

Verb Forms

Improper use of verb tenses disrupt the flow of ideas in speaking and writing, so it is important to use verb tenses correctly. The following are some simple rules that you should consider:

Rule: Do not randomly shift verb tenses in writing.

*Incorrect: Jerry nodded, and the clerk looked at me with a sorrowful face. I smiled. Having arrived at the bus station only a few minutes prior to departure, we quickly **begin** to say our good byes. Jerry **walks** me to my car. Looking deep into one another's eyes, we **hold** our last conversation before he left.*

*Revised: Jerry nodded, and the clerk looked at me with a sorrowful face. I smiled. Having arrived at the bus station only a few minutes prior to departure, we quickly **began** to say our good byes. Jerry **walked** me to my car. Looking deep into one another's eyes, we **held** our last conversation before he left.*

Rule: In some cases, it is possible to use the present with the past.

I know that she went to the concert last week.

Rule: When using "by + time phrase," use a past perfect or future perfect tense.

Incorrect: By 1990, she graduated from college.

Revised: By 1990, she had graduated from college.

Incorrect: By next week, I will finish my research paper.

Revised: By next week, I will have finished my research paper.

Rule: When using "since," or "for + time," use present perfect tense.

Incorrect: Since I was a child, I lived in this city.

Revised: Since I was a child, I have lived in this city.

Example: I have lived in this city for seven years. (Speaker still lives in the city.)

Example: I lived in this city for seven years. (Speaker no longer lives in the city.)

Rule: When using "in + time," use simple past.

Incorrect: In 2000, Tom graduate from college.

Revised: In 2000, Tom graduated from college.

Passive Verbs

When using passive voice, the subject receives the action instead of doing it.

To change a sentence from the active voice to the passive voice, there are three steps:

1. The object becomes the subject of the sentence.
2. Use a form of the verb "be" with the past participle form of the verb.
3. Use the preposition "by" with the subject.

Consequently, when using passive voice, use a form of the verb "be" with the past participle form of the verb.

Active : *John **purchased** a sweater.*

Passive: *The sweater **was purchased** by John.*

Active: *The students **played** soccer at the stadium.*

Passive: *At the stadium, soccer **was played** by the students.*

Incorrect: *The Sound and the Fury **wrote** by William Faulkner.*

Revised: *The Sound and the Fury **was written** by William Faulkner.*

Incorrect: *The music **was play** by the orchestra.*