

Consistency of Tense**Do not change needlessly from one tense to another.**

When you describe events that happened in the same time frame, use the same tense in all your verbs. For instance, if you are telling a story that happened in the past, narrate each event using past tense verbs. If you change from one tense to another, the reader may become confused about the order of the events.

INCONSISTENT	When I first <u>saw</u> the bike, I <u>knew</u> I <u>had</u> to have it. It <u>was</u> perfect! It <u>has</u> every accessory I <u>want</u> . I worked for two months to earn money. I <u>deliver</u> papers, <u>mow</u> lawns, and <u>do</u> odd jobs for neighbors. Finally, I <u>will earn</u> enough money. Dad is <u>driving</u> me to the store, and I buy the bike with my own hard-earned cash! [Do the actions take place in the past, the present, or the future?]
CONSISTENT	When I first <u>saw</u> the bike, I <u>knew</u> I had to have it. It <u>was</u> perfect! It had every accessory I <u>wanted</u> . I <u>worked</u> for two months to earn money. I <u>was delivering</u> papers, <u>mowing</u> lawns, and <u>doing</u> odd jobs for neighbors. Finally, I <u>had earned</u> enough money. Dad <u>drove</u> me to the store, and I <u>bought</u> the bike with my own hard-earned cash! [All the verbs are in the past tense or the past perfect tense. The actions clearly took place in the past.]

EXERCISE A

Read each sentence, paying special attention to the underlined verbs. If the verbs' tenses are consistent, write **C** on the line provided. If the verbs' tenses are inconsistent, write **I** on the line.

Example 1	C	1. That athlete <u>runs</u> fast and <u>wins</u> the race almost every time. [The verb runs and the verb wins both describe action that occurs in the present, so the tense is consistent.]
Example 2	I	2. The glass of water <u>sat</u> in the sun and <u>heats</u> up. [The verb sat describes action that occurred in the past, but the verb heats describes action that occurs in the present, so the verbs' tenses are not consistent.]

____ 1. The beavers have built a new dam and make a nest in it.

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- _____ 2. The car **handles** well and **gets** good gas mileage.
- _____ 3. The crane **will lift** the beam up and **lowered** it onto the structure.
- _____ 4. Juanita **put** a CD in the player and **adjusts** the volume.
- _____ 5. **Is** the traffic bad at this time of day, and **are** there any construction delays?
- _____ 6. Each student **will have taken** notes and **listens** to the guest speaker.
- _____ 7. **Turn** into the lot and **choose** a parking space.
- _____ 8. Because they **studied** hard, they **did** well on the test.
- _____ 9. Pigeons **clustered** on the roof and occasionally **flutter** down to the ground.
- _____ 10. We **will brush** our teeth and **have gone** to the dentist

REMINDER

Sometimes, people narrate a past event in the present tense. This makes the event come alive, as if it were happening right now. When you choose to narrate an event in the present tense, be consistent. Do not switch between present and past unnecessarily.

EXERCISE B

Each of the sentences below is inconsistent in its tense. Rewrite the sentence so that the tense is consistent.

Example	<p>1. The computer <u>froze</u> up, and my document <u>disappears</u> into cyberspace. [In this sentence, <i>froze</i> describes an action that happened in the past, but <i>disappears</i> describes an action happening in the present. The sentence would make more sense if both verbs described actions that happened in the past. However, both actions could occur in the present or even in the future, as long as the tenses are consistent.]</p> <p><i>The computer froze up, and my document disappeared into cyberspace.</i></p>
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11. The haze **clears** away, and the day **was** beautiful.
12. The student council **will vote** and **chose** a location for the class picnic.
13. A pair of kingfishers **hunt** for fish while we **watched**.
14. The wind **blows** through the trees, and leaves **fell** to the ground.
15. When **will** the computer store **hold** its grand opening and **allowed** customers to come in?

Consistency of Tense

Answer Key

Answer Keys:

EXERCISE A

1. I 6. I
2. C 7. C
3. I 8. C
4. I 9. I
5. C 10. I

EXERCISE B

(Answers may vary.)

11. The haze cleared away, and the day was beautiful. [or The haze will clear away, and the day will be beautiful.]
12. The student council will vote and will choose a location for the class picnic. [or The student council voted and chose a location for the class picnic.]
13. A Pair of kingfishers hunt for fish while we watch. [or A Pair of kingfishers hunted for fish while we watched.]
14. The wind blew through the trees, and leaves fell to the ground. [or The wind blows through the trees, and leaves fall to the ground.]
15. When will the computer store hold its grand opening and allow customers to come in?