

Problems with Verbs

Teaching

Improper Shifts in Tense An **improper shift** is the use of different tenses to describe two or more actions that occur at the same time. Avoid problems by using the same tense to express two or more actions that occur at the same time. Use different verb tenses and forms to show how events are related in time or to emphasize them differently.

We **examined** the Escher picture while we **waited** for you.
Even after we **had examined** the picture, it **confused** us.

Confusing Verbs Avoid using the wrong verb in these pairs of similar verbs:

lie , lay, (has) lain	to rest in a flat position	leave , left, (has) left	to allow to remain
lay , laid, (has) laid	to place	let , let, (has) let	to permit
rise , rose, (has) risen	to go upward	bring , brought, (has) brought	to carry toward
raise , raised, (has) raised	to lift	take , took, (has) taken	to carry away from
sit , sat, (has) sat	to occupy a seat		
set , set, (has) set	to put or place		

Incorrect Use of *Would Have* Do not use *would have* in *if* clauses when the past perfect tense is needed to express the earlier of two past actions.

INCORRECT If I would have built his steps, I could have gone up and down at the same time.
CORRECT If I had built his steps, I could have gone up and down at once the same time.

Misuse of *Would of*, *Should of*, *Could of*, or *Might of* Do not confuse these phrases with the verb phrases *would have*, *should have*, *could have*, and *might have*.

INCORRECT I never knew anything could of been so confusing visually.
CORRECT I never knew anything could have been so confusing visually.

Avoiding Problems with Verbs

Underline the correct verb in parentheses.

- I (might of, might have) (lain, laid) down on the magician's table but I was shy.
- When the magician (rose, raised) his hand, I (see, saw) the magic string.
- If I (had, would have) looked more closely, I could have seen the trick.
- Gretchen (thought, thinks) she sees the way out of the mirror maze.
- If I (would have, had) (left, let) my brother participate in the magic trick, he could have appeared on national television.
- Tommy (set, sit) the hat on the table for the magician to finish his trick.
- Heather (could have, could of) seen a mirage when we were driving yesterday.
- If the assistant (took, brought) the key with her when she (left, let) the stage, how did the magician escape from the box?
- Pablo (should of, should have) (laid, lain) the tickets for the show in a better place.
- It seemed as though the magician's hat (raised, rose) off the ground.
- Andrea (has taken, has brought) her juggling pins to this birthday party.
- My family (will see, had seen) a show when we go to Las Vegas next month.
- We (sat, set) in our seats only a few moments before the show began.
- Before she (raised, rose) her glass in the air, the liquid inside the glass had disappeared.

Lesson 6 **Problems with Verbs**

More Practice

A. Correcting Misused Tenses and Confused Verbs

Underline any error in verb usage in the following sentences. Write the proper verb on the line. If all verb forms in a sentence are correct, write **Correct**.

1. My sister Helena took her CD collection with her to college. _____
2. We set down after the usher brought us to our places. _____
3. The umpire had seen the previous play, but he makes the wrong call. _____
4. Fanny lay her new suit on her bed after she had finished ironing it. _____
5. We all raised our glasses to toast the bride and groom. _____
6. If I had gone to bed earlier, I could of gotten up on time this morning. _____
7. Our dog always lays in a funny position when he sleeps. _____
8. After I had sat the new dishes in the cabinet, the earthquake began. _____
9. Tim should of listened to the advice of his friends. _____
10. After their big party, Mr. and Mrs. Doxer let the house in a mess to take their nightly walk. _____
11. Erika finished her homework while she listens to her new CD. _____
12. Katherine laid down on the couch to watch her favorite movie on television. _____

B. Correcting Misused Tenses

Six sentences in this passage contain incorrectly used verbs. On the lines below, write the numbers of the sentences with errors, and the correct forms of the misused verbs.

(1) Yesterday, I saw an optical illusion that tricks me. (2) In the illusion, two people are standing in opposite corners of a room. (3) Compared to the first person, the other person in the room might of been a giant. (4) If you would have seen this picture, you could never have guessed the truth.

(5) In reality, the floor of the room raises while the ceiling slopes downwards. (6) The artist left the back wall slant forwards as well. (7) The two people are actually the same height. (8) But because the room is uneven, the person in the smaller end seems to be a giant. (9) This type of room is called an Ames Room after the ophthalmologist Adelbert Ames who first built it in the 1940s. (10) The inventor should of seen how surprised I was when I recognized the trick.

CHAPTER 4

Problems with Verbs

Application

A. Correcting Verb Errors

Underline any verb that is incorrect and write the correct verb or verb form on the line to the right. If the tenses and verb choice need no correction, write **Correct**.

1. Preparing for the party, my godmother sat the placemats on the dining room table. _____
2. Joseph laid the stack of books he had just bought on his school desk. _____
3. When you come to see me this summer, be sure that you take your yearbook. _____
4. Every Friday, the teacher leaves her students eat their breakfasts during first period. _____
5. I could of played in the championship tennis match if I had brought my sneakers. _____
6. After she shook the soda bottle, all the bubbles raised to the top. _____

B. Correcting Problems with Tenses

In the passage below, some of the sentences have incorrect shifts in tense, verbs in the wrong tense, or wrong verbs. Rewrite the paragraph below, correcting ten errors.

After writing to his cousin in New York, Alexander let London for his first trip to the United States. He plans to fill every day of the six weeks with activities. As sometimes happens, however, his plans go awry. As he have stepped off the plane onto the runway, he twisted his ankle. There he was, laying on the pavement. Cousin Leonard, who was waiting for more than two hours for the plane to land, rushes to his side.

"That's what I call making a three-point landing," Leonard says, trying to smooth things over with a joke as he helped his cousin to raise.

Alexander smiled back bravely. "I just flew in from London," he quipped, "and, boy, were my arms tired."

CHAPTER 4