VERB TENSE

Tense refers to time. In addition to showing action or linking the subject to other words, verbs tell time. Explaining when something happened can be just as important as telling readers what happened.

The simple tenses are formed by using the principal, past or past participle of the verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>charge</td>
<td>charged</td>
<td>charged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play</td>
<td>played</td>
<td>played</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go</td>
<td>went</td>
<td>gone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sing</td>
<td>sang</td>
<td>sung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be</td>
<td>was, were</td>
<td>been</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

_____ 1. Brittany (a. buyed  b. bought) a motorcycle for her boyfriend's birthday.

_____ 2. We had (a. drove  b. driven) to school before the roads were closed.

_____ 3. The idea of vacationing in a warm climate had (a. grown  b. grew) on her.

_____ 4. Darnell (a. drank  b. drunk) a mixture of honey, lemon, and hot water for his cough.

_____ 5. As a freshman in college, Mario had (a. broke  b. broken) three baseball records.

_____ 6. Let us try to figure out where Mom has (a. hid  b. hidden) our Christmas gifts.

_____ 7. My sister (a. been  b. was) a graduate of Notre Dame in the 1980s.

One of the most common errors student writers make is beginning a passage in one tense and then shifting when there is no change in time. Stay consistent with the tense in order to prevent confusion.

The phone rings and I wake up. It is only five a.m. I pick up the phone, expecting bad news about my grandmother who is sick. But it is Larry. He tells me to meet him at the airport at seven. I hung up the phone, took a shower and got dressed. I got into my car and was just pulling out of the driveway when I remember he never told me what his flight number is or even what airline he is on. I pick up my cell phone but get no response. I realize the best thing to do is just wait by baggage claim.

Revised – Present tense

The phone rings and I wake up. It is only five a.m. I pick up the phone, expecting bad news about my grandmother who is sick. But it is Larry. He tells me to meet him at the airport at seven. I hang up the phone, take a shower, and get dressed. I get into my car and am just pulling out of the driveway when I remember he never told me what his flight number is or even what airline he is on. I pick up my cell phone but get no response. I realize the best thing to do is just wait by baggage claim.

Revised – Past tense

The phone rang and I woke up. It was only five a.m. I picked up the phone expecting bad news about my grandmother who was sick. But it was Larry. He told me to meet him at the airport at seven. I hung up the phone, took a shower, and dressed. I got into my car and was just pulling out of the driveway when I remembered he never told me what his flight number was or even what airline he was on. I picked up my cell phone but received no response. I realized the best thing to do was just wait by baggage claim.

In writing about literature and film, the writer should relate the plot’s events in present tense.

In A Separate Peace, the hero is a shy sixteen-year-old boy at an elite prep school who feels a mix of admiration and jealousy for Finny, his roommate. Finny is bold, witty, and athletic.
I. English has two voices—active and passive. Active voice emphasizes the subject—who did the act. Passive voice emphasizes to whom or to what an act was done.

**ACTIVE**
The teacher chose the books.
The city repaved the street.
My aunt sold the old house.

**PASSIVE**
The books were chosen by the teacher.
The street was repaved by the city.
The old house was sold by my aunt.

*Active voice* is preferred because it is direct, strong, and clear.

*Active*
- Atlas Electronics developed the new sensor.
- Lisa Smith will direct the film
- A federal judge authorized the wiretap.

*Passive voice* tends to reverse the order, emphasizing the object over the subject, sometimes creating a sentence that reports an action without naming a subject.

*Passive*
- The new sensor was developed by Atlas Electronics.
- The film will be directed by Lisa Smith.
- The wiretap was approved.

The passive voice is formed by adding a helping verb from the verb *to be* and the past participle of another verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of to be</th>
<th>past participle of another verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is, was, were, will be</td>
<td>flown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has been, have been</td>
<td>given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Rewrite these sentences to change them from passive to active voice. In some cases you will have to create a missing subject.

1. The horror film was released by Paramount last week.

2. The bond issue has been rejected by the voters.
3. The shows were cancelled by studio executives after the ratings came out.

4. The diet was criticized by several doctors and nutritionists.

5. The airport was repaired and reopened recently.