If your instructor tells you that you have a problem with **verb tense**, it means that you are using incorrect or inconsistent **verb tenses**.

**Verb tense** is important to clear writing, because it tells the reader **when** something happened, and often when something happened **in relation to** something else. There are five basic verb tenses. Use them correctly to avoid confusion.

- Use the **simple present** tense for facts and consistent states (**Cows eat grass**), happen routinely (**I do homework in the evenings**), or are scheduled to happen in the future (**We take our test tomorrow**).
- Use the **simple past** tense for actions or events that happened at a specific time in the past but have ended (**I ate a chocolate pie yesterday**).
- Use the **simple future** tense for actions or events that will happen in the future and for actions or events predicted or planned to happen in the future (**I will read our assignment tomorrow**).
- Use the **present progressive** tense (**am, is, or are + the present participle—the verb stem+“ing”**) for actions that are in progress in the present but will not continue indefinitely (**I am studying for our test**).
- Use the **past progressive** tense (**was or were + the present participle**) for actions that were in progress sometime in the past but are no longer happening (**I was eating when you called**).
- Use the **future progressive** tense (**will be + the present participle**) for actions that will be in progress in the future (**I will be going to London next month**).

One important exception to basic tense rules involves writing about literature. When writing about literature, use the **literary present tense**. Literary present tense requires you to write about the events that happened in a piece of literature, such as a novel or short story, in the present tense.

- Literary present tense assumes that even though a piece of literature was written in the past, the events described are current and alive to the reader in the present day.
Practice

Write a sentence using the verbs given in the tense specified.

   
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2. *Cook*, simple past tense.
   
   ____________________________________________________________

   
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   ____________________________________________________________

Your instructor or tutor has identified some tense errors in your writing. Write out the phrases or sentences they've indicated and correct them below.

Sentence:

__________________________________________________________

Correction:

__________________________________________________________

Sentence:

__________________________________________________________

Correction:

__________________________________________________________

Sentence:

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Correction:

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Sentence:

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Correction:

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