

Lesson Topic: Consistent Verb Tense

Objective

Students will be able to keep the tenses of their verbs consistent, unless the sentence requires a shift in tense.

Lesson Outline

1. Objective
2. Individual Practice: Identify errors in a paragraph
3. Introduction: Review simple verb tenses
4. Individual Practice: Fill in the blank with a verb
5. Individual Practice: Fill in the blank with a verb
6. Introduction: Discuss why it's important to be consistent
7. Individual Practice: Correct errors in a paragraph
8. Introduction: Explain when to use present tense in essays
9. Introduction: Explain when to use past tense in essays
10. Individual Practice: Correct errors in a paragraph
11. Individual Practice: Write a paragraph
12. Wrap-up

Optional Follow-up Activity

Consistent Verb Tense - Proofreader Practice

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.1.D

Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense.

Prerequisites

None

Slide 1/12

By the end of today's class, you will be able to identify and correct unnecessary shifts in verb tense.

Objectives

Introduce the objective of the lesson.

Say: Please read the objective for today's class silently.

Slide 2/12

There's a grammatical problem in this paragraph. What is it?

The Prime Minister reports that he runs a mile every day. He said that exercise keeps him alert and focused. He also says that he's in excellent health. His physician confirmed this.

Individual Practice

Ask students to identify the errors in the paragraph.

Say: Please read the short paragraph on your screen and see if you can spot the problem.

Pause as students search for the error.

Ask a volunteer to comment. If the answer is correct, ask how many people agree; then, confirm that the answer is correct.

If the answer is incorrect, ask if anyone has a different theory. Continue until you get a correct answer. If no one answers correctly, you can either give the class a clue—"Focus on the verbs"—or move on with the lesson.

Anticipated Student Responses:

- Some of the verbs are in present tense and some are in past tense.
- The verbs change tense and they shouldn't.

Say: That's right. The first sentence is in the present tense: *The Prime Minister reports*. The second one is in the past tense: *He said*. Then it switches back to the present tense: *He also says*.

Say: This is something you should avoid doing. If you're writing in the present tense, you should stay in the present tense, unless you start discussing something that happened in the past, or that will happen in the future. The same is true no matter which tense you're writing in: keep it consistent, unless there's a good reason to change tenses.

Slide 3/12

Introduction

Past Tense

She went.

He drove.

Present tense

He says.

She reads.

Future Tense

He will eat.

She will fly.

Review simple verb tenses.

Say: Let's do a quick review to make sure everyone knows what I mean when I talk about the *tense* of a verb.

Say: An action can happen right now—in the present—or in the future, or in the past. The tense of a verb refers to when the action (or state of being) is happening. Is it happening right now? Am I feeling sick right now? Then we use the present tense.

Slide 4/12: Interactive Slide

Fill in the blank with the present tense form of the verb "sell."

Pablo ____ paintings at a gallery.



Students Input Sentences

Individual Practice

Ask students to fill in the blank with the correct form of the verb.

Say: Just to make sure this is clear, let's practice putting a verb in the right tense.

Discussion

Select 1 correct response to display and discuss.

Review the students' responses to check for understanding. Flag students who used the wrong form of the verb.

Once all students have submitted an answer, display the correct responses.

Say: The present of *sell* that matches with *Pablo* is *sells*, so the sentence should read: *Pablo sells paintings at a gallery.*

Slide 5/12: Interactive Slide

Individual Practice

Fill in the blank with the past tense form of the verb “sell.”

Pablo ____ a painting last week.



Students Input Sentences

Ask students to fill in the blank with the correct form of the verb.

Say: Now, let’s practice putting a verb in a different tense.

Discussion

Select 1 correct response to display and discuss.

Review the students’ responses to check for understanding. Flag students who used the wrong form of the verb.

Once all students have submitted an answer, display the correct responses.

Say: The past tense of *sell* that matches with Pablo is *sold*, so the past tense sentence should read: *Pablo sold a painting last week.*

Slide 6/12

If you’re writing in the present tense: Stay in the present tense!

If you’re writing in the past tense: Stay in the past tense!

Introduction

Discuss why it is important for verb tenses to be consistent.

Say: The basic idea is really simple. Don’t shift from one tense to a different one in the middle of a paragraph or page, unless there’s a good reason to.

Say: Can anyone suggest a reason for this rule?

Call on a volunteer. If no one volunteers, give them a hint:

Say: Imagine that you’re reading an article for school, and the author keeps changing from past tense to present tense and back again. What would that be like for you, as a reader?

Anticipated student response: Confusing

Say: That’s right. It can be very confusing if a writer switches verb tenses for no reason.

Slide 7/12: Interactive Slide

Correct any verbs in the following paragraph that shift into a different tense.

In some schools, teachers let students read books that interest them instead of assigning the classics. Students can choose *Harry Potter* instead of *The Scarlet Letter*. The idea was that, this way, students learn to love reading. But many students never chose more challenging books. They are missing out on the classics.



Students Input Sentences

Individual Practice

Ask students to correct any unnecessary shifts in verb tense.

Say: Let's practice. Search for the places in this paragraph where the verb shifts to a different tense for no reason. Then correct the errors.

Discussion

Select 1 correct response to display and discuss.

Say: You should have changed *was* to *is* and *chose* to *choose*.

Say: Why do these two verbs need to be in present tense?

Anticipated Student Response: Most of the other verbs in the paragraph are in present tense—*let*, *read*, *can choose*, *are missing*, etc. *Was* and *chose* need to be present tense to match with the rest of the paragraph.

Say: Exactly. Remember, keep it consistent, unless there's a good reason to change tenses.

Say: So what is a good reason to change tenses? Let's talk about that now.

Slide 8/12

Use present tense when discussing the events or ideas in a story, poem, play, or essay

Example

Introduction

Explain that present tense is used to talk about the ideas in a story, poem, play, or essay.

Say: Sometimes it is okay to use two different verb tenses in the same piece of writing. It depends on what you're writing about.

Romeo **falls** in love with Juliet the first time he **sees** her.

Say: Before we talk about when it's okay to switch tenses, let's talk about a particular scenario that requires present tense.

Say: When you're writing about the events or ideas in a story, poem, play, or essay, use present tense.

Say: Here's an example. Let's say you're writing about *Romeo and Juliet*. You want to summarize key parts of the story. To do that, use the present tense.

Ask a student to read the example out loud.

Say: It wouldn't be wrong to write, *Romeo fell in love with Juliet the first time he saw her*. It's just a convention, a customary way of writing about literature.

Slide 9/12

Use past tense when discussing historical events, or an author's biography

Example

Baldwin **calls** white Americans his "countrymen," in the hope that they will eventually see him the same way. At the time when he **wrote**, however, equality **remained** an elusive goal.

Introduction

Explain that past tense is used to talk about historical events.

Say: But when you're writing about an article, essay, novel in the present tense, you might need to reference a historical event. That's a case where it is okay to shift from present to past tense.

Say: For example, say you're writing about an essay by James Baldwin, a famous African-American writer. You might write something like this.

Point to the example on the slide and ask a student to read the example out loud.

Say: Notice how the verbs shift between the present tense, *Baldwin calls*, and the past tense, *equality remained*. In this case, that's completely appropriate. You can use present tense to talk about the ideas in the essay and past tense when referring to historical events outside of the essay.

Say: What questions do you have about this?

Slide 10/12: Interactive Slide

Read the following paragraph.

Individual Practice

Ask students to correct unnecessary shifts in verb tense.

Correct any unnecessary changes in verb tense.

In “The Story of an Hour,” when Louise learns that her husband has died, she grieves. Moments later, though, her attitude changed. She realized that for the first time in her life, she is free. She imagines a future in which she can finally make her own choices. Tragically, that future never arrived. This story, which was written by Kate Chopin, is wildly popular when it was first published in 1894.



Students Input Sentences

Say: Okay, let’s practice. On your screens you’ll find a short paragraph about a famous short story. Read it closely, and correct any verbs that changed tenses unnecessarily.

Discussion

Select 1 correct response to display and discuss.

Discuss the following points:

- *changed, realized, arrived* should all be in present tense because this is a summary of a short story.
- *Is wildly popular* should be *was wildly popular* because it references something outside of the story that happened in the past—it is an example of when a tense shift makes sense.

Slide 11/12: Interactive Slide

Write a brief summary of one of your favorite books. (Keep it to three or four sentences).



Students Input Sentences

Individual Practice

Ask students to write a paragraph.

Say: The best way to learn a writing skill is to practice it with original writing of your own. Now I’d like you to write a short paragraph, just three or four sentences, summarizing the plot of one of your favorite books. Remember, when you write about the events in a story or a play, you should use the present tense except when you need to reference something that happened in the past.

Review students’ paragraphs. Flag any students who shifted verb tense unnecessarily throughout their paragraph.

Slide 12/12**Today, I learned:**

- Most of the time, all of the verbs in your writing should be in the same tense.
- Use present tense to write about the ideas in an essay, book, play, etc.
- It's okay to shift to past tense when talking about historical events.

*Wrap-Up***Review what the students learned today.**

Say: Great work everyone! Let's review what you learned today.

Ask students to read the objectives.

You can assign an independent practice activity that students can either complete now or later.

You can also pull aside the flagged students for small group instruction.

Say: Follow the instructions on your screen. If your screen says to begin the next activity, go ahead and begin it now. If your screen says to wait for instructions, please wait at your desk quietly for your next steps.