

Verb Tense Grammar Tutorial Worksheet

For the Tutor

Many second language (L2) writers have the misconception that all verbs in a paragraph should be in the same tense, yet shifting tense is usually necessary in a piece of writing to communicate information clearly. Learning to shift tenses, especially when the perfect tenses are involved, is a challenge for many ESL writers.

For the ESL Writer

Study the following passage, which demonstrates logical shifts in verb tense:

Yesterday I *went* [simple past] to Admissions and Records to pay my fees; today I *am going* [present progressive] to the University Transportation Office to pick up my free bus pass; tomorrow I *will go* [simple future] to the bookstore to buy my texts and to the health center to get my flu shot. I usually only *do* [simple present] one or two errands per week, but I *have discovered* [past perfect] that I always *have* [simple present] too much to do at the beginning of the semester.

Here is another example showing incorrect and correct shifts in verb tense:

INCORRECT EXAMPLE

The chemistry Dept. has just changed the prerequisites for Chem 200. Now instead of taking it after Chem 101, students must also have completed Cham 102 before they *have enrolled*. In addition, students must have declared a Chemistry major and concentration before they *have been allowed* to take Chem 200. This has been problematic for many students because the office often has taken up to six months to process students' declaration of major.

CORRECT EXAMPLE

The chemistry Dept. has just changed the prerequisites for Chem 200. Now instead of taking it after Chem 101, students must also have completed Cham 102 before they *enroll*. In addition, students must have declared a Chemistry major and concentration before they *will be allowed* to take Chem 200. This has been problematic for many students because the office often has taken up to six months to process students' declaration of major.

Although most of the paragraph is in *past perfect* tense, some verbs need to be in other tenses to convey correct meaning. Note that the last sentence could be written in present tense if the writer wished to show a general trend: "This is problematic for many students because the office often *takes* up to six months to process students' declaration of major."

Correct the following:

PRACTICE PARAGRAPH

The Office of International Studies has just started a Partner Program that pairs American students with international students who will only *have been* in the United States for a short time. Both students and professors are happy with this program. The students are happy because the program has proven to be a great way *to have met* new friends and *learned* about other cultures. The professors are happy because they have been able to assign their students to discuss certain topics with an international partner to gain a broader perspective and a better understanding of the curriculum.