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THE LAZY EDITOR: "Bermuda Triangle Mystery" • SKILL: Verb-Tense Consistency, page 1 of 2

Name:

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## **Conquer Verb-Tense Consistency**

A verb's *tense* indicates when the action that it describes takes place—in the past (I ran), in the present (I run), or in the future (I will run).

The verb tense you use should remain *consistent*, or the same, unless you have a good reason to change it. The verb tense should remain consistent throughout sentences, throughout paragraphs, and throughout the entire body of whatever you are writing—again, unless you have a good reason to change it. For example:

**Incorrect:** When my mom **goes** to the store, she **bought** a treat for everyone. (*Goes* is in the present tense, and *bought* is in the past tense—and you don't have a good reason to change the tense you are using.)

**Correct Option 1:** When my mom **goes** to the store, she **buys** a treat for everyone. (Both verbs are in the present tense.)

**Correct Option 2:** When my mom **went** to the store, she **bought** a treat for everyone. (Both verbs are in the past tense.)

So what IS a good reason to change the verb tense you are using? When you are describing events that happen at different times. For example:

**Correct:** Lindsey **plays** field hockey now, but last year she **was** on the soccer team. (You are describing something that is happening now, and you are also describing something that happened in the past.)

**Correct:** We **took** first place in the state competition; next week we **will compete** in the national competition. (You are describing something that happened in the past, and you are also describing something that will happen in the future.)

**Directions:** In each group of sentences or paragraphs below, place a  $\checkmark$  in front of the sentence or paragraph that correctly uses verb tenses.

- **1.a** I picked up the cell phone quickly and dial the number.
  - **b**\_\_\_\_\_ I pick up the cell phone quickly and dialed the number.
- **c** \_\_\_\_\_ I picked up the cell phone quickly and dialed the number.
- **2. a** \_\_\_\_\_\_ Suddenly, the lights flickered and an uninvited guest enters the room.
  - **b**\_\_\_\_\_ Suddenly, the lights flicker and an uninvited guest enters the room.
  - $\boldsymbol{c}$  \_\_\_\_\_ Suddenly, the lights flicker and an uninvited guest entered the room.
- **3. a** \_\_\_\_\_ When I was comfortable, I began my homework.
  - **b**\_\_\_\_\_ When I was comfortable, I begin my homework.
  - **c**\_\_\_\_\_ When I am comfortable, I began my homework.
- **4. a** \_\_\_\_\_ Stephen is going to save his money so that he will be able to buy a drum set.
  - **b**\_\_\_\_\_ Stephen is going to save his money so that he was able to buy a drum set.
  - **c** \_\_\_\_\_ Stephen saves his money so that he was able to buy a drum set.

- **5. a** \_\_\_\_\_ Yesterday, we went to the movies. We shared a large popcorn. After the movie, we went out for pizza. I loved pizza, but I am so full from the popcorn that I am hardly able to finish one slice.
  - **b** \_\_\_\_\_ Yesterday, we went to the movies. We were sharing a large popcorn. After the movie, we are going out for pizza. I love pizza, but I was so full from the popcorn that I could hardly finish one slice.
  - c \_\_\_\_\_ Yesterday, we went to the movies. We shared a large popcorn. After the movie, we went out for pizza. I love pizza, but I was so full from the popcorn that I could hardly finish one slice.
- **6. a** \_\_\_\_\_ My sister Julie and her friend Carli are going to bake a batch of Grandma's oatmeal butterscotch cookies on Saturday night. Julie has never made cookies before. I hope they turn out all right!
  - **b** \_\_\_\_\_ My sister Julie and her friend Carli are going to bake a batch of Grandma's oatmeal butterscotch cookies on Saturday night. Julie has never made cookies before. I hope they turned out all right!
  - **c** \_\_\_\_\_ My sister Julie and her friend Carli are going to bake a batch of Grandma's oatmeal butterscotch cookies on Saturday night. Julie is never going to make cookies before. I hope they turn out all right!

**Directions:** Rewrite the paragraph below so that the verb tense is consistent. If you change the verb tense at any point, make sure you have a good reason to do so!

We were all snuggled up on the couch to watch a movie as the rain pounds against the window. Then there was a tremendous rumble of thunder, and the electricity goes out. We slowly walked into the kitchen to get some flashlights and candles. We decide to play a game of Clue by candlelight. We played five games before the lights come back on. I must say, it was pretty fun!