irregular verbs change their spelling and therefore have to be memorized. Study the list on pages 94–96 for the correct past and past participle forms of irregular verbs.

EXERCISE 5-1

Fill in the blank in each sentence with the past tense form of the verb in parentheses.

1. A new theory about the dinosaurs' extinction _____ **arose** _____ (arise) recently.
2. Some scientists now believe that a giant comet _____ **struck** _____ (strike) the earth some sixty-five million years ago.
3. The comet _____ **dived or dove** _____ (dive) twenty-five miles deep into the earth's crust.
4. The comet _____ **dug** _____ (dig) a giant crater when it landed at the tip of the Yucatan Peninsula.
5. A giant fireball soon _____ **burst** _____ (burst) into the air.
6. The fireball _____ **bore** _____ (bear) small particles that blocked the sun's light.
7. Eventually, the earth _____ **grew** _____ (grow) too dark and cold for animals or plants to survive.
8. As a result, dinosaurs and some other animal species _____ **became** _____ (become) extinct.
9. Scientists _____ **gave** _____ (give) the press some interesting evidence for their theory.
10. However, the debate over this theory, which _____ **began** _____ (begin) in the early 1980s, still continues today.

EXERCISE 5-2

Fill in the blank in each sentence with the past participle form of the verb in parentheses.

1. Did you know that the last active submarine of World War II was _____ **sunk** _____ (sink) off the Long Island coast?
2. In April of 1945, the German U-boat had _____ **reached** _____ (reach) its attack post a few miles from Rhode Island and Long Island.
3. The sub, a U-853 body type, was _____ **nicknamed** _____ (nickname) Der Seilt aenzer, or The Tightrope Walker, because of her stealth and mobility.
4. Meanwhile, an American freighter had _____ **begun** _____ (begin) a routine delivery of coal from Virginia to Massachusetts.
5. With one blast from the U-boat, the freighter had _____ **capsized** _____ (capsize) and become the last U.S. ship sunk by a German foe.

6. For the next hour, three U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships were engaged (engage) in a cat-and-mouse game with the German sub.
7. After an assault with depth charges, some debris, including a pillow and the German captain's hat, was observed (observe) on the water, but it was a trick by the Germans.
8. Soon, a pair of blimps was flown (fly) to the area to look for oil slicks or air bubbles that would indicate the sub's location and condition.
9. The Navy's sonar had detected (detect) the U-boat's eastward movement, and a full assault had begun.
10. Ten hours later, the U-boat was destroyed (destroy) and its sixty crew members drowned.
11. The sad irony of the story is that, one day before the U-boat sank the freighter, the German leader who had replaced Adolf Hitler had ordered (order) all U-boats to "cease hostilities" and return home immediately.
12. No one knows what might have kept (keep) the Tightrope Walker from obeying the order.
13. Some say that weather and distance could have blocked (block) the U-boat from receiving the crucial message on its radios.
14. In the decades since its sinking, the U-boat, which sits upright in just 130 feet of water, has become (become) a favorite destination for experienced divers.
15. The sub's hull has retained (retain) numerous artifacts, including china, bottles, and gold rings.



Feel that you have been *sunk* by irregular verbs? Log onto <http://www.mywritinglab.com> for help. Click "Verbs," then "Regular and Irregular Verbs." You can watch a helpful animation, practice identifying and correcting verbs in a paragraph, and even try rewriting a whole paragraph that contains common verb errors.

Using the Correct Tense

You have noticed in your study of verbs that they can indicate different tenses or times by the ending *-ed* or *-d*, by a change in spelling, and by the helping verbs that go with them. The forms of the verb change according to the time expressed—when the action or state of being occurs. Each tense has a specific purpose, and careful speakers and writers select the appropriate tense according to that purpose.

Here is a list of the six common tenses in English and their uses.

The Six Common Tenses	
Present:	I jog, or I am jogging.
Past:	I jogged, or I was jogging.
Future:	I will* jog, or I will be jogging.
Present Perfect:	I have jogged, or I have been jogging.
Past Perfect:	I had jogged, or I had been jogging.
Future Perfect:	I will* have jogged, or I will have been jogging.
* <i>Shall</i> is often substituted for <i>will</i> in the future and future perfect tenses.	

The accompanying list shows the six common tenses of *take*. Showing all of the tenses of a verb in this way is called **conjugating a verb**.

Conjugation of <i>Take</i>			
Present Tense		Present Perfect Tense	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
I take	we take	I have taken	we have taken
you take	you take	you have taken	you have taken
he, she, or it takes	they take	he, she, or it has taken	they have taken
Past Tense		Past Perfect Tense	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
I took	we took	I had taken	we had taken
you took	you took	you had taken	you had taken
he, she, or it took	they took	he, she, or it had taken	they had taken
Future Tense		Future Perfect Tense	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
I will (shall) take	we will (shall) take	I will (shall) have taken	we will (shall) have taken
you will take	you will take	you will have taken	you will have taken
he, she, or it will take	they will take	he, she, or it will have taken	they will have taken

Each of the six tenses has an additional form called the **progressive form**, which expresses action that continues to happen. The progressive form is not a separate tense but an additional form of each of the six tenses in the conjugation. It consists of a form of the verb *be* plus the present participle of the verb.

Progressive Forms	
Present Progressive:	am, are, is taking
Past Progressive:	was, were taking
Future Progressive:	will (shall) be taking
Present Perfect Progressive:	has, have been taking
Past Perfect Progressive:	had been taking
Future Perfect Progressive:	will (shall) have been taking

The *present tense* is used in the following situations:

To express a condition or an action that exists or is going on now.

- Her car *is* fast.
- But she *is driving* under the speed limit.

To express an action that is habitual or is always true.

- He *competes* in calf-roping events every summer.
- He always *beats* his opponents.
- There *is* no other game like baseball.
- Sumter, South Carolina, *is* the home of the nation's finest iris garden.

The *past tense* expresses an action or a condition completed in the past.

- The Coalition forces *attacked* the terrorists in their caves.
- Sheldon *visited* his mother last night.
- The Security Council charged that several nations *were participating* in illegal arms shipments.

The *future tense* expresses an action that will take place in the future.

- Javier *will race* his bicycle in the next Olympics.
- Uncle Jim *will be* sixty years old next August.
- Fourteen Americans *will be participating* in the freestyle swimming competition next Wednesday.

The *present perfect tense* is used for an action that began in the past and continues into the present.

- *I have gone* to many freshwater fishing tournaments. (And I still go.)
- *I have lived* in Atlanta since 1997. (And I still live in Atlanta.)
- Our neighbor's dog *has barked* for two days now. (And he is still barking.)
- Crystal *has been taking* Spanish lessons in preparation for her trip to Madrid. (And she is still taking lessons.)

The *present perfect tense* can also be used for an action that started in the past and has been completed at some indefinite time.

- The fire in the warehouse *has been extinguished*.
- My grandfather *has been* to a doctor only once in his lifetime.
- Chen-Li *has taken* French lessons in preparation for his trip to Paris. (He has finished taking lessons.)

The *past perfect tense* is used for an action that began and ended in the past. Additionally, it conveys that the action was completed before something else happened.

- *I had lived* in Mobile before I moved to Atlanta. (**Not:** *I lived* in Mobile before I moved to Atlanta.)
- Everyone knew that Clark's father *had been* a member of President Clinton's cabinet. (**Not:** Everyone knew that Clark's father *was* a member of President Clinton's cabinet.)
- Monica asked us if we *had watched* the Rose Bowl Parade on television. (**Not:** Monica asked us if we *watched* the Rose Bowl Parade on television.)
- Renee *had been rehearsing* her part as an understudy for only three days when she was suddenly asked to replace the star of the play. (**Not:** Renee *rehearsed* her part as an understudy for only three days when she was suddenly asked to replace the star of the play.)

The *future perfect tense* is used for an action that will end in the future before a particular time.

- Her parents *will have been married* forty years next Thanksgiving.
- *I will have used up* all of my vacation time by the time your visit ends next week.
- Fatima *will have been dieting* for six months this Thursday.

REMINDERS About Tenses

1. Use the past tense only if the action referred to took place at a specific time in the past.
2. Use the past perfect tense (*had* plus the past participle) only when you want to place a completed action before another action in the past.

A Few Suggestions for Using the Correct Tense

1. Do not use the past tense of a verb when it should be in the present tense.
 - Naomi took a course in anthropology last year. She said that it was an interesting subject that studied cultures and societies throughout the world. (Incorrect. *Was* and *studied* imply that anthropology no longer is interesting and no longer studies other societies and cultures. The correct verbs are *is* and *studies*.)
2. Use the present infinitive (*to write*, *to invent*, *to leap*, and so on) unless the action referred to was completed before the time expressed in the governing verb.
 - Annika and Sanjay planned *to stay* (not *to have stayed*) awake for *Saturday Night Live*.
 - I am fortunate *to have had* (not *to have*) my life jacket during the stormy boat trip.
3. When a narrative in the past tense is interrupted by a reference to a preceding event, use the past perfect tense.
 - No one could believe that I *had known* him before he became a movie star.
 - The film's ending made no sense to me because I *had missed* the beginning.

EXERCISE 5-3

In the space before each sentence, identify the tense of the italicized verb by writing *past*, *present*, *future*, *present perfect*, *past perfect*, or *future perfect*.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| <u>present perfect</u> | 1. Scientists <i>have begun</i> to study one of nature's strangest creations, the corpse flower. |
| <u>past</u> | 2. This flower <i>earned</i> its name from the overwhelmingly putrid odor that it occasionally emits. |
| <u>present</u> | 3. The corpse flower <i>stands</i> as tall as a man, but some specimens have grown to nine feet. |
| <u>future</u> | 4. Every two to four years, a huge bucket-shaped bloom <i>will sprout</i> from the giant stalk. |

future perfect	5. Within a day or two of blooming, the flower <i>will have died</i> .
past	6. A corpse flower at a California university, nicknamed Ted, <i>bloomed</i> for a record four days.
past perfect	7. In the past, scientists <i>had seen</i> corpse flowers only in Indonesia.
present	8. Now, however, specimens <i>grow</i> around the world.
future	9. Scientists have just begun to analyze the flower's chemical makeup, but they suspect that tests <i>will show</i> the presence of sulphur (which makes rotten eggs smell) and two chemicals that cause dead flesh to smell.
future perfect	10. Believe it or not, thousands of tourists <i>will have visited</i> these flowers during their next brief—but overpowering—bloom, including a sturdy plant in a public garden next to the U.S. Capitol.

EXERCISE 5-4

In the space before each sentence, write the verb shown in parentheses in the tense indicated.

are	1. There (<i>be</i> —present) some simple steps you can take to prepare your mind and body for an exam.
have slept	2. First, you should (<i>sleep</i> —present perfect) at least eight hours the night before the test.
ate	3. The best students always (<i>eat</i> —past) a healthy breakfast before taking their exams.
have drunk	4. I (<i>drink</i> —present perfect) orange juice for an energy boost before tests this semester.
grew	5. Some students said their concentration (<i>grow</i> —past) stronger after they had drunk a cup of coffee.
have sat	6. Once you (<i>sit</i> —present perfect) down at your desk, relax your body and mind.
Draw	7. (<i>Draw</i> —present) in a deep breath, hold it for a few seconds, and then release it.
left	8. My brother reported that his tension (<i>leave</i> —past) his body when he tried this breathing technique.
lay	9. Make sure you (<i>lay</i> —present) your pencils, calculators, and other needed supplies on the desk ahead of time.
has given	10. Most important, read all of the instructions that the instructor (<i>give</i> —present perfect) you before the exam begins.



Visit <http://www.mywritinglab.com> for more help with verb tense. Click on “Verbs,” then “Using the Correct Tense” for an explanatory animation, as well as some exercises that will help you to identify and correct verb tense errors.

Shifts in Tense

Having learned the use of the six common tenses, you should use them consistently, avoiding unnecessary shifts from one tense to another. If, for example, you begin a paragraph using the past tense to describe events in the past, do not suddenly leap to the present tense to describe those same events. Similarly, do not abruptly shift to the past tense if you are narrating an incident in the present tense. This does not mean that you cannot use more than one tense in a piece of writing. It does mean, however, that you must use the same tense when referring to the same period of time.

In the following paragraph, the writer uses verbs in the past tense to describe events that occurred in the past and then shifts correctly to the present tense to describe events occurring in the present.

- I learned to respect fine craftsmen when I was a young girl helping my father build the house that I lived in until I married. My father had an exact, precise air about him that could make sloppy people like me somewhat nervous. When he laid out the dimensions of the house or the opening of a door he did it with an exactness and precision that would not allow for the careless kind of measurements that I would settle for. When he measured a board and told me to cut it, I knew that it would have to be cut in an unwavering line and that it would fit exactly in the place assigned to it. Doors that he installed still fit tightly, drawers slide snugly, and joints in cabinets and mortices can scarcely be detected. Today, when I measure a piece of new screenwire to replace the old or a fence to put around the rosebushes, I can still hear the efficient clicking of his 6-foot rule as he checks my calculations.

This passage is correct in its use of tenses. The events of the past are recalled by the author and narrated in the past tense (*I learned, my father had, he laid out, and so on*). When she shifts to the present, she changes her tense accordingly (*when I measure, I can still hear, and so on*). The next paragraph, in contrast, is confusing because of its inconsistent use of tenses, shifting from the past to the present tense to refer to the same time.

- Flamenco is the traditional song and dance of the Andalusian people in southern Spain. Developed over several centuries, flamenco has roots in Romani, Moorish,

Indian, and other types of music. Some songs were intense and profoundly sad. Others are moderately serious, and still other songs will be light tunes of joy and romance. The men's dance features speedy toe- and heel-clicking steps. The women's dance featured graceful hand and body movements. Guitarists usually accompany the dancers. Onlookers participated, too, by clapping their hands or snapping their fingers in rhythm with the dancers.

You probably noticed that the first and second sentences are in the present tense (*flamenco is* and *flamenco has roots*), signaling the reader that the paragraph will be related in the present tense. Therefore, we are not prepared for the shift to the past tense in the third sentence (*some songs were*), the return to the present in the fourth sentence (*others are*), the subsequent jump to the future tense (*other songs will be*), and so on. The jumble of tenses jerks the reader from present to past to present to future without warning.

To avoid such confusion, ensure that the tense forms you are using correspond to the time in which the action takes place.

EXERCISE 5-5

Some of the following sentences contain confusing tense shifts. Revise the sentences so that the tenses are consistent. If a sentence is correct, mark "C" in front of it.

1. Many sports fans know about the new Yankee Stadium, which opens recently. ^{opened}
2. It was rumored that a mischievous worker ^{buried} a Boston Red Sox jersey near home plate, to bring the Yankees bad luck.
3. The rivalry between the Yankees and Red Sox is well-known and lasts for decades. ^{has lasted}
4. Therefore, the Yankee staff ^{was} is upset to hear that a Boston jersey might become a permanent part of their new ballpark.
5. **C** One of the workers, a Red Sox fan, admitted that he takes the construction job for just one day, and just to bury a David Ortiz jersey.
6. Workers dug with jackhammers and find the shirt under two feet of fresh concrete. ^{found}
7. Team and stadium officials cleaned the jersey, puts it in a display case, and auctions ^{auctioned} it on eBay to benefit the Red Sox team's favorite charity, a cancer research fund.
8. **C** Two hundred and twenty-two people bid on the jersey, but a New England car dealer won.
9. He ^{paid} pays \$175,100 and displayed the shirt in his dealership.
10. Meanwhile, Red Sox player David Ortiz, namesake of the infamous jersey, saw a rare slump in which he ^{batted} bats just .077; some fans wonder if he had been hexed, too.



If you are feeling a little shifty about shifts in tense, visit <http://www.mywritinglab.com> and click on “Verbs,” then “Shifts in Tense.” You will find a helpful animation and some practice in spotting and correcting tense shift errors. You can also rewrite a short article that contains verb consistency problems.

Two Pairs of Irregular Verbs: *Lie* and *Lay* and *Sit* and *Set*

Four irregular verbs cause more trouble than most of the others: *lie*, *lay*, *sit*, and *set*. Unwary speakers and writers can easily confuse them, but careful speakers and writers observe their differences.

Lie* and *Lay

To *lie* means “to remain in position or be at rest.” (We are ignoring the other meaning—“to tell a falsehood”; when *lie* carries this meaning, it is a regular verb.) *Lie* never takes an object—that is, you never *lie* anything down. *Lie* is usually followed by a word or phrase that tells where (*lie* down, *lie* on the grass, and so on).

The principal parts of *lie* are *lie* (the present), *lay* (the past), *lain* (the past participle), and *lying* (the present participle). Because our ear tells us that a “d” sound is usually the sign of the past tense, we are tempted to say or write *laid* for the past tense, instead of the correct form *lay*. The present participle *lying* is used with helping verbs; it should not be confused with *laying*.

Forms of *Lie*

Present:	Our dog often <i>lies</i> by the fire on cold nights.
Past:	Roberta <i>lay</i> (not <i>laid</i>) by the pool for hours yesterday.
Past participle:	The dishes have <i>lain</i> (not <i>laid</i>) in the sink all day.
Present participle:	The children have been <i>lying</i> (not <i>laying</i>) on the porch and telling ghost stories. Your soccer ball is <i>lying</i> (not <i>laying</i>) in the middle of the street.

To *lay* means “to place or put something somewhere,” and it is a **transitive verb**—that is, it requires an object to complete its meaning: “lay the *package* down,” “lay your *head* down,” and so on. The principal parts of *lay* are *lay* (present tense), *laid* (the past tense), *laid* (the past participle), and *laying* (the present participle). The present participle *laying* is used with helping verbs; it is followed by an object.

Forms of <i>Lay</i>	
Present:	Please <i>lay</i> your essay on my desk.
Past:	Paul <i>laid</i> his Rangers cap on the floor under his chair.
Past participle:	We have <i>laid</i> over two hundred bricks in the new driveway.
Present participle:	We were <i>laying</i> bricks in uneven lines and had to remove them. Yesterday, as planes flew overhead, the president was <i>laying</i> a wreath at the Vietnam War Memorial.

The most effective way of mastering *lie* and *lay* is to memorize their forms: *lie*, *lay*, *lain*, and *lying*; *lay*, *laid*, *laid*, and *laying*.

Sit* and *Set

To *sit*, meaning “to occupy a seat,” is an **intransitive verb**—it never takes an object. This means that you never “sit” anything down, for example. The principal parts are *sit* (the present tense), *sat* (the past tense), *sat* (the past participle), and *sitting* (the present participle). Study the following sentences carefully.

Forms of <i>Sit</i>	
Present:	Rodney <i>sits</i> by the creek in Perkerson Park to escape his noisy siblings.
Past:	We always <i>sat</i> in the back row at movies.
Past participle:	My sister <i>has sat</i> next to us in Spanish class all year.
Present participle:	Have you been <i>sitting</i> in the balcony for all of the performances this season?

TIPS for Using *Lie* and *Lay* and *Sit* and *Set*

1. *To lie* means “to be at rest”; you don’t “lie” anything down. The forms are *lie*, *lay*, *lain*, and *lying*.
2. *To lay* means “to place or put somewhere”; an object must always follow this verb. The forms are *lay*, *laid*, *laid*, and *laying*.
3. *To sit* means “to occupy a seat”; you don’t “sit” anything down. The forms are *sit*, *sat*, *sat*, and *sitting*.
4. *To set* means “to put in place,” and except for idioms like “The hen sets” and “The sun sets,” it is always followed by an object. The forms do not change in the present, the past, or the past participle: *set*, *set*, and *set*. The present participle is *setting*.

To set resembles *to lay* in meaning. *To set* means “to put in place.” Like *to lay*, it is a transitive verb and is followed by another word (a direct object) to complete its meaning.¹ Its principal parts remain the same in all forms: *set* (the present tense), *set* (the past tense), *set* (the past participle), and *setting* (the present participle). Study the following sentences carefully.

Forms of *Set*

Present:	Evan <i>sets</i> his BlackBerry under his desk during marketing class.
Past:	I have no idea where I <i>set</i> my car keys last night.
Past participle:	Anthony and Amelia have <i>set</i> a date for their wedding.
Present participle:	<i>Setting</i> unwise eating habits aside is tough but beneficial. The <i>setting</i> sun still warmed us as we descended Mt. Tamalpais.

As in the case of *lie* and *lay*, the most effective way of mastering *sit* and *set* is to memorize their forms: *sit*, *sat*, *sat*, and *sitting*; *set*, *set*, *set*, and *setting*.

¹In a few idioms such as “The hen *sets* on her nest” and “The sun is *setting*,” *set* does not require a direct object. In most other cases, however, it is followed by a direct object.

EXERCISE 5-6

Use the correct form of “lie” and “lay” in the following sentences.

1. Yesterday afternoon I _____ **lay** _____ at the beach.
2. It is my favorite stretch of sand, and I have _____ **lain** _____ there every summer since childhood.
3. Because the sky was overcast, not many people were _____ **lying** _____ on the beach.
4. My radio _____ **lay** _____ by my head and played my favorite tunes.
5. I had _____ **laid** _____ my pink volleyball in the sand beside me.
6. After I _____ **lay** _____ in the sun for a few minutes, I fell asleep.
7. When I woke up, the ball was not where I had _____ **laid** _____ it.
8. This was no time to _____ **lie** _____ around in the sand; I had to find it.
9. After I _____ **laid** _____ the radio and towel next to my ice cooler, I began searching for the ball.
10. I asked everyone who had _____ **lain** _____ on the beach if they had seen the ball.
11. After looking everywhere on the beach, I _____ **lay** _____ down by the pier and became despondent.
12. It was all my fault because I had _____ **laid** _____ the ball near me, but I had not kept my eye on it.
13. Soon a big but friendly dog _____ **lay** _____ down next to me.
14. I caught a glimpse of something pink _____ **lying** _____ in the sand by his head.
15. There _____ **lay** _____ my prized volleyball—with a few teeth marks but still good as new.

EXERCISE 5-7

Use the correct form of “sit” and “set” in the following sentences.

1. Everything was finally _____ **set** _____ for our Super Bowl party.
2. Trenton and I had _____ **sat** _____ in the kitchen for hours last night, deciding which refreshments to serve.
3. We worried whether there would be room for all of our friends to _____ **sit** _____ on the couch in front of the television.

4. We _____ **set** _____ out some extra folding chairs to make certain that everyone had a seat.
5. “Some of them will _____ **sit** _____ on the floor,” Trenton said.
6. I had already _____ **set** _____ a tray of cups and plates on the coffee table.
7. I asked him to _____ **set** _____ our new vase in the other room so that it would not be broken.
8. Everyone _____ **sat** _____ down as soon as they arrived.
9. The children were _____ **sitting** _____ in front so that they could see the television.
10. Trenton _____ **sat** _____ down and soon the ball game began.
11. We did not notice that our cat had _____ **sat** _____ down by my cousin Laura.
12. Rita began sneezing violently and overturned a bowl of popcorn that _____ **set** _____ nearby.
13. I _____ **set** _____ a box of tissues near her, and she recovered from her attack.
14. The cat, meanwhile, was now _____ **sitting** _____ behind the television and had somehow become entangled in the cables.
15. Although several people had _____ **sat** _____ by the television trying to restore the cable signal, the picture disappeared, and so did our party.

EDITING EXERCISES

The following paragraph describes the custom of sending flowers to express various feelings or emotions. The subsequent paragraph describes how to avoid a dog attack. As you read each paragraph, you will notice several errors in verb usage. Improve the paragraphs by correcting the errors and revising the sentences when necessary.

The use of sending flowers to express deep feelings **began** in early Roman times. One of the most famous **was** were the white lily, which frequently **lay** in the hands of the Virgin Mary in numerous paintings; it symbolizes purity and

chastity. Many other early artists ^{used} use flowers not only for their beauty but for the subtle meanings they ^{added} add. The Elizabethans and Victorians had ^{given} gave meanings to nearly every flower that ^{grew} grew in Britain. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the language of flowers was largely ^{forgotten} forgot. Today, most people do not know the meanings that ^{have} had been associated with many common flowers. Although nearly everyone knows that a red rose means true love, for example, many people do not know that other flowers can convey similar feelings. The red tulip and little blue forget-me-not are declarations of love, and the sturdy ivy, whether growing on a wall or in a porcelain vase ^{sitting} setting on a table, promises fidelity. Honeysuckle, which can be ^{grown} growed in most parts of this country, shows love for friends and relatives. Although many people send a bouquet to someone in mourning, few choose flowers specifically for meaning, such as marigolds for grief or red poppies for consolation. After you have ^{chosen} chose a flower for its specific meaning, you should attach a note that explains that meaning to its recipient.

Each year, thousands of people ^{are} is injured or killed in dog attacks. With a few simple tips, you can avoid this kind of trouble. When you ^{see} seen a leashed dog approaching, keep a safe distance from it. Do not pet the dog until you have ^{asked} ask the owner's permission, since not all dogs ^{like} likes being ^{touched} touch by strangers. Never approach an unfamiliar dog that ^{is} are barking, growling, sleeping, eating, or nursing. If a dog ^{pursues} pursued you, try to turn sideways and distance yourself from it—and do not ^{stare} stared the dog in the eyes, or you will be ^{seen} sawn as a threat. If charged by a dog, put something between you and it, such as a stick, backpack, or umbrella. If attacked, you may ^{need} needs to curl up in a ball and ^{protect} protects your face, neck, and head. You must remember that no one can outrun a dog, and your running ^{stimulates} stimulate the dog's instinct to chase you. Always prepare for a leashed dog when it ^{is} be a block or more ahead, and avoid unleashed dogs altogether.

WRITING SENTENCES The Correct Form of the Verb

In this chapter we deal with two common problems when using verbs: not knowing the form of the verb needed to express when a particular action is taking place and not knowing the correct form of an irregular verb. This writing exercise will give you an opportunity to show that you do not suffer from either problem.

1. Using two of the verbs listed on pages 94–96, write two sentences showing the correct use of the present perfect tense.
2. Using two additional verbs listed on pages 94–96, write two sentences showing the correct use of the past perfect tense.
3. Using two other verbs listed on pages 94–96, write two sentences showing the correct use of the future perfect tense.
4. Write a sentence correctly using *sit* in the past tense.
5. Write a sentence correctly using *set* in the past tense.
6. Write a sentence correctly using *lie* in the present perfect tense.
7. Write a sentence correctly using *lay* in the present perfect tense.

LANGUAGE TIPS

1. With some irregular verbs, all three forms (present, past, and past participle) are the same. An example is *hit*.
 Cheryl can *hit* and throw with either hand. (present)
 Yesterday she *hit* a home run to win the game. (past)
 She has *hit* safely in her last seven games. (past participle)
 2. With other irregular verbs, the past is the same as the past participle. Examples are *tell* and *told*.
 She *told* me to come back the next day. (past)
 Have you *told* anyone about your new job? (past participle)
 3. With other irregular verbs, all three forms are different. Examples are *break*, *broke*, and *broken*.
 Every January I *break* my New Year's resolutions in the first week. (present)
 Kiri *broke* her arm in a skiing accident. (past)
 The American team *has broken* three scoring records. (past participle)
- For more information on irregular verbs, see pages 93–96.

REVIEW TEST 5 - A

Common Errors Involving Verbs

A. Using the appropriate letter, identify the correct form of the verb in each sentence.

- b** 1. Brittany (a. *buyed* b. *bought*) a motorcycle for her boyfriend's birthday.
- b** 2. We had (a. *drove* b. *driven*) to school before the roads froze.
- a** 3. Justin likes to (a. *lie* b. *lay*) on the couch and watch *Two and a Half Men* after his night classes.
- a** 4. The idea of vacationing in a warm climate had (a. *grown* b. *grew*) on her.
- a** 5. Irina and Sarah had (a. *awakened* b. *awoke*) just in time to join us at the rock wall for a practice climb.
- b** 6. Ty and I had (a. *rang* b. *rung*) the ticket agency ten times before we were able to buy our seats at the 49ers game.
- b** 7. Beata wishes she had (a. *saw* b. *seen*) Michael Jordan play with the Bulls, or even the Tar Heels.
- b** 8. Keesha could not believe that Nelly Furtado had (a. *wrote* b. *written*) her autograph on Keesha's concert t-shirt.
- a** 9. After completing the triathlon, David (a. *sat* b. *set*) down to drink a quart of water.
- a** 10. Darnell (a. *drank* b. *drunk*) a mixture of honey, lemon, and hot water for his cough.
- b** 11. As a freshman in college, Mario had (a. *broke* b. *broken*) three baseball records.
- b** 12. Samir and I (a. *hanged* b. *hung*) our wedding picture above the fireplace.
- b** 13. Can you believe that Tom has never (a. *rode* b. *ridden*) a horse?
- b** 14. Let us try to figure out where Mom has (a. *hid* b. *hidden*) our Christmas gifts.
- a** 15. Lauren and Heidi have (a. *set* b. *sit*) your backpack on your desk.

B. Identify the tense of the italicized verb in each sentence by using the appropriate letter.

a. *present tense* b. *past tense* c. *present perfect tense* d. *past perfect tense*

- c** 16. Sylvia's brothers *have driven* six hundred miles to attend her college graduation.
- b** 17. The professor *spoke* with me about making up last week's test.

- c 18. Maria's coach says that she *has swum* more quickly today than ever before.
- d 19. Adam *had begun* to eat when the fire alarm sounded.
- b 20. We *ran* all the way back to the library to retrieve the forgotten cell phone.
- a 21. She and I *play* Super Mario Brothers almost every night as a study break.
- d 22. If Josh *had known* of today's quiz, he would not have spent last night shooting pool.
- b 23. Alexi *flew* out the door when he heard his Metro bus approaching.
- a 24. We always *freeze* on the trail when we think a bear might be near.
- c 25. I *have written* Santa to ask for a Porsche Carrera with a six-speed stick and extra cup holders.

REVIEW TEST 5 - B

Common Errors Involving Verbs

A. Using the appropriate letter, identify the correct form of the verb in each sentence.

- b 1. Su-Lan's collection of new U.S. Mint nickels (a. shined b. shone) in the morning sun.
- b 2. After a hectic day at his law office, Leif (a. sit b. sat) down to eat dinner and watch *House of Payne*.
- a 3. We all know that James Bond will not drink a martini unless it has been (a. shaken b. shook) to his liking.
- a 4. Judging from your pink nose, I would guess that you have (a. lain b. laid) by your pool all day.
- a 5. Hayley's cell phone goes to voice mail after it has (a. rung b. rang) just once.
- b 6. Have your pants truly (a. shrank b. shrunk), or are those doughnuts finally catching up with you?
- b 7. Beata wondered why Jack had (a. wore b. worn) the same shirt on all four of their dates.
- a 8. Sergio departed for his trout-fishing trip before the sun had (a. risen b. rose).
- b 9. In the nineteenth century, cattle thieves were sometimes (a. hung b. hanged).
- b 10. Emeka and Kofi (a. drunk b. drank) champagne to celebrate their twentieth anniversary.
- a 11. Would you like a copy of any of the pictures we have (a. taken b. took) of your new truck?
- a 12. Rogelio never goes to sleep until he has (a. written b. wrote) in his journal.
- b 13. Mara (a. sits b. sets) aside part of her monthly pay and donates it to a Doberman rescue organization.
- a 14. You must (a. lie b. lay) on your back for the next series of X-rays.
- b 15. We were surprised to learn that the nun had illegally (a. snuck b. sneaked) into movies when she was a child.

B. Identify the tense of the italicized verb in each sentence by using the appropriate letter.

a. present tense b. past tense c. present perfect tense d. past perfect tense

- b** 16. Ahmad *sprang* to his feet when the fire alarm rang.
- d** 17. We had not seen the warning sign until we *had* nearly *driven* into the sink hole.
- c** 18. The pie you *have brought* is delicious!
- c** 19. Termites *have eaten* a hole in the patio deck.
- b** 20. T. J. and Annie *froze* the extra venison they had hunted.
- a** 21. Monique *dives* into the pond every morning to wake her mind and spirit.
- d** 22. There was little left of the tire that *had blown* out during our cross-state drive.
- a** 23. Thanks to heavy winter rains, wildflowers now *grow* where none had grown before.
- b** 24. Luis *drew* two lucky tickets at the church raffle Sunday.
- c** 25. The rapper Little Bow Wow *has grown* up and now simply goes by “Bow Wow.”

WRITING PARAGRAPHS

COHERENCE IN THE PARAGRAPH THROUGH ORDER OF IMPORTANCE

One of the most useful ways of arranging ideas in a paragraph is in their order of importance. To organize your ideas in this pattern, you should first list the ideas that support your topic sentence. The most important ideas should come first, then the next important, and so on. In writing the paragraph, take your ideas from the list in reverse order. Not every paragraph can be constructed in this pattern, of course, but it can be a very emphatic way to arrange ideas.

The advantages of building up to the most important ideas stem from the suspense involved and the tendency for readers to remember best what they read last. The paragraph that concludes with a surprise, a clever comment, an appeal for action, or with some other strong ending is more likely to be successful.

In the following paragraph, written by a student, notice how the writer introduces the least important ideas first and then presents the most important idea in the last sentence, which serves as the topic sentence.

- Before a one-hundred-inch telescope was built on Mount Wilson near Los Angeles, astronomers had difficulty in studying the stars. But in 1923 the American astronomer Edwin Hubble, using the new telescope, could pick out stars and calculate distances within our Milky Way. Through his measurements of the stars he calculated that the Andromeda nebula is approximately two million light-years away, a fact that places it far outside our Milky Way. As a result of his discoveries, we now realize that our galaxy is only one among billions of galaxies in the universe, each with billions of stars.

In the next paragraph, also written by a student, notice a similar structure: a series of facts about bulimia paves the way for the most important fact at the conclusion of the paragraph.

- Until recently, physicians and scientists have been unable to provide a reliable cure for bulimia, a syndrome of gorging on food followed by voluntary vomiting. The illness, which affects up to two million American women, had been treated by a variety of remedies. Some patients tried hypnosis, but without success. Others tried radical changes in diet, with limited success. Still others tried therapy or large doses of vitamins, but without notable improvement. But a scientist from Harvard Medical School announced recently that ninety percent of the women treated with an antidepressant reported that they “binged” on food half as frequently when on the medication. This finding suggests that bulimia has a chemical and hereditary basis and gives researchers hope that a complete cure will be found soon.

The ideas in this paragraph are arranged in their order of importance. Read the paragraph carefully, and then write a response to Exercise A or Exercise B.

- As we look at the night sky we can observe clouds drifting across the moon, as well as far off planets and stars. But there is another visible object of greater importance. It is so conspicuous and brilliant that it is sometimes visible even through the haze of a city's night sky. It is the band of lights stretching in a great circle across the sky and its presence has been noted from ancient times. One early writer suggested that the stars lie in a flat slab of finite thickness but extending to great distances in all directions in the plane of the slab. The solar system lies within the slab, so naturally we see much more light when we look out from earth along the plane of the slab than when we look to any other direction. This is what we see as the Milky Way.

EXERCISE A Order of Importance

Arranging your ideas in the order of importance, write a paragraph of at least one hundred words on one of the following topics. Underline your topic sentence.

- the effects of exercise
- reasons for majoring in . . .
- the benefits of travel
- the advantages of a long engagement
- the advantages of going away to college
- the benefits of meditation
- preparing for a job interview

WRITING TIPS Last, But Not Least

When writing a paragraph based on the order of importance, you have to give signals to your reader to indicate the progression of your ideas. Use words like the following: *consequently, thus, therefore, as a result, in the end, finally, and most important.*

WRITING TIPS Who's Out There, Anyway?

Knowing your audience—the readers you are writing for—is crucial to the success of your assignment. Consider your readers.

- Who is going to read my paragraph?
- How much do my readers already know about my topic?
- What new information or novel angle can I offer?
- How can I keep their attention and make them continue reading?

EXERCISE B Order of Importance

Presenting your ideas in their order of importance, write a paragraph of at least 150 words on one of the following:

1. Listing them in their order of importance, describe three or four of your goals for the next ten years.
2. Describe the three most admirable traits of one of your friends or relatives.
3. Describe your concept of the ideal mate, boss, or politician.



You can find more information at <http://www.mywritinglab.com>. Click on “Verbs,” then “Coherence in the Paragraph” and watch animations about developing, organizing, and drafting a paragraph. There are also tips for using concrete words, supporting details, and order of importance. A variety of topics and topic sentences will help you start a great paragraph of your own.