

## Simple Rules for Verbs and More by Judy Hubbard

Some general basic, pared-down, easy to understand rules, without a lot of grammar terminology.

1. What are the three main time frames in English?  
(Past, Present, Future)
2. Which two do we use the most in academic writing?  
(Simple past and simple present)
3. What do we mean by simple?  
(There is only one word in the verb)
4. Is it okay to have different verb times in the same sentence?  
(Sure, if you are referring to different time periods)
5. How do I find the verb in the sentence? The verb always tells the time of the sentence. Verbs can change to past, present or future. If the word you find doesn't change time, it isn't the verb)
6. How do I know if I am supposed to be writing about past or present?  
(Good question. Here are some basic rules.)

## Present Tense

When do we use it in academic writing?

1. Activities or events occurring in the present.
2. **Summarizing** writing, films, plays, essays (important for academic writing).
3. **Stating opinions, generalizations, beliefs, habits, and facts (important for academic writing).**

An important rule to know is that in the present tense subjects and verbs have to agree in number. That means that the verb will either have an s on the end of it or not, depending on the subject. Here is a simple formula:

### *Singular Subjects and Verbs*

<u>Subject (No S)</u>	+	<u>Verb (+ S)</u>
Singular		
No s on the end (is not plural)		Always ends in S
He/She/It		

### *Plural Subjects and Verbs*

<u>Subject (+S)</u>	+	<u>Verb (No S)</u>
Plural		
Has s on the end (is plural)		No S on the end
I/You/We/They		

## Common present tense problems:

### 1. Forgetting to put an s on the end of a singular verb or putting an s on a plural one.

- (This seems contradictory; a verb that ends in s is singular; a noun that ends in s is plural.

#### Breaking rule #1n example

1. **As the males grows up, he begin to develop the identity of being a boy because of the toys he play with.**.) A secondary problem is deciding which subject to choose. Remind the student that the subject should be consistent.)

#### Questions to ask?

- Present or past? Why? Refer to the reference sheet.
- Where are the verbs?, the words that can change time. Use the rule for finding the verbs.)
- What are the subjects? Should they be singular or plural?
- What ending should a verb have after the male? Is it singular (one) or plural? (more than one). How about he? How should we change the verbs?

2. **Schools also has a major effect on gender roles.**

(same questions as above)

### 3. Using past tense when the verb should be in the simple present.

#### Why do this? 2 reasons.

- One is that we switch tenses often in informal speech, even when this is inappropriate. We tend to write what we hear..
- The other is that switching to past tense helps avoid the confusing s on a verb that follows a singular subject in the present tense

#### Breaking Rule #2

**Example: When we were born into this society, we are expected to become what society wanted us to be.**

- Should the verbs be in the present or past? Why? Make the student find and repeat the rule from the reference sheet.
- Where are the verbs?, the words that can change time. Are they all in the present tense?
- How can I can the verbs in the past into the present? Should they have a s on the end of them or not? Why or why not?

### 3. Using the would or will + the verb when the simple present should be used:

#### Breaking Rule #3

**Example . When a girl plays sports or is athletic, people would single her out as a tomboy.**

#### Questions to ask?

- Present or past? Why? Make the student find and repeat the rule from the reference sheet.
- Where are the verbs?, the words that can change time. Are plays and is correct? Why?
- Is would single correct? Why not? (**make sure to go to the simple tense rule #3 page 1**). What should be crossed out? What is the verb after would?

What is the subject? Should you put an s ending on single? Why not?

**Important notes:**

- **Be, Have and Do are difficult verbs. Use the chart on page 9 to help you learn them.**
- When you make wouldn't + the verb as the present tense, change the would to do/does + *not*. The forms of do are in the reference chart at the end.
- When you use wouldn't be or won't be, change the verb to isn't or doesn't.
- Sometimes *would* is correct. Your ears will tell you if you are not simply using the simple present or simple past.

**Exercise: Find and make corrections in the following paragraph. Remember the rules for present tense. Ongoing facts, generalizations and opinions should be in the present tense.**

Society stereotype men. . Boys were taught how to survive. The fathers wants their sons to be responsible for their own actions. Men needs to be solid. When they grow up, boys were expected to be strong, independent and protective. They will continue to receive this message for the rest of their lives. In childhood, girls received messages about being quiet and passive. When they started growing up, they would be told to act feminine. The constant pressure a tomboy would receive from her choice of clothing would eventually drive her into dressing as the ads portray on television just so that she will avoid the insensitive comments. The article discuss the multiple years of research based on a woman's ideal identity. The unrealistically thin image caused adolescent girls to feel less confident.

## Past Tense

### Use of the Past Tense

What is the past tense? The past tense is used to describe experiences and events that occurred in the past so are not ongoing. The simple past is most often used in academic writing because we use past experiences that illustrate (give examples of the points we are writing about).

**Regular past tense verbs have an -ed ending.**

#### Examples of Regular Present and Past Verb Forms

##### Present

ask  
grab  
start  
stop  
walk

##### Past

asked  
grabbed  
started  
stopped  
walked

(notice that the last letter is doubled when the vowel before it does not sound the way the vowel is said alone.)

There are also lots of irregular verbs (See Be, Have and Do Chart at the end of the packet)

#### Examples of Irregular Present and Past Verb Forms

##### Present

get  
leave  
teach  
think

##### Past

got  
left  
taught  
thought

\* If you are not sure about the correct form of the past tense, look the word up in the dictionary. Do not guess.

### Common past tense problems:

- 1. Forgetting to put the -ed ending on the past tense verb. Why does this problem occur? Because we don't hear an -ed when we say it out loud. We're used to writing what we hear.**

**Example: Society stereotype men in the 1950s.**

Questions: Past or present? Why?

What ending goes on regular past tense verbs? What should stereotype have on the end of it?

## 2. Switching from the past tense to the present tense when you are still writing about an experience from the same time period.

**Example:** When I came to the United States in 1999, my parents want to live in my uncle's house.

Questions:

- Which verb tense should this passage be in? Why?
- Where are the verbs? Are they both in the past tense? What should change and why?

## 3. Using would + verb to indicate tense (This is a common problem for many native speakers. Would + verb is often used in conversational English.)

**Example:** When I was a kid my father would tell me to be tough, like a man.

Questions: Where are the verbs? Should they be past tense or present tense?

- How many words in the simple past? Is was simple past tense?
- Is would tell? How do I fix it? (Cross off would and change tell to the past tense.)

**Example:** There were times I would scrape my knee and wouldn't be able to scream or cry.

Questions: Where are the verbs? Should they be past tense or present tense?

How many words in the simple past?

- Is were simple past tense? (Check the chart on the end)
- Is would scrape? How do I fix it? (Cross off would and change scrape to the past tense.)
- Is wouldn't be? How do I fix it? (Cross off would and change be to the past tense.) (Check the chart on the end)

### Some important notes

- **Be, Have and Do** are difficult verbs. Use the chart on page 9 to help you learn them.
- **Would+ not or wouldn't** changes to **did + not or didn't**.
- **Wouldn't be** changes to **wasn't or weren't**.
- Sometimes **would** is correct. Your ears will tell you if you are not simply using the simple present or simple past. If you are using **If** or **When**, often **would** is the correct verb.

Past Tense Correction Exercise:

Find and change all the verbs in the following paragraphs to the correct past tense forms.

I was a tomboy when I was a girl. The constant pressure I would receive from my choice of clothing would eventually lead me to dressing like my peers. I stay inside and watch cartoons to avoid my friends. They are always asking to play Barbies. I lie and make up excuses because I would prefer to play video games by myself. Even though my mother loves me, she would push me to dress like the other kids. I try to please her but I never would want to play those boring games and wear those fussy clothes. I finally give in around 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

As a child growing up, I would always want to have the materialistic things that my friends have. I would tell my parents to take me to the store to buy them. When I was a child, my family would work hard for what we have. Growing up many things influence me on what I spend my money on. A large influence on me then is the media. Seeing people I look up to on TV would make me go out and get what they wear.

Problems with verbs following Be: see chart at the end.

In English we have a form of the verb called the passive. This happens when the subject is not the doer or causer of the verb. This is the way it looks:

Subject	Verb (To be)	Past participle (often the verb +ed)	(by someone or something else) This can be assumed. It is not always stated	Rest of the sentence
I	am was	<u>influenced</u>	(by my peers)	to get in trouble.
You	are were	<u>raised</u>	(by your parents)	to follow rules.
He She It	is was	expected	(by society)	to assume responsibility.
We They	are were	embarrassed	(by our politicians)	when they lie.
It	is/was/ were <u>to be</u>	hoped	(by everyone)	things improve
The students	has/have/had <u>been</u>	bored	(by the conversation)	about grammar.
It	is/was/were <u>being</u>	supposed	(by others)	to finish.
The fact	will <u>be</u>	discovered	(by a researcher)	In 2025.

**Passive Voice rule:** When you use the passive voice (the verb is done or caused by someone or something else) the verb following a form of *To Be* must be the past participle (often verb+ed). Why do we break this rule? Because we don't hear the final -ed when we talk.

**Example of breaking this rule:**

I was surprise by being allow to go to the prom, even though I was ask by a really good friend.

Questions to ask:

1. Where are the forms of to be in the sentence above? (**Check the chart above in the "To Be" column on the previous page.**)

I was surprise by being allow to go to the prom, even though I was ask by a really good friend.

2. What are the verbs following the verbs to be?

I was surprise by being allow to go to the prom, even though I was ask by a really good friend.

3. Are the verbs following to be done by someone or something else (either stated or understood)

I was surprise (by the news) by being allow (by my parents) to go to the prom, even though I was ask (by a really good friend).

4. How do I correct the verbs following to be? Add d or -ed.

I was surprised by being allowed to go to the prom, even though I was asked by a really good friend.

**Exercise:**

**Correct the following passive verb errors by following the above rule.**

In this society people are stereotype by being generalize. Females are always portray as being motherly, passive and innocent. Those who don't follow the rules are overlook. If you do not live up to the expectations of being a feminine girl, you are tease or taunt. You can also be view as a negative object to society and peers. Stereotypes are also reinforce in school by passing along cultural information. In schools, girls are expect to sit quietly. This rule has been pass down for generations. When I was a child, my mom was ask, "What's the name of your baby boy?" My mom felt so embarrass and angry at the stereotypical role that girls can't be dress as boys are. Nowadays women are allow to work outside the house although in the past they were suppose to be homemakers. No matter how times change, women and housewives will still always be view as one.



## Irregular Verbs, Be, Have and Do

<u>Verbs</u>	<u>Present Tense Forms</u>		<u>Past Tense Forms</u>	
<b>To Be</b>	<b>I</b> <b>You</b> <b>He/She/It</b> <b>We/They</b>	<b>Am</b> <b>Are</b> <b>Is</b> <b>Are</b>	<b>I</b> <b>You</b> <b>He/She/It</b> <b>We/They</b>	<b>Was</b> <b>Were</b> <b>Was</b> <b>Were</b>
<b>To Have</b>	<b>I</b> <b>You</b> <b>He/She/It</b> <b>We/They</b>	<b>Have</b> <b>Have</b> <b>Has</b> <b>Have</b>	<b>I</b> <b>You</b> <b>He/She/It</b> <b>We/They</b>	<b>Had</b> <b>Had</b> <b>Had</b> <b>Had</b>
<b>To Do</b>	<b>I</b> <b>You</b> <b>He/She/It</b> <b>We/They</b>	<b>Do</b> <b>Do</b> <b>Does</b> <b>Do</b>	<b>I</b> <b>You</b> <b>He/She/It</b> <b>We/They</b>	<b>Did</b> <b>Did</b> <b>Did</b> <b>Did</b>

Reminder: When we make contractions it is sometimes hard to find these verbs. Separate the contractions into two words (I'm = I am, It's = it is, you're= you are, we're = we are, They aren't = they are not, I don't = I do not, We didn't = they did not, I've = I have, He hasn't = he has not, she doesn't = she does not.)