

# Verb Usage

## Verb Tenses:

**Present:** Action that is occurring now, occurs habitually, or is generally true

**Simple Present: Plain form or -s form**

I walk.

You / we / they walk

He / she / it walks.

**Present Progressive: Am, is, or are plus -ing form**

I am walking.

You / we / they are walking.

He / she / it is walking.

**Past:** Action that occurred before now

**Simple Past: Past-tense form (-d or -ed)**

I / he / she / it walked.

You / we / they walked.

**Past Progressive: Was or were plus -ing form**

I / he / she / it was walking.

**Future:** Action that will occur in the future

**Simple Future: Plain form plus will**

I / you / he / she / it / we / they will walk.

**Future Progressive: Will be plus -ing form**

I / you / he / she / it / we / they / will be walking

**Present Perfect:** Action that began in the past and is linked to the present

**Present Perfect: Have or has plus past Participle (-d or -ed)**

I / you / we / they have walked.

He / she / it walked

**Past Perfect Progressive: Have been or has been plus -ing form**

I / you / we / they have been walking.

He / she / it has been walking.

**Past Perfect:** Action that was completed before another past action

**Past Perfect: Had plus past participle (-d or -ed)**

I / you / he / she / it / we / they / had walked.

**Past Perfect Progressive: Had been plus -ing form**

I / you / he / she / it / we / they will have been walking.

**Future Perfect:** Action that will be completed before another future action

**Future Perfect: Will have plus past participle (-d or -ed)**

I / you / he / she / it / we / they will have walked.

**Future Perfect Progressive: Will have been plus -ing form**

I / you / he / she / it / we / they will have been walking.

## The Writing Center

Trident Technical College Thornley Campus  
Building 510/ Room 137

writingcenter@tridenttech.edu  
574-6623

# Verb Usage

## Common errors with verb forms

One common error occurs with -s endings.

Use the -s form of a verb when the noun is third-person singular and the action occurs in the present.

The singer **asks** [not ask] for a glass of water.

Another common error occurs with -ed endings.

- ❖ Sometimes this happens with certain words whose -ed endings are not always pronounced in casual speech. However, the -ed ending must be included in written form. Some of these words include “supposed”, “used”, “asked”, “discussed”, “mixed”, and “walked”.

I **used** to work at the local grocery store.

Janice was lost, so she **asked** the stranger for directions.

- ❖ Sometimes an -ed error happens with the past participle form of a verb. When the verb is used with a helping verb such as *be* or *have*, you need the past participle (the -d or -ed) form of the verb.

He is **concerned** [not concern] about his grades.

I have **watched** [not watch] many sunsets.

Another error occurs with improper infinitive forms.

An infinitive is the plain form of the verb with the word *to* in front of it: to run, to know, to be.

Infinitives can function in many ways in a sentence, but by themselves they are **not** the main verb and should not have additional endings on them such as -s, -ed, or -ing.

I wanted to **watch** [not to watched] my favorite show, but the power went out.

A final error occurs with the irregular verbs “to be” and “to have”.

Be sure to use the proper form of the verb for the tense you need:

To Be:	<u>Present Tense:</u>	I am	you are	he, she, it is	we are	you are	they are
	<u>Past Tense:</u>	I was	you were	he, she, it was	we were	you were	they were
To Have:	<u>Present Tense:</u>	I have	you have	he, she, it has	we have	you have	they have
	<u>Past Tense:</u>	I had	you had	he, she, it had	we had	you had	they had

## The Writing Center

# Verb Usage

Many verbs express action. (feel, shout, walk, grow, have, consider, study) Ask, “Who or what is doing what in the sentence?” The “doing what” is the verb.

Other verbs show a state of being. (am, is, are, was, were) Remember these words; they are always verbs.

Sometimes verbs occur in phrases. (Examples: has jumped; should have known; is running; will try)

Subjects can have more than one verb. (She enjoys downtown shopping but hates traffic.)

Here’s a tip: try changing the tense of the sentence, such as from past to present or present to future; the word that changes is at least part of the verb.

Sue was the best chef at the restaurant changes to Sue is the best chef at the restaurant.

Sue is cooking up a storm changes to Sue was cooking up a storm.

## Checking for verb errors: a short how to guide

**Step 1:** Go through your paper and circle all the verbs you can find.

**Step 2:** Check verbs for correct form and for consistency (for example, present tense stays present and past tense stays past).

**Step 3:** Check to make sure verbs agree with their subjects (for more help on this issue, see “Subject and Verb Agreement” handout).

## The Writing Center